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PEACE AND WAR



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PEACE AND WAR

BY

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TRANSLATED BY

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PREFACE

IN February 1930, the University of Geneva and the Institut Universitaire des Hautes Études Internationales, directed by MM. F. Mantoux and W. Rappard, did me the honour of offering me a Chair of History. I accepted the invitation, delighted to have the opportunity of lecturing on nineteenth-century history as it presents itself to me to-day after fifteen years of meditation, and in the light of the catastrophes which have succeeded one another since 1914, in the "city of refuge," this "cross-roads of the world," where liberty of thought has found one of its last places of sanctuary.

The reader will find in this volume some of the guiding principles I have put forward in my lectures at the University and the Institute.

The third and fourth papers are lectures which I gave in the United States last spring. The "Transatlantic Talks" were written on my return from America and were published, in another translation, in the *Illustrated London News* in July, August, and September 1931.

G. F.

GENEVA,
22nd October, 1931.

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WAR: THEN AND NOW

WAR: THEN AND NOW

I

FOR the Western world war is no longer an intermittent danger, a threat and a terror from without; it is an obsession which unnerves us from within and feeds on itself, like all fixed ideas. There have been times when people lived with the sword in their hands, yet did not know what it was to have the war obsession. The century between 1815 and 1914 was for Europe a century of peace with an interlude of war, covering a period of twenty-two years, 1848-1870; wars that were short and, with the exception of the last one, not very sanguinary. But this long peace was haunted by the terror of war, by a kind of generalized and contagious fear neurosis, and all the precautions that were taken to reassure people's minds only intensified the evil. Since 1919 the malady has grown still more acute. In order to guarantee peace it has been necessary to remodel the map of three continents; the most powerful dynasties have been exterminated; one part of Europe has had its weapons taken off it, the other has been given too many. We have created the League of

Nations, concluded alliances, signed pacts, drawn up treaties, outlawed war, convened international conferences by the score. It makes no difference; people have never thought so much of war and its future horrors, real or imaginary—towns devastated in a few hours by a shower of bombs, poison gases capable of destroying in a few minutes every form of life in a city of the size of Paris, millions of men, women and children killed at a stroke. It would seem that our age has a foreboding that some day or other it is sure to be wiped out in some nightmare outburst of violence. Pacifism itself is only a form, perhaps the most hopeless form, of the war obsession.

What is at the bottom of this obsession? A hideous reality? A dismal hallucination? That mixture of truth and delusion which underlies all the chief terrors of hapless humankind? How can this reality be mastered, if it is a reality? How can this delusion be cured, if it is only a delusion?

II

Gunpowder has been known to the West since at least the ninth century. The *Livre des feux*, by Marcus Græcus, a sort of incendiary's Bible, of which two manuscripts are to be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, gives us the formula for the "flying fire": Mix salt-

petre, sulphur and charcoal; wrap the resulting compound in papyrus. But if for four centuries Marcus Græcus's thirty-second formula was put to no use save in the making of rockets, the fifteenth century rescued it from ineffectuality and sent it forth to revolutionize the world, in company with another decisive invention, the art of printing. Chemical warfare began with the use of firearms.

Its earliest ravages during the religious wars seemed to justify Ariosto's famous invective against guns and cannon. Having no regular pay and no supply services, and confident in the superiority which the new firearms gave them over the civil population, the armies of the sixteenth century lived on what they could take, whether among friends or enemies. The towns which were not in a position to defend themselves gave themselves up to the stronger side, who imposed a ransom in money and in kind. When the army left, it cut the ripe corn, emptied the barns and sent the grain to the mills in the neighbourhood of the camps. The ovens of the nearest villages were then set to baking the bread.

But these first excesses of chemical warfare had their penalty in the hatred which surrounded and dogged the moving armies. Exasperated by the ruthless conduct of the soldiery, the peasants rose all round a retreating army and

massacred the stragglers. At a time when armies were almost exclusively composed of mercenaries, anything that made war too arduous and dangerous diminished recruiting and multiplied desertions. Gradually, therefore, it became clear that it was not to the interest of chemical warfare to lay the world waste too thoroughly. In the seventeenth century a beginning was made with the organization of commissariat services, and armies were forbidden to live by pillage of either their own or the enemy's country. The armies subjected themselves to rules and limitations which represented alike a moral principle and a practical necessity.

The transformation took several generations and was only accomplished after many hesitations and changes of course. The Thirty Years' War, for instance, presents both aspects. In Germany, where the armies lived on the inhabitants as in the sixteenth century, the war was very cruel; the soldiers devoured the substance of the peasants, and the peasants massacred the soldiers whenever they could. In Catalonia and Flanders, where, thanks to the frequency of fortified towns, it was possible to set up numerous depôts for munitions and food supplies, the armies could operate without having to wrench each day's provisions by main force from the peasantry. But the war was so much less savage in Spain and in Flanders that

Turenne and Puységur tell us that troops who had been fighting in those theatres could not be employed in Germany.

In the eighteenth century war became limited and circumscribed by a system of precise rules. It was definitely regarded as a kind of single combat between the two armies, the civil population being merely spectators. Pillage, requisitions, and acts of violence against the population were forbidden in the home country as well as in the enemy country. Each army established depots in its rear in carefully chosen towns, shifting them as it moved about; the supplies for these depots were brought up, as far as was possible, by water. Anything else that was needed was bought at prices freely agreed upon even in enemy countries.

From the death of Louis XIV up to the French Revolution, the European states endeavoured to keep war subject to these minutely codified restrictions. It is true that they were not always respected; necessity or the fury of the struggle often provoked more or less serious infractions; but the observance and not the violation of these rules constituted the laws of war. In addition to this code of honour, there were the material limitations as regards men and money. Conscription existed only in a rudimentary and sporadic form, for kings and republics had not then the fabulous credit facilities

which multiplied the resources and turned the heads of governments in the nineteenth century. Man-power and budgets both had their limits, and what was important in an army was the quality of the troops, not their quantity; a small army might be good, a big army was bound to be bad. According to Marshal Puységur, an army of 80,000 men was useless, as it was too large to be properly handled. Marshal Saxe said that an army of 42,000 men ought to be sufficient to enable a good general to deal with any political problem which his government might set him. Soldiers being scarce and hard to find, everything was done to ensure their quality by a long, patient and meticulous training, but as this was costly, it rendered them very valuable, and it was necessary to let as few be killed as possible. Having to economise their men, generals tried to avoid fighting battles. The object of warfare was the execution of skilful manoeuvres and not the annihilation of the adversary; a campaign without battles and without loss of life, a victory obtained by a clever combination of movements, was considered the crowning achievement of this art, the ideal pattern of perfection. In short, war was a classic art. "I am not in favour of giving battle, especially at the outset of a war. I am even convinced that a clever general can wage war all his life without having to fight one," said Marshal

Saxe. Speaking of Prince Henry, the brother of Frederick, Massenbach said: "More successful than Cæsar at Dyrrachium, greater than Condé at Rocroi, he, like the immortal Berwick, won the victory without a battle." "The science of war," wrote Joly de Maizeroy, "consists not only in knowing how to fight, but even more in avoiding a fight . . . in such a way as to achieve one's objective without committing oneself. . . ."* It was avarice and calculation that made war more humane.

Restricted by small numbers, poverty, and the laws of honour, war became a kind of game between sovereigns. A war was a game with its rules and its stakes—a territory, an inheritance, a throne, a treaty. The loser paid, but a just proportion was always kept between the value of the stake and the risks to be taken, and the parties were always on guard against the kind of obstinacy which makes a player lose his head. They tried to keep the game in hand and to know when to stop. It was for this reason that the great eighteenth-century theorists of warfare urged that neither justice, nor right, nor any of the great passions that move a people should ever be mixed up with war. Hapless indeed

* Quoted by Marshal Foch in his *Principles of War*, translated by Hilaire Belloc (Chapman and Hall, 1918), p. 26.

are those belligerents who take up arms in the conviction that they are fighting for justice and right! Both parties being persuaded that they are in the right, they would fight until they were exhausted, and the war would go on for ever! One must go to war admitting that the cause of one's adversary is as just as one's own; one must take care to do nothing, even for the sake of victory, that may exasperate him, or close his mind to the voice of reason or his heart to the desire for peace; one must abstain from treacherous and cruel acts, for there is nothing that rouses an adversary to greater fury.

III

A debased form of real warfare, artificial and conventional warfare, false warfare—that is how the nineteenth-century strategists described the warfare of the eighteenth century, with its small forces, academic manœuvres, and formal rules. Real or false, one cannot deny to the limited warfare of the eighteenth century the full beauty of a learned and difficult art. It was the last creation of the old qualitative civilizations, and one of their finest. The French Revolution destroyed it along with the ceremonial, manners, fashions and institutions of the old régime. Attacked by almost the whole of

Europe, France had to resort to compulsory service as an exceptional expedient in order to adjust the balance of strength. But this exceptional expedient hardened into common usage, and the art of warfare was transformed. Conscription yielded many soldiers, but they were soldiers to whom war was no longer a difficult calling to be learnt to perfection, but an irksome duty to be discharged as quickly as possible. In the non-professional soldier, passion replaced professional training; myths became weapons as necessary as cannon and muskets; on the battlefield the classic art of warfare was replaced by a kind of war-romanticism, which felt no repugnance at pouring out blood lavishly, provided campaigns were short. The aim of manœuvres was no longer to avoid battles, but to provoke them so as to hasten the decisive result. Once again, as in the sixteenth century, armies lived by pillage or requisition on the countries through which they passed, whether these were friendly or enemy. It was the simplest way to enable them to move about rapidly. It did not matter that the dangers of war increased; soldiers were plentiful and cost nothing.

“ By the strength and energy of its principles,” said Clausewitz,* “ by the enthusiasm with which it had enraptured the people, the French Revo-

* Quoted by Marshal Foch, *Principles of War*, p. 29.

lution had thrown the whole weight of that people and all its forces into the scale which had hitherto nothing but the weight of a limited army and of the limited (regular) revenues of the State. Paying little heed to the calculation of political alliances . . . which weakened the force of the State and subordinated the brutal element of fighting to the reserves of diplomacy, the French army went haughtily forward through the countries and saw, to its own surprise and to that of its opponents, how superior are the natural force of a State and a great and simple motive to the artificial diplomatic assemblage in which these States stood mutually involved."

"A new era had begun," writes Marshal Foch,* "the era of national wars, of wars which were to assume a maddening pace (*aux allures déchaînées*); for those wars were destined to throw into the fight all the resources of the nation; they were to set themselves the goal, not of a dynastic interest, not of the conquest or possession of a province, but the defence or the propagation of philosophical ideas in the first place, next of principles of independence, of unity, of non-material advantages of various kinds. Lastly, they staked upon the issue the interests and fortune of every individual private. Hence the rising of passions, that is elements of force, hitherto in the main unused."

* *Principles of War*, p. 30.

In 1815, after twenty-five years of "national wars at a maddening pace," Europe found herself in such a state of disorder and misery that the policy had to be reversed. At the Congress of Vienna, emperors and kings, the "survivors" of the Revolution, seriously contemplated the abolition of conscription. Louis XVIII, in article 12 of the Charter, promised France that he would abolish it. But the eighteenth-century armies relied too much on quality, not numbers, even for the Europe of the Restoration and the Holy Alliance. What changes there had been throughout the whole of Europe in twenty-five years! Kings and emperors in 1815 needed too many soldiers to be able to deny themselves the facilities of conscription. France took the responsibility of attempting a compromise between the two systems by creating an army which until 1870 was the model of all European armies except one. Conscription was retained on the principle that military service was part of every Frenchman's duty, but conscripts were practically transformed into professional soldiers. Renouncing the possibilities conscription offered in the matter of numbers, France enrolled between 40,000 and 60,000 men each year, which was less than a fifth of the 300,000 liable for service. But the term of service was long, namely seven years. It was decided by lot who had to serve, and those who

were thus selected had the right to find substitutes. The rich served in the army only as officers. Thus a limited number of conscripts had to undergo a long period of training, the object being to obtain a smaller but more efficient army.

Can such an army be called a professional army, as M. Montheillet defines it in his fine book *Les institutions militaires en France*? This would perhaps be simplifying too drastically the laborious compromise which aimed at recapturing and reviving in warfare of the post-Revolutionary type, with the fast and furious pace* it had adopted, the classic spirit of warfare under the *ancien régime*. Like all compromises, this one had in it something strained and artificial. It could only be applied with difficulty, and it ended in a catastrophe for France, but in spite of its ultimate failure we can now recognize it as a supreme attempt to save Europe from the misfortunes that overwhelm her to-day, and we can do justice to the greatness of this attempt made *in extremis*. Thanks to this somewhat hybrid military system, Europe was able to live in peace from 1815 to 1848, to re-establish her prosperity and build up great industries, instead of increasing her armies and perfecting her armaments. Thanks to this same military system, the Crimean War and the war of 1859 were not wars *aux allures déchaînées*.

* Repeating Marshal Foch's phrase, *aux allures déchaînées*.

But even during this period one Power—Prussia—stood out from the rest by applying to her army the revolutionary principle of compulsory short-term service for all. No substitutes were permitted in the domains of the king of Prussia; all his subjects had to serve, but the service lasted only three years.

Hemmed in by the Holy Alliance and kept quiescent by the general peace, Prussia did not disturb Europe until 1848. But after the revolution of that year, though the armies remained subject for another thirty years to this kind of self-limitation which prevented them from growing too big, the golden age of mankind began. The wealth of Europe and America multiplied; the mania for inventions took possession of armies and navies; guns and rifles were brought to perfection; the masses began to grow restive, fired by the ideas of liberty, of civil and economic equality, of independence and national power. In short, the spirit of “fast and furious national wars” awoke once more. The old king of Prussia was alarmed when his minister advised him to propose that the Diet of the Germanic Confederation should no longer be elected by the governments, but by universal suffrage, and suggested that this proposal should be used as a pretext for war against Austria, who would oppose it. “But you are suggesting a revolution, M. le Ministre,” said the king.

“What does it matter to you,” answered Bismarck, “if from your solid rock you can look on in safety at the tempest in which the others will be shipwrecked?” The daring minister meant to fire the spirits of the rather extemporized troops whom he was about to send into battle, and did not boggle at going to the arsenal of the Revolution for his combustibles. Finally the war of 1870 broke out and destroyed the old scale of military values.

After 1870 the military romanticism of the Revolution triumphed definitely over the classical tradition which, after 1815, France had tried to revive and to adapt to the new era. The victories of Germany convinced the whole world. The only real wars were those *aux allures déchaînées*. Only compulsory, short-term military service could rally to the flag all the active forces of a country, reconcile the demands of quantity with those of quality, and at the same time create bigger and better armies than those formed under the hybrid system retained in France. This doctrine—heresy to the strategists of former times, eternal truth at length revealed to latter-day strategists by the genius of a Prussian general—triumphed over all objections.

Armies everywhere were reorganized according to the new principles; military service was made more general, and the period shortened; the number of effectives in peace and war was

everywhere increased by passing the maximum number of men through the barracks in as rapid succession as possible. At the same time metallurgy had developed into a gigantic industry which placed at the service of Mars its enormous workshops and the inexhaustible imagination of inventors.

A new phenomenon—a monster hitherto unknown—appeared in the shape of unlimited competition in armaments. In a single generation, under the glamorous refulgence of the German victories and the monarchy which had fostered them, the military romanticism of the French Revolution was transformed into futurism. As if hypnotized by the sudden eruption of German might in Central Europe, the conscience of the world passively obeyed the brutal impetus given by the facts, and docilely allowed itself to be led into the uncharted realms of the most dangerous chimeras in search of a new formula for power. For the first time in history, the richest and most civilized states of Europe rated military strength by numbers and by the power of the instruments of warfare. For the first time they competed for superiority in numbers and in armament, and allowed themselves to be driven by their rivalry to the extreme limits of the possibilities of their population and possessions. Densely populated and enormously wealthy, they created in thirty

years the most colossal armies history has ever known, and endowed them with war material of fabulous power.

And what was the result of an effort unique in history? It was a war so fast and furious that at the end of three months it was held fast in the bonds its own violence had created. That was the inconceivable paradox of the World War.

IV

In the first days of August, 1914, two million Germans rushed to the assault on France. Before these two million men there lay a frontier which was defended by a treaty, a promise, a scrap of paper, by honour itself. Were they so numerous that in order to live they had to turn the land they passed over into a desert, as if a cloud of locusts had ravaged it? Their front was so long that in its advance the right wing had to describe an immense arc at top speed. The dead weight of the light and heavy artillery, the machine-guns, munitions, siege material and provisions, slowed down their onslaught. No matter: they were in a hurry, like all conscript armies; they wanted to get it over quickly, with a few swift gigantic blows. And they were drunk on that fire-water of patriotism which ever since the French Revolution has been distilled in the schools and newspapers

in order to excite in the masses the romantic spirit of warfare *aux allures déchaînées*. Without hesitation the two million Germans strode across the inviolable frontier and overwhelmed Belgium; staying neither for food nor sleep, they ran, ran till they were out of breath, outstripping their *impedimenta*, to find the enemy and annihilate him in a few battles; they ran at such a pace that in the end they were no longer within the control of the commanders who had sent them forth. During the decisive days of the Marne, the German Headquarters at Spa had almost entirely lost touch with their units, could get no word from them, and could send only fragmentary instructions. The order to retreat was given by a lieutenant-colonel of the General Staff who had been given full powers by General Headquarters and sent to the front to see what was going on.

The German army of 1914 made a botch of its operations because it was too big. It was impossible to command this enormous army, to provision it, to fill up its gaps, to maintain contact between its units, to keep up its morale. The mass was set in motion at too maddening a pace, and in a few days was beyond the reach of the hand which had discharged it, while at the same time the force of its initial impetus was rapidly becoming exhausted. It began to slow down and to wobble, and finally it em-

bedded itself in the earth. • Three months later the war of position had begun all along the Western front. War had been let loose; it now had to be kept under control by tethering it to fixed positions.

Then, however, not being able to break loose in space, the war broke loose in another direction—in a wild extravagance that maintained a deadlock. Millions of men were needed on both sides to fill the trenches. Since 1870 it had been accepted that two years, a year and a half, or even one year, were sufficient to make a soldier, but during this war six weeks were considered enough. Six weeks sufficed to transform a boy of eighteen or a man of forty-five into a warrior. The equipment used in open warfare was not suitable for demolishing or attacking trenches so strongly defended. Though in peace-time the utmost efforts had been made for the improvement of armaments, the war roused men to a diabolical frenzy in the invention of murderous devices. For the first time Death was armed with an electric scythe. Every new engine of war provoked a retaliation, and for four years the whole wealth of Europe was squandered in maintaining attack and defence at an equal level, and raising that level day by day.

V

We have seen the appearance in history of the monster which will devour us all, if we do not succeed in casting it in chains—the war of fantastic proportions, the “super” war. The “super” war of 1914-1918 differed from preceding wars not merely in its proportions, but in its quality as well. In its self-exaggeration war lost its true form. It contracted a disease which up to that period seemed to have attacked Western civilization only in its practical activities—that form of psychological inversion by which action ceases to be a means to an end, and becomes an end in itself, mere movement acquiring an absolute value independent of its direction. What counts in human conflicts is not the absolute strength of the weapons available, but their relative superiority over the enemy’s weapons. If I am armed with nothing more than a stick and my adversary is unarmed, I am in a more advantageous position than if my adversary and I each had an automatic revolver. The invention or manufacture of a powerful weapon is a rational act in proportion to the prospects the inventor or manufacturer may have of being the only person to make use of it. The invention of firearms gave Europeans at a certain moment a decisive superiority over America, Africa, and Asia, because those continents did not know

Marcus Græcus's thirty-second formula, or did not know for a long time how to apply it.

What happened during the "super" war? A superhuman effort was made to increase the absolute power of weapons, without changing the relative superiority by one inch. A fortnight after one of the belligerents had invented a new engine of destruction or a new method of defence, his opponent had copied or improved upon it. The respective positions of the belligerents remained the same, and only the effort and sacrifice of the war increased. They increased to such an extent that suddenly, in 1916, the Germanic empires on the one hand and the Allies on the other began to discuss their war-aims. This fact is unique in history: they had been fighting for two years, millions of men had perished, Europe had ruined herself at this terrible game, and they did not know what they were fighting for! Or rather, if they still knew, the political and territorial questions which had started the war—Alsace-Lorraine, Trent and Trieste, Austro-Russian rivalries in the Balkans, the world-aspirations of Germany, Serbo-Bulgarian jealousies, Constantinople—all these began to appear too insignificant to justify the fury of the combatants and the havoc they had wrought. They looked about for aims commensurate with such fury and destruction; some definite goal that had to be reached if the

war was still to have a meaning and not become a sequence of reprisals rising swiftly in a spiral towards a paroxysm of maniacal rage; so as not to doom themselves to marching on for the sake of marching, when it meant wading in blood. They tried to find commensurate war-aims, but, as it was impossible to discover any, they went on fighting because they had begun to fight and did not know how to stop. They went on killing and killing and killing.

If only all these inventions had merely increased the amount of material destruction done ! But they mangled poor human flesh and filled the hearts of the peoples with bitter hatreds. The engineers designing the new engines of war, the chemists mixing the explosives or preparing the poison gases, thought they were solving the technical problems of the war presented by the necessity of overcoming the enemy. But the marvels of the workshop and laboratory, the wonders of mechanism and chemistry, wrought frightful havoc when they appeared on the battlefield. The peoples have not yet, and probably never will have, more than a vague notion of it. During the war all those who knew the truth discreetly conspired to cover the horrors of the trenches with a needful silence. The stories of soldiers on leave were too fragmentary, too disjointed, and perhaps also too colourless. It is so difficult when one is plunged into the extra-

ordinary to be conscious of it oneself. In the trenches the combatants on both sides wavered between a resignation which, by taking the edge off the horror, made endurance possible, and fits of revolt which—save in Russia, where they actually burst into full eruption—died out in silence after a few feeble throes. The public only knows of the horrors of the trenches through war novels, of which the pattern was first set by Barbusse's *Le Feu*. But art is always obliged to tone down the truth in order to make it plausible.

Things happened in the Great War which were far worse than anything depicted by Barbusse and Remarque. Let me, by way of example, translate a few pages from a small pamphlet which is not to be found at the book-sellers'. The young officer who has there recounted his war experiences in a rather rugged prose and with an artless sincerity has had only a few dozen copies printed for his friends. It was during the last days of the war, when the Allies were pursuing the retreating enemy on all fronts.

“The top of the mountain was surrounded with trenches. Behind these trenches were the black and gaping mouths of numerous tunnels. There were still some of the enemy up there, but not many. The captain told a sergeant to go with a few men and take them prisoner.

We sat down in the sun and began our dinner. It was not too soon, for we were dying of hunger. Unfortunately, there was no water.

“Whilst we were eating, the sergeant returned and told us that about forty of the enemy had taken refuge in a cave and obstinately refused to come out. Then M—— (another officer) went to see. We heard the explosion of a few bombs. Shortly afterwards M—— came back and said that the men absolutely refused to come out. It was my turn to go. I took a flame-thrower and approached the cave. I called, but there was no answer. I went a few steps into the cave; I heard the characteristic noise of rifles being loaded. I jumped out; I ignited the flame-thrower. My orderly let it empty itself completely into the cave; the flame lasted about thirty seconds at a temperature of 600° C. We heard groans, and nothing else.

“We had to wait half an hour before we could enter the cave. By the light of a torch I saw a horrible sight: a heap of burnt and blackened corpses with contorted faces lying in terrifying attitudes as if they had tried to burrow into the earth, their sinews blackened and burnt. The fire had cut them into pieces.

“I was horrified at what I had had to do, but it was their own fault. Only those at the back had been spared to some extent; some

were dying and were still gasping. We brought them out, but it was useless. They died soon after.

“I called the captain and asked him what to do. It was impossible to bury them. We fixed a piece of paper at the entrance to the tunnel, with the notice, ‘Full of dead,’ and went back to finish our meal. In the afternoon the colonel arrived. . . . He saw the notice and asked what had happened; he was not very pleased and said that I had been too harsh; but when I told him in detail what had happened he forgave me, pinching my ear in a friendly way. He was obviously satisfied.”

The author of this massacre was a youth of nineteen.

VI

Kill, kill: movement is all, and direction is of no importance. We all know the results: ten million killed, eleven million wounded, half of them disabled for life; entire regions, among them some of the richest of Europe, in Belgium, France, Italy, Poland and Russia, laid waste; six revolutions, one of which has put a third of Europe and Asia outside Western civilization; the partial or total bankruptcy of a dozen large states; the destruction of the monarchical system which had ruled Europe for a century;

a further general overthrow of the ruling classes, and, consequently, of all standards of value; every defect of our period intensified—urbanism, overproduction, the superstition of science, delirium tremens of will and intelligence, instability of morals and principles, political chaos, break-up of the family, frenzied labour, time utilized to the point of doing away with the leisure that gives it all its value—man more than ever a slave to the duty of producing in order to consume and consuming in order to produce; Europe rent in pieces, drenched with blood, covered with wounds, Asia in revolt, Africa restless, America distrustful, the whole earth thrown off its balance.

More serious still, the Western world is plunging deeper and deeper into a tremendous misconception which, although not dangerous up to the present, might end one day or another by throwing the whole of Europe into inextricable confusion. This point is of such importance that we must dwell upon it for a moment. We are dealing here with one of the darkest riddles of our time.

What is socialism? For some it is the hope, for others the fear, of a new revolution which would transform the world. What are this hope and fear based on? On an historical analogy. At the end of the eighteenth century the bourgeoisie evicted the aristocracy and created

a new form of State which was inspired by their own ideology and interests. In the same way the proletariat will one day oust the bourgeoisie and create the proletarian State.

But the analogy is arbitrary. The French Revolution did something that went much deeper than the substitution of one class for another; it replaced a religious, authoritative and pessimistic conception of life by a secular, rationalistic and optimistic conception. Although in all countries, particularly in France, the commonalty profited more by the Revolution than the nobility, the new conception was not the work of the bourgeoisie at grips with the nobility. It came into being through a gradual process which took three centuries to complete, and to which all classes contributed. In every part of Europe a section of the bourgeoisie fought against the Revolution which was to make its fortune.

Besides, when and in what way have we shown any intention of setting out to discover a new world as the eighteenth century did? During the whole of the nineteenth century we did nothing but apply, develop, adapt, defend, criticize, combat and revise the doctrines of the French Revolution. Collectivism is only the transference of the democratic doctrine to the economic plane. Has it entered so deeply into the minds of the masses that it can inspire them with the

will and the strength to reorganize the world on this new system? It would need a lively imagination to affirm that it has.

Moreover, can it be denied that modern civilization tends towards the unification of all classes into the bourgeois type? The aristocracy is nothing but a survival; the proletariat is still only a vague body of would-be bourgeois, at least in so far as it is no longer the indifferent or disaffected mob. The workman who earns good wages, who educates and improves himself, who aspires to rise in the world, becomes one of the petty bourgeoisie. If there are deep divisions in the modern world in spite of this process of unification, it is because the bourgeoisie is not a united body, as the socialists assert, but a turbulent and uneasy hierarchy. There is a rich bourgeoisie, a comfortable bourgeoisie, and a poor bourgeoisie. There is an intellectual and an uncultured bourgeoisie. There is a bourgeoisie that has the right to command, and one that has to obey. Political differences, religious strife, and racial and national hatreds have also to be taken into account. The rich and the intellectual bourgeoisie are in command everywhere; but though the comfortable bourgeoisie is docile, the poor bourgeoisie is restive. It detests the rich bourgeoisie, which in its turn despises it and sometimes treats it badly, while the well-to-

do or poor intellectuals are continually provoking these dissensions for their own ends.

Why, then, do so many workers and peasants, on the strength of this analogy, believe in a more or less imminent revolution concerning which nobody can say exactly what its nature ought to be, and of which nobody would care to bear the cost, even were it possible to bring it about ? The socialist party has stoutly championed the interests of the workers and peasants in all countries, but this in itself is not enough to account for its dazzling success. There is a deeper cause which we can discern to-day when we fix our attention upon Europe in the state in which the World War has left her. All these ruins, if we know how to read their meaning, now readily reveal a secret, one of the great secrets of modern times, which was undecipherable before 1914. Marxism predicts that the social revolution will be the inevitable outcome of large-scale industry, and that it will come to pass in the countries where industrialization is most advanced. But if we look at a map showing "Red" expansion since 1914, we see that socialism of the most revolutionary type holds absolute power in Russia, where large-scale industry is still but a sickly child, and is almost non-existent in the United States, where such industry is a giant in the full vigour of its manhood. In Europe, up to 1914, the

map of "Red" expansion supplied the same refutation of this doctrine. Among the great countries of Europe England was the one where socialism had the least power. The Trades Unions paid great attention to the interests of the workers and their professional claims, but the Labour Party was almost of no account as a political force.

It is evident that the power of the socialist party bears no relation to the development of industry. On what does it depend, then? On two different causes which function simultaneously: wars and the more or less autocratic forms of power. Tsarist Russia was an Asiatic despotism, over-militarized, always at war in Europe or in Asia in pursuit of great or small conquests. It had an immense army, waged frequent wars, possessed no liberty, its people were condemned to obey, to pay, and to fight in silence, their backs bent beneath the lash; and it is in Russia that socialism of the deepest dye is absolute master of all things. In Germany socialism is very powerful, but less so than in Russia, of a milder form, pink rather than red. It is not dictator and absolute master as is Bolshevism in the old empire of the Czars; it shares power with the bourgeois parties. Dominated by dynasties, a nobility, an upper middle class, and a bureaucracy, all very energetic and autocratic, Germany was

still in 1914 the first military power in the world and an immense barracks where the drill-sergeant and the schoolmaster trained the people to fight and to obey. But the power of the ruling oligarchy was not absolute. Germany had Parliaments, parties, and a certain amount of liberty; the people were not, as in Russia, slaves driven by the whip. They could associate, talk, think. This degree of liberty offset the militarism, the monarchy, the oligarchical spirit of the governing power. Socialism rules to-day, after the "super" war, but it does not aim at bringing Germany under its dictatorship.

Let us turn to France. The socialist party is powerful there, but less so than in Germany. Though numerous and influential in the Chamber, it is not yet one of the parties that form Governments—I write these lines in 1931—it is still, in 1931, eleven years behind the German party, even as regards a partial conquest of power. Situated in the centre of the cyclones of war which periodically devastate Europe, France was the leading military power in the world from the seventeenth century until 1870, and the second after that date. Of all European countries she is the one that has waged most wars, both great and small, continental and colonial, during the last three centuries. But she has always enjoyed considerable liberty, even under the old monarchy; and for the last sixty years she

has been fortunate enough to live under a republic, under a wide and general, though sometimes rather unsettled, libertarian régime. Democratic institutions have counterbalanced wars by toning down the rebellious spirit of the masses. The French Revolution has to a certain extent rendered France immune against socialism.

Until 1915 England had no conscription. War was a calling chosen by the individual of his own free will; for the nation at large it affected the pocket and not the person: consequently, socialism scarcely existed as a political movement before 1914. But the World War compelled England also to pay the price of her power with blood. Fifteen years later, socialism was in power in England as in Russia, but in its most moderate form, and only temporarily, as a parliamentary party elected by universal suffrage, and respectful of the divine right of the majority.

England is a free country: in England too the spirit of the Constitution served as an antidote to the subversive influence of conscription and the war.

In Belgium, Holland and the Scandinavian countries, the progress of socialism is linked with the aristocratic constitution which these States retained until thirty years ago. As they are peaceable countries, with but little tendency

to militarism, socialism has never taken on a very revolutionary character. The same can be said of Switzerland. Finally, socialism is not yet of any political importance in the United States, a democratic republic, without conscription, and situated outside the zone of wars.

Conservative circles like to repeat that "every democracy finally blossoms out into socialism." The map of "Red" expansion proves the contrary. Up to the present, at any rate, socialism has been much more successful in absolute or semi-absolute monarchies than in democracies. Universal suffrage is a far more conservative force than the divine right of kings.

Before the World War bitter comparisons were often made in Conservative circles between the respectful docility of the English masses and the tense rancour of the masses on the Continent. But the latter had been as docile as the English until the Revolution. They became what they are to-day because the ruling classes awakened them by drawing them into their own struggles. Generals, diplomats, statesmen, have been repeating for the last three generations that the nineteenth century saw the wars of the kings replaced by the wars of the peoples. This is both true and false. It is true in the sense that the wars of the nineteenth century affected wider sections of the public than those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is,

however, quite untrue if it is taken to mean that since the French Revolution the whole population in every European State has been fired with enthusiasm for these wars between peoples. The nineteenth-century wars and the World War were conflicts between the ruling classes, conflicts at which the people—workers and peasants—would have preferred to be mere spectators if the law had not compelled them to be the striking force of the combatant states. This contradiction is one of the keys to the history of the nineteenth century. Partly by the natural reaction of the instinct of self-preservation and the horror of war which is innate in most men, and partly because the masses had to be stirred up to fight by flattery and promises, the wars of the nineteenth century were a seminary of revolt for all nations. After 1870 people fancied that Bismarck had discovered the antidote to the spirit of democracy, namely, a fine, fast, furious, and victorious war. Dazzled by the success of the Hohenzollerns and their minister, Europe did not notice that the great infection of the German masses by socialism also dated from 1870. By playing boldly the game of war, the monarchy, the nobility, and the upper middle class of Germany won the first rubber in 1870. But they had to go on playing, and it was socialism that won the second rubber in 1918. Even in Germany, for the last twelve

years at least, it is only socialism that has gained anything by the war.

In Western civilization socialism is the reaction of the masses against absolutism and war. It is a political movement masked by a social movement, a kind of colossal confusion of ideas. The masses appear to be, and believe themselves to be, in pursuit of the social revolution, when what they really want is peace and liberty. How has this strange misconception come to permeate the life and the history of Europe to such an extent as to be in full control? I cannot say. The historian who could clear up this great mystery would render an immense service to our age. But if the causes are obscure, the fact is clear enough, as are the attendant dangers. This colossal error puts all social classes and political parties respectively in a false position, and makes them all contribute to their own ruin, losing sight of the real and essential problem—peace and liberty—in their dread or desire of the future revolution which the proletariat is to bring about.

Even the most visionary of doctrines ends by affecting people's will and intelligence when millions of organized men believe in it and pledge themselves to apply it, as the history of religions bears witness. The doctrine becomes a truth which must never be forgotten, even if it cannot be applied; a law which one must obey as

far as human powers permit, even when it is beyond them; a pledge to be kept a year hence or a thousand years hence, even if it cannot be kept to-day. The proletarian revolution is one of these compelling illusions. What is its action in conjunction with war? We can determine this by comparing free countries with enslaved countries.

The socialist party can only expand and gain many adherents in free countries. It, too, is an adopted son of liberty. With the help of war it can acquire partial power in free countries. It has acquired it in Germany and in England. But as soon as it comes into power it finds itself in the gravest perplexity; it can do much to ensure peace and guarantee liberty, but it can do nothing to speed up the social revolution. Its being in power, thanks to the divine right of the majority, is the surest guarantee against revolution. The myth of the social revolution has, however, excited hopes, expectations, sympathies, regrets, rancours, among the masses. This is a very vague state of mind; but as the party, being bound by its doctrines, cannot repudiate it, it is strong enough to keep the activity of socialism, when in power, fettered by the incurable uncertainties of a misconception that cannot be destroyed.

Russia in her turn proves to us that if socialism cannot develop widely in an enslaved country, it can, in alliance with a "super" war, take sole

possession of supreme power by violent means, and bring about the social revolution set down in its programme. But then it can do nothing more, either for freedom or for peace. For the last twelve years Moscow has been the dread and abhorrence of the rich throughout the world, from the rajahs of India to the bankers of New York, from the bondholders of Paris to the ranchers of the Argentine. To work up a finer fury of execration upon the Russian revolution, it has been made out to be an inexplicable monster which does not conform to any of those standards of measurement employed by reason in every latitude since human life began. But the inexplicable monster would perhaps readily yield its so-called secret if we seriously asked ourselves this question: Why have the improbable and the incredible become reality since 1918? Why did the empire of the Czars, which was revered by all the reactionaries as the last rampart of authority, of which Nietzsche had prophesied that it would be the only State in Europe to endure, pass in six months from the hands of God's anointed into the hands of a small band of philosophizing scribblers who had spent their lives in seeking and finding in Karl Marx a host of things which are not there? How did they manage to transform Holy Russia, which had scarcely left the patriarchal age, into a field for experiments in collectivist futurism?

In 1917 not one Russian in a hundred thousand knew what collectivism was. The Russian revolution was at the outset only the revolt of the army against the "super" war. There is a limit to everything, even to the patience of a Russian peasant in uniform: tired of offering their poor carcasses in millions to the ghastly butchery of a hopeless war, the soldiers finally threw away their weapons and dispersed. The revolt of the army provoked the fall of the old régime, and once the old régime had fallen a new one had to be built up. A Western form of government, a republic with a parliament and universal suffrage, instead of the hereditary system and the grace of God as the source of authority, was the first model, the first hope, and the first experiment. As in France or England, a certain number of parties enjoying equal rights under a régime of liberty were to bring universal suffrage into operation by appealing to it for a mandate to govern. From April to October, 1917, Russia laboured to create a parliamentary republic, beginning in the proper place with the organization of parties.

But in order to secure the monopoly of power, Czarism had repressed all that creates and vitalizes political parties in Western countries—men and ideas, feelings and interests. The socialist party alone had succeeded in secretly organizing itself and maintaining life, in a small

and feeble way, on a strange protective kind of persecution. Czarism had done it good service by persecuting it to quell the liberal and democratic spirit. Though feeble and small, the party had life in it; it had even split into two sections, the moderates and the extremists. The moderate party, which was analogous to the Labour Party in England or the Social-Democratic Party in Germany, found itself, thanks to the protective persecution which socialism had suffered and profited by under the old régime, the strongest of all parties after the collapse of Czarism, and it tried to organize a parliamentary republic. It might have been successful if it had been both supported and limited by fairly strong democratic bourgeois parties, as in Germany, and if it could have concluded peace immediately. Only the very simple-minded could have believed that a revolution, the prologue to which had been the dissolution and dispersion of the army, could continue a war of such fantastic proportions.

These two conditions were lacking, however. It was impossible to create in six months democratic parties strong enough to govern such a vast republic. The attempts to create them could only increase the general confusion at first. The moderate socialists were too closely bound to the Western Allies by their political doctrines to dare to conclude peace, although they no

longer had the strength to continue the war. They thus remained isolated and helpless, without any solid support, in an equivocal and untenable position. The Bolsheviki took advantage of this. With the assistance of imperial Germany, which supplied the wherewithal to pay a small body of men, they seized the reins of government by a *coup de force*, exploiting the popular discontent with the general confusion, the scarcity of food and the continuation of the war. They pledged themselves to conclude an immediate peace, and drowned the sweet-toned flutes of conciliation and reform with the brazen trumpets of uncompromising revolution. Their party was to be the only genuine representative of the proletarian revolution, with the sole right to command. The parliamentary republic, universal suffrage, all other parties, the right of opposition, liberty as understood in the West, were all suppressed at one blow. A small communist oligarchy replaced the court of the Czars and retained its absolute power combined with the right to exterminate all adversaries. Opposition and rebellion, criticism and attempts against the security of the State, discussion and high treason, became synonymous in face of the divine right of Russian communism, just as they had been for the divine right of Czarism.

The coup succeeded. The absolutism of the Czars put on the red cap in the name of a pro-

letariat which only existed in the pages of the professors of Marxism. The Bolshevik oligarchy seized the power, the wealth, the last relics of the old bureaucratic machine, and tried to apply the extreme doctrines of Marxism, or rather those which it thought it had discerned in the dimmest recesses of the master's mind. But it was soon face to face with an insoluble problem.

Russia had begun to revolt against the absolute power of the Czars fifty years before. Even the Russians—or at least a minority which increased from generation to generation—could not admit that a small number of people grouped around the Czar should be allowed to control the destiny of a hundred million people without either responsibility or check. And yet the crown which the Czars wore was a real one, which millions of people had venerated for centuries. The Red Czarism of 1917 was represented by a rather uncouth band of teachers, professors, journalists, illiterate peasants and workmen, and former refugees embittered by the sorrows and humiliations of exile. If Russia had begun to doubt the right of the Czars to absolute power, how could she recognize the Lord's anointed, the men chosen of God to command without rendering an account to anyone, in this motley crowd of scribblers taking their stand around a kind of economic

Bible, translated from the German, which most of them had never read ?

In the absence of any historic title to power, Red absolutism had to justify itself by success in some tremendous enterprise. This is the subterfuge to which all *coups d'état* and all revolutions have to resort. The germ of the idea that the proletariat is called upon to bring a new civilization into being is to be found in Marx. To justify itself in its own eyes and in the eyes of the people, the Red absolutism of Moscow cultivated this germ; it promised Russia and the world in general a universal revolution that would transform everything—industry and syntax, agriculture and prosody, the family and the calendar, philosophy and cooking, religion and fashions.

But it is easier to promise to change the face of the world than to do it. “It isn’t everybody who can go to Corinth,” said the Greek proverb. A universal revolution cannot be made to order. Between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a revolution which changed the history of the world, but it had been heralded by more than just one book, one doctrine, and a few commentators. Three centuries of work beneath the surface had gone to the making of it, and so it had only to break through the crust of the old régime. The new world we live in was not created by the decrees

of the Convention, but by the imprisoned forces which the Revolution set free.

Again, it is not clear why the fall of Czarism should change prosody, family customs, and the structure of the whole of Western civilization. But the Soviets feel the need of convincing the universe and themselves that they are reshaping the world. How many commissions, distinguished by weird combinations of initial letters, have they created to assist their revolution to give birth to the golden age! M. de Chessin has described them in a powerful book, *La nuit qui vient de l'Orient*. Many Russians prefer to remain unhappy in their own way, rather than be made happy in the manner pleasing to these sometimes rather fantastical commissions. The Government insists, yet again, that Russia must be made happy in spite of herself; the prisons are full to overflowing, and the scaffolds stream with blood. It all forms a sequence. But the underlying cause of the whole immense upheaval is still war—"super" war.

VII

At some time or other we too must have blundered or been at fault. How otherwise can one explain why the most powerful, humane and learned of all civilizations should suddenly one day have found itself compelled to perpetrate the greatest massacre in history; and why,

having carried out this unimaginable holocaust, it has remained for ten years staggered by what it has done, unable to find the strength to grasp the situation, and to react against itself? These sudden dislocations of a great historical system invariably presuppose either the misconception of some truth or the violation of some moral law, or both; a truth and a law that are, in fact, too simple to be perceived by passion, self-interest, and obstinate wrongheadedness. What, then, is the error or offence which is responsible for the existing confusion? This introduces the problem of war, no longer as a technical or political problem, peculiar to any one epoch or any one point in space, but as a problem *sub specie eternitatis*, an eternal and universal problem. History is indeed nothing but an immense, unbroken human sacrifice, in which the blood of generations has never ceased to flow. But is this human sacrifice part of the divinely established order of things, or the most hideous violation of that order? When man joins battle with man, is he fulfilling a duty, or committing a crime?

“Thou shalt not kill”: these words are written in a book which the majority of Europeans and Americans believe to be divinely inspired. For Christian and for Jew, it is God Himself who has forbidden man to shed his brother's blood. The radical school of thought

has deduced from this that war is a crime, and that men should refuse to be a party to it. Christianity, in its early days, professed this doctrine. Many martyrs were deserters on moral principle, and were handed over by the courts-martial to the axe of the executioner. This doctrine has its followers in England; not very numerous, it is true, but so determined that they succeeded in evading conscription during the World War.

To this radical negation the philosophical lyricism of the nineteenth century replied by a doctrine which exalted war as a dazzling revelation of the divine. War was the prime foundation of right, mankind's severest discipline, the pollen which fertilizes the healthy energies of the human spirit. Catholics and Freethinkers, reactionaries and revolutionaries, joined as brothers in this eulogy of war, which was also by no means displeasing either to the generals or the armament manufacturers. Once at least de Maistre, Proudhon and Marshal von Moltke united in an unexpected trio in praise of Mars. Proudhon's book *La Guerre et la Paix*, which has recently been republished with a fine preface by M. Henry Moysset, is a most radiant and ridiculous justification of war, from the pen of a philosopher of a lyrical disposition.

"War is holy, divinely ordained," said Marshal von Moltke. "It is one of the sacred

laws of the world. It keeps alive all man's noblest sentiments, and prevents him from sinking into the most hideous materialism." There was another who could not fail to join, from the depths of his solitude, in this martial chorus—Nietzsche, the inspired old-clothes-man of philosophy, who, by tricking out in dazzling imagery a host of commonplaces older than Methuselah, brought them back into circulation as discoveries of superlative originality.

Between these two extremes lies a moderate doctrine which belongs to the eighteenth century. It is that there is no law and no judge between States; when two States assert competing rights and neither will give way, there is no other law and no other judge than arms and the God of Battles. (Everyone will bow before victory as though it proved that the winner was in the right, even if it is the very triumph of injustice.) But man must be content with these approximations, because he is incapable of finding anything better.

The first of these doctrines leads to the abolition of armies and to general desertion, the second to the wars *aux allures déchaînées* which we have been waging since the French Revolution, the third to the limited and regulated warfare of the eighteenth century. Where does the truth lie?

Even those who no longer consider the Bible

to be the Word of God accept the sixth commandment as one of the categorical imperatives of the human conscience. Christians, Jews, Freethinkers all agree that man has no right to kill his brother. But if it is true that "Thou shalt not kill" is a categorical imperative of the human conscience, it is also true that all peoples and all ages have admitted the right of the State to resort to bloodshed, torture and war, and that from time to time revolutionary governments usurp and exert this right with a violence as abhorrent as it is irresistible. Are these things violations of the above law, or are they exceptions that ratify it? The problem of war boils down to that. If a man rebels against God or reason every time he kills, war is a crime. If the rule admits of exceptions, we must choose between the two doctrines, that of the eighteenth century and that of the nineteenth. We shall be able to make up our minds when we have discovered why the most solemn of God's commandments admits of exceptions.

Man is always torn asunder by an incurable self-contradiction. He is a brute who would like to be an angel. In his calmer moments he freely admits that every man has the right to attribute an absolute value to his own existence; that just as every man is entitled to deny that any other man has the right to kill him

for any reason whatsoever, so also every man is in duty bound to respect the lives of others. But though men, taken singly or collectively, love truth and justice, this love is so intense and so narrow that they are all and always, singly and collectively, convinced that the right is on their own side. They recognize a universal and eternal value in truth and justice, but they never succeed in agreeing on what is true and what is just, because each has his own standard of value, which differs from his neighbour's. Singly or collectively, they all and always make the utmost efforts to persuade their neighbour that his standard is false; but as they never succeed, they all end by losing their temper. Hatred is kindled, passions run high, violence breaks out, and even the sixth commandment sinks out of view. The result is—wars and revolutions.

Under the empire of man's self-contradiction, life would be nothing but an uninterrupted butchery if nothing had availed to prevent men from perpetually bringing their respective rights and duties into dispute, and defining them sword in hand. They have been prevented from doing so, but only through an expedient which is at the basis of every possible social organization: instead of setting out to find perfect truth and justice, men have to be content with approximations and agree to

regard them as perfect. The possibility and the pangs of living spring together, like two branches from the same trunk, out of this expedient. What are civil and penal laws but systems of conventional rules applied by magistrates to decide between right and wrong? The rulings are approximate, but we agree to regard them as absolute justice, in order to have done with the matter. What are the titles, honours, hierarchies and rules by which certain men are entitled to consider themselves superior to others or to command them, but the assumption of the merits whose objective existence is so difficult to establish? The only legitimate title to power that reason and justice can recognize is the superiority of the man in command; but as the marks of superiority are always debatable, we agree to accept heredity in monarchies, and the voice of the majority in democracies, as an infallible sign. The eldest son of a king may be an idiot, the majority of voters may choose an incompetent man. But in order not to end up every time by cutting each other's throats, and to ensure the legal continuity of power and avoid continual contests for the right to rule, men accept the convention that, in a monarchy, the eldest son of the king has all the necessary qualities, and that in a democratic State it is always the most able men who get the majorities.

Society is not and cannot be anything but a system of outworn, limited and approximate conventions which are accordingly in some degree false and unjust, but which claim to be absolute truth and justice. Without these conventions men would live under the categorical imperative of killing, instead of "Thou shalt not kill." The pretence which veils their partial falsity and injustice suits everyone's interest to a certain extent. But only to a certain extent; either because the egoism and indolence of those in power, who take advantage of that pretence, tend to crystallize these conventions, or because men always feel impelled to show up their falseness and injustice. The hardening of conventions is the organic disease of societies; their repudiation is a vital instinct of the human spirit. The inevitable consequence is that mere persuasion will not induce men to accept these conventions as absolute truth and justice; a certain amount of force is necessary. But as they are defended by force, they can only be broken down by force when they have hardened out so far that they have become unbearable to that vital instinct of criticism and destruction which afflicts mankind. They have yet one more weakness: limited and approximate as they are, it is too difficult for these conventions to win any internal authority in a human society for one to expect them to have any

weight as between States. Between States, the eternal difficulty always recurs; each State is judge of its own right and interprets it according to its own passions or interests; only force can decide.

The eighteenth century was right: the sixth commandment does admit of exceptions, imposed and justified by the imperfections of human nature. War, like the judicial violence manifest in police and executioners, is one of these exceptions. Let us listen to that philosophy which has no academic status but is sometimes gifted with a sharp eye, the philosophy which is called commonsense. Are we to believe that mankind was insane until 1928, when fifty-six nations signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact? War is not a divine law, as the Prussian marshal called it; but since there have been so many wars, it must be because in certain circumstances even war has had its uses. The eighteenth century was right: war may be legitimate because it is necessary, when it serves to settle a dispute between two States who will not or cannot decide it by negotiation or by arbitration. These questions, like all others, have to be settled, and as there is no method more rational, more just, or more certain . . .

But this is not the only case. Take, for instance, the two centuries of blood and iron between the second Punic War and the birth

of Christ. All the Mediterranean states, large and small, were destroyed by Rome or committed suicide; and their collapse was complicated by the revolutions within the republic which supplanted them. As the number of peoples under her sway increased, Rome became less and less capable of governing herself. During the century which preceded our era, four civil wars ravaged Italy. After having annihilated almost all the monarchies of the East, the Roman Republic collapsed upon their ruins. And yet, fifty years later, the Mediterranean had already become the flowery cradle of Christianity. The world had emerged rejuvenated and strengthened out of the immense simplification produced by war. Peace, order and prosperity reigned. The young barbarian states and the old civilizations came into contact; Gaul became Romanized; the Mediterranean was transformed into a living unit. Revolutions and wars had transfigured it.

Ought we then to raise a cheer for war? Were de Maistre, Proudhon and the inspired old-clothes-man of philosophy right? But there is also the history of the third century. . . . After the fall of the Severi, civil and foreign wars depopulated the Roman Empire and gradually destroyed ancient civilization. Ten generations strove in vain, with heroic persistence, to build again upon its ruins. War pursued its pitiless work of destruction, until the day

came when nothing but a few vestiges remained of the work of so many generations.

War can be the child of God and the bastard offspring of hell. When an old civilization is smitten with sclerosis, when a system incrustated with conventions stifles and fetters the new forces that might regenerate it, war is a vital operation. It shatters these incrustations and liberates creative energies. The French Revolution and the wars which it let loose are another example. But if the imprisoned energies that are to be released are non-existent, as in the third century of our era, war is nothing but the suicide of states, peoples and civilizations.

A higher necessity—a question that cannot be settled by any other means, or a layer of stifling accretions that must be broken—is the initial condition which reason and morality demand before they can sanction war. But can this higher necessity give man's fury a free hand and authorize destruction of every kind? Violence, being a breach of the moral law or of a divine commandment, can only be accepted as legitimate in exceptional cases. An exception, however, is not capable of extension, but must always be restricted and limited as far as possible in favour of the rule. Necessity alone is not sufficient to justify war; there must be a certain proportion between the necessity and the sacrifices exacted by war, and within the limits of

this proportion the destruction done must be kept down as far as is compatible with the purpose in view. One's conscience revolts at the suggestion that a people has the right to sacrifice the same number of lives without discrimination, whether the object is to secure some disputed colonial territory or to defend the liberty of the whole nation against aggression. Similarly, though war may be a vital operation when it breaks up social incrustations, it is nothing but a collective crime or the trade of barbarians when, as in the third century of our era, it annihilates the regenerative forces together with the incrustations. In short, war can only be regarded once more as a normal historical phenomenon if it can keep itself within bounds, and when it is the sole means, in default of gentler methods, of arriving at the necessary result with the least destruction of life and property. Necessity, a due proportion between aim and sacrifice, a minimum of bloodshed and destruction, are the categorical imperatives of war if it is to be of the kind that reason and morality can sanction.

The difficulty of deciding in each case if this necessity and this proportion exist in no way diminishes the validity of the principle, even if it greatly complicates the task of the States concerned. How many States have perished because they erred in this task, either by excess

or default! But the principle is simple, and it impresses itself on the mind with all the force of direct evidence.

The height of perfection would thus seem to have been reached in the warfare of the eighteenth century, though Clausewitz and the nineteenth-century strategists denounced it as a debased form of true warfare. Its complicated and cunning rules, which it is so hard for us to understand to-day, form one of those peaks of human evolution which man painfully attains from time to time, and on which he stays but for a moment, to slide back once more into imperfection. They are the elaborate corrective, discovered after three centuries of toil, to the great but dangerous invention of firearms. Marcus Græcus's thirty-second formula, when applied to guns and rifles, had multiplied the destructive power of armies by ten; in order to keep this power within bounds and to lessen the impact of masses of men thus armed, the eighteenth century invented restricted warfare, and thought out methods of overcoming an enemy without destroying him, of sparing him in order to spare oneself. The nineteenth-century strategists ridiculed the warfare without battles that Marshal Saxe had dreamed of. They were wrong. Warfare without battles, after the great Marshal's pattern, would be warfare in its absolute perfection; legal

violence raised to the sphere of pure mind; intelligence and will directly at grips without the clumsy instruments and collisions of material force; human strife and human solidarity reconciled by morality and reason. For it must not be forgotten that, especially in warfare, one must spare in order to be spared. If two armies are of almost equal strength, neither can kill many of the enemy without running the risk of suffering equal losses. Marshal Saxe's warfare without battles is one of the noblest visions of the human mind.

Let us go a step further, and we shall reach the conclusion that when the sense of proportion between sacrifice and objective is lost, and war is no longer able to keep itself within bounds, it is no longer an operation which reason can define, justify and guide, but an explosion of destructive and subversive forces. These forces too are part of human nature, but they are passions which the best of mankind strive tirelessly to subdue, because they are a perpetual menace to their achievements. The "super" war, the war of attrition which we have seen devastating Europe for four years, from November 1914 to November 1918; war which seeks to secure victory by the greatest physical destruction of the enemy forces, no matter what outlay is involved, is the negation of reasonable war, such as our ancestors conceived it in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, up to the war of 1870. For the latter, in spite of its fast and furious pace, still retained human proportions. The war of attrition would be the perfection of military art if one could find a means of exhausting the enemy's forces without exhausting one's own. But this means was the philosopher's stone which the strategists of the World War did not succeed in finding, and which strategists of every country and every epoch will seek in vain. In order to exhaust the enemy's forces one must spill one's own blood like water. A war of attrition between powers of equal strength will lead to savage mutual destruction and a double suicide. The victor will fall dying on the body of the vanquished.

Europe is in a state of chaos, because she waged war regardless of these two categorical imperatives—proportion between aim and sacrifice, and a minimum of bloodshed and destruction.

VIII

Are we then to set limits to war? Shall we return to the eighteenth century so reviled by the strategists? That would be the right solution if reason governed the world. But is the limited warfare of the eighteenth century still possible to-day? Methods of warfare are not so easily

transferred from one century to another as styles in decoration.

Before the French Revolution, wars scarcely affected the masses. They were fought out between sovereigns—the emperor, the kings, or the aristocratic republics which were still numerous in the eighteenth century—between ruling classes few in numbers, homogeneous, cultured and refined. These classes could fight each other without excessive animosity; they could recognize that the enemy's cause was as righteous as their own; they could wage war as a game, respecting its rules even when it would be more advantageous for the moment to break them; and admit defeat as soon as it became too dangerous to keep on. To-day it is the people who fight, even when they have not the slightest wish to do so. Workers and peasants have to supply the rank and file, the middle classes the officers, the well-to-do and the rich the funds; the result is an enormous, heterogeneous, mobile and impressionable mass, torn by complex antagonisms of passions and interests. This mass cannot keep up the efforts of a war unless it is fired by some passion common to it all. A nation at war must therefore *hate* the enemy, which means that it must be convinced that it is defending the most righteous of causes against the most infamous aggression; that it represents innocent Right

fighting against Evil armed with the most diabolical of long-premeditated designs. The danger which most dismayed the theorists of the eighteenth century then becomes a necessity. War of this kind makes it essential that each nation shall have a mystical conception of the exclusive righteousness of its own cause, a conception which is equally violent and bigoted in both belligerents. It is, moreover, so easy for men to convince themselves that they are right and others are in the wrong. The Germans—the people who poured out their blood, not the oligarchy that prepared the hecatomb—were as fully persuaded as their adversaries that they were the champions of justice, acting in lawful self-defence. But for this illusion they could not have kept up the superhuman efforts required of them. And yet their enemies have been waiting for twelve years for them to declare their penitence for having been the aggressors !

But how can we expect whole peoples inflamed by such fiery passions to play the game of war calmly and correctly like the kings and princes of the eighteenth century ? Peoples at war know only despondency or rage: in despondency they are capable of throwing down their arms as the Russians did; when enraged, they think only of exterminating the enemy. As for codes of honour, international law, humanitarian principles, it is always the story of the mote and

the beam. The German people are still convinced that the invasion of Belgium was only a trifling irregularity that can easily be justified: if Germany had not forestalled them, the Allies themselves would have crossed the sacrosanct frontier a few days later. "Somebody had to be the first," as one rather hasty Don Juan said, when charged with having violated a girl. The Allies tore up two treaties—the Declaration of Paris of 1856 and the Declaration of London of 1909—which limited the right of blockade to material strictly necessary for armies and warfare. The nations who blockaded the Central Empires do not yet realize that in 1914 the wholesale blockade, as the Allies applied it, was a measure of warfare quite as expressly prohibited by treaty as the invasion of Belgium.

In former times, wars came to an end when one of the antagonists realized that the game was not worth the candle. Each belligerent could afford the stakes because he was not staking his very existence, but only some limited possession, a disputed right or territory which belonged to the sovereign and which the latter could yield without risking his head. "I have lost a battle, I will pay with a province," is what the Emperor Francis Joseph, still using the obsolete language of the eighteenth century, could say in 1859, the day after the battle of Solferino, thus saving Europe from a general war with an

archaic phrase that would soon be unintelligible. Nowadays, before nations will fight, they have to be convinced that they are acting in defence of the most just and sacred of causes. Then how can they reconcile themselves to the defeat of the just cause and the triumph of wrong, that infamous wrong held up in the press and on the platform to the execration of times present and to come? If the just cause is defeated, then those who should have defended it were either incompetent or treacherous.

Wars nowadays can only be terminated by revolution; 1917 and 1918 showed us that. A war ends when one of the belligerents rises, overthrows its government and sets up a republic or a communist State. Sometimes revolution precedes, prepares and renders possible the final defeat of the army; when strategy and tactics are *in extremis*, it brings them an assistance which the eighteenth century would have rejected with horror as the supreme dishonour of warfare. Sometimes revolution follows defeat and completes it; battles are then like the blockade, famine, and financial exhaustion, only a means of provoking revolution. In both cases, the life of the government is at stake. Its defeat means its disappearance. If the whole of Europe became republican and followed the example of Russia, something far graver might happen: as there would be no

more monarchies for, the people to wreak their vengeance on, they might turn upon the wealthy and despoil them. How then can one expect States and classes whose very existence is at stake to wage war according to the restrained and chivalrous code of the eighteenth century? The only rule they can recognize is the categorical imperative of the instinct of self-preservation, goaded to madness by their danger: they must win at all costs, to save their own skins! Fire and sword; *après nous le déluge!*

I do not know what truth there is in the rumours spread by the newspapers regarding the new engines of war and fresh preparations for war on which Europe and America are said to be working—bombs, poison gases, aeroplanes. . . . For the honour of the white race, I hope that all such talk is exaggerated. But it is, alas! only too certain that future wars (if there are any great wars) will wreak more and more destruction upon the civilian population, women, children, peaceful towns, the monuments of human genius and the achievements of human labour—that is, upon everything that the restricted warfare of the eighteenth century tried to keep in safety. The war of attrition is so entirely the negation of real war that the States concerned will make the most desperate efforts to avoid its fatal deadlocks. But whereas in the old days, when one wanted to bring about peace,

one had only to shake the confidence or the patience of the king, the court, or a small number of reasonable persons, one now has to subjugate, body and soul, the whole populations that have been called to arms. Even then it would be easy enough to persuade the actual fighting-men, on whom the pitiless hammer of war has beaten ceaselessly day and night, to make peace, but in modern warfare these are only the right arm of the nation. The brain which controls that arm is elsewhere, in the civilian population, who are everywhere a stubborn crew as long as they do not suffer by the war, or are even profiting by it. It is their opinion that has to be changed, their obstinacy that has to be overcome before the government can be forced to yield; and this cannot nowadays be done by battles. Battles no longer make any impression, because they are all set down as victories in the official bulletins of the belligerents; what one calls a "strategic retreat," the other defines as a "crushing defeat," and the "steady progress" of the one is an "attack beaten off" for the other. Before the enemy will give in there will have to be a revolution in his country, and in order to bring it about the army must be corrupted and the resistance of the civilians shaken; men and women, old folk and children alike, must be tortured, ruined, starved, bombarded, asphyxiated.

If, therefore, there are any more wars, they

are fated to be waged with weapons that will grow more and more inhuman. But the more powerful the weapon is, the more the men who wield it are impelled to abuse it. No soldier could make humane use of an inhuman weapon, unless he was a hero accustomed by long discipline to having the mastery over his nerves. Under the modern army system, however, the most terrible instruments of war will be more and more entrusted to temporary soldiers, easily roused to panic and fury. Place in the hands of a youth of nineteen a flame-thrower which will burn alive in thirty seconds a hundred poor wretches who have sought refuge in a cave; how are you going to demand of him the self-possession and courage he would need to handle this terrible weapon and subject his fellow-creatures humanely to a shower of hideous calcinations? Happy eighteenth century, which had only humane weapons, small forces, and limited funds at its command in warfare! We are handed over to frenzies of extermination by a combination of dangerous facilities to that end: conscription, wealth, credit, paper-money, chemistry, machinery, and the diabolical power of the engines we have created.

Restricted warfare was one of the loftiest achievements of the eighteenth century. It belongs to the class of hot-house plants which can only thrive in an aristocratic and qualitative

civilization. We are no longer capable of it. It is one of the fine things which we have lost as a result of the French Revolution. In losing it we won many other kinds of progress, but it might in the end wipe out all that we have achieved. That is the great danger.

IX

Are we then to do away with war entirely ?

The sceptic lifts his arms to heaven. We are the descendants of Cain, yet you talk of doing away with war !

All the same, we must come to some understanding, and to do this we must keep the problem within bounds. We have seen that Western civilization is no longer capable either of ensuring that in war the sacrifice shall be proportionate to the importance of the question at stake, or of limiting bloodshed and destruction in accordance with the dictates of morality and reason. Even when wars are provoked by definite issues, they are apt to outstrip them, to get out of hand, and to lose all concrete reason and definite aim by breaking away beyond all bounds. They no longer have any outcome but revolution in one country or both. Nowadays, arguing from the World War, we tend to think that all future wars will be very long. It is quite possible that this view will prove

erroneous, for one can well imagine that even in the wars of the future one of the antagonists may lose heart and revolt against its government after a few months. But it will always be war combined with revolution, and not military operations alone, that will bring about a solution. Such is the surprising complication which Western civilization has to face in its "super" wars. What are we to do? This complication opens up a new set of problems which we can neither examine nor solve by looking backwards. Our forbears knew them not. The world vaguely understands the position, and for the last ten years has been seeking some entirely new, untried and original solution which is to be our salvation. The League of Nations has been founded, the Treaty of Locarno concluded, the Kellogg-Briand Pact signed, innumerable treaties of friendship and arbitration have been drawn up, four or five disarmament conferences convened, and we have been told of the coming of a new diplomacy. The Powers have recently been approached by M. Briand, the French Foreign Minister, with a new plan for a European federation. These are innovations, but precisely because they are innovations the world hopes and yet distrusts. . . . Can a nation place its whole faith in these solemn documents and in the more or less definite promises set down therein?

This state of perplexity is natural. Although the world has progressed considerably in the last four centuries, although reason, justice and right count to-day for more than before, and although we may hope that their authority is on the increase, nevertheless Europe is not yet Plato's Republic. There are still questions to be solved in Europe for which no solution appears to be possible without fresh wars. And there are too many soldiers, too many engines of war, too many armament works. There is too much national rivalry, too much imperialistic ambition, too much political discord, too many warlike traditions, which refuse to admit that modern warfare is no longer war. There are too many people who made fortunes out of the recent slaughter, and too many who would like to have the same chance. There are too many interests which still identify the greatness of the nation and the might of a State with military power, and consider the outcome of war to be the judgment of God between the classes and parties at strife. How can we be surprised if Europe, whilst continuing to look to the future, is perpetually looking back to the past? The nations go to Geneva, pacts and agreements are signed, Count Koundenhove Calergi is cheered, the future federation of Europe is discussed; but all the time alliances are being secretly planned, and the nations go on arming, arming,

arming. For defence, of course, not for attack: everybody shouts that aloud to the four winds, and probably everybody really believes it. But the real function of armies is to make war, not to guarantee peace; whatever the intentions of those who organize them may be, armies that swell to enormous proportions in order to counterbalance each other act as a mutual menace. Each believes itself to be the innocent lamb and denounces the other as the wolf. A balance of perpetually augmented powers may preserve peace for a time, but it will intensify the war obsession to the point at which war appears as a deliverance, the only way of putting an end to unbearable anxiety. It is not only men who commit suicide through fear of death—as we saw in 1914.

We are in a vicious circle. We twist and turn in this infernal circle until we lose our bearings. Is there no way of breaking the magic ring and escaping? No way of giving to the world not only peace but confidence in peace, since it is confidence, even more than peace, that is lacking? Can we not put an end to the war obsession which has become universal as a result of the monstrous forms assumed by modern warfare, and threatens to perpetuate those forms and make them more and more monstrous still?

It would be rash to trust blindly in the new-

old system which has been extensively resorted to for the last ten years, and supplement the League of Nations and the like with a more or less camouflaged armaments race. Obviously we shall thus have all the disadvantages of both the old system and the new without the advantages of either. But though in itself absurd, this attempt to prop up the new system with the aid of the old helps us to discover the weak point of all the plans for European peace that have been worked out during the last ten years. This weak point is a certain inconsistency: these plans, by excluding all forms of collective coercion, assume that peace would become acceptable to the world solely by reason of its superiority over war. But if that were so, there would be no need of the League of Nations, nor of the Kellogg-Briand Pact or the other treaties, nor of a European federation. The League of Nations was created, and the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the other treaties were concluded, precisely because everyone knew that peace had to have some powerful support behind it. It is also clear that this support can only be afforded by a moral and material force less costly and dangerous than the game of alliances and the equilibrium of increasing armaments, but capable of guaranteeing peace against a possible awakening of the war spirit. The problem of war reduces itself to the quest for

such a force. Is it a dream? Or does it somewhere really exist?

It appears to exist. Which of the peoples and empires whose quarrels provoked the World War bear to-day the primary responsibility for the future? It is easy to recognize them. There are three of them. They were the stoutest fighters of the war on their respective sides; they survived because they were peoples and not merely empires; they suffered enormous losses of every kind; but, together with a fourth Power, more remote and less responsible, they are still the pillars of Western civilization. Although three of these nations are sore wounded and stricken, the four together still possess everything that matters — numbers, arms, money, raw materials, the industries that utilize them, agricultural products, metals, fuels, model institutions, initiative in every sphere, on land, in the air, on sea, in the realm of the mind. They direct Western civilization. The future of the world depends on them. If these three battle-scarred peoples go on hating and fighting each other, or if all four prefer to live apart in selfish distrust, the “super” war will return to devastate the earth; the weaker, less wealthy, less cultured nations can then only endeavour to turn the struggle of the stronger peoples to their own advantage, and make their very weakness a protection from a scourge which they will

be powerless to prevent. If the four Powers came to an understanding to maintain peace in Europe, if they agreed to act together, with all the means at their disposal, from boycott and blockade to actual armed force, against any Power which tried to provoke a war, the problem would be solved. It would not be necessary to carry out their threats because these would take effect in advance. A type of coercion all-powerful in its self-restraint, replacing the game of alliances and the armaments race, would have been found. Confidence would be reborn. The reduction of the armaments of all the Powers could be seriously contemplated, beginning with the four guarantors of peace. These Powers are England, Germany, France and the United States. War could be abolished if these four Powers would join together to put an end to war on the monster scale.

It is very simple, too simple perhaps to appear practicable. Facility is to be distrusted; it is often the disguise assumed by the merely fanciful, the better to deceive. There is, however, a precedent. At Vienna, in 1815, the great monarchies of Europe contrived to conclude an agreement to maintain peace and to create a system of general peace that lasted until 1859—forty-four years. During these forty-four years, under the wing of peace, the Europe of the nineteenth century, whose heirs we are, came into being.

In theory, therefore, an effort of this kind is not impossible. Is it also a practical possibility, in our special concrete case, at this moment? The four Powers have not wearied of repeating for the last ten years that they consider peace to be the chief concern of the whole world. Undoubtedly, they are sincere; if they were not, they must indeed be the victims of mental aberration. But up till now they have been unwilling to pledge themselves to outlaw war not only in the abstract and on paper, but in the concrete, in the person of the aggressor State. France preaches in the wilderness the doctrine of security. Not only has the United States a growing horror of all entanglements, but England also, since the Labour Party came into power, has been trying to detach herself gradually and gently from the gravest of the obligations she might have assumed when she signed the Covenant. Although the four Powers sincerely wish for peace, each seriously believes only in its own sincerity, distrusts the others, and is doubtful of their common concord and the authority which their union would exercise over the rest of the world. Uneasiness kills confidence. France and Germany are still separated by a river of blood. England, half ruined by the World War, is afraid lest once again the struggles of France and Germany should involve

her in a vast, aimless and endless conflict. The United States are not sure whether another storm will not break out between the Channel and the Rhine, between the Po and the Danube; and they wish to remain free to decide, when the storm breaks, whether it will suit them or not to cross the Atlantic a second time. Everybody wants peace, but each is chiefly anxious not to incur too much risk in the event of another "super" war in Europe. And that is the surest means of provoking it and of being caught hopelessly in its toils !

I know, I know: there is the Corridor, the *Anschluss*, the bill or bills to settle, reparations, debts, the cruelties of majorities, the bombs and conspiracies of minorities, capital ships, cruisers, submarines, the scars of age-old strife, the burning wounds of the last encounter, commercial rivalry, colonial ambitions, popular jealousy and envy, the interests which batten on these; that mess of pottage for which during the last ten years these four nations have daily been selling their birthright. There is the frenzy that appears to be dragging Germany towards a social revolution that will be much more disastrous for Europe than the Russian revolution. And there are the ruling classes and the masses who in every country are playing at pull devil, pull baker. Brought down by the war both in position and in composition, torn asunder by the con-

flict between doctrines, interests and rival political ambitions, the ruling classes cannot make up their minds. They perceive dimly that "super" war now has nothing in common with warfare as our ancestors understood it; they sense the dangers with which this monstrous innovation threatens us. But nowhere can they bring themselves to make the sacrifices necessary to solve the problem once and for all. They have seized the lever and would like to lift the world, but they cannot find the fulcrum. The masses yearn for peace, but they have not and cannot have any precise idea of how to ensure it. That is the problem that the ruling classes ought to solve, but cannot solve. The masses, on the other hand, actuated largely by their desire for peace, are plunging deeper and deeper into the revolutionary fallacy of socialism; a fact that disturbs one section, the wealthiest, of the ruling classes, and makes them lose sight still further of the essential realities of the situation.

All this, unhappily, is true. But it is also true that so long as people are afraid of another war between France and Germany, and so long as lengthy and laborious conferences are needed to act as some kind of check on the naval competition between England and America, the League of Nations, the Kellogg Pact, treaties of friendship and arbitration, and the United States of

Europe will be able to offer humanity nothing but quite unreliable expedients. The League of Nations cannot work magic. Whence can it derive the power to impose peace on Europe, if the whole of Europe, whether it knows it or not, is busy making preparations for another "super" war? The League of Nations can only express, direct and regulate a will for peace which exists somewhere, in part of the world at least, and which must be sufficiently clear, strong and decisive to hold the opposing forces in check. But where can this will for peace exist, if the four strongest Powers in the world, those who have most to lose by future wars, those who dragged so many weaker Powers into the World War and ruined them, refuse their aid; if they leave all the other Powers to grapple with their difficulties and temptations, and detach themselves from the general problem in order to seek their own individual immunity, which incidentally is highly problematical? If England and the United States, France and Germany go on doing their best to let loose another "super" war, either by competition in armaments or by the old game of alliances or by selfish isolation, what States are there left to stand at the centre of things as the solid pillars of universal order? Bulgaria, Bolivia, Greece, Turkey?

Europe must be weaned from blood: she has

grown too much accustomed to it during the last three centuries. She has accomplished wonders during that time, but she has fought too many wars, invented and manufactured too many weapons, marshalled too many armies and allowed them to grow too big; she needs a long rest from bloodshed. For fifty years there must be no more wars in Europe, either for just or unjust causes. Europe must know in advance that there will be no more wars for fifty years because an adequate moral and material force is safeguarding the peace of the world. This force must be able to limit the extent and duration of any odd conflict that might succeed in escaping its vigilance, and to choke it down to a brief and petty affray, like the Russo-Chinese war of 1929. There is no other way to deliver Europe and America at last from the war obsession and to dissipate the deadly mist which is stifling us, distorting the present around us and at the same time blotting out the future; no other way of restoring to Western civilization the possibility of thinking, creating, living, enjoying and suffering with the serenity which is now hardly more than a name to us. In fifty years of peace, the spirit of man could shake off the fetters that weigh it down to-day, and find again a humane conception of life, society, work, war and peace. Man could emerge from the revolutionary fallacy in which he is going farther

and farther astray, and argue things out with himself, and find out what he really does want—justice or power, quality or quantity, liberty or tyranny, peace or social revolution, Christ or Anti-Christ. He could realize that if Europe wants to wage “super” wars, to load itself with debts unto the seventh generation, and at the same time continue to raise the standard of living, enjoy liberty, and multiply as in the days of peace and prosperity, it is asking too much, and the end of that can only be the utter overthrow of the ruling classes and the wholesale slaughter of the masses.

For these are the two dangers with which “super” war threatens us. The overthrow of the ruling classes brought about by the World War has already gone so far that we can form an idea of what would happen if peace did not last long enough for us to recover. The second danger is less apparent, and it is worth while to pause and consider it for a moment. It is time that we opened our eyes to the fact that a Europe with a stationary population could still allow itself the luxury of wars and revolutions. A Europe with a steadily increasing population would commit suicide if it did not make peace. People say, “What does it matter if Europe does get a little poorer? There are the colonies, there is the whole world. Only a fragment of the earth has been exploited even yet!” It would seem as

though the follies and errors of men might be lost and disappear in the immense expanses of the earth which have been opened to our enterprises during the last fifty years.

But this is another illusion. How has it been possible for so many countries, which only yesterday were wildernesses, to multiply their population four or five times over, to cover the land with towns, to organize a flourishing civil life, all in less than a century? It is because these countries were not, like the colonies of former days, forced to create little by little the whole equipment of their economic and social life. The world being a unit, they found countries with an old-established civilization which supplied and are supplying them with part of this equipment—railways, agricultural and industrial machinery, laws, and educational and social organization. But the new countries had and still have to pay for this machinery, and they could not and cannot pay for it except with the products which the older countries need. In other words, a new country, whether independent or a colony, can only develop in proportion as it is capable of producing at favourable prices commodities which the rest of the world requires. Its development, which is facilitated by the wealth and enterprise of other countries, is in its turn limited by their needs and their wealth. The fortunes of new countries and old

civilizations are linked together. When the old countries prosper, they consume in great quantities the products of the new countries, which can then open their doors to immigrants and capital. At a time of general crisis, the new countries suffer with the old: when over-population makes itself felt in the latter, the demand for labour diminishes in the former.

That is what is happening to-day. Unemployment, from which almost the whole of Europe is suffering, is not a passing disturbance, but an organic disease left in our system by the "super" war. Europe is no longer able to feed the whole of her population, which has gone on increasing, while the war destroyed immense quantities of capital and shook the world-empire of capital and labour on which Europe had lived until 1914—that is to say, the export of manufactured goods, loans, and emigration. . . . If we cannot have a long peace, the evil will get worse instead of getting better. Throughout the whole of Europe one section of the population will suffer the fate of the Russian masses; and the development of new countries, in America and Africa, will be arrested. A second "super" war would not devastate Europe alone, but the whole earth, and with far greater ferocity than the first.

In the supreme interests of Europe and the world, of the ruling classes and the masses

alike, Europe must be weaned from blood. "But," you will ask, "what of the questions which are still pending, and which only war could solve? You have said yourself that there are still certain questions which only war can solve."

Yes, that is true. But the interests which are linked up with the continuation of a permanent state of war have added to the list of insoluble questions a certain number which could very well be solved without resorting to war, once Europe realized the price worth paying for peace. Other problems would be at least modified, if not solved, once the fierce spirit of oppression and persecution which has descended upon Europe was replaced by the spirit of tolerance, solidarity and freedom which the victors of the World War solemnly promised to all the peoples of the universe. The four Powers which are the pillars of Western civilization should not only ensure peace, they should also exercise moral and intellectual pressure on the whole of Europe, in order to unite it in a system of liberty and tolerance which will make it less difficult for the various races and classes to live and work together without secretly sharpening their weapons day and night for future revolutions. As for the questions which really are insoluble without war, they can wait. Europe needs to free herself from the fear neurosis which is unsettling her mind; a whole continent cannot be doomed to

destruction merely to rectify certain frontiers, however just such changes may be. The peoples never perish; they can wait. After all, Poland waited almost a century and a half for her resurrection! Every generation has its task, and for two or three generations Western civilization ought to subordinate everything to the supreme necessity of preventing its own strength from wreaking its destruction.

X

Possibly you remember the horses of the Sun so finely described by Ovid—the fiery steeds who flew along without needing the whip:

Sponte sua properant: labor est inhibere volantes.

The legend is familiar. Phaeton was foolish; he would not listen to Apollo. He tried to drive the formidable steeds, and they got out of hand. The nineteenth century also wanted to drive its fiery steeds, despite the warnings of the wise. Like Phaeton, it mounted the chariot, took the reins, and sped away. But, luckier than Phaeton, it has so far escaped the fulfilment of those gloomy prophecies. The horses which looked like breaking bridle and brake calmed down and yielded to its iron hand.

The sages who, like Apollo, had prophesied a broken neck were mistaken this time, because they had thought only of the horses. They had

not reflected that although the horses were apt to get out of hand, bridle and brake had been made by men who were thinking less of speed than of keeping their necks intact. They could stand the strain.

The marvels of the nineteenth century have been attributed to those fiery coursers, the new ideas of liberty and progress, the irresistible pressure of population, which have so powerfully stimulated the will and intelligence of recent generations. Quite rightly, but that is not the whole. The nineteenth century had inherited from older civilizations certain principles of moral, intellectual and political discipline which, conflicting more or less with the new aspirations towards liberty and progress, operated as brakes. The secret of the nineteenth century, the underlying reason of its measured progress, is to be found in the equilibrium between the new impulses and the old checks upon impulse. Thanks to this wonderful equilibrium, the hundred years between Waterloo and the battle of the Marne are a period unique in history, the one and only epoch in which part of humanity has been able to enjoy order and liberty, and to couple strength with gentleness and wisdom. Never before had there been so much order and liberty anywhere as in Europe and part of America during that century.

The modern army was the masterpiece of the

century, which had succeeded in reconciling impulse with inhibition, strength with gentleness, liberty with discipline. In earlier times it would have been impossible to apply universal military service to countries with tens of millions of inhabitants except under a savage system of slavery which no power would have been strong enough to impose. That explains why, before the nineteenth century, even the most despotic governments were unable to apply conscription except in a very rudimentary form, and were obliged to use largely professional armies. During the nineteenth century, Europe contrived to arm its peoples while giving them liberty; to militarize all classes, rich and poor, whilst allowing them to live, think, act, organize, as they liked; and to equip Death with an electric scythe, though they grew gentler and kinder day by day.

But this marvellous equilibrium was founded on a contradiction. Impulses and checks were never fused into one coherent doctrine; they belonged to two different ages, and resisted one another like the rush of the horse and the metal of the brake. The brakes, that is, the old principles of discipline, were bound to wear out in the long run. Why then, in this century of marvels, did a mysterious sense of uneasiness weigh more and more heavily upon Europe and America as the successes of industry and the

fruits of liberty went on heaping up ? Why did this uneasiness grow more acute between 1900 and 1914, the most bounteous years mankind has ever known ? It was because from 1848 onwards the history of Europe and America was nothing but a kind of general mobilization of all things, wealth, ideas, morals, the family, institutions, public spirit. Capital, like individuals, got into the habit of travelling from one continent to another. Minds became more and more emancipated from any kind of authority; morals grew lax and over-indulgent because men were anxious to understand all in order to forgive all; governments meekly gave way to the caprices of public opinion and the pressure of interests. Anything which tended to stabilize interests, feelings, morals, fortunes, came more and more to be considered as an evil, as anti-progress, as the negation of the modern world. More and more, with the continual shifting of persons, fortunes and interests, traditions disappeared, morals became fluid, and taste, even the highest taste, the taste for beauty, was lost among the whims and extravagances of unrestricted freedom. Individuals and groups, being left to themselves, freed from all law, authority or tradition, could more and more create their own religion, their own philosophy, their own standard of morality, their own taste, according to their liking, provided they carried out the double duty of work and warfare.

Even religion had to compromise with the distracting influences of the pressure of modern life, encroaching daily upon the time dedicated to sacred things. The brakes, the old brakes of the nineteenth century, had weakened, for the constant running had worn them down; the world felt it and was afraid.

And now those brakes are shattered. In 1914 they were badly strained by a hundred years of hard usage, and the shock of the World War dislodged them altogether; and that is the reason, above all others, why the world must have a long spell of peace. We have seen that war is a revolutionary force valuable for breaking through the incrustations of an established order of things. It can, in spite of the havoc it brings in its train, infuse new life into petrified societies. But ours is the first civilization to be unstable by profession, the first civilization to live on continual and universal revolution. The revolutionary forces active at the heart of things to-day are so numerous and powerful that nothing could be more necessary and more salutary than a touch of petrification and crystallization to give life a certain consistency once more. Phaeton's steeds race through the sky unchecked in all directions; there are no more captive energies to be liberated in the Western world; they have all been let loose. . . .

Before the war, people were fond of pre-

dicting that the World War was, would be, was going to be, the greatest revolution the world had known. But it did not create anything new: it simply speeded up all the revolutionary forces which had already been at work for a century; urbanism, sybaritism, plutocracy, industrialism, socialism, nationalism, individualism. Western civilization, which was already the victim of a general condition of fluidity before the war, now tends towards a gaseous state. It suffers in consequence, for a civilization cannot exist as pure impulse, cannot volatilize itself in motion which has no other aim than acceleration.

We too need moral discipline, political discipline, and æsthetic discipline: brakes to replace those which the nineteenth century had worn out, and which were shattered by the war. Though we may not be aware of it amid the confusion of our times, that is what we are really working at—the inventing, manufacturing, and testing of these new brakes. But it is only peace that will allow us to make them; war would smash them again and for ever.

XI

Are you a swimmer, reader ?

Every experienced swimmer knows what a difference there is between having some visible

point to swim for and swimming without one. If you swim out to sea without any particular objective such as a buoy, a boat, or a rock, you can go in any direction you please, but you have no precise notion of the distance you have covered, and you don't appear to be making any headway. If you want to know how far you have gone, you have to turn and look at the shore. You may very easily go much farther out than you intended, or even too far for safety, under the impression that you are hardly moving at all. But if you are swimming towards a fixed and visible point, the course is mapped out for you, you cannot go off at random as your fancy leads. Every moment, as you see the goal coming nearer, you are gauging the distance you have gone and what has still to be covered. You grasp the proportion between effort and result, and on reaching the goal you can enjoy the satisfaction of something attempted, something done.

What is the difference between the old Europe and the new, the civilization which followed the French Revolution and the civilizations which preceded it? The ancient world, the Middle Ages, the pre-Revolutionary civilizations had strewn all over the ocean of life a great many visible buoys, some near, some far away. Towards these men used to swim as far as their strength would take them. Sometimes

a storm carried the buoys away, and one or two generations perished, swallowed up by the waves in the wake of the tempest. But as soon as the seas calmed down a little, the divers—religion, the State, philosophy, art, literature, the family, tradition—were back in the bosom of the deep, fixing fresh buoys.

One day a wilder storm than ever blew all the buoys away, and this time, when it had passed, the sea was still too rough for the divers to go down. Men found themselves with an empty ocean before them, and a new period of history began. That storm was the revolution of the nineteenth century, next in importance to the coming of Christianity. The old-time sea-marks defined the skyline, set limits to freedom, made the world a smaller place; the nineteenth century tore them away, and mankind was confronted by the boundless waste of waters.

Let us look around us. Why are America and Europe striving so desperately to increase their wealth, their knowledge and their power? In this superhuman effort there lies a self-contradiction which sets us at odds with ourselves and brings about a kind of mystical evaporation of wealth in the hands of those who produce it, workers and capitalists alike. Day and night men invent, manufacture, and bring into play fresh means of increasing a wealth which, though it is already enormous as compared with that

of any earlier time, turns out to be insufficient as soon as it has been produced. The effort grows more intense in proportion as the world grows richer, as though the world grew poorer by getting richer; as though fresh knowledge and power whetted our curiosity and ambition instead of appeasing them. No one now can tell us at what point mankind ought once more to utter the old word to which our lips have grown so unaccustomed: Enough.

And why? We are rich, powerful, and learned. We have created the most humane civilization known to history. Even to this day, after all that has happened, our laws, our manners are tempered by a lenience no other generation has known. This may be only the last gleam of a dying fire, but that fire has burned for a century and is burning still. We are neither the materialists nor the sceptics that we are often accused of being; ours is, after its fashion, an age of mysticism like the Middle Ages. But we are troubled because we are marching through the illimitable and cannot see any goal before us. Like the swimmer in the empty sea, we go onward and onward, and we seem to be still where we were.

We do not know where to stop. That is the price we have paid for our formidable power, the deadly germ of the inevitable disasters we have seen and are to see. Whatever our civiliza-

tion sets out for—knowledge, beauty, armed strength—it is always carried past the mark. The goal just reached becomes but a halting-place. We are always on the march towards a goal that recedes as we approach it. Movement becomes more and more important than direction; it tries to find in itself its reason for existence. Everything must increase if it is not to diminish, and dissatisfaction keeps pace with success. We live in an age when nothing is easier than increasing and multiplying everything, even at the risk of suicide; nothing is more difficult than decrease or limitation, even if salvation depends on it.

The disadvantages are serious in every sphere: over-population and over-production in that of practical activity; a growing deterioration in quality for the sake of quantity in that of ideal activity—science, art, literature, morals. Still, however serious the disadvantages may be, they are the price we pay for our power, and as regards industry, commerce, art, literature, and science there is something on the other side of the ledger. But there are no such compensations now as regards war. The world has waged many wars, but always in order to arrive at peace. The speed with which they attained that end might vary, but peace was always the justification for war, the goal in sight. If that goal no longer exists, if one war is only a

rehearsal for another and a bigger war, then we are rushing towards the abyss. Industry, commerce, art, and science are all creative activities. Whatever may be the disadvantages of over-creation, a civilization does not perish of excess of life. But wars are destructive agencies, and they can only be of service as long as there is something that it is to the general advantage to destroy. Beyond that point they are nothing but a form of collective suicide. One can work for the sake of working; but one cannot kill for the sake of killing. The sixth commandment says "Thou shalt not kill."

That is the reason why war is the vital problem of contemporary civilization. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*. All other problems—the social question, capitalism, socialism—are of secondary importance. As long as populations go on increasing, as long as the facilities that spring from abundance, the multiplication of desires and satisfactions, the growth of human power over nature, continue to be our dominant aspirations, as long as there are new countries to exploit, the economic system cannot change. The workers and peasants will be no less interested than the capitalists in perpetuating it with all its disadvantages. Only one revolution could shake modern society to its foundations, and that would be a general outbreak of asceticism among the masses of the people,

of which there are no immediate signs. But if we continue to make wars merely in order to keep ourselves in training for still greater wars, we shall bring the whole fabric down in ruins.

The main problem before us is how to prevent the enormous military power which we have created from destroying us, how to ward off the rain of fire which threatens to reduce all our treasures to ashes. It is a colossal problem, yet a very simple one. It is colossal because we have to overcome a formidable coalition of interests and passions, passive and active resistance of every kind, and that terrible inertia born of scepticism which so easily gets a grip on men confronted by a difficult task. But the problem is also very simple because, whatever the practical complications may be, it all comes down to an elementary duty, obedience to God's commandment—"Thou shalt not kill." Can it be possible that the most humane civilization in history remains untroubled by the huge bloodstain that has defiled it for the last thirteen years? Can we believe that it never wonders how, after twenty centuries of Christianity, it came to perpetrate the greatest massacre in history, killing, mutilating, crippling and blinding in four years more men than all the wars from the foundation of Rome down to 1914? Do ten million dead weigh so lightly on the conscience of our age that it is unmindful of them after

thirteen years? Have we no other duty towards all these dead than to lay out vast cemeteries, set up a certain number of memorials, and gather from time to time beside these memorials or among those endless rows of tombs to utter once more our curses on the enemy?

For all that happened between 1914 and 1918 the generation responsible is entitled to make one excuse: it did not know, it could not guess. It thought it was embarking upon a war *aux allures déchaînées* on a slightly larger scale, but no more prolonged or more cruel than those which had stained the nineteenth century with blood. Though a few isolated men of vision had warned it that a terrible surprise was in store—a banker, M. Bloch, in Russia; a rather free-spoken soldier with many original notions, M. E. Meyer, in France—the deafness of the generation that did not listen to men who were too far-sighted for it cannot well be accounted a crime. The current which was dragging it along was too strong, and the realm of wisdom has its bounds. . . . But to-day we *do* know.

The history of mankind is nothing but a succession of great catastrophes. Why? Because such catastrophes are necessary to free the world from the monstrosities that periodically torment it. Powerful as he is, man is an imperfect and unbalanced creature, and he always ends by exaggerating the principles, aspirations,

and needs most in, keeping with his nature to such a monstrous pitch that they become unbearable afflictions. The most splendid civilizations have perished either directly through the action of these insufferable miscreations or indirectly through man's desperate efforts to get rid of them. Ancient civilization accomplished marvels, but it had stretched the hierarchical principle so far as to divide mankind into two classes, gods and brutes. The members of the ruling aristocracies or monarchies were not made of the same clay as the miserable rabble who existed but to obey—they were divine beings. The only service done by the immense upheaval which demolished almost the whole of ancient civilization—arts, literature, schools of philosophy, law, religions, institutions—was to blot out this enormity finally and for ever and to lead back kings and nobles to the fold of poor mortal humankind. Almost everything that had been destroyed was made anew—art, literature, philosophy, law, institutions; but gods of flesh and blood were no longer to be seen seated on their thrones or stalking past with sword in hand. Freed from this monstrous notion, the Mediterranean world created a new and marvellous civilization, founded on a new principle—the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal. It was a sublime principle, but man contrived to push even this too far, and to

evolve from it a theocracy which likewise in due course became unbearable. Its overthrow cost three centuries of strife and the destruction of part of the wonderful civilization of the Middle Ages. For the last century we have been trying to reconstruct, as best we can, as much of this as can still be rebuilt.

The monstrous thing that threatens Western civilization is "super"-war, waged without any definite reason, with aims that continually shift and expand, and with no possible conclusion but revolution on the weaker side. As a morbid exaggeration of the human agencies in war, it is doomed to disappear. Mankind will rid itself of it as it has rid itself of all the bloated growths that have endangered its existence. The question is, whether it will be swept away by some brutal onslaught of material forces upon our sluggish passivity in the course of a series of disasters which will destroy the very foundations of the new powers that mankind is beginning to misuse; or whether it will be abolished by some reaction of our moral sense and an act of the human will prompted by the first such disaster. In the first case many things that deserved to survive, and that will have to be laboriously refashioned, will perish at the same time. Russia offers for our contemplation the initial stages of what might be, within a few degrees more or less, the future existence of all

Western civilization if it does not find in itself the strength to solve the problem. *De te fabula narratur.*

Are we still masters of our fate? The great riddles of our age are not in our heads, but in our hearts. What are we? Pagans or Christians? Civilized people or barbarians? Masters or slaves? We do not know. All is mist and confusion in our souls. What has happened in our conscience to our two great legacies from the past—the humanitarianism of the eighteenth century, which was the secular form of Christianity; and Christianity itself, the religious sublimation of all the highest aspirations of mankind of old, or at least of its noblest peoples? Are they still alive in our conscience or have they been gradually withered up by wealth, power, knowledge, pride, the distracting influences of endless activity, ambition, envy, and the thirst for pleasure? Can we have become just clever barbarians, without admitting it, without knowing it, without noticing it?

The heart and not the head will decide our future. If the deep springs of Christianity and humanitarianism have dried up in our souls, if, among the peoples who are responsible for leading Western civilization, the ruling classes and the masses do not feel it to be the universal duty to rest from bloodshed after the last great massacre, if we submit ourselves to destiny in

face of the problem of war and the difficulties we have gradually allowed to accumulate in it and around it, our civilization will one day or other be the victim of that nightmare outburst of violence we now vaguely dread. We shall only reach salvation by way of a new Middle Age, brought into being by the loosing of the monstrous power we have created and no longer know how to control; a Middle Age—alas!—of high explosives, with no Giotto, with no Dante, with no Christ.

THE PROBLEM OF PEACE

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I

IF we were to ask a contemporary what he thought would be the best justification he could give of war, he would be sure to say: "As the supreme defence of right." In the clear light of its own self-evidence this answer hardly seems to require any proof. Could force conceivably be employed to nobler purpose? It was in defence of right and justice that, in 1914, the whole world was called to arms.

What will my readers think when they hear that this principle, which seems to us beyond dispute, was not only contested but completely inverted by eighteenth-century opinion, which maintained that war in defence of right and justice was not lawful and could not be approved? Yet this is the truth. Let us read dispassionately the following pages which were written about the middle of the eighteenth century.

"He alone whom justice and necessity have armed, has a right to make war; he alone is empowered to attack his enemy, to deprive him of life, and wrest from him his goods and possessions. Such is the decision of *the necessary law*

of nations, or of the law of nature, which nations are strictly bound to observe: it is the inviolable rule that each ought conscientiously to follow. But, in the contests of nations and sovereigns who live together in a state of nature, how can this rule be enforced? They acknowledge no superior. Who then shall be judge between them, to assign to each his rights and obligations,—to say to the one ‘ You have a right to take up arms, to attack your enemy, and subdue him by force ’;—and to the other—‘ Every act of hostility that you commit will be an act of injustice; your victories will be so many murders, your conquests rapines and robberies ’? Every free and sovereign state has a right to determine, according to the dictates of her own conscience, what her duties require of her, and what she can or cannot do with justice. If other nations take upon themselves to judge of her conduct, they invade her liberty, and infringe her most valuable rights: and, moreover, each party asserting that they have justice on their own side, will arrogate to themselves all the rights of war, and maintain that their enemy has none, that his hostilities are so many acts of robbery, so many infractions of the law of nations, in the punishment of which all states should unite. The decision of the controversy, and of the justice of the cause, is so far from being forwarded by it, that the quarrel will become more bloody,

more calamitous in its effects, and also more difficult to terminate. * Nor is this all: the neutral nations themselves will be drawn into the dispute, and involved in the quarrel. If an unjust war cannot, in its effect, confer any right, no certain possession can be obtained of any thing taken in war, until some acknowledged judge (and there is none such between nations) shall have definitely pronounced concerning the justice of the cause: and things so acquired will ever remain liable to be claimed, as property carried off by robbers.

“ Let us then leave the strictness of the necessary law of nature to the conscience of sovereigns; undoubtedly they are never allowed to deviate from it. But, as to the external effects of the law among men, we must necessarily have recourse to rules that shall be more certain and easy in the application, and this for the very safety and advantage of the great society of mankind. These are the rules of the voluntary law of nations. The law of nature, whose object it is to promote the welfare of human society, and to protect the liberties of all nations,—which requires that the affairs of sovereigns should be brought to an issue, and their quarrels determined and carried to a speedy conclusion,—that law, I say, recommends the observance of the voluntary law of nations, for the common advantage of states, in the same manner as it approves of

the alterations which the civil law makes in the rules of the law of nature, with a view to render them more suitable to the state of political society, and more easy and certain in their application. Let us, therefore, apply to the particular subject of war the general observation made in our Preliminaries—a nation, a sovereign, when deliberating on the measure he is to pursue in order to fulfil his duty, ought never to lose sight of the *necessary* law, whose obligation on the conscience is inviolable: but in examining what he may require of other states, he ought to pay a deference to the voluntary law of nations, and restrict even his just claims by the rules of that law, whose maxims have for their object the happiness and advantage of the universal society of nations. Though the *necessary* law be the rule which he invariably observes in his own conduct, he should allow others to avail themselves of the *voluntary* law of nations.

“The first rule of that law, respecting the subject under consideration, is, that *regular war, as to its effects, is to be accounted just on both sides*. This is absolutely necessary, as we have just shewn, if people wish to introduce any order, any regularity, into so violent an operation as that of arms, or to set any bounds to the calamities of which it is productive, and leave a door constantly open for the return of peace. It is even impossible to point out any other rule of

conduct to be observed between nations, since they acknowledge no superior judge.

“Thus, the rights founded on the state of war, the lawfulness of its effects, the validity of the acquisitions made by arms, do not, externally and between mankind, depend on the justice of the cause, but on the legality of the means in themselves,—that is, on everything requisite to constitute a *regular war*.”*

These curious pages were written by M. de Vattel. . . . “De Vattel? Never heard of him. Who was he?” my reader will say. Emmerich de Vattel was the son of a Protestant clergyman, and was born at Cuver, in the principality of Neuchâtel, in 1714. He studied at Bâle and Geneva, and began by taking part in the very lively philosophical controversies of the time. Then in 1741 he went to Berlin to offer his services to Frederick II, since the principality of Neuchâtel at that time belonged to Prussia. Frederick II had no use for him, but he had better luck two years later at Dresden at the court of Augustus III, Elector of Saxony. In 1746 Augustus III made him a counsellor of embassy and in 1747 appointed him to be minister plenipotentiary at Berne. There he remained eleven years, until in 1758 he was made privy councillor to the Elector and recalled

* *The Law of Nations*. Translated by Joseph Chitty (1834).

to Dresden, where he conducted the government of the country in that capacity until his death in 1767. He was thus a diplomat, a statesman, and a man of action, not a professor, an intellectual, or a bookworm. Nevertheless, during his stay in Berne as minister plenipotentiary he wrote a book, a thick book, with one of those titles a mile long, then in vogue and now a trifle absurd: *Le droit des gens, ou principe de la loi naturelle, appliquée à la conduite et aux affaires des nations et des souverains*. It is a lengthy, closely packed, and comprehensive study of the problem of war and peace as seen by the eighteenth century. It was a study written by a man who had based his theory on practice, who had read books while he consorted with men and handled affairs. First published at Leyden in 1758, the book appeared in many editions and translations before the Revolution and made its author famous, though in his diplomatic career he had never risen above mediocrity. His fame suffered an eclipse during the nineteenth century. De Vattel was forgotten, and the professors of international law scarcely deigned even to name him among those fore-runners who are consigned to the grave for ever, without hope of resurrection. Even as late as 1914 the pages I have reproduced here, from Book III, Chapter XII, would have been considered absurd.

Have they become more sensible, that is to say more comprehensible, to-day? Let us try to grasp their meaning. What does Vattel say? To fight for justice and right would be the noblest of tasks if in conflicts between nations we could tell on which side justice and right actually lay; if one of the contesting parties, the one which was in the right, was conscious of its right, and if its adversary recognized in its own conscience the injustice and violence it was seeking to commit. But a struggle between nations is never a fight between a quite unmistakable angel and a quite unmistakable devil. Each side thinks itself the angel, the other side the devil: no one can say which is in the wrong and which is in the right. The convictions of the belligerents prove nothing, as each side passes the verdict on its own case. It is so easy for peoples as well as for individuals to convince themselves that they are right, even when they are wrong. Well, then, what will happen when the two belligerents confront each other, both convinced they are fighting for justice and right? Each of them, regarding itself as the innocent victim of an infamous wrong, will consider itself entitled to employ any means whatever against its enemy, even the most treacherous and cruel means. The treachery and cruelty of these methods will enrage feelings already rendered obdurate by the

consciousness of being in the right. It is easy to come to a compromise over some particular interest, but one cannot bargain over a right or what appears to be a right. When two peoples are equally convinced that they are fighting for their rights there will be no possibility of peace between them until one of them is completely crushed. The war will become more and more cruel, it will endure and extend indefinitely, for each of the belligerents, realizing that it must either conquer or be wiped out, will seek as many allies as it can.

In 1914 this reasoning would still have been incomprehensible, but does it not represent for us to-day the innermost psychology of the World War, which Vattel divined, by a kind of prophetic anticipation, far back in the eighteenth century? The two adversaries—I mean the peoples, not the narrow oligarchies who controlled the conflict on both sides—were equally convinced—partly spontaneously, partly by mutual suggestion—that they were wholly in the right, and that the wrong was entirely on the side of their opponents. Both of them being equally certain that they were defending right and justice, they thought themselves entitled to adopt any means whatever to overthrow the enemy; they sought allies everywhere, they refused to entertain any form of conciliation or compromise. There could be no thought of

laying down arms until one side or the other was utterly exhausted. But if you set out to exhaust your enemy you cannot stint either blood or money. The champions of right and justice succeeded in wearing down the strength of the Central Empires, but at what a price ! Russia brought to nothing ; Italy, Serbia, and Rumania utterly ruined ; Britain and her Empire shaken to their foundations ! Justice and right cost one dear if one seeks to defend them with the sword. Vattel was right.

Here the reader will again protest: " But at that rate a legitimate war, a permissible war, that is to say a just war, would be a war for which there was no reason ? What a paradox ! To go to war in the spirit of your preposterous eighteenth-century wiseacre, thinking that your enemy's cause is as just as your own, means going to war without caring anything about your own cause—that is, without any serious motive. How can you expect States to face the danger of ruin, or millions of men to risk their lives, without any serious motive, for a kind of chivalrous dilettantism which bids them put aside all hatred for the enemy just as they are about to strike at him ? It is ridiculous. The nineteenth- and twentieth-century strategists are right. War is a terrible ordeal. Before a people can submit to it, they must be convinced that they are in the right, that they are defend-

ing a sacred cause. The great mass-hatreds must be mobilized. . . .”

True, but in that case peace will become an impossibility.

II

Let us reduce this problem to its simplest terms and try to see things clearly. It is the gravest problem humanity has had to tussle with from the remote beginnings of history. It is the difficulty of solving it that has destroyed most civilizations and condemned man to start his task anew a hundred times over amidst the ruins. It is this same difficulty that threatens to destroy the achievements of the nineteenth century.

History has known its wars of extermination. Stronger States, peoples, and races have wiped out weaker States, peoples, and races. Europeans have waged wars of extermination in Africa even during the nineteenth century. A war of extermination sets out to wipe the loser out of existence, and it comes to an end when this has been achieved. Without discussing the rational and moral standing of this form of warfare, we may content ourselves with noting that it has disappeared from Europe and America. For example, Germany cannot think of exterminating France, nor France Germany. The wars of to-day can only aim at placing the

enemy in a position of temporary inferiority which will enable the victor to obtain certain concessions that could not be secured by means of negotiation.

If you look at all the wars which have taken place in Europe and America during recent centuries, you will see that they have all been justified in the eyes of reason and morals by the impossibility of obtaining certain results except by force, and by the possibility of securing them by war. The nineteenth century tried to establish a further condition before war could be held lawful—that the claim for which the war was fought must be a just one. Wars would thus have been just or unjust according to their objects. The intention was a noble one, but no single universal and generally accepted standard of measurement has yet been found to measure the justice of a nation's claims. The war which one writer, one party, one nation denounces as an infamous aggression is extolled by other parties and other nations as the noblest of enterprises. We must therefore content ourselves with a single simpler and cruder justification for war—as a means of deciding those disputes between States which cannot be settled by reason alone.

When war has ceased to aim at the extermination of the enemy, it has not, and cannot have, any other object than an agreement with him, *i.e.* peace. Peace is the object and justification

of war. War is legitimate from the point of view of reason and morals in so far as it is a means of securing peace. But what is peace? Many provisional treaties of peace in history have been signed by the defeated party because it could no longer continue the war, with the firm intention of renewing the struggle as soon as it could do so. This kind of peace was in reality nothing but a truce. A genuine peace must definitely and for ever settle the question that provoked the war. A war is really over when the defeated side accepts its outcome in good faith and for all time, when it signs the peace treaty with the set purpose of never again raising the question or questions decided by the war. War is therefore legitimate in so far as, keeping its sacrifices proportionate to the importance of the question at issue, it ends in a genuine peace, that is to say in a final settlement of the matter. Vattel puts this with his customary lucidity:

“The effect of the treaty of peace is to put an end to the war, and to abolish the subject of it. It leaves the contracting parties no right to commit any acts of hostility on account either of the subject itself which had given rise to the war, or of any thing that was done during its continuance: wherefore they cannot lawfully take up arms again for the same subject. Accordingly, in such treaties, the contracting

parties reciprocally engage to preserve *perpetual peace*: which is not to be understood as if they promised never to make war on each other for any cause whatever. The peace in question relates to the war which it terminates: and it is in reality perpetual, inasmuch as it does not allow them to revive the same war by taking up arms again for the same subject which had originally given birth to it.”*

War, therefore, goes on in the guise of a truce of longer or shorter duration, so long as it does not achieve a final settlement fully and honestly accepted by the loser. This is inherent in the very nature of war. But here we come upon a difficulty, and a serious one, an irremovable paradox, which complicates in practice a problem that is so simple in theory. War is violence made legitimate by the inability of reason to settle certain questions. The settlements it effects are always imposed by force. It is, however, a categorical imperative of the human conscience that nobody is bound to keep promises that have been extorted by force. All ages, laws, and religions agree on this point: no moral obligation exists if consent was not given freely. Therefore, if all treaties of peace are imposed by force, no treaty can bind the losers and pledge their honour. As soon as the force that imposed it grows weaker, as soon as they

* *The Law of Nations*, Book IV, Ch. II, § 19.

feel they can challenge it, they will no longer be bound to respect the treaty; they will be entitled to reopen the whole question. War can never bring about a final settlement, and consequently it is doomed to prolong itself indefinitely. All force can do is to wipe out one of the belligerents; the only effective war is a war of extermination.

This objection is beyond dispute. Nevertheless, among those peoples who have reached a degree of civilization and power that no longer admits of wars of extermination, there have always been questions which could not be settled by reason and which yet had to be settled somehow without letting a war go on for ever. Thus the problem of peace for all civilized peoples is how to arrive, by means of war, at settlements which will satisfy the victors without seeming an intolerable exercise of compulsion to the vanquished. It is the most difficult of all the problems which civilization has to solve, because it is contradictory; it admits only of approximate, partial, and imperfect solutions; but it is one of the decisive tests, one of the revealing trials of the strength of a civilization. A civilization which has found a real solution of this terrible problem can afford to have many failings in other directions. If a civilization has not succeeded in solving it, it must indeed be great in other spheres if it is to endure and prosper.

The most perfect solution the peoples of Europe have found up to the present time was supplied by the eighteenth century. It is one of the achievements, glories, and innovations that were its greatest, though the century that followed understood them least. It was Vattel who propounded this solution. He was the theorist who set his century an ideal pattern of perfection as the goal for its efforts, and in so doing reveals to us the spirit and inner direction of those efforts and helps us to understand them, in spite of the hesitations and gropings, the inevitable confusions, falterings, and imperfections which accompany the actions of men. Let us once more pick up the old book by the diplomat from Neuchâtel. If, as we read it, we keep before us what he had in view, we shall see deep down into one of the profoundest mysteries of life and history. The paradoxes that were so baffling at the first reading will turn into great windows opening on to vistas of truth of whose very existence we had ceased to have any suspicion.

A treaty of peace must be sacred for the loser as well as for the victor. Vattel is no less emphatic on this point than the nineteenth-century jurists.

“We cannot claim a dispensation from the observance of a treaty of peace, by alleging that it was extorted from us by fear, or wrested from

us by force. In the first place, were this plea admitted, it would destroy, from the very foundations, all the security of treaties of peace; for there are few treaties of that kind, which might not be made to afford such a pretext, as a cloak for the faithless violation of them. To authorize such an evasion would be a direct attack on the common safety and welfare of nations:—the maxim would be detestable, for the same reasons which have universally established the sacredness of treaties. Besides it would generally be disgraceful and ridiculous to advance such a plea.”*

The plea of duress cannot be accepted against a treaty of peace: this principle has been, is, and will be everywhere and always the foundation of international law. But our eighteenth-century jurist does not overlook the fact that all treaties of peace are imposed by force; that force has no power to bind honour and conscience; and that therein lies a contradiction which must be cleared up if peace, real peace, is to be possible. He sets about it by stipulating in the first place that peace shall be concluded before one of the two combatants is utterly exhausted. The stronger side should be sufficiently moderate in its demands, the weaker sufficiently sensible in its resistance, to avoid the needless prolongation of a struggle whose issue cannot now be affected.

* *The Law of Nations*, Book IV, Ch. IV, § 37.

Again, having asserted that it would almost always be disgraceful and ridiculous to put forward a plea of violence, he explains why; and in doing so he sets forth the conditions under which peace should be concluded to prevent any future allegation of constraint. The text runs as follows:

“At the present day, it seldom happens that either of the belligerent parties perseveres to the last extremity before he will consent to a peace. Though a nation may have lost several battles, she can still defend herself: as long as she has men and arms remaining, she is not destitute of all resource. If she thinks fit, by a disadvantageous treaty, to procure a necessary peace,—if by great sacrifices she delivers herself from imminent danger or total ruin,—the residue which remains in her possession is still an advantage for which she is indebted to the peace: it was her own free choice to prefer a certain and immediate loss, but of limited extent, to an evil of a more dreadful nature, which, though yet at some distance, she had but too great reason to apprehend.”*

A treaty of peace must therefore be sufficiently moderate, and negotiated under conditions of sufficient freedom, to allow it to be said that the weaker party has decided of *its own free choice* to prefer a certain and immediate loss, *but of*

* *The Law of Nations*, Book IV, Ch. IV, § 37.

limited extent, to an evil not immediate, but too likely and too dreadful.' The loss must be *limited* enough, the choice sufficiently *free*, for the loser himself to admit that his opponent was right in demanding what he did in view of the outcome of the war, for which it is the loser's duty to pay up like a gambler who has lost. In conclusion, the war of exhaustion is a false and illegitimate form of war, because it makes peace impossible or too difficult to obtain.

But if that relative freedom does not exist, if the victor takes advantage of the complete exhaustion of the loser to force outrageous terms upon him with the knife at his throat, the result is not peace but merely an armistice. On this point also Vattel is extremely lucid and exact:

“If ever the plea of constraint may be alleged, it is against an act which does not deserve the name of a treaty of peace,—against a forced submission to conditions which are equally offensive to justice and to all the duties of humanity. If an unjust and rapacious conqueror subdues a nation, and forces her to accept of hard, ignominious, and insupportable conditions, necessity obliges her to submit: but this apparent tranquillity is not a peace; it is an oppression which she endures only so long as she wants the means of shaking it off, and against which men of spirit rise on the

first favourable opportunity. When Ferdinand Cortes attacked the empire of Mexico without any shadow of reason, without even a plausible pretext,—if the unfortunate Montezuma could have recovered his liberty by submitting to the iniquitous and cruel conditions of receiving Spanish garrisons into his towns and his capital, of paying an immense tribute, and obeying the commands of the king of Spain,—will any man pretend to assert that he would not have been justifiable in seizing a convenient opportunity to recover his rights, to emancipate his people, and to expel or exterminate the Spanish horde of greedy, insolent, and cruel usurpers? No! such a monstrous absurdity can never be seriously maintained. Although the law of nature aims at protecting the safety and peace of nations by enjoining the faithful observance of promises, it does not favour oppressors. All its maxims tend to promote the advantage of mankind: that is the great end of all laws and rights. Shall he, who with his own hand tears asunder all the bonds of human society, be afterwards allowed to claim the benefit of them? Even though it were to happen that this maxim should be abused, and that a nation should, on the strength of it, unjustly rise in arms and recommence hostilities,—still it is better to risk that inconvenience than to furnish usurpers with an easy mode of perpetuating their injustice, and

establishing their usurpation on a permanent basis. Besides, were you to preach up the contrary doctrine which is so repugnant to all the feelings and suggestions of nature, where could you expect to make proselytes ?”*

We can now understand why Vattel insists that each of the belligerents, before he takes the field, should have the same respect for the enemy's cause as if it were as just as his own. When he goes to war let him accept the fact that his own defeat would be quite as possible and natural a matter as the enemy's; that victory is not a privilege to which he is entitled in advance because he is morally superior to the enemy, because he represents good battling against evil. Let him recognize that we must always keep in view the relative human importance of the interests in dispute, so as not to push matters too far, either in defending our cause if we are the weaker side or in imposing terms of peace if we are the stronger. For if the terms of peace are to be accepted by the loser under conditions sufficiently free from compulsion for him to feel bound in honour to observe them, the victor must show moderation. Now, according to Vattel, nothing in war is more opposed to moderation than the judicatory spirit—the idea that the victor, as the champion of good, is called upon to mete out justice, that is to say to

* *The Law of Nations*, Book IV, Ch. IV, § 37.

punish the loser, as representing evil. Here are some illuminating remarks:

“A treaty of peace can be no more than a compromise. Were the rules of strict and rigid justice to be observed in it, so that each party should precisely receive every thing to which he has a just title, it would be impossible ever to make a peace. First, with regard to the very subject which occasioned the war, one of the parties would be under a necessity of acknowledging himself in the wrong, and condemning his own unjust pretensions; which he will hardly do, unless reduced to the last extremity. But if he owns the injustice of his cause, he must at the same time condemn every measure he has pursued in support of it: he must restore what he has unjustly taken, must reimburse the expenses of the war, and repair the damages. And how can a just estimate of all the damages be formed? What price can be set on all the blood that has been shed, the loss of such a number of citizens, and the ruin of families? Nor is this all. Strict justice would further demand, that the author of an unjust war should suffer a penalty proportioned to the injuries for which he owes satisfaction, and such as might ensure the future safety of him whom he has attacked. How shall the nature of that penalty be determined, and the degree of it be precisely regulated? In fine, even he who had justice on his side

may have transgressed the bounds of justifiable self-defence, and been guilty of improper excesses in the prosecution of a war whose object was originally lawful: here then are so many wrongs, of which strict justice would demand reparation. He may have made conquests and taken booty beyond the value of his claim. Who shall make an exact calculation, a just estimate of this? Since, therefore, it would be dreadful to perpetuate the war, or to pursue it to the utter ruin of one of the parties,—and since, however just the cause in which we are engaged, we must at length turn our thoughts towards the restoration of peace, and ought to direct all our measures to the attainment of that salutary object,—no other expedient remains than that of coming to a compromise respecting all claims and grievances on both sides, and putting an end to all disputes, by a convention as fair and equitable as circumstances will admit of. In such convention no decision is pronounced on the original cause of the war, or on those controversies to which the various acts of hostility might give rise; nor is either of the parties condemned as unjust,—a condemnation to which few princes would submit;—but, a simple agreement is formed, which determines what equivalent each party shall receive in extinction of all his pretensions.”*

* *The Law of Nations*, Book IV, Ch. IV, § 18 (trans. Chitty).

“Equitable agreements, therefore, or at least such as are supportable, are alone entitled to the appellation of treaties of peace; these are the treaties which bind the public faith, and which are punctually to be observed, though in some respects harsh and burthensome. Since the nation consented to them, she must have considered them as in some measure advantageous under the then existing circumstances; and she is bound to respect her promise. Were men allowed to rescind at a subsequent period those agreements to which they were glad to subscribe on a former occasion, there would be an end to all stability in human affairs.”*

We can now also understand the following observations regarding the methods it is proper to employ in war:

“All damage done to the enemy unnecessarily, every act of hostility which does not tend to procure victory and bring the war to a conclusion, is a licentiousness condemned by the law of nature.

“But this licentiousness is unavoidably suffered to pass with impunity, and, to a certain degree, tolerated, between nation and nation. How then shall we, in particular cases, determine with precision, to what lengths it was necessary to carry hostilities in order to bring the war to a happy conclusion? And even if the point

* *The Law of Nations*, Book IV, Ch. IV, § 38.

could be exactly ascertained, nations acknowledge no common judge: each forms her own judgment of the conduct she is to pursue in fulfilling her duties. If you once open a door for continual accusations of outrageous excess in hostilities, you will only augment the number of complaints, and inflame the minds of the contending parties with increasing animosity: fresh injuries will be perpetually springing up; and the sword will never be sheathed till one of the parties be utterly destroyed. The whole, therefore, should, between nation and nation, be confined to general rules, independent of circumstances, and sure and easy in the application. Now the rules cannot answer this description, unless they teach us to view things in an absolute sense,—to consider them in themselves and in their own nature.”*

It is clear, then, that in war we must not be too indulgent with ourselves, nor too hard on the enemy. We must keep a hold on ourselves, for the use of methods that are too treacherous and cruel inflames the enemy’s fury and renders peace impossible. On the other hand we must not be too ready to stigmatize the enemy’s own expedients as barbarous. We are always too much inclined to see the enemy as the personification of evil striving for victory over good. In short, moderation should be the watchword

* *The Law of Nations*, Book III, Ch. IX, §§ 172-173.

in the actual methods of warfare as well as in our attitude towards the enemy. We should fight, so far as it can be done, without either feeling hatred or provoking it.

III

But a further objection arises. I can imagine my reader thinking: "All this is very interesting, but it is all past history. These ways of waging war and making peace belong to another age. They were possible in the eighteenth century, but not to-day. They have vanished for ever."

This is quite true. The theory of peace as set forth by Vattel was one of the most delicate blossoms of the qualitative civilizations which preceded the nineteenth century. Only the aristocratic republics and enlightened monarchies of the eighteenth century could understand and apply this theory, with those modifications and distortions which the noblest of ideas must undergo when they are translated into action and reality. This lovely blossom was blasted by the fiery rain of the French Revolution. Yet whether such a form of war is possible to-day or not does not in any way alter its character. It was not the arbitrary creation of a century which had a passion for the artificial in every field; it was based on a simple, fundamental, and obvious psychological truth—that violence

infallibly calls forth violence, and that limits must be set to war if we do not mean it to go on indefinitely, growing more and more desperate with the successive intensifications of its fury until final exhaustion comes with utter destruction.

This is a simple enough truth. Now that we have discovered it once more in the faded pages of Vattel, let us turn again to the nineteenth century. It will be easy for us to make some rather curious discoveries in its history. First of all, it is evident that the nineteenth-century strategists went too far when they condemned the restricted and conventional warfare of the eighteenth century as a debased form of real warfare, as a spurious kind of war, cherished by a generation that no longer knew how to fight. There would have been some truth in this if the only use the marshals and generals of the eighteenth century had made of the conventions which limited the warfare of that time had been to identify the art and the genius of war with the pedantic observance of arbitrary rules. But the nineteenth-century strategists forgot that there was a vital purpose behind the conventions they ridiculed so freely. That purpose was to mitigate the violence of war so as to make peace possible. They assisted war to attain its only reasonable aim, which is peace, by concealing the contradiction between the force imposing the treaty of peace and the freedom with which

such a treaty must be accepted if the loser is to regard it as binding on his honour.

When we have grasped the spirit and the forms of the conventional warfare of the eighteenth century, it is also easier for us to understand the spirit and forms of the romantic warfare created, as we saw in the preceding paper, by the French Revolution. How far did the tactics and strategy devised by Carnot and the military committees of the Convention, applied and brought to perfection by the generals of the Revolution, and carried to their highest pitch of development by Napoleon, differ from the tactics and strategy of the eighteenth century? The latter endeavoured to limit the violence of war, whereas the tactics and strategy of romantic warfare strove to give it full rein. Nineteenth-century wars, in the words of Marshal Foch, were “wars *aux allures déchaînées*.” The Revolution took advantage of the abundance of man-power supplied by conscription and the warlike enthusiasm of its youthful soldiers. It freed its armies from the *impedimenta* which hampered the forces of the old régime, and took the risk of causing them to live on the countries they invaded. By this means it succeeded in increasing the speed of their operations and the violence of the blows they could deal. The object was to surprise the enemy by rapid thrusts at the weak points of his line, to stun him by

unexpected attacks, to destroy his forces by a series of fierce battles instead of paralyzing them by means of manœuvres, in short to bludgeon him into a quick surrender. The Revolution and the Empire owed their brilliant military successes to these new methods of warfare. The power that lay in strategy and tactics made them veritably a game for giants.

But the treaties of peace wrung from the losers by the unexpectedness and violence of such blows were nearly always unreasonable and no longer had that element of comparative absence of duress which could make the defeated side bound in honour to observe them. As the losers signed them with the full intention of repudiating them as soon as they were able, none of these treaties was anything more than a precarious armistice. When it took on its new pace and pressure, war increased the effectiveness of the means at its disposal, but at the same time lost the power to achieve its proper purpose, which is peace.

The men who created romantic warfare and its weapons, from Carnot to Napoleon, do not seem to have been aware of this fact. They believed quite sincerely that they had invented a new and more powerful tool with which to impose peace. This is proof enough that they were dilettanti or amateurs in warfare, inspired, untrained, and in a great hurry to win, rather

than real masters of the art comparable with those produced by the eighteenth century. The French Revolution was a complex event. It has a stupendous credit side, but also a considerable debit side, and the heaviest item on the latter is romantic warfare. At the root of this type of war, the war *aux allures déchaînées* which the Revolution and the Empire thrust upon Europe, lies the psychological error of imagining that tremendous and crushing victories assist one to secure peace, whereas they really make it more difficult or even impossible to secure. This error is the key to the whole history of the Revolution, the Empire, and the nineteenth century up to our present confusions.

Why was the Revolution compelled to keep on extending its military operations? It was because of the failure of all its desperate efforts to obtain peace after its too sweeping victories. The paradox grows more pronounced when one comes to Napoleon. It has been asserted that he was the least bellicose of rulers. In a certain sense this is true. He did not wage so many wars out of a platonic love of battles. After Montenotte he was drawn into a vast mechanism which did not let him go till after Waterloo. He pursued peace all his life, but in vain—and why? Because he thought he could secure it by knocking it down with a bludgeon. He won all the battles, but lost the war. He dictated

half a dozen treaties of peace which would have made him master of Europe and the most powerful ruler ever known to history if they had been accepted in earnest. They were all short-lived, however; none of them withstood the ultimate revolt of the defeated side against them. The reason was that they had used a temporary prostration to enforce exorbitant terms. His great battles—Marengo and Austerlitz, Eylau and Ulm—when detached from their background may strike the imagination of the multitude as unequalled triumphs, but only through the illusion produced by this detachment. In reality they were only conditional victories, dependent on the ultimate issue of that one long war of which they were indeterminate incidents. All Napoleon's victories ended in a single but definitive defeat which engulfed and annulled them, because instead of facilitating peace they had made it impossible. They had been altogether too overwhelming. Napoleon never succeeded in concluding the peace that was essential to him, and which alone would have made his victories absolute instead of conditional, because his conquests were too thorough.

How was it that, on the other hand, his opponents managed in 1815 to conclude a peace which lasted nearly fifty years? It was because they contented themselves with less conspicuous

tokens of victory, since they would have failed to get anything too "spectacular." Their weakness has given them additional greatness and power in the eyes of history. The peace of Vienna was a return to the eighteenth century, as were also the armies which Europe organized on the French model between 1815 and 1870. The "survivors" of the Revolution—kings, emperors, and ministers—who made the peace of Vienna were still close enough to the eighteenth century to realize that Europe's first need in 1815 was peace, and that they would only have concluded an armistice more ruinous than war itself if, after wresting France's signature from her by force, they then had to arm to the teeth to compel her to honour her obligations. It was essential that France should accept the peace under conditions sufficiently free from compulsion for her to bring her actual goodwill towards its maintenance, and respect the settlement without having to be forced to do so. Talleyrand was allowed to join in the discussions on terms of equality, and he, the loser, even became the guiding spirit of the Congress, precisely because it did not intend to force the treaty upon France with the knife at her throat. The terms were very moderate, for otherwise it would have been impossible to count on the goodwill of such a proud enemy. Not one inch of the territories which France had conquered since

1789 was ceded to her, but not one inch of the territories which belonged to her before that date was taken from her. In respect of these she had prescriptive rights. The German claims to Alsace and Lorraine were firmly set aside. All this was pure eighteenth century. The guiding principles of the Congress of Vienna are to be found in the pages of Vattel which have been examined above.

The nineteenth century, however, lost the clue to all this as it advanced and increased its distance from its predecessor. The Congress of Vienna ultimately came to be regarded as a superlative piece of jugglery on the part of Talleyrand, who was credited with almost miraculous feats of diplomatic legerdemain which allowed him to make the trophies of victory disappear under the very eyes of the bewildered victors. Certain French historians are so convinced of this that they ask far too much of him. A diplomat capable of feats like these, they say, should have returned from Vienna with at least the left bank of the Rhine in his pocket. The wretch must have been bribed by his friend Alexander I !

But though the nineteenth century had ceased to understand the Congress of Vienna, it profited by it, and by its partial reversions to the practice of the eighteenth century, up to 1870. As we saw in the preceding paper, the Crimean War

and the Austro-Italian War were not wars *aux allures déchaînées*. Each of them accordingly ended in a definitive peace. Neither Russia nor Austria ever raised again the issues they had conceded on the pretext that they had been extorted by force. But in 1870 war again assumed its *allures déchaînées*. Moltke once more brought into action the half-forgotten strategic methods of the campaigns of the Revolution and Napoleon. In six weeks, fighting battle after battle—Weissenburg, Spicheren, Wörth, Gravelotte, Sedan—he invaded and overwhelmed France. The Republic's desperate attempt at resistance was met with another stroke of the bludgeon, the siege and capture of Paris. Then the victor tore away a strip of the loser's very flesh. With the knife at her throat, he forced upon her so cruel a mutilation of her territory that it could never receive the sanction of her ultimate acquiescence. A temporary prostration was used to extort exorbitant terms. In the Peace of Frankfort we find the same weakness as we noted in the treaties concluded by Napoleon. Like the latter, it was no more than an armistice.

That armistice lasted forty-four years. It poisoned Europe and warped the minds of two generations. Everyone between 1870 and 1890 was born beneath its baneful sign. Another complication which rendered it still more

dangerous was that the war-making power and the peace-making power became completely separated in those forty-four years. In the eighteenth century the two powers were in the same hands, which could prepare for war and wage war without ever ceasing to give due heed to the peace which was its end and aim. After 1848 war became the exclusive province of the General Staff, close corporations of experts, military monasteries, as it were, whose sole study was how to bring about the complete defeat of the enemy, without giving a thought to peace and its possible fate amid the conflicts they were fostering. Peace was the business of civilians, of diplomats. But what could civilians and diplomats do when the old rules of the art of making peace were made inoperative by the new methods of making war? The soldiers perfected the technique of war; the diplomats lost the art of making peace; that, in a nutshell, is what happened between 1848 and 1914. Being unable to make peace, the diplomats in their turn began to prepare the way for war by making and unmaking alliances. Two Powers had signed the armistice of 1871, but when it was repudiated in 1914 it was two formidable groups of Powers that confronted one another, armed to the teeth. And so the fiery deluge began.

IV

What are we to think, then, of the peace treaties of 1919? Are they too nothing but so many armistices?

The criticism these treaties have undergone has been severe—even excessively severe—particularly as regards the territorial clauses. But this time the victors had a stroke of good fortune in the shape of the disappearance of one of their opponents, the Hapsburg Empire. An enemy was thus exterminated without a war of extermination. The partition of the territories formerly belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire has provoked a great deal of recrimination which will not speedily die down. However, as these recriminations have not the backing of any powerful State, they cannot seriously disturb the peace treaties and reduce them to a collection of armistices.

On the other hand it is certain that Hungary has not accepted and will not for a long time accept the mutilations inflicted on her by the treaty. I think that the victors would have done better to be less severe, especially as Hungary was dragged into the conflict against her will. But Hungary is not one of the pivots of the world, and whatever the future fate of the Hungarian claims may be, it does not appear

impossible that the question will be fought out privately, so to speak, without precipitating a general catastrophe.

As regards Germany, the Locarno Pact proves that the majority of Germans at any rate are ready to ratify the cession of Alsace-Lorraine and to consider the question closed. The peace is therefore genuine and final at least as far as this point—which is incidentally the most important of all—is concerned, unless a sudden change some day or other reopens the whole matter. The eastern frontiers are more a matter of dispute. The victors did not define them with the caution and consideration which the world had the right to expect from them. Still, at all events they have not made another Alsace-Lorraine in the east of Germany, and it ought to be possible to arrive at a reasonable solution of all the questions at issue between Germans and Poles in that region. Is anyone going to set Europe ablaze again and destroy a whole civilization for the sake of the Danzig Corridor ?

I never believed that Germany could fulfil the obligations imposed on her by the Treaty of Versailles as regards reparations. Even the modifications provided by the Dawes and Young plans seem to me to embrace impossibilities which will make their effects felt one day or another. But the period of the real difficulties

in this connection has not yet arrived or is only just beginning. Up to the present Germany has received from the world a great deal more money than she has paid her enemies—between 1919 and 1922, thanks to the folly with which the whole world speculated on the rise of the mark and lost thousands of millions; and after 1924, in the shape of the loans which the whole world granted her with incredible alacrity, with its eyes shut. In 1919 everyone declared that “the Boches” must pay, pay, pay, but the fact is that since 1919 the world has done nothing but give, give, give money to these terrible “Boches”—which is further proof that life is more complex than our passions. Why is Germany in the throes of such a grave economic crisis to-day? It is because the world can no longer go on giving her money.

In short, if the treaties of 1919 are not perfect, if they are a clumsier achievement than the treaties of 1815, their imperfections are not gross enough to explain the tremendous political and moral disorders with which Germany and other parts of Europe are struggling to-day. The cause of the evil lies deeper. The initial weakness of the peace settlement of 1919 is that it was imposed upon the losers when they were in a state of complete exhaustion. Vattel had already shown in the eighteenth century, as we have seen, that the loser always regards a peace

which he accepted while in a state of complete exhaustion as an unbearable act of brute compulsion and therefore in no way binding upon him. By refusing to discuss the treaty with their enemies, the Allies gave the losers all the more reason to feel that outrageous terms were being extorted from them while the knife was at their throats. The most reasonable demands struck them as insufferably oppressive simply because they had no voice in the matter.

In practically all cases peace was concluded not with the government which had waged the war, but with a revolutionary government which had taken its place. This is perhaps a far graver complication than was thought in 1919. Every government created by a revolution is weak, unstable, and insecure to begin with. These new governments were certainly not strong enough to disown the obligations they had accepted by signing the peace treaties, but neither were they strong enough to coerce their peoples into carrying them out.

But the most serious weakness of the treaties is the "judicatory" spirit that animated them, particularly as regards Germany. We have only to read once more the passage from Vattel reproduced on page 119 to find the most penetrating criticism of the treaties of 1919, made in advance during the eighteenth century. If M. de Vattel could come back to life and be

presented with the treaties of 1919, he would pronounce them defective precisely because they aimed at applying "the rules of strict and rigid justice." Prompted by this desire for justice, of which incidentally they were themselves the sole arbiters, the victors demanded first of all that the loser should "acknowledge himself in the wrong"; that he should "condemn every measure he had pursued in support of his cause"; then "that he must reimburse the expenses of the war and repair the damages"; finally that "the author of a war officially declared to be unjust by the treaties of peace should suffer a penalty proportioned to the injuries for which he owes satisfaction, and such as might ensure the future safety of him whom he had attacked." Vattel had foreseen even the impeachment of William II and the disarmament of Germany as a punitive measure.

It is just this obsession of the peace treaties with the claims of strict justice which constitutes their weakness. If the victors had been content to exact reasonable sacrifices in money and territory, not in the name of justice, but making force their warrant, as the price of defeat, the losers would probably have accepted them. What objection could they have made? Force is a reason when reason is not a force. But to transform peace into an avenging archangel of Almighty justice, to turn peace into

a system of punishments to appease offended justice for the outrage of the war, was to bring reason and all its disputes, arguments, and sophisms back into a business where reason had no place. It simply made the game easy for the defeated side. Nothing was easier for them than to overthrow the whole system of accusations and punishments. It is so simple to give yourself the verdict when you are your own judge ! Accordingly Germany's admissions counted for nothing because they had been wrested from her by force ; Germany was no more responsible for the war than the other Powers, because her only object had been to defend herself against the spite, jealousy, and hatred of her enemies : therefore she ought neither to pay the cost of the war, nor repair the damage done, nor undergo disarmament ; the whole peace treaty was nothing but a system of injustices to which the German people would submit only till such time as they were strong enough to revolt against it.

No one with the slightest knowledge of human nature and mass psychology can wonder that the German people lent a willing ear to the men and parties who, in good faith or bad, talked to them in this strain. The eighteenth century was right. At the end of a war the nation which has been unlucky in the arbitrament of arms can be compelled to make certain material sacrifices ;

but nothing can compel it to regard such sacrifices as the well-merited punishment for a great offence which has dishonoured it in the eyes of history. Yet this is precisely what the victors wanted Germany to admit. They thus unwittingly played right into the hands of the old régime, which in ten years has succeeded, thanks to these blunders, in convincing part of Germany that all her troubles have been brought about, not by the war, but by the peace treaties imposed by the enemy, and that she should not turn her wrath against the old régime which led her into the war, but against the Republic which concluded so infamous a peace. Again, only the very simple-minded could be surprised at this counter-attack on the part of the old régime. Monarchy has never succumbed to the first blow anywhere; wounded to the death, the powerful creature has always been slow to die and savage to the last. This rebound, this return to the charge on the part of the social forces which governed Germany up to 1918, was only to be expected. The victors should have been more heedful, and not have supplied them with weapons only too easy to handle.

The nineteenth century, as one cannot often enough repeat, though it wanted peace and needed it even more than any other century, lost the notion of what exactly peace is and what has to be done to secure it. But Vattel's theory,

far from being an artificial creation of the eighteenth century, is so true and so human that it forces itself upon us even though we have let it slumber beneath the dust of the library shelves for over a hundred years. The reader will probably be surprised to hear that for the last four years we have been practising "Vattelism" without knowing it. Nevertheless, it is the truth. Locarno, the Dawes Plan, the Young Plan—what is the meaning behind these much-debated measures of diplomacy? Plenty of people demur and ask why, since we won the victory and made the loser accept certain terms, we should have to go back on them. What is the source of this weakness that abjures our victory? Vattel explains the apparent mystery of this puzzling weakness. What happened in Europe between 1919 and 1925 was that it was soon realized that if the sole guarantee for the observance of the peace treaties was force on the part of the victors, the peace would be nothing but an armistice, long or short in duration, but never for a moment free from apprehension. We had to be in a position to ask the losers to observe the treaties of their own free will, at least to a certain extent, as an obligation of honour, a duty that urged itself on them independent of all outside compulsion. But in that case, though it has never been officially admitted, it was impossible to elude

that eternal principle of psychology which regulates human relations—that the stronger party can, without argument, impose his will upon the loser by the simple right of force; but in that event he cannot and must not count on anything but force to make his will respected. If he wants to be entitled to count on the loser's word and honour, the acceptance of the treaty must be an act sufficiently free from constraint. One cannot simultaneously claim the privileges of force and the advantages of free consent.

Locarno, the Dawes Plan, and the Young Plan were nothing but attempts at transforming the one-sided coercive provisions enacted by the peace treaties of 1919 into agreements accepted by the defeated side under conditions unfettered enough to make them binding upon its honour. They are therefore an unconscious reversion to the eighteenth century, to the diplomacy of the aristocratic republics and enlightened monarchies of the old régime, thrust upon an ignorant generation by the force of events. This reversion has not yielded all the results we were entitled to expect, and it has been responsible for many disappointments, for reasons not difficult to understand. It would be unjust to call in question the perspicacity of the statesmen who are to be credited with the attempt. In the aristocratic republics and en-

lightened monarchies of the eighteenth century, the making of treaties was entirely in the hands of a small group of persons who were sufficiently cultured and reasonable to understand the value of the plighted word and the dangers of a world where treaties would be nothing but scraps of paper, and firm enough in their seats as masters of the State to be able to undertake long-term obligations. Nowadays the State whose word is being pledged is the expression of the obscure, changing, restless, often contradictory will of enormous masses of people; it is, so to speak, a fluid State, represented by men and groups who are here to-day and gone to-morrow. It is as difficult to compel it to anything by force as to bind it firmly and enduringly to anything by its word. That is another reason why it is so difficult to-day to conclude a lasting peace after a long war. Still, even if our reversion to the eighteenth century has not brought its full results, it was essential to make the attempt. Force by itself will not suffice to maintain the balance of peace.

V

Europe thus lies to-day in a twilight phase which is no longer war but is not yet peace, and will not be peace for a long time to come. The bewildering disturbances in Germany form the

nightmare of this twilight state and will continue to do so for a considerable time. What are we to think of these disturbances? What can we expect them to end in?

If we study the unrest in Germany without prejudice, it is easy to see—and that is the very reason why it is so full of danger—that it springs from a kind of gigantic popular hallucination, a distorted vision of things, which the German people, or at least a part of the German people, are taking more and more seriously. Germany blames the peace for the evils really caused by the war, and the fate of the world turns upon this tremendous misconception. We should be very fortunate if all we had to do to cure the world of its troubles was to amend the faulty portions of the peace treaties. We need only call a conference of diplomats at Geneva or elsewhere. But suppose the treaties were revised, the Danzig Corridor restored, reparations cancelled, the ban on armaments removed . . . what then? Germany would still be a sick giant, as she is to-day, for her troubles arise from things far deeper than the errors or excesses of the peace treaties.

Even before the war Germany suffered profoundly from a condition of maladjustment. Her territory, resources, and capital were not sufficient for her population and its needs, both alike on the increase. She flung all her capital

into a tremendous, aimless, romantic war which has still further reduced her territory and her resources. Her maladjustment is far more serious to-day than it was in 1914. But it was the war and not the peace, whether it was a good one or a bad one, which aggravated her condition and which is to-day inflicting so much suffering on the German people: incurable unemployment, the ruin of the middle classes, enslavement by debt, crushing taxation, the dreadful overcrowding of the professions, the poverty of the intellectual classes, the wretched plight of agriculture, the excesses of State control. To this frightful discrepancy between aspirations and means, between needs and resources, we have to add the political disturbance provoked by the collapse of the monarchy. How extraordinary it is that anyone in Paris, London, and New York could have believed that the fall of the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs would be a domestic affair of the German peoples, which was of no concern to other nations except as regards the facilities it offered them in the struggle begun in 1914! Why, it was an enormous upheaval of the whole of Central Europe, whose effects will be felt for many generations to come! It will not be so hard and painful for Germany to learn to be a republic as it was for France. Time has done its work. It is an easier task to-day to set up a demo-

cratic republic on the ruins of an absolute or semi-absolute monarchy than it was at the end of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless it is still a complicated, arduous, and dangerous task, for reasons which will be explained in a later essay.

In these conditions of general maladjustment, the things that Germany needs and the obstacles to her obtaining them have gradually banked up until the very thought of them makes one shudder. No one could be surprised if almost any day the German people were to lose their heads amid the gulfs surrounding them on every side and, seeing no other way of escape, plunged into one of them in the attempt to leap across it. But that would mean some stupendous catastrophe, for neither a war nor a revolution would be of any use. The time is past when wars returned a profit and revolutions could cover their expenses by invading the neighbouring countries. The French Revolution still enjoyed that good fortune at the end of the eighteenth century because wars did not then require many soldiers, large armaments, and vast expenditure, whilst they might bring in a great deal of booty in the form of precious metals. If Germany took up arms again and even won the war, she would be obliged to lay out much more than she could ever take from the vanquished. She could ruin those nations around her who still

enjoy substantial means, but she could not save herself. She would only increase the present painful disparity between her population and her resources. It is clear that this disparity can only be lessened and obliterated by a new high tide of prosperity. Similarly, a revolution—whether of the Right or of the Left—would be a calamity even direr for Germany than for the rest of the world. A revolution in Germany would condemn a part of her population to starvation. Despite the destruction of her capital in the war, Germany has managed to support her enormous population in some sort of fashion since 1919 because she was able to obtain credit abroad. Revolution would dry up this credit; industry would be paralyzed, and though the problem of over-population would be solved, it would be by the slaughter of several millions of men.

Germany's troubles were born of the war, a romantic war, a war *aux allures déchainées* pushed to its furthest conclusions by the violent disposition of the Germanic peoples. An over-populated country without abundant capital cannot go to war nowadays without being ruined, whether it meets with victory or defeat. This applies not only to Germany but also to Russia and Italy. The conclusion is clear; for these ills there is only one remedy, peace. Peace and hard work, that is to say hard work and

time. Even if peace prevails, many years will have to pass before 'the enormous disparity between Germany's needs and her resources can be removed: but the task will take much longer or become utterly impossible if the labours of the new generations are interfered with by wars and revolutions.

VI

Studying the problem of peace as it presents itself to-day, we come to the same conclusion as with the problem of war: there must not be another European war, whether just or unjust, for another fifty years.

The object of war is peace. The eighteenth century thought that the way to attain this object more readily was to fix limits to war. The nineteenth century overthrew this principle and fancied that it could secure peace more rapidly by letting war stick at nothing. The nineteenth century was a very great century, but it was no more infallible than any other, and this time it was mistaken. To-day, twelve years after the end of the World War, we have the proof of it. The greatest achievement of the World War was that it supplied this proof. The more violent, furious, and terrible war becomes, the less easy and lasting is peace. Twelve years after the end of the World War a great Paris newspaper

has been grouping a certain number of items every day under the significant heading: "The Settlement of the Peace." The heading is in itself an emblem of our age. What sort of a peace is it that has still to be "settled" after twelve years? But "settling" here *means* trying to make a peace which has only been half made as yet. For twelve years we have been settling the peace, and we shall be doing so for a long time to come. We live in a twilight phase which is no longer war and is not yet peace; everything is vague, shifting, and ambiguous.

If in this twilight wars once began again there would be no stopping them. Our civilization can make war well enough, but it has forgotten how to make peace. War is not for us what it was in the eighteenth century, a rational method of settling questions between States that could not be settled by other means, but a mortal peril which might easily overmaster our reason and our will to live. If we are not very careful, war may get such a hold on us as to wreak our destruction. We may be forced to go on fighting with increasing fury and ever more formidable weapons, until we are drained of everything, through the sheer impossibility of making peace. What would then become of us, the peoples of Europe and America? This danger threatens everything: Christianity as well as

our civil and political liberties; the humanitarian spirit, all that was beautiful, noble, and humane in the French Revolution, as well as the high intellectual culture of which we are so proud.

The Kellogg-Briand Pact which outlawed war, paradoxical though it may appear as the outcome of so many centuries of war, answers a need which is both new and profound. It was dictated by the instinct of self-preservation of a strange period of history, an age which knows how to make war but has forgotten how to make peace. But the outlawry of war pronounced by the Pact must not take place on paper only; it must become an active reality. Of course, if the four great Powers at the head of Western civilization—France, England, Germany, and the United States—could unite over this common principle of no more war for any reason whatsoever for at least fifty years, and the settlement of disputes by any means whatever save war, the problem would be solved. At the present moment, the world is threatened with the violent secession of Germany. Germany seems to be succumbing more and more to the temptation to plunge into the unknown, to set out in quest of a new world, whose existence is very doubtful. If this secession were to take place it would renew on a spiritual plane the war of 1914. But France, England, and America, even without Germany, would still be powerful

enough to quell the impending upheaval if they determined and jointly agreed to do so. These three nations possess all the means—intelligence, ideas, technical skill, arms, wealth, liberty, and firmly established political institutions—of saving Western civilization from the internecine anarchy with which it is threatened. Without Germany's help, and against her opposition, the task would be harder, but it would not be impossible, and it would be even more creditable. All that is needed is the understanding and the will.

If the Germanic peoples choose to make their way through chaos towards the paths of the future, can we depend upon the three peoples in whose hands the fate of humanity lies to secure for this supreme work of defence the wise and careful collaboration of those social forces which have been at such bitter odds with one another ever since the French Revolution? The super-war arose from the political and social convulsions which have agitated Europe since the end of the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century war escaped from the control and direction of human reason because the conflicting parties, classes, and doctrines each tried in turn to use it as an instrument: the Revolution against the old régime, Bismarck and the Prussian monarchy against the Revolution of 1848. War did willing

service to both sides—that is to say, it served in turn whichever contrived to use it for his purpose with the greatest energy and the fewest scruples, while it craftily bided its time to ruin them both. Now that the human reason can put bounds to it no longer, war offers the same menace to both the old enemies alike, and stands ready to overwhelm them in a common ruin. War or peace: this is a problem as vital for the Vatican as for Wall Street, for the Labour Party as for the English aristocracy, for the Institut de France as for the Confédération Générale du Travail.

THE END OF MONARCHY

THE END OF MONARCHY

SEEN at close range, extraordinary things very often seem quite commonplace. How many generations have witnessed tremendous events and been scarcely aware of them! This is what has been happening for the last ten years to the generation now near or in the forties. One of the greatest events in the world's history has taken place and is taking place under their very eyes, and yet they do not see it.

What, then, is the event which one day, when our eyes are opened, will mark an epoch in history, and at which we are now the indifferent and unconscious lookers-on? It is the fall of one of the pillars of the world's history, the sudden, almost violent extinction of a form of government which for twenty-five centuries has played a decisive part in human affairs—monarchy. A new era in the world's history is really beginning before our very eyes, though they do not take it in. Round about 1900, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the world was still monarchical. The only republican continent was formed by the independent portions of America. The last of its monarchies fell in 1889, when the Emperor of Brazil

was deposed. But Europe and Asia were both monarchical continents, with the exception of two republics, France and Switzerland. Domination from Europe brought Australia, part of America, and almost the whole of Africa into what one might have called the great monarchical zone of the world. Monarchy seemed to be at the height of its splendour, and everybody predicted it centuries of life and greatness.

It was all an illusion. In ten years, from 1908 to 1918, a series of volcanic eruptions in the shape of revolutions and wars destroyed the central part and two-thirds of the wings of this enormous structure. The first took place in Asia, at Constantinople, with the rising of the Young Turks, who, in July 1908, compelled the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, to grant a constitution on Western lines. Then came a more violent one, in China, in 1911, which overthrew the Manchu dynasty. By the process of synergy, the volcanoes of revolution soon brought into great activity the volcanoes of war. The Young Turk revolution of 1908 brought about, between 1908 and 1912, the total emancipation of Bulgaria from her vassalage to the Sultan, the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary, and Italy's conquest of Tripoli. These three events led to the Balkan War of 1912-1913, from which sprang the World War, which completed the overthrow of monarchy in Europe and Asia.

In November 1914, England, by a stroke of the pen, deposed the former absolute sovereign of Egypt, the Khedive, and substituted a short-lived protectorate. Then in April 1917 came the stupendous collapse of the Russian monarchy, from the Baltic to the Yellow Sea. In 1914 the monarchies of Europe still formed a system which was united by a certain solidarity even when they were at war with each other. If the empire of the Czars had succeeded in surviving the war, it would probably not have tolerated a republic either in Austria or in Germany. In its downfall the Russian monarchy left a gap on the flank of the German and Austro-Hungarian monarchies, and into this gap both monarchies toppled in the following year, 1918. With increasing bewilderment the world saw the red flag which had already been hoisted over the Kremlin waving above Potsdam and Schönbrunn. But the end had not yet come. The catastrophic overthrow of the Romanoffs, the Habsburgs and the Hohenzollerns was to bring about the downfall of other thrones in Europe and to react upon Asia, whence the first shock had come. In Turkey the nominal constitutional monarchy which had taken the place of absolutism since 1908 was overthrown in its turn, and—which of us would ever have believed it possible?—a Turkish republic was established. Greece followed suit, and a republic arose once more

in the shadow of the Parthenon. Syria and Palestine became republics under the protection of France and England. Constitutional monarchies were established, under British influence, in Egypt and in Mesopotamia, complete with elections, parliaments, newspapers, clubs, popular demonstrations, and political parties.

And so the world became a vast graveyard of dynasties. The monarchies of Europe are now confined to the fringes of the continent. They mark out its circumference, so to speak, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, England, Spain, Italy forming a chain which remained continuous up to the spring of 1931. Then Spain made a break in the chain. "Well, it is only natural," the reader will say. "It is the culmination of the French Revolution, the natural outcome of the democratic movement which has been progressing steadily for the last century. It was only to be expected. What is there to be surprised about?"

People who live in a republic that is actually in being are apt to think that the transition from monarchy to republic is quite an easy and simple business. On the contrary, the crossing is always difficult and stormy. Which form of government is the better, a monarchy or a republic? The question has been briskly discussed for the last 150 years, but nobody seems

to have found a simpler and profounder solution than Jean-Jacques Rousseau's.

"If it is difficult for a great State to be well governed, it is much more so for it to be well governed by a single man; and everyone knows what happens when the king appoints deputies.

"One essential and inevitable defect, which will always render a monarchical government inferior to a republican one, is that in the latter the public voice hardly ever raises to the highest posts any but enlightened and capable men, who fill them honourably; whereas those who succeed in monarchies are most frequently only petty intriguers. . . . The people are much less mistaken about their choice than the prince is; and a man of real merit is almost as rare in a royal ministry as a fool at the head of a republican government. Therefore, when by some fortunate chance one of these born rulers takes the helm of affairs in a monarchy almost wrecked by such a fine set of ministers, it is quite astonishing what resources he finds, and his accession to power forms an epoch in a country.

"In order that a monarchical State might be well governed, it would be necessary that its greatness or extent should be proportioned to the abilities of him that governs."*

It would be difficult to make a better summary

* *The Social Contract*, Book III, Ch. IV (trans. Henry J. Tozer).

of the respective advantages and disadvantages of the absolute or semi-absolute monarchy, in which the control of the State is the hereditary privilege of a single family, and the republic or the English type of constitutional monarchy, which is only a mitigated form of republic. In an absolute or semi-absolute monarchy, the essential powers are left to the mere chances of birth, and subject to very little check, and they often fall into incompetent hands; but if the ruler happens to be a man of outstanding ability—an Alexander, a Henri Quatre, a Frederick II—or if he knows enough to choose a great minister—a Richelieu, a Talleyrand, or a Bismarck—the results may be extraordinary. If it happened often, what a wonderful thing monarchy would be!—but it happens only once every two or three centuries. . . . In a republic and in a parliamentary monarchy on English lines, it is almost impossible for any outstanding genius to seize the reins of government, for the mediocrity of the people from whom power has to be derived will always bar his way. But as power is always assigned by large groups of people and for a limited period, and as it is subject to continual checks and can easily be withdrawn, it is nearly always placed in the hands of persons who are capable of rendering real service. Republics and constitutional monarchies of the English pattern do not provide instances of those geniuses

who once in every two or three centuries appear from nowhere to enhance the prestige of absolute or semi-absolute monarchies, nor of the scandalous incompetence which has so often called forth the curses of the latter's unhappy subjects. A republic or a parliamentary monarchy on the English model can ensure the State a continual supply of men of reasonable ability, which in its turn ensures good government, so far as the imperfection of human nature allows.

Rousseau was therefore right in affirming the superiority of the republic to the monarchy. But in that case, if republics or monarchies of the English type are better forms of government than absolute or semi-absolute monarchies, why have they not ousted the latter long ago? How was it that absolute or semi-absolute monarchies still formed as late as 1900 the majority of the governments of the civilized world?

If a republic or the English type of constitutional monarchy represent better forms of government, they make demands upon their people beyond anything required by absolute or semi-absolute monarchies. They have to have parties with leaders, periodical elections, programmes, continual discussions. They must have an organized and vigilant public spirit, always healthy and active, and a majority of citizens who are both able and willing to

concern themselves not only with their own affairs, but with public affairs, whether as members of parliament or ministers, or as electors, members of political parties, or lookers-on and critics, helping to form the various currents of public opinion. There is nothing of this kind in absolute or semi-absolute monarchies. The great majority of the people have little or nothing to concern themselves with, all the authority and the essential powers being the monopoly of a family and of a small group of persons surrounding that family. If the people are not in control, or have only a very limited control, they can attend to their own business, troubling themselves very little, if at all, about public affairs, for which the responsibility is borne by others.

This division of responsibility between the mass of the people and a reigning family has many disadvantages, but it offers facilities valued by the masses in all countries and in every age. Otherwise there is no means of explaining why there have been so many absolute or semi-absolute monarchies, and why, as late as 1914, there were only three republics in Europe, the most civilized continent of the globe—France, Switzerland, and Portugal—one great constitutional monarchy—England—and five small ones—Belgium, Holland, and the three Scandinavian countries. Absolute monarchy has yet another

advantage which won it its success in the days of barbarism: it can continue to exist even amid the wildest anarchy. What is the principle that gives a republic or a constitutional monarchy its legal standing? Authority derived from the people. The government has a right to rule because the people have conferred power upon it. But before the power thus bestowed can be legitimate the people must be able to bestow it freely; that is to say, all parties must have the same rights of organization, discussion, and propaganda work, and none of them must be allowed to cheat at the game by resorting to force or bribery. It is essential, therefore, that there should be a strongly established and firmly upheld system of law to ensure a rightful liberty to all. In the absence of such a system, armed factions or groups of interests will be formed which will terrorize or corrupt the electorate, using violence or bribery to create a sham public opinion and bogus majorities. The power thus obtained is no longer legitimate, since the will of the people who conferred it has been falsified by violence or corruption; and then we have the worst of all governments, that which rests on force or bribery and has no true right to govern.

This is not the case with absolute or semi-absolute monarchies. When a nation recognizes the hereditary right of a certain family to exer-

cise supreme power without popular checks, that power will not be obeyed so readily in practice in times of anarchy or disorder, but it will not be disputed or disputable in law. The power of the king and the powers he delegates—that is to say, all the essential powers—remain legitimate, and this reduces considerably both the disadvantages of absolutism and the dangers of anarchy. The history of France affords striking proofs of this.

That is why we find absolute and semi-absolute monarchies in every age of barbarism and civilization, but republics and constitutional monarchies only in advanced civilizations. That is why a large portion of Europe—Spain, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Germany—not wishing to live like Russia under an absolute monarchy, and not being able to establish a republic like France and Switzerland, or a constitutional monarchy like England, Belgium, Holland, or the Scandinavian countries, remained until 1914 under an intermediate form of semi-absolute monarchy. It might be called “demo-monarchy.” The reigning families had granted the people constitutions and a certain amount of liberty, consenting to share their responsibilities with parliaments, while still retaining the essential powers and the supreme control of the State.* And, finally, that is why the transi-

* See note at the end of this paper.

tion from monarchy to republic is not so simple a matter as people in 'old-established republics imagine.

Yes, absolute or semi-absolute monarchy has fallen in Turkey, China, Russia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Greece, and Spain, and they have had to set up republics in its place; it is very shaky in Italy and in the Balkans, where it ought to be changed into the English type of constitutional monarchy. But before they could organize democratic republics or constitutional monarchies all these countries would have to form parties, develop a public spirit, a political organization, and a firmly established system of law. In scarcely any of them do these conditions yet exist; one or the other is always lacking. Hence arises a crisis which assumes its own particular forms in each country, but has the same cause in all cases. It is the same crisis as England passed through in the seventeenth century, and France in the eighteenth. It is the crisis produced by the transition from an absolute or semi-absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy or republic—that fearful hiatus when absolute or semi-absolute monarchy no longer exists or has lost all its power, and the constitutional monarchy or republic has not yet come into being.

This crisis is the key to the situation in which the whole world finds itself to-day. Take an

example, the most important we can find, the Russian revolution. To the whole of the Western world it presents an enigma which fills a great many people with fear—that of the triumph of Communism in an empire which everyone regarded as the stronghold of autocracy. But the enigma is cleared up when we realize that Bolshevism is only a phase of the great transition from monarchy to republic, the phase corresponding to Jacobinism in the history of the French Revolution. It would have been easier to understand the Russian revolution, and Europe and America would have been spared many terrors and many equally illusory hopes, if the age we live in had been a little better acquainted with the essence of the history, the real history, of the French Revolution. What has happened in Russia since 1917? When Czarism suddenly collapsed in April 1917, the first idea was to set up in its place a republic of the Western pattern on a basis of universal suffrage, conducted and controlled by a number of parties all enjoying equal rights in a régime of liberty. From April to October 1917, Russia laboured confusedly at organizing the parties which were to make the republic a going concern.

But the task was too complicated to be carried out extempore in the space of six months, especially in a vast country whose people were

of so many different races, the bulk of them still sunk in ignorance, and which had only just broken free from such ages of enslavement. Besides this, the whole legal structure—justice, police, army, and law—had collapsed together with Czarism in 1917, as happened in France after the taking of the Bastille. From April onwards, as in France after July 14, 1789, the whole empire was in a state of anarchy and swarming with armed bands. The one condition essential to the working of a democratic republic—a solid basis of law and order—was lacking. The results were seen at the end of October, when one of these small armed bands, organized by the extreme Socialists, brought off its sudden seizure of power. Like the Jacobins, the Bolsheviks were only a small minority, and having, like the Jacobins, attained power by a stroke of force which owed its success entirely to the prevailing anarchy, they could only maintain it, like the Jacobins, by preserving the absolute power which had belonged to the Czars, just as the Jacobin oligarchy had preserved that of the kings of France. For the divine right of Russian Communism, opposition became synonymous with revolt, criticism with an attempt against the safety of the State, discussion with high treason, as they had been for the divine right of Jacobinism.

Force may for a while be a sound enough

basis for power, but it does not in itself justify power, and no power can survive without due justification. That is why every power founded on force, not being upheld from within by the constitutional and juridical justification afforded by a universally acknowledged principle of legality, tries to secure political and moral justification from outside through the accomplishment of some enormous task or tasks. The Jacobins were fortunate enough to have this justification supplied them by the monarchies of Europe who threatened France with dismemberment. Up to a certain point, they could justify the power they held by using it in the defence of France, without committing themselves too deeply to any messianic promises of a new age. No doubt one can find in Robespierre or in Marat gleams of socialism or communism which enable certain historians to dress the Revolution up in the style of 1931 and maintain that it was meant to be first and foremost a social revolution. However that may be, it cannot be disputed that the First Republic found its chief patent of legitimation in war. Not having the same good fortune, the Bolsheviks, as we have seen in the paper on war, seized upon an idea set forth in a somewhat sketchy fashion by Karl Marx—that of the dictatorship of the proletariat, whose task it will be to create a new civilization. To justify themselves in their own eyes and before their people,

the Bolsheviks nurtured this seed and promised Russia and the world a universal regeneration.

The motives for the attempt at creating a new social order on the basis of Communism have their root in the necessity for justifying and legalizing, on the grounds of the unprecedented task to which it has been called, a power whose juridical and constitutional standing is questionable and is not acknowledged by a considerable number of Russians. But this power succeeded in extending its sway over the whole of Russia thanks to the anarchy which broke loose during the interregnum between monarchy and republic. The key to the Muscovite enigma is to be found in the political crisis brought about by the fall of the monarchy. The Russian Revolution is only the latest replica of the French Revolution, a rather clumsy replica with some variations due to race, geography, and history—on a larger scale as regards extent, but much more slow and chaotic. Its Jacobin phase is lasting a great deal longer. Though it would be an exaggeration to call Robespierre a forerunner of Lenin, one might regard Lenin as a Russian Robespierre, brought up on Karl Marx instead of Rousseau, a Robespierre who contrived to die in advance of Thermidor.

If it were only Russia that was wrestling with this crisis, and the rest of the world were quiet, there would be no cause for any special anxiety.

But the crisis extends over half the earth. The world to-day is divided into two parts. There are the countries where the French Revolution has run its course and reached its fulfilment; there are the constitutional monarchies or democratic republics in which the governing power is conferred by free and universal suffrage, and which, since the lawful status of their governments is beyond dispute, can guarantee their people a certain order, a certain justice, a certain liberty, a certain refinement of manners. These countries are, in Europe, England, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries; in Asia, probably Japan; in America, the United States; in Africa, the Union of South Africa and those states directly or indirectly dependent upon England, France, and Belgium; and finally Australia and New Zealand.

But there are also countries where absolute and semi-absolute monarchies have given place to powerless republics, or where the monarchy has grown so weak that it is no longer capable of governing, though it is still strong enough to save itself from being supplanted by constitutional monarchy. In such countries the principle that legalized the power held by the monarchies—hereditary right—has lost its force; the principle that should have replaced it—the sovereignty of the people—is not yet an effective reality. It is thus impossible to make either of these principles

the basis of power. Unable to turn to one side or the other, such countries are tempted to make hazardous experiments, to establish the dictatorship of a particular faction, and to discover some new legitimizing principle for power other than the monarchical formula, now obsolete, or the democratic formula, for which they are not yet ready. It is a difficult task, as Russia has shown. We find the title of republic given to a replica of Jacobinism, the dictatorship of an armed faction, not only in Russia, but also in Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Turkey, China, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and Peru. The democratic republic on the basis of universal suffrage has succeeded in establishing itself in Germany, Austria, Finland and Greece; but it has hardly yet begun to govern, being surrounded by dangers, and faced with the perpetual threat of being overthrown by armed factions. Great efforts are being made to establish a democratic republic in Spain; it is to be hoped that they will succeed. In Italy, Jugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Egypt, absolute or semi-absolute monarchy is no longer capable of governing, and the people are not yet capable of doing so, either from ignorance or from impotence. The military dictatorship of the Court in Rumania, Jugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Egypt, and Fascism in Italy are only different manifestations of this incapacity on both sides, the supreme crisis of monarchy on its deathbed, still refusing

to recognize its natural successor and give the power into its hands. -

This unrest is so widespread, and in certain countries so profound, that no nation and no person of any perception ought to look on it without concern. It would be useless to deceive ourselves about it. The whole of Western civilization is threatened, at the very zenith of its splendour, by the fearful gap which has opened between these two principles of authority, and into which so many nations are plunging as into a bottomless abyss. It is obvious that all those countries now standing between monarchy on the one hand and a republic on the other, and at a loss for a proper form of government, will not be able to escape from their dilemma. Either they will succeed in organizing constitutional monarchies or democratic republics similar to those already in being, or they will be obliged to venture further and further on dangerous courses in quest of those mysterious formulas for the new legitimation of authority which so many prophets have predicted but which nobody can define.

What will happen in that case ? That it will mean a profound disturbance of the life of the whole world is beyond question. The opposition, at present latent, between the two parts of the world, the part which has settled its form of government and the part which has not, will con-

tinue to increase. The nations will be divided into the elect who will enjoy in peace the greatest civilization created by mankind—order, liberty, wealth, knowledge, beauty, refinement; and the damned who will eat their hearts out under the yoke and in the bondage of a despotism entirely alien to their ways and aspirations, in the attempt to arrive at a new formula for order and happiness which is probably undiscoverable. Events in Russia may give us some idea of what might happen in the other countries of Europe and Asia which are seeking some fresh principle of justification for absolute power. It would become increasingly difficult for the two parts of the world to agree together, or even to understand one another; that sense of uncertainty which already has a paralyzing effect on so many of to-day's activities would only grow worse; the selfishness of the fortunate peoples, which is already too acute, would be still further intensified; every nation would incline more and more to consider solely its own interests; and the universal spirit of egoism would render every problem insoluble. Very probably the outcome of it all would be revolutions and wars which would bring the same misery alike upon the elect and the damned—revolutions which would engender wars and wars which would engender revolutions joining forces to bring the world back to barbarism.

It is a vital matter for the whole world that

that part of the world which is so ill at ease to-day because it cannot settle on its form of government should, instead of embarking on some arduous enterprise in search of new principles for the legitimation of authority, adopt and develop those institutions based on the principle of the sovereignty of the people which are already in operation elsewhere. For all their faults, these institutions are still the best that mankind has created up to the present; no one with a knowledge of history will doubt it for a moment. They may not stand comparison with some new ideal of perfection; but one cannot but admire and extol them if one takes the past as the standard by which they are to be judged. They are most certainly capable of improvement—provided we do not begin by destroying them in order to find better ones. Besides, it is not everyone who can make a great revolution; and there is nothing to show that the world is capable of finding any more trustworthy formulas for universal happiness than those bequeathed us by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Have we exerted ourselves enough to be worthy of any such renown? But if it is desirable that the world should progress towards unification as regards the principles and institutions of representative government, what are we to do to bring about that consummation?

A good deal might be said in answer to this

question. I shall content myself with calling attention to one point only—the most important of all—which is, that it is essential that the three peoples who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries initiated the enormous revolution of which we are witnessing the culmination to-day—England, France, and the United States—should grasp the situation and take action. General disorder, of a contagious and incurable kind, is destroying the cohesion of the world because these three peoples have not taken in the meaning of the almost miraculous dénouement of the World War, that portent of 1918, which saved them from total ruin. What did it mean when a republic was proclaimed both in Vienna and in Berlin in 1918, a year after a republic had taken its seat in the Kremlin? It meant two things: that after 130 years the French Revolution was victorious; and that the collapse of the three powerful dynasties with which the Revolution had so often crossed swords after 1792 had flung half Europe into a great political crisis, the crisis which in days gone by had stricken France on the fall of the monarchy and which afflicts every country during the transition from monarchy to republic. France, England, and the United States, the three Powers who were responsible for the peace, could have profited jointly by this supreme victory, because once all the Germanic peoples

and all the Slav peoples were under the rule of democratic republics, it would have been much easier to keep Europe at peace. In that event peace would have been founded on political unity. The advantage would have been particularly great for France, who had been the prime mover in the revolution which had just triumphed in so unexpected a fashion, and could therefore have aspired to a kind of moral hegemony over the Old World. But this advantage was accompanied by a danger—the difficulty of organizing new governments in so many countries might inspire in some cases a desperate resistance which might even produce a monstrous alliance between the old régime and the social revolution. The right thing to have done was to help all these peoples to emerge from the crisis and to adopt representative institutions; to prevent the old régime and the social revolution from joining forces against liberty; and to give assistance to the German Republic, the finest prize the war had won.

But none of them understood—neither the United States, nor England, nor France. What happened in France was truly extraordinary. If 1918 saw the supreme and unexpected triumph of the French Revolution, fortune decreed that at the moment of its triumph the government of France should be in the hands of a man who had spent his life in defending the principles of

that Revolution when the world seemed to have given up thinking on those lines for ever. If there was anyone living who ought to have recognized the event as almost a personal victory, that man was Clemenceau. . . . What mist clouded the mind of the weary old Titan at this supreme moment? The three Powers responsible for the peace concluded treaties with the losers without troubling whether the latter were going to be able to govern themselves and in what way. They withdrew into themselves, announcing that the internal affairs of other countries were no concern of theirs; and they left all those peoples to their fate and to the dangerous temptation to find a remedy for their ills by creating the world over anew. The consequences of this attitude are to be seen on all hands to-day, with the world everywhere entering upon the era of wholesale anarchy.

There must be a reaction and a change. The peoples who first set the political revolution afoot must guide it to its final goal. Shall I be asked by what means? The United States, England, and France together represent such an immense military, political, economic and intellectual power that they could, if they would, give both direct and indirect assistance to the peoples who are struggling painfully for their liberty, without seeming to exercise any humiliating protectorship over them. They could have

produced a great effect even on Russia if in her affairs they had looked further than their own immediate interests. How much stronger would that effect have been on other countries which have not seceded from the Western world !

But side by side with economic, political, and diplomatic action there would be the force of example, doctrines, and ideas. These three countries have newspapers, periodicals, and literatures which are read all over the world; they possess Academies, learned societies, universities, and schools of law of worldwide prestige. How much quieter, happier, and more prosperous the world would be to-day if ever since 1919 these three countries had through all these various channels repeated and repeated this message to all those nations at a loss how to govern themselves: " You are unhappy, because the hour of the great ordeal has struck for you in turn, a century later than it did for us. Do not lose heart; follow our example intelligently. The liberty we enjoy is not a perfect state, and we shall do our utmost to improve it; but we shall not allow any interference with its principle. It is a hallowed inheritance, a sacred torch of our civilization, the very essence of the great work on which the Western world has been engaged for the last three centuries. Do not be led away by the notion that it would be quite easy to do

better, to discover somewhere or other the legendary Happy Isles. The forms of government of which we provide the pattern are the best that the world has created up to the present. You will emerge triumphant from this ordeal by developing the principles which are the soul of free institutions, not by knocking them to pieces or turning your backs on them. Do not lose heart, battle your way in your turn along the path we have opened for you; and count on us to help you."

That is how they should have spoken. But New York, London, and Paris kept silent, or, if they spoke at all, they too tried to put the blame on liberty for the calamities piled up by the war. Their lamentations and accusations heightened the disorder prevailing in the countries which were in the throes of the great ordeal. Such a misrepresentation of the facts cannot continue unless Western civilization wishes to commit suicide. For a century Europe has sown broadcast the principles of political, intellectual, and moral liberty. Does she mean to burn the harvest just as it is ripening, under the delusion that she can sow it all anew, with still more marvellous seed? It would be a folly of which history has never seen the like. For a century and a half a great revolution has been transforming Western civilization. That revolution is nearing its climax, and it is the duty

of the peoples who took the initiative in it to help the others who have been drawn into the movement to accomplish the final stages.

NOTE ON PAGE 164.

This intermediate form of monarchy is the key to the history of Europe after 1848. One of the reasons why France and England understood and still understand so little of what is going on in the rest of Europe is because semi-absolute monarchy or demo-monarchy has been, and is still being, confused with parliamentary monarchy.

This confusion seems to have arisen from the fact that demo-monarchies or semi-absolute monarchies possessed Parliaments. It is true that they did, but the existence of a Parliament does not necessarily imply of itself the existence of a parliamentary system. A parliamentary system only exists where Parliament is the controlling power, as in France and England. It does not exist where, as is the case in all demo-monarchies, Parliament is an instrument more or less subordinate to the executive power and whose only duty is to check the accounts or submit remonstrances. In short, before one can tell how a country really is governed, one must determine whether it is Parliament that controls the executive power, or whether it is the executive power that controls Parliament. The former are parliamentary countries, the latter semi-absolute monarchies. This is why Fascism is not yet understood at all in England and France. They persist in thinking of Fascism as a reaction against the excesses of the parliamentary system, though that system had never existed in Italy. Until 1914, Italy was governed by a demo-monarchy, which was more closely related to pure absolute monarchy than the Prussian monarchy, for example. Having a solid dynastic basis, and being directed by a very small oligarchy

—a few dozen people in all—the executive power in no way depended on Parliament; it shaped the latter to its will; it had the initiative in all the main affairs of the State, and administered nearly all of them without a word to anybody, rendering nothing but a very limited account to the two Chambers. The King was the official head of this oligarchy, but Signor Giolitti was really in control. After the war, for many complicated reasons which it would be impossible to analyze here, this intermediate form of monarchy was no longer possible; it had either to be transformed into a real constitutional monarchy on English lines or to revert to the absolutism of 1815. The first of these would have been the right solution. The King, Signor Giolitti, and the small oligarchy which directed the affairs of State under their guidance, nominal or actual, had not the skill, the power, or the will—history will say which of the three nouns is correct—to transform the demo-monarchy into a constitutional monarchy; and so absolute monarchy has come back. The meagre powers of Parliament have been abolished together with the first timid developments of political freedom that the demo-monarchy had tolerated. Fascism is nothing but a return to the absolute monarchy of 1815. That the absolute powers are exercised by a minister instead of by the King does not in any way affect the facts. It was Richelieu who governed France under Louis XIII, but France was an absolute monarchy none the less for that.

**PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN
THE MODERN WORLD**

PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD

DURING the Egyptian campaign, when he was still only General Bonaparte, Napoleon visited the ruins of one of the great temples of the Pharaohs, and, whether fact or fiction, the story goes that he said :

“ If I were to take it into my head to proclaim myself the son of God, like Alexander the Great or one of these Pharaohs, what a roar of laughter there would be from one end of the world to the other ! No, it cannot be done nowadays ; people know too much for that.”

If the words were ever uttered, it was simply by way of a jest, nothing more. Nevertheless, the jest has a deeper meaning than its author perhaps supposed, for it defines in a picturesque manner the greatest revolution in history, the revolution wrought by Christianity, which destroyed for ever, throughout the Western world, the spirit of the Pharaohs. You will soon see what I mean by that expression.

Ancient civilization accomplished wonders : but in the sphere of politics it had not hit upon any other means of ensuring a certain order in

the world than that of setting authority above all dispute by investing it with divinity. Asiatic rulers were gods in flesh and blood, and no one might come nigh them save with the full ritual of a meticulous religious ceremonial. So far was the fiction carried that in certain countries—Egypt, for example—the monarchs had to marry their brothers and sisters so that their divinity should not be debased by any admixture of mortal blood. The aristocracies of the ancient world were watered-down monarchies, and they too sought to present themselves to the masses as being of superhuman origin and essence. When we read that Julius Cæsar claimed to be descended from Venus, we think that it was merely a joke. But he was not the only one, and he was not joking; and even if he himself did not really believe what he asserted, he hoped at least that others would take him seriously. The ancient aristocracies were, like the monarchies, based on hocus-pocus of this kind.

If the kings and nobles were gods, the State they governed was also divine, superior in essence to the miserable ruck of humanity who owed it obedience. Consequently, the State was an end in itself; it did not exist to serve its subjects, but to receive their service, perfect and unassailable in power, insatiable of adulation and reverence, and relentless towards any attempts at criticism or resistance. Even in

republics, discussion and criticism were not allowed, except within very restricted limits. Since there was nothing above the State with a right to judge it, it was without fault or flaw; it was beyond good or evil, and was not bound to respect either the code it imposed on its subjects or that which its subjects considered imperative in their relations with one another. As the right to violate the ordinary moral code was the most conspicuous proof of its supremacy, the ancient State took a certain pride and vainglory in asserting its power by the display of all those attributes which bring suffering and terror: harshness, violence, rapacity, and ferocity. The ancient State was bloody in its deeds by reason of a certain fiendish pride of power. It did not take life because the task in hand required it, and strictly to that extent, but in order to show that it was above the common herd. This explains the savagery of ancient manners even in Greece and Rome, whose civilizations were so glorious from other points of view.

Such was the Pharaoh spirit—I propose to give it that name—of the ancient State. All the efforts of Asiatic wisdom, of Greek thought, of Roman might, had only succeeded in tempering it slightly at the heart of the Roman Empire. The Roman emperors were still flesh-and-blood deities who squandered human lives without stint; but they contented themselves with a more

human, less degrading form of worship than the Ptolemies, the kings of Persia, and the Pharaohs. They did not, for instance, marry their sisters. That was all that the ancient world had gained under Rome and the Empire. Who can tell what humanity must have suffered under these frightful tyrannies which compelled them to revere iniquitous laws, barbarous customs, cruel institutions, as though they were perfect, and to pay worship to madmen, scoundrels, and men cankered with the most abject vices? To know it we should have to call from their slumber centuries now laid to rest for ever with the sorrows that consumed them. It was the heaviest yoke ever laid on the shoulders of mankind. Liberation, wholesale liberation had to come. It was brought about by Christianity.

The ancient civilizations had made social institutions a mixture of the human and the divine, degrading alike to humanity and divinity, by sanctifying those imperfections in the ruling power which were too difficult to correct. Christianity separated the two elements and changed the face of the world. God alone was perfection; all that mankind had created, riches, wisdom, power, were now merely means of approaching perfection, provided they were well employed: they were human things, perishable and corruptible, which might equally well be turned to the service of good or evil.

The State lay in the shadow of God and the moral law which He had revealed through the Scriptures and their inspired writers, to which all men, the kings and the mighty ones not excepted, owed obedience. The individual was no longer the instrument of the State; the State was the instrument of the individual. The individual and his salvation, that is to say the perfecting of his moral being, became the supreme end towards which all else, even the power of the State, must be directed. If kings and nobles still remained, they were no longer kings who were gods, or aristocrats descended from Mars or Venus, but weak and pitiful mortals like the rest. God would require more of them for the very reason that He had conferred upon them the dread privilege of wielding authority over their fellow-men. Man had acquired the right to denounce the imperfections of the world—its manners, institutions, laws—provided that he made the necessary effort to improve it. The era of liberty had begun, and with it the humanization of manners. Savage cruelty was no longer a divine attribute of the State, but the most shameful of its failings. When we read to-day in the Sermon on the Mount that the meek shall inherit the earth, we do not realize the meaning those words had for people then alive who had only known a world lorded over by fierce and bloodthirsty despots. It was the

grand challenge to the Pharaoh spirit of the ancient world, which proclaimed the coming of the wonderful humanization of manners we enjoy to-day.

No, our bells can never ring peals enough each year on Christmas Day to celebrate what that day stands for, the opening of this new era. . . . To-day, after twenty centuries, we can survey in their splendid totality the consequences of that liberation. What was it that from the twelfth century onwards kept the Christian peoples of the earth from repose, caused them to work like a leaven in mankind and produce in every century one of those tremendous innovations which change the history of the world ? Think of what has been accomplished in those eight hundred years ! The Christian peoples have discovered, conquered, and populated the earth. They have invented printing and firearms. They have been the founders of science and have wrested from Nature her most fruitful secrets. They have adorned Europe with an incomparable wealth of masterpieces of art. They have carried the principle of the moral equality of men to its furthest conclusions by creating democratic society and democratic government. They have succeeded in subordinating force to intelligence and justice to an extent not previously attained by man. They have invented the steam engine, discovered electricity and made it serve them, and

flooded the world with fabulous riches. What was the well-spring of this insatiable craving for activity and perfection, so startling in its contrast with the passivity of the great peoples of the East ?

That craving sprang from the great initial discovery that man is not the slave of man; that he is, that he must be, the servant of God alone, the servant of an ideal of perfection superior to all, imperative upon all—rich and poor, learned and ignorant, humble and powerful. All the greatness of the white races comes from that sublime Judæo-Christian idea whose light was shed over the world from Palestine through the agency of the Bible and the great teachers of the Pharisees. Through its influence the State lost its divine character and put itself at the service of mankind; the spirit of criticism and the desire for better things were given the freedom of the world; the thirst for truth and justice increased with every effort made to quench it. The nearer men came to the fount of truth in every sphere, the more they chafed at their ignorance, and the wider seemed the gulf which separated them from the entire and absolute truth for which they so ardently yearned. The more humane they made their manners, the more they fostered justice, the more they did to redress the wrongs blind fortune multiplies among mankind, the more they felt that the world is but the clumsy

counterfeit of a perfection the unsatisfied craving for which plagues us all our lives and makes our lives worth living. 6

Thus the life of the Christian peoples became the perpetual renewal of a task which will never be accomplished, a kind of permanent revolution whose goal recedes further the more man strives to reach it. But if the greatness of the white races has its deepest source in the Judæo-Christian religious revolution, what is the import of the laments we hear regarding the progressive dechristianization of the world? The matter is engrossing the attention of eminent thinkers, and it has been said that "Christianity is on its deathbed." The various churches in Europe and America are equally perturbed. Roman Catholics and Protestants alike readily agree in detecting and denouncing a spirit hostile to Christianity in modern civilization. Even laymen hesitate to-day when they ask themselves if ours is still a Christian civilization. What are we to think of gloomy utterances like these?

The problem is one of the most serious of all those our epoch has to face. If Christianity is the deepest source of our greatness, and if Western civilization is becoming dechristianized, one would conclude that the spring is drying up and that our decadence has begun. This view is taken in certain circles, both lay and ecclesiastical. It seems to me, however, that we

are confronted with a more complicated phenomenon—a strange paradox, unique in history, which we must take into account if we are to understand the period in which we live. It is this: For the last three centuries Western civilization has been moving back towards paganism, and yet at the same time it has been growing more and more Christian. For the last three hundred years it has been developing its Christianity in certain spheres and its paganism in others. Our whole existence is governed by the impact of these cross-currents. Let us try to explain how and why, and to divine what we may expect as a result.

It has become the custom to regard the Renaissance as an artistic and literary revolution. But the Middle Ages had produced a fine literature and wonderful works of art. They did not need the Greeks and Romans to teach them how to write, paint, sculpture, and build churches and palaces. One might even wonder if the Renaissance was not really a period of decadence from the artistic point of view. For my own part, I do not hesitate to admit that the painting and architecture of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries in Italy seem to me to possess more originality and vigour than the imitations of classical models which were so numerous from the sixteenth century onwards.

Why, then, was Europe seized at that time by

the craze for unearthing from their hiding-places the few Greek and Roman books and remains which had survived the collapse of the ancient world? Why did she revere them as the sources of the highest wisdom and the patterns of perfect beauty?

It was because those old books could teach her how to wage war and frame governments. Christianity, making the perfection and the salvation of the individual its chief concern, had demilitarized Europe and stifled the political spirit. The ancients, on the other hand, by deifying the State, had created a great political and military civilization; even after the lapse of so many centuries, therefore, their governments and their armies could supply a pattern for a civilization which had lost the arts of politics and war. Europe's infatuation for the Greeks and Romans dates from the sixteenth century, when she began her great political and military reorganization. She admired them in all things, even those arts in which the Middle Ages had excelled them, because they taught her how to organize armies, how to wage wars, and how to build up great States.

At the time when Europe set about this task, Western civilization had no desire for any kind of breach with Christianity. It did not even imagine that there was, for instance, any possible contradiction between the use of fire-arms and

the Gospel. But its efforts to learn the arts of government and war were accompanied by the erection of the greatness and power of the State into an ideal equal if not superior in consequence to the religious truth and perfection which had been the ideal of the Middle Ages. Although it did not deify the State, it became more exacting towards the individual, and the sacrifices he was called upon to make in the service of the State were greater than any asked of him in the service of God, or at any rate as great. If it did not make actual gods of its great kings, ministers, and warriors, it gave them a full share of the veneration which during the Middle Ages had been reserved for the saints. It subordinated morality more and more to State policy, and began to consider whether it too could not make religion into an *instrumentum regni*. All this was sheer paganism.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, industry and commerce added their influence to that of the growing prestige of the State in paganizing Western civilization. Christianity has always been characterized, if not by a contempt for riches, at any rate by a certain indifference or aloofness towards them as the instrument of the baser passions, the consolation of second-rate souls, and a weakness hidden under the outward shows of a simulated strength. From the eleventh century to the sixteenth, art,

philosophy, and geographical discovery made much greater progress than industry, commerce, and agriculture. The seventeenth century saw the beginning of the colonial exploitation of America, the first great world development of commerce, and the first efforts for the improvement of industry and agriculture. It saw, in other words, the triumph of human exertions, and the forging of so many fresh chains to bind man to the earth.

Thus, from the sixteenth century onwards, Western civilization was carried back towards paganism by the influences of war, politics, industry, commerce, and science. It was not, however, dechristianized; on the contrary, it grew more and more Christian. Century by century, from the sixteenth onward, it became both more pagan and more Christian at the same time. It followed the pagan tradition in once more deifying the State and making its greatness and power the supreme ideal to which the individual must sacrifice everything, even life itself, but it also carried the Christian principle of the sovereignty of the individual to its furthest conclusions as regards freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, and political freedom. The French Revolution marks the point where these two cross-currents met, forming in their encounter a colossal whirlpool which a century and a half later had engulfed the whole world. The French

Revolution imposed conscription on Europe and created the great bureaucratic centralization of modern States; that is to say, it carried the subordination of the individual to the State much further than the States of the old régime or even those of antiquity had done. But it proclaimed the rights of man and recognized once and for all the inviolable prerogatives of the individual in relation to the State. The nineteenth century, born of the French Revolution, was at once the most Christian and the most pagan of all centuries. Its humanitarianism was nothing but a secularized and popularized version of Christianity which penetrated deeply into society and the State, into manners and institutions. Its liberalism was likewise a fruit of the great Christian tree, for it endeavoured to substitute persuasion for compulsion in all human relations. Modern democracy itself is the child of Christ. Nietzsche is right, from his point of view, when he accuses Christianity of having destroyed the only true aristocracies the Western world has known, the aristocracies of antiquity. Once all men became the sons of God, it followed that aristocracy and monarchy could no longer rank as divine institutions, unshakable in their principle; they became merely human devices, valued only according to the services they were capable of rendering.

At the same time, however, Western civiliza-

tion succeeded in creating the most perfect specimens of the State raised to godhead by its power over the individual: the State which can compel tens and even hundreds of millions of men to lose their sleep, to study, to toil, to give their money and their lives without stint for wars on a monstrous scale; to let themselves be crammed by schoolmasters, ill-treated by overseers, bullied by sergeants, squeezed dry by tax-collectors; to wear, in the century of liberty, the uniform of a fourfold subjection—to school, labour, State, and army. Under such sovereigns as Frederick II or Louis XIV, or even under the Roman Empire, deified in the persons of its emperors, the power of the State was not supreme, but almost non-existent, if you compare what it could do then with what it can do to-day, when it can even prohibit drinking! Napoleon was wrong when he complained that a ruler's occupation was gone in the modern world because he could no longer exploit the tricks and pretences of the false political religions of olden days. The God-Kings of Thebes, Nineveh, Babylon, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome never exercised any such power over the common herd as that enjoyed by modern States, the offspring of liberty and mandatories of reason.

Thus, during the whole of the nineteenth century, Western civilization continued to blend more and more closely the pagan conception of

the divinity of the State with the Christian conception of the free and sovereign individual. It let the two conceptions contend with one another, for it could not prevent their mutual antagonism from breaking out; but it did not allow the conflict to end in the complete destruction of either; it was even reluctant to have it admitted officially that they were antagonistic. Accordingly, we live in a state of permanent disharmony. The family, social life, manners and morals bear the stamp of Christianity; politics and war draw their inspiration from the classic and pagan tradition; law, literature, philosophy, art and history are subjected to the competing influences of both. The Christian spirit in social life and manners clashes continually with the pagan spirit in war and politics, in confused and muffled encounters, of which the real significance almost always escapes us.

It would be useless to deny that this disharmony brings a certain confusion into our lives, which is particularly noticeable in the policy of States and in the individual conscience. What is the State—an end or a means? That is the paramount question on which all else depends. Paganism and Christianity had each given a clear and definite answer. Paganism said that it was an end. Christianity replied that it was a means. Our own age, however, cannot give an answer either way. All social classes,

all schools of philosophy, all political parties try to maintain perpetually an attitude of ambiguous indecision which will allow them to avail themselves of both doctrines. The parties which represent the rich are no more explicit than those representing the working classes; the Universities and the Academies do not express themselves any more clearly than the congresses of the Socialist party. As a rule, the classes, groups, and parties which are in Opposition are Christian; they uphold the individual and his sacred rights against the omnipotence of the State. No sooner do they come into power, however, than within twenty-four hours they are converted to paganism; they discover that the State is everything, and that all things must serve it and bow before it.

But the disharmony lies also and above all in ourselves. In every country of America and Europe we all think of ourselves as a single people—American, English, German, French, Italian, Russian—whereas in reality there are two races in every country, the Judæo-Christians and the Græco-Romans, and most of the troubles of our times spring from the opposition between these two races. These dissensions are all the more involved and 'obscure, because nowadays, whichever we are, Judæo-Christian or Græco-Roman, we are usually quite unaware of it; and there are no clear and unmistakable

signs to show which race a man really belongs to. At bottom the difference is one of feeling. There are some people for whom success, power, and riches carry their own justification. Their tendency is always to believe, in all good faith, that in any dispute whatever the winner is the one who had right on his side, and that he won because he was in the right; that misfortune always implies some kind of failing, and that success is invariably an index to merit; that the whole social hierarchy in all its ranges represents exactly an ascending scale of genuine superiority; and that power can never err. If the facts compel them to own that a highly placed personage has acted foolishly or wickedly, they make excuses for him and put the blame on his associates or advisers. If they are forced to admit that success, power, and riches have sometimes been acquired by improper means, they condone such methods as regrettable but inevitable mischances. They are Græco-Romans or pagans, people for whom, as in the essentially political civilizations of the ancient world, morals are subordinate to action and success.

Then there are others who are less easily dazzled by success, power, and riches, who are always impelled to call them to account, to examine the means by which they were obtained and the ends to which they are directed. They are the people who hunger and thirst after

righteousness, to whom it was promised in the Sermon on the Mount that they should be filled. Still awaiting the fulfilment of the promise, they see the unrighteousnesses in which this world abounds, occasionally they exaggerate them, they suffer by reason of them and yearn to redress them. Such people are Judæo-Christians, for whom action is subordinate to morals.

So we live side by side, Christians and pagans, the unconscious inheritors of a dualism which forms the essence of our whole history. Borne along on the rushing stream of modern activity, we imagine that we are all of one mind, while in reality we are nothing of the kind. But how many dramas in public and private life find their origin in this unsuspected dualism ! Many people were surprised when, after having devoted part of my life to the study of history, I wrote a novel. The fact is that I was attracted at the time by the subject of this vast struggle, the most dramatic, the most fruitful, and the least apprehended conflict of the modern world, and it seemed to me that the novel form would provide an excellent means of depicting it in a typical instance. It is the story of a family. The father, an intelligent and energetic business man, has made a great fortune and has become very powerful. He is not by any means a villain and has a certain fund of kindness, but he is a Græco-Roman, that is a man of action, of

a political turn of mind, for whom all the means necessary to secure success are justified by the mere fact that they are necessary. His wife is a Christian whose lofty and noble moral sense would never allow her to accept the plea of necessity in justification of wickedness and falsehood; she would sooner choose ruin and death. The son wavers between father and mother; his mother's moral elevation is mingled in him with the masterful egoism of his father. The family has reached the very height of power and wealth. It appears to be united and has not the least suspicion of the dreadful rift that is spreading within. . . . Something happens which brings it to light, and the family's happiness is destroyed by a conflict of which the true significance is unrealized even by its victims.

But it is not only families that are thus disrupted, for the same rift sometimes makes itself felt in States. In every country, both in England and in America, there are occasionally political conflicts that reach an extreme pitch of violence because the real point at issue is not any political or economic interest, but a moral principle. Look into any of them, and you will find the great struggle between paganism and Christianity, between the divinity of the State and the sovereignty of the individual.

This perpetual struggle is, after all, one of the

glories of our civilization. It was this that enabled the nineteenth century to create a civilization in which order and liberty mutually supported each other, and the highest development of the individual counterbalanced a development of the power of the State the like of which no other age had ever seen. This is so far the greatest achievement in history. But we can only enjoy this unique estate at the price of a continual struggle with ourselves. The sentry must always be on the alert; woe betide him if he should drowse even for a moment, for the enemy is always there. . . . And it is for that reason that we should be specially watchful at the present moment. It is no use shutting one's eyes to the truth because it is unpleasant; for the last fifteen years, following on the colossal struggle which plunged the whole world into confusion, paganism has been gaining ground on every hand. Every country is showing the tokens of it more and more. Paganism is seen triumphant in those numerous countries in which the power of the modern State is beginning to degenerate into tyranny, to use money and armed force to suppress every kind of freedom, even freedom of thought and conscience. It is triumphant in the increasing subservience towards power that is spreading everywhere, and particularly in the morbid admiration for every adventurer, past and present, who has

raised himself to power by the use of force and disregard for law; and in the rage for violence which has seized upon all classes and peoples nearly everywhere as if the only way they could feel their power was by oppressing another class or people. It is triumphant in that mystical attitude towards war and bloodshed which still inflames too many imaginations; in that kind of voluptuous brutality with which our manners, our amusements, and our tastes are beginning to be imbued; and in the growing influence which money is exercising on politics and on intellectual life. Fertile, powerful, and useful as it is when employed to organize and direct the productive efforts of human toil, money becomes sterile and deadly in its effects when it seeks to direct States or to corrupt the intellect of the world.

All these aberrations, excesses, and errors are so many revivals of the Pharaoh spirit, brought about by the war. We must struggle against such revivals by making a living thing in the minds of men of Christ's unfailing promise that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled, that the meek shall inherit the earth. In so far as it applies to the concrete realities of our existence here on earth, that message sets before us, as the goal of our efforts, a world in which human relations shall be regulated more and more by reason and justice; in which authority shall not be based on fear but on

sincere respect and willing submission; in which mankind shall be cured of that mania for murder and destruction which has stained all past centuries with blood, and which is the source of man's weakness and unhappiness, since every evil passion—pride, ambition, cupidity, hatred, vengeance—finds therein its climax and its sustenance. For three centuries, in the face of vast opposing tendencies, that message has been on the way to becoming a reality for part of the human race. Little has been achieved if we contrast the confused and inconsistent reality with the splendour and divine clarity of the promise; but an immense amount if we compare our present estate with the days when the Pharaoh spirit held sway. We have passed the lowest level of history when man was the slave of his bloodthirsty fury, and of the terror which his own ferocity inspired, and are rising purified alike from ferocity and fear towards the sunlit peaks of freedom, knowledge, and serenity. Let us take care not to fall back into the region of terror and slavery. Let us be ready to struggle with ourselves with all the energy at our command. And lest this energy fail, let us always remember that man rose to freedom when his bloodthirsty passions gave way before the meekness which shall inherit the earth, and that though the Christian world has itself been ravaged by frightful wars, Christianity is the negation of war.

TRANSATLANTIC TALKS

I

THE PURITAN AND THE SKY-SCRAPER

“No, I’m not at all excited about the crisis. We’ve had so many of them. I can remember the crisis in 1922 and in 1914 and 1907 and 1893. They all followed the same cycle. There is always a moment of despair when you think that the world is coming to an end and all is lost. And then you have to own up to yourself that the end of the world is a long way off yet. Sudden losses may drive you to despair, but you end by realizing that the most sensible thing to do is to start afresh, to set to work again to win back what you have lost. You stop bemoaning your fate, you turn to the future, you try your hand at something new, and because you go carefully it succeeds. These first successes wipe out your past disappointments and give you fresh courage. In a few years’ time you suddenly find yourself as prosperous as ever again. That is the history of every crisis, and it will repeat itself once more; it is only a matter of time. That is why I remain perfectly calm in spite of the growing pessimism all round. Nothing extraordinary is going to happen in America in

the next few years. We shan't see any of the calamities so many people are prophesying."

The American who was talking to me in this strain in his New York office was a man between fifty and sixty, one of those Puritans, simple and clear in their notions and unshakable in their convictions, who remind anyone who comes into close relations with them of a rock. Everything about him conveyed an impression of a massive solidity: the thick-set body of medium height, the bulging brow, and above all the bare round skull which looked like a ball of pink marble. It looked as though, if you hit it with a hammer, the hammer would bounce off it.

Like all the notions which had found a home beneath this arching cranium, the optimism expressed in the above speech was simple, clear, and unshakable. I felt that it would be useless to try to make any impression on it by means of argument. I replied without any hope of convincing him.

I began by objecting that this time the crisis arose from far deeper and more complex causes.

"Don't forget that at the bottom of all this immense upheaval there is the World War. The other crises were only a reaction against certain excesses in industry and commerce, a natural and healthy reaction which set matters

right. To-day we are suffering the consequences of the colossal destruction of capital caused by the greatest war in human history."

"The war may have ruined Europe, or some parts of Europe," the optimist replied without hesitation, "but it made us rich. Even in the existing depression we are much richer and have a much higher standard of living than when you first came here twenty years ago."

"True, but the question is whether your new wealth has come to stay. You grew rich while nearly the whole of Europe and part of Asia were spending on wars and revolutions the hoarded wealth of fifty years. Now Europe and Asia are ruined, precisely because they have squandered too large a portion of their capital. Their poverty is reacting on you. One people may profit financially by another's ruin, but only for a certain time; it can only grow richer continuously and permanently if all the rest of the world does likewise. The world has become a unit. Its peoples are interdependent."

"That's another of the fixed ideas you Europeans have. The world's a unit. Are you really certain? Do you know the figure for the exports of the United States as compared with her total trade? Under 10 per cent. Even if the world grew so impoverished that it could not buy any of our products, the problem would simply boil down to finding an outlet at home

for less than 10 per cent. of our production. Do you think that we could not do that ?”

He gave a vigorous shrug of the shoulders. Anyone who imagined the task to be beyond America's powers seemed a fool worthy at most of a contemptuous pity. But despite the disdain with which he backed it, his assertion was open to dispute. I replied:

“You are simplifying things too much. We will admit that your exports represent less than 10 per cent. of America's total trade. But that is because you manufacture yourselves nearly everything necessary for home consumption. You have a very large number of industries that export nothing, that concentrate entirely on the home market. It is nevertheless the fact that your prosperity depends upon certain staple commodities—oil, cotton, copper, grain, silver, tobacco, coal, iron—and that these commodities depend on the world market.

“When is the United States prosperous? When she can sell all she produces at very high prices, as has been the case these last ten years. Then your farmers and everybody connected with your mining industries make a lot of money; and when they have plenty of money they spend freely, they buy motor-cars, pianos, wireless sets, they travel, they fill the cinemas. Money circulates, everyone is prosperous. But when the price of cotton, grain, and all the rest comes

down, people make very little money or none at all, and everything is at a standstill as it is at present. But the price of all these products is a world price; it is bound to come down if the world is ruined and penniless as it is to-day."

"But do you think the United States could not consume at home the bulk of what she now sends abroad?"

"I think she could. Obviously, of all the peoples of the earth, you are the one which could most easily support itself on its own resources. You have everything. But I also think that if you shut yourself in behind a kind of Great Wall of China, you will no longer be able to live as you are living to-day, as you have lived these last fifteen years, when all the riches of the earth came flowing into this country."

My companion reflected a moment, then with an abrupt gesture he changed the field of the discussion.

"Don't let us get off the point and start chopping logic. What does it come to at bottom? We can increase our population year by year as much as we please without spending a cent; we have only to turn on the tap of immigration a little more. Our wealth has made a great impression on you, but you must always remember that we are only at the beginning of it, that so far we have only exploited a very tiny part of our natural resources. We have an enormous

amount of capital at our disposal, more than we can utilize. We have whole armies of engineers, inventors, and constructors. The technical advances made here every year are astounding. It is almost like magic. We should be compelled to go on getting richer and richer even if we did not want to. We are no longer masters of our destiny; the momentum of our activity is carrying us further and further. . . .”

“That is to say,” I replied, smiling rather maliciously, “you can no longer control the machine you have made. Take care: it might run into some obstacle in its mad career and smash itself to pieces.”

“What obstacle? There aren’t any. The runaway, driverless machine you are afraid of is the aggregate of human wealth-producing activities. Why be afraid if these activities become more and more productive? Can there be too much wealth? There is and always will be so much poverty in the world!”

“True, but it was this beautiful optimism which led us to our present pass—millions of unemployed everywhere; agriculture, industry, and commerce being carried on at a loss; nations dying of starvation and millions of farmers in despair because they cannot sell their grain.”

“It is a passing disturbance. The flat absurdity of the situation is a guarantee that it cannot last. Besides, it is even more of a

psychological phenomenon than an economic phenomenon. You know very well that money is accumulating in the banks of all countries, and here more than anywhere else. What does that mean? It means that people still have enough money to buy all the commodities that no one can manage to sell. Then why don't they buy them? Why do they prefer to save up their money and let it accumulate in the banks? It is because they fear they will need it one day; because they are afraid of the future. It is a kind of morbid inhibition. . . ."

"It would be morbid if the fear of the future were only a foolish fancy," I replied. "But supposing it were warranted?"

My companion was silent for a moment. Suddenly he rose, went to one of the windows of the room in which we were conversing, and beckoned me over to him. I went across and looked down upon New York, gleaming in the liquid gold of a lovely May morning. We were on the eighteenth floor of a building which, though it could not claim to be a sky-scraper, towered above a multitude of lower buildings. Beneath us, as far as the eye could see, lay an ocean of roofs and buildings. But in front of us, supreme, unparagoned, dominating the whole town and overwhelming us on our eighteenth storey, the silver mass of the Empire Building soared into the sky.

The Empire Building is the tallest sky-scraper that has yet been built. It is situated in 33rd Street near Fifth Avenue. It is higher than the Eiffel Tower. It is in the form of a tower with concave walls, and as its structure is supported by a framework of nickel steel, it sparkled in the sun that day like a silver mountain. It had just been completed, and the opening ceremony had taken place a few days before. It had been rather a gloomy affair, for the colossal building which was to house thousands of offices was still almost unlet. My companion drew my attention to the tower at the very summit, looking quite tiny on top of the enormous structure.

“What do you think of the men who built that?” he said. “Were they mad?”

I did not answer, but my companion smiled.

“Yes, you too think they were mad. You needn’t hesitate to say so. The whole of New York, the whole East, the whole West, the whole of America thinks the same. Fancy putting up a building over a thousand feet high that 25,000 people could come and work in every day, spending fifty-two million dollars—how much is that in those miserable francs or those wretched lire of yours that are worth so little?—and after all that, to have the monstrous thing standing practically empty! So far its only use has been for people to go up it, as you do the Eiffel Tower,

to see Manhattan, the Hudson, and the sea from the top. You can go to the top for a dollar, and the view is very fine. From up there a car looks no bigger than an insect. Have you been up?"

I nodded. My companion smiled as he spoke, as if he were telling a joke. He went on, looking at me with eyes twinkling with malice:

"Yes, anyone would have to be mad, stark staring mad, to go in for freaks of that kind. All New York thinks so and says so. But for my own part, though I am not an old man yet, I have lived long enough to have accumulated quite a store of instructive recollections. I remember very well when the 'Equitable,' the famous insurance company, put up its building. It looks small enough now, but in its time it seemed to be overdoing things as much as the Empire Building. It, too, was practically untenanted when it was first opened, and remained so for a year or two. It only secured its first tenants after a great deal of difficulty by lowering the prices. Then, as now, everybody said that the men who built it were certifiably insane. They wondered how anybody could be so short of common sense. Well, years went by, and one by one the floors began to be inhabited, and gradually, one by one, they became full up; in another year or two there was not even a corner to be had. In short, it was a triumphant

success ! What had been required to make it so ? Nothing but a little patience ! I tell you, the same thing will happen with the Empire Building. It is only a question of time and patience. Prosperity will return, and the public will absolutely besiege the enormous building that is now standing empty."

My companion was no longer arguing in defence of his optimism; he had lapsed into prophecy. His vision had outsoared considerations of possibility and impossibility. Nevertheless, the argument he had used to convey his expression of faith gave such an opening for a counterstroke that his opponent could not resist the professional temptation to take advantage of it, futile as he felt a verbal contest on this footing to be.

"You may be right. The resources of our age and your country are so great ! The world will not come to an end because Europe made a tremendous war and a rickety peace, or because America let herself be dazzled by the mirage of endless prosperity. But, even if your prophecy came true, it would not alter the fact that your argument is sophistical and fallacious. The proof is that one can carry it further *ad absurdum*. Because thirty years ago somebody made a good thing out of building sky-scrapers thirty or forty storeys high, you argue that it is quite all right to build one a hundred and two

storeys high to-day, and that if we bide our time it will find tenants just as the others did ! But why stop there ? Carry the argument further. In another thirty years it will be all right to build a sky-scraper two hundred storeys high ; in fifty years' time it can be four hundred storeys high, and so on. You will agree that this is absurd. Man is a limited being. There is a limit to all he does, to the development of America's wealth as well as to the height of sky-scrappers. . . . You don't intend, I take it, to set up in the midst of New York a second Tower of Babel, whose top might reach unto heaven ?”

I made this biblical allusion with a smile, by way of a harmless joke and without any malicious intent. I expected to hear some proud, simple, and vigorous affirmation of faith in unlimited progress as the privilege of mankind—mankind whose powers have been renewed by nineteenth-century science. The idea of unlimited progress is very popular among Americans. I had already encountered it in the America of 1909, which was nevertheless far more cautious, more reasonable, more European than the America of 1931. My companion seemed to be just the right man to be taken in by it. He was one of those men—more numerous over there than in Europe—who live on the fringes of the active and the intellectual life. After having been engaged in various industries, he was at that time editor

of an important publication. The optimism of the man of action was blent in him with that facility in generalization and deduction which marks the writer.

But he did not answer. He reflected a moment, then suddenly slapped his forehead with the palm of his right hand and exclaimed:

“The Tower of Babel! I never thought of that. It was the first and most famous skyscraper! . . .”

What latent ideas had my innocent words stirred up in the deeps of that puritan conscience? He was silent again for a while; then he went on in hesitating, almost frightened tones:

“And for having dared to set it up, God sent down on us as a punishment the confusion of tongues. . . .”

II

THE BANKER AND THE KING

I HAD been taken over the head offices of one of the biggest banks in the United States. They were situated on the upper floors of an immense sky-scraper which the bank had built for itself down town near Wall Street. How many floors I had gone up and down in the smoothly gliding

lifts serving every corner of the building, how many managers' rooms, private offices, general offices, departments, employees at work, typewriters, calculating machines I saw, it is beyond me to say. The bank even had a luxurious restaurant, where I lunched with high officials, my only regret being that I could not wash down my excellent meal with a glass of wine; and a little hospital with a doctor, nurses, and a dispensary, where I saw a young typist, who had been taken ill, lying asleep in bed.

The whole organization was at once colossal and minute, as huge in its proportions as it was finished in detail. A great deal of imagination had gone to its making as well as a vast amount of money. Compared with this giant, the banks I had seen in Europe seemed very small and modest.

Finally, when I was under the impression that my tour was over, the official who had been my guide told me that one of the directors of the bank would like to see me. Could I have wished for a more interesting finish to my visit than to behold one of those invisible Jupiters of Wall Street who are reputed to let loose the tempests and bring back the sunshine at will upon the money-markets and the traffic of our planet, which seems so big to the rest of us, so small to their Olympian gaze ?

I went into a sumptuous office, where a tall,

very thin man, still quite young, but with a face lined with wrinkles, greeted me in friendly fashion. We talked for some time of one thing and another. There was nothing Olympian about my interlocutor's person or his gaze. He was a courteous and simple-mannered man, well-informed, acute and subtle in mind, who had lived a long time in Europe. After a quarter of an hour's conversation, I put the question I had been burning to ask him—what was his opinion of the world economic position? He replied in very simple terms, but without any hesitation.

“Bad, very bad. The world has got too deep into debt. Taking nations alone, almost every country in the world is in need of loans, loans, loans. But the public isn't having any, even when the countries concerned aren't in any way shaky. Take the case of Germany: since 1924 she has borrowed between ten and fifteen milliards of marks at an interest never lower than 6 per cent. The Reich, individual States, provinces, towns, banks, industrial and commercial concerns, large, medium, or small, everybody has heaped up debts, debts, debts. Some of these are short-term floating debts, which makes the situation still more dangerous. On top of this there is the political unrest. To our way of thinking, at any rate, Europe has not yet made peace; she is still at war. Since

the German elections in September, part of the short-term credits have begun to be called in."

I hastened to remark, with a certain amount of vigour: "I am glad to hear it said by one of the captains of American finance that since 1920 the world has got too deep into debt. Though I am not a banker, I had come to that conclusion long ago. But you must let me say one thing, though it may sound rather naïve. Couldn't this have been realized a little sooner, especially in America? Every debtor who contracts an unreasonable burden of debt presupposes a creditor who lends too readily. Frankly, I must say that I have never understood American finance and the principle it has followed since 1920. You have lent money right and left to every country in the world without discrimination. You did not even trouble to find out whether there was any kind of check on expenditure in the countries to which it was lent. You lent hundreds of millions to countries that have neither a regular budget nor a Parliament to discuss it properly, nor a free Press to criticize it; about which you have no means of knowing what they take in and what they pay out. It is amazing."

He looked at me for a moment with an ironical smile; then he said:

"Do you believe that such a thing as American finance really exists? I've never met the lady.

Perhaps you could tell me something about her, let me have her address. . . .”

“It is a figure of speech,” I replied, rather surprised by the sally. “American finance means you and your colleagues and competitors. You exist, I presume. And I also presume that before you lend your millions you give the matter a little thought.”

The banker shrugged his shoulders.

“So you think that *we* make these loans?”

“Well, who else would it be?” I exclaimed.

“There are a great many people in this country with money to invest, and more of them every day. At one time a few hundred families had all the capital. A banker could be in touch with a section of this small group and advise it, or direct it, if you like. But nowadays what is known as capitalism is an enormous anonymous host of people. We have no means of getting at them, and it is they and their changing moods that control what we do. Look at what happened five or six years ago. . . .”

At this point a ring from the most indiscreet of man’s inventions cut into the conversation. The banker took off the receiver, listened, and muttered a few words in reply. During this short interruption a far-off memory came back to me. Twenty years back a king had tried to make me believe that royal authority no longer counted for anything in the modern world, that he could not

do anything because the world nowadays was controlled by the great organized interests and the psychological fluctuations of the masses. Now the money king was going to repeat the performance and protest in his turn that his power was only an outward show. Having finished with his invisible interlocutor, the banker turned to me.

"About 1924-25 . . . Those were the years of the fat kine. The United States was glutted with money. Gold flowed in to us from all parts of the world, into everybody's pockets, millionaires and workpeople alike. For, five or six years back, our working classes had started to save and invest their money. Government and municipal loans were in great demand. The public would buy anything with its eyes shut if only the interest was high enough. If you had floated a 6 per cent. loan for the moon in those days, it would have subscribed to it."

"That was the time when the famous Milan loan was floated here," I said with a smile.

"You only had a few drops of that shower of gold," replied the banker, smiling in his turn. "It was Germany that got the full benefit of the downpour. The Dawes Plan and Locarno had re-established confidence. Germany needed money, America had too much. Germany was literally invaded by representatives of the American banks who went about offering money to all and sundry, whether they wanted it or not.

I know cases where towns which had only asked for a loan of five million marks were offered ten or fifteen millions. Now the years of the lean kine have come. All the borrowed capital has been spent long ago; it is impossible to borrow any more. Everywhere the taxpayer has to be squeezed to pay the interest and repay the principal. The taxpayer is jibbing, and the people are getting on their hind legs. . . .”

“What if Germany ends by going bankrupt again?” I returned, rather irritated by the calm way in which he talked of such serious matters. “Many people in Europe say that is what will happen. Having wiped out her internal debts by going bankrupt in 1924, she means to get rid of her foreign debts. . . .”

“That is a possible solution,” replied the banker with the same placid air. “If it were just Germany alone! But there are many other countries in the five continents that are more or less in the same position. You know that better than I do. The liquidation of debts is a recurring phenomenon in history. When you’ve contracted too many . . .”

I had expected to make some impression on my companion by holding up the threat of Germany’s bankruptcy, and he retorted by quite calmly foreboding a kind of general bankruptcy.

“But . . . but . . .” I answered, somewhat disconcerted, “have you considered the conse-

quences? Do you think that the liquidation could be carried out without any commotion? Why, you are prophesying something very like world revolution."

"We shall probably pass through some very troubled times."

But at this I made a rather vigorous protest: "That would be the last straw . . . in a world that is already so distraught. No, we must avoid that at any price. The reputation of all the forces that control Western civilization is at stake, American finance included. We were speaking of Germany. . . . Have people over here any real notion of what is going on there? Germany went bankrupt for the first time in 1924—it was the inflation bankruptcy which destroyed her middle class, the intellectual class, the European class. Why did Germany go bankrupt? Because from the signing of the Armistice up to the time of the Dawes Plan she could not borrow a single mark. The war, defeat, revolution, and Article 248 of the Treaty of Versailles, which gave the Allies a first claim on all the property and revenues of the Empire and its individual States, had destroyed all her chances of obtaining a loan. There was nothing for it but to resort to the printing press. She did not do it half-heartedly, and you know the results. The Powers assembled and drew up the Dawes Plan modifying Article 248 of the Treaty

of Versailles, confidence was restored, and Germany again found it possible to raise loans. Having gone bankrupt once because for five years, from 1919 to 1924, she could not borrow any money, is she likely to do it again because she was able to borrow too much between 1924 and 1929; because everybody lent her money with their eyes shut, without either discrimination or caution? What a demonstration of the general stupidity of our age that would be! . . .”

“How are you going to prevent it?”

“But it is you bankers who ought to prevent it, who ought to have prevented it in the first place. Are you or are you not the intermediaries between the public with the money and the countries that need it? You ought to study each country’s position very carefully, keep an eye on them all, sift them out, separate the sheep from the goats, lay down your conditions. You should educate the public, restrain its infatuations when times are good, and keep down panics when times are hard.”

My companion greeted this piece of advice with a hearty laugh.

“If only it were as easy for us to do as for you to suggest! But what authority have we with other Governments or with the public? None at all. Even if we granted these loans only on certain conditions, and even if the States concerned accepted our terms, do you think they

would observe them ? And what could we do if they did not, once the money had left our coffers ? As for the public, how are we going to influence it ? It is only the socialists who believe that we rule the world. But there they do us an honour we don't deserve, and make us responsible for things with which we had nothing to do. We control nothing, absolutely nothing beyond our own private business; we have no influence whatever on general affairs; everything is done entirely independent of us."

I have always been sceptical about the hidden hand of the money power—the terror or the hope of our time. But although I have met many bankers in my life, it was the first time I had heard a banker admit with so much frankness, with an almost morbid humility, the non-existence of the power which the masses credit him with possessing. And I found this financial "Nihilist" in Wall Street, which the world to-day looks upon as the seat of the invisible and all-powerful masters of the earth !

My first reaction to this surprise was a certain feeling of distrust. I again thought of the king who twenty years ago had also tried to persuade me of the utter non-existence of his power. There was a certain physical resemblance between the two men, which struck me at this moment. Both had shrewd sparkling blue eyes, both were thin and prematurely wrinkled, as if aged before

their time. There was only one difference: the king was very short, the banker very tall. Suddenly I saw once more, the little study hidden away in one of the biggest royal palaces of Europe, where that queer conversation had taken place: a room far smaller and more unassuming than that of the New York banker. I could not resist the temptation of using that reminiscence for the purposes of our argument.

“Do you know who said the same things to me twenty years ago, only the other way round? It was a king, the head of a monarchy which was still powerful at that time, though it has fallen very low to-day. He said to me: ‘My fellow-rulers and I no longer count; the world is governed to-day by the organizations belonging to the big interests.’ That is to say, mainly by you men of finance. Well, then, who does govern the world to-day?”

“I don’t know. At all events, *I* don’t.”

“All the same . . . I do not doubt your sincerity, just as I firmly believe that the king I mentioned was sincere. But he was mistaken, for he wielded much more power than he thought. Events have proved it. Any kind of power may be similarly mistaken because it does not perceive the exact extent of its influence and thinks itself greater or smaller than it really is. Isn’t something of the same kind true of you men of finance? When you want the Government to

act in a certain way, you know very well how to set about it to gain your ends."

"That is a different story. Yes, we do try to have a certain amount of influence on the Government to assist us in protecting the interests entrusted to us. But doesn't everybody do the same, from the workers upwards? Again, I do not understand why you should want to make tis masters of the world. If we could dictate the policy of countries that need money and compel the public to place its money where we wanted, we should become an excessive and intolerable secret power. You complain about the dictatorships which are springing up everywhere, but ours would be worse than any of them. Somewhere or other, in offices like this one, there would be men, unseen and unknown, who, without being answerable to anyone, could choke the life out of States and bring about revolutions. It would be terrible!"

"But as things are, everything is at the mercy of the passing fancies of a mob of small or middling capitalists who are just as easily carried away by excessive enthusiasm as by panic. It is that mob in one of its panics that will bring about the world revolution and its own destruction."

"Revolution, revolution. . . . Isn't the word rather overworked to-day? Don't let us exaggerate. The world is in a difficult position.

The war has created everywhere an artificial state of things which cannot last, and which will have to be liquidated before we can get back to order and common sense. We are bound to incur some losses in the process, and I admit that these losses will be heavy because the liquidation will be done in a rather haphazard fashion according to the notions and the needs of the moment. But the world has enough reserves to be able to stand the losses that can't be avoided; and it will learn a good deal by having to deal with things as they arise, to meet immediate necessities. Undoubtedly it would be better if the liquidation were under the control of a single will and intelligence, but only on condition that it made no mistakes ! Otherwise it would mean a catastrophe !”

He was silent for a moment, smiling vaguely, as a man does when a queer idea is passing through his mind. Then he said:

“I respect your discretion. . . . I do not want to know who the king was who unbosomed himself to you, but may I ask whether he made good use of the powers he had but did not think he had ?”

I raised my arms and my eyes to heaven. The gesture said more than words.

“There you are !” said the banker triumphantly. “And yet you are sorry that we are not a controlling power ? If we were, we too

would run into disaster. Leave us to our modest sphere: we cannot save the world in a few weeks, but neither can we ruin it. The world will save itself, more slowly but more surely. And the process, though lengthy, will teach it many things."

III

PROHIBITION AND DEMOCRACY

"It's a queer business, all the same! America is a free country, a democracy. . . . Here the people are supreme. . . . And the people want to drink. If the 'Wets' are not in a majority, they are a very powerful minority. How is it that they have not succeeded in getting their right to drink substantiated by joining forces with those who are indifferent one way or the other? The determined, fervent, fanatical Prohibitionists cannot be anything but a minority either, and a much smaller one!"

I put this question to an American with whom I was dining in a New York "speak-easy"—the name given to the clandestine resorts where one can have a glass of wine or spirits. There are said to be 30,000 of them in New York alone. The place was crammed with customers, almost all Americans, who were setting the eighteenth amendment at naught all round us with a zest quite alien to our own judicious libations. What

I saw when I looked about me in the saloon made me realize better than any amount of exposition what the prohibition law has to contend with. How was it that in a free country so widespread an opposition had not succeeded in making itself felt in a more open and dignified manner than in this furtive law-breaking behind the delusive frontage of a bogus private house ?

But the friend who had invited me to join him in violating the famous law was one of those Americans—and they are not rare among the upper classes in the United States—who no longer have either confidence in or respect for the political institutions of their country. Without knowing exactly what they would put in its place, they openly assert that American democracy has gone bankrupt and can only lead the country to ruin. He replied at once:

“The explanation is a very simple one. There is no country in the world that enjoys less liberty than the United States. Our so-called democracy is the despotism of the populace, sometimes represented by thieves, sometimes by madmen.”

I protested again.

“I know that tale. I have heard it every day since I came to America. Allow me to be frank to the point of rudeness: you don't know what you are talking about. Your system may have everything you please the matter with it, but

don't talk of despotism. You don't know the meaning of the word. You would have to spend a few months in certain parts of Europe before you did."

"But you have just said so yourself. Prohibition has been thrust upon us by a fanatical minority, and in spite of our so-called democracy, in spite of our alleged liberty, the majority has to knuckle under. If we want to have a bottle of wine, we are forced to skulk in this kind of catacomb. . . . What is it, if it isn't despotism? How can you say that such a country is free? People were never oppressed to that extent even under the Czar or the Roman emperors."

"You think you are solving the problem when you are merely doing away with it. You say: 'There is no liberty in the United States; therefore it is not hard to explain why Prohibition was possible.' I turn the argument the other way. The United States is a country which enjoys a great deal of liberty: then how can one explain such a strange anomaly as Prohibition? Universal suffrage . . ."

"Means the triumph of stupidity in America as everywhere else," he broke in violently. "Here, as everywhere else, the people is a sort of huge, lazy, stupid pachyderm. The will of the people is what the newspapers and party propaganda make it believe. With plenty of money and a few lies you can make the people

say and do anything you please. What a wretched farce !”

“Where force prevails, it can keep universal suffrage in bondage and wrest its will: there’s no doubt about that. There are plenty of examples. It is then merely the miserable slave of a despotic power. But where it is free . . .”

“It is not free anywhere. The countries that are least hypocritical about it are those where it is avowedly under official restraint. Where it is allowed the pretence of liberty, it is bound hand and foot by organized lying on the part of the Press and bribery by political parties. That is a much more dangerous state of affairs. . . .”

“That’s where I think you are mistaken. Where there are several parties and several newspapers competing on equal terms under a system of political liberty, then universal suffrage chooses freely for itself. . . .”

“And it always plumps for the most absurd idea and the most worthless men.”

“Are you quite sure it does ?”

“Am I sure ! Why, it’s as plain as can be !” replied my companion, as if he were rather surprised I should doubt it. “What sort of world are you living in ?”

I replied in my turn without any hesitation.

“I feel tempted to apply the words of the Gospel to you and all who think like you: ‘You

have eyes, and see not.' There are plenty of you, both here and in Europe. But look around you. How can you be blind to the way in which universal suffrage, wherever it is free, has resisted every kind of extremist idea for the last ten years? In the highest ranges of Western civilization there is a cleavage caused by the violent opposition between various sets of extreme ideas all trying to win the backing of important interests. The mind of our age, as represented in the governing classes, is at war with itself, torn this way and that by irreconcilable claims and counter-claims. What force still prevents these doctrines and interests from flying at each other and setting the whole earth ablaze with a tremendous civil war in which all things would perish? That force is the populace, as you call it. It is universal suffrage, the great stabilizer of this toppling world of ours, the ballast of our storm-tossed vessel; those millions of men and women who are not carried away by any gust of madness."

The history of the last ten years supplied me with abundant proofs. Could my opponent assert that any uncontrolled general election held anywhere in Europe or America since 1919 had resulted in the victory of an extremist party either of the right or of the left? Had not the Swiss people in 1922 rejected a law proposed by the socialists for the confiscation of part of the

income of the rich as a present to the "populace"? Had not the German people a few years ago refused to authorize the confiscation without compensation of the property of royal and princely houses, which might have prepared the way for further confiscations of a more productive kind? If the conversation had taken place in September instead of May, my argument would have had the further support of the Prussian plebiscite of August 9th. In spite of the bewildering chaos of public opinion in Germany, in spite of the alliance of the two extremist parties, it proved impossible to lead the majority of the Prussian electorate into an adventure which could have only ended in a *coup d'état* or in revolution.

My companion listened attentively. Finally, after thinking a moment, he said:

"What about Prohibition? Isn't that an extreme idea? There is such a thing as the drink problem: I should be the first to admit it. You cannot allow a nation, especially a nation like ours, to drink as much as it likes. But to solve the problem by doing away with it, and threatening us with prison for every glass of wine or nip of brandy we dare to drink—that's an extreme idea, goodness knows. Only our Puritans, who are veritable Bolsheviks in the realm of morals, could have thought of it. The people adopted it though they didn't believe in it.

So you see that universal suffrage can be made to swallow even an extreme idea."

"You are right. Prohibition is the most extreme idea that universal suffrage has ever been induced to ratify! That is why I should be so interested to know how and why it came about . . ."

"But the problem is a very simple one. Prohibition is tomfoolery; therefore the sovereign people adopted it. That is the law of all democracies. Just look at the way all those countries—monarchies or republics—are governed where universal suffrage rules the roost! It is the same tale everywhere: disorder, waste, muddle, and discontent."

"What about the others?" I asked with a smile. "Those who haven't even free universal suffrage?"

Now we had come to the decisive question, the inevitable conclusion to all argument of this kind. The Americans to whom I had put it during my travels had answered in two different ways. A very few of them had not hesitated to tell me that dictatorships were the best form of government and that every nation needed a Pilsudski or a Kemal Pasha. The great majority had tried to slip out of giving an answer. My companion belonged to the majority. He answered with some embarrassment:

"I can't say. Possibly dictatorships are even

worse. Still, that does not make the governments under which we so-called free citizens have the misfortune to live any better. Can you deny that democratic or parliamentary governments are incapable of solving the great problems with which the world is faced to-day?"

"Is it because the governments are incapable or because the problems are insoluble? Have you forgotten that between 1914 and 1918 the world underwent some slight disturbance from a certain war? We always come back to that; the World War caused as much of a universal upheaval as the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, and even more. The consequences are as yet barely beginning to make themselves felt; and they will be felt for many generations. We are at the beginning of the period of wholesale anarchy. . . ."

"The period you prophesied twenty years ago in *Between the Old World and the New*, when you returned from your first visit here."

"If you like. . . . But at that time I figured the great anarchy as slowly emerging from the depths of the new industrial civilization, with its concentration on perpetually increasing output at the price of a continual deterioration in quality. In order to be able to keep on sacrificing quality to quantity further and further, our industrial civilization has to make the standards by which we judge that quality more and

more unstable, less and less accurate and exacting. That is to say, it has to cover up more and more all distinction between good and bad, beautiful and ugly, true and false, and thus gradually to sink into a state of general anarchy, intellectual, moral, and æsthetic. My prediction seemed to me as safe as an astronomical calculation, though its fulfilment would be slow and remote. It would take place in a century or two. But the war, monstrous alike in its scale and its devices, speeded up the process and hurled us at a bound right into the twenty-second century with anarchy in full swing. That is the reason why everything that governments do to-day, even the best of them, is fumbling and inadequate. The war left us surrounded on all hands by insoluble problems, problems admitting only of approximate and precarious solution. How long will this state of affairs last? How are we going to get ourselves out of it? I have no idea. But the point is that we have to use different standards to-day when judging governments When are you thinking of going to Europe again?"

"In 1932."

"Then you ought to visit both Europes. For there are two of them. There is the Europe which before the war was under really representative systems of government—democracy in Switzerland, constitutional monarchy in Eng-

land, Belgium, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries, a parliamentary republic in France. And there is the Europe which before the war was under absolute or semi-absolute monarchy. where the people still counted for little or nothing—Spain, Austria, Germany, Poland, Russia, Italy, the Balkan States. You will have no difficulty in finding out that the healthy part of Europe is the former, and the diseased part the latter. In the former you will still find humane laws, liberal institutions, ordered finances, a thoughtful, healthy public opinion; in short, order and liberty. In the latter, with the exception of Spain, which is making a great effort to save itself, you will find revolution, despotism, anarchy, terror, the disorganization of public opinion, national bankruptcy, and economic ruin; in short, disorder in its most dangerous forms. *Coups d'état* are the loathsome affliction of dying monarchies and new-born republics. Old-established republics and constitutional monarchies have up till now been immune, and I hope for the sake of humanity that they will long remain so. Now, does not America present the same contrast in a modified form? You complain of your democracy, and I do not deny that many of your recriminations are justified—but would you like to see this country under one of those dictatorships which have been cropping up again in South America during the last two years?"

“Certainly not.”

“People keep on talking about the bankruptcy of the parliamentary system, democracy, and representative government. But look at the world, and you will see that the only governments—republics or monarchies—that have withstood the storm are the old parliamentary, democratic, representative governments. The only countries that still have a government to-day are those which for the last century have been training their people in good earnest to govern themselves. Our epoch marks the triumph of parliamentary and representative government.”

“Yes, but in free America I run the risk of being sent to prison simply for offering you some of this extremely pleasing wine,” said my companion, as he poured out a glass of Chablis.

“Would you rather run the risk of being deported to a desert island by the administration because you did not approve of Mr. Hoover? I admit that universal suffrage made a great mistake in the matter of Prohibition, but at all events it sprang from a noble conception and generous aspirations.”

My friend did not reply and seemed to be wrapped in silent meditation while we finished our meal. A quarter of an hour later we left the “speak-easy.” We were scarcely outside the house which had concealed and abetted our crime when my friend stopped and said:

“I’ll admit it. Prohibition is only a petty tyranny. It is not despotism . . . or war . . . or communism. . . . I should be rather inclined to side with universal suffrage again, if I were sure that it would rest at that.”

“You may be sure that it will,” I replied. “But only on one condition. . . .”

“What is that?”

“Provided that the great nations, at any rate, in Europe and America, go on believing in liberty. Political and intellectual liberty.”

THE END

