

HOW PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THE  
WAR





## I

### DO THEY REALLY THINK AT ALL ?

ALL human affairs are mental affairs ; the bright ideas of to-day are the realities of to-morrow. The real history of mankind is the history of how ideas have arisen, how they have taken possession of men's minds, how they have struggled, altered, proliferated, decayed. There is nothing in this war at all but a conflict of ideas, traditions, and mental habits. The German Will clothed in conceptions of aggression and fortified by cynical falsehood, struggles against the fundamental sanity of the German mind and the confused protest of mankind. So that the most permanently important thing in the tragic process of this war is the change of opinion that is going on. What are people making of it ? Is it producing any great common understandings, any fruitful unanimities ?

No doubt it is producing enormous quantities of cerebration, but is it anything more than chaotic and futile cerebration ? We are told



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all sorts of things in answer to that, things often without a scrap of evidence or probability to support them. It is, we are assured, turning people to religion, making them moral and thoughtful. It is also, we are assured with equal confidence, turning them to despair and moral disaster. It will be followed by (1) a period of moral renascence, and (2) a debauch. It is going to make the workers (1) more and (2) less obedient and industrious. It is (1) inuring men to war and (2) filling them with a passionate resolve never to suffer war again. And so on. I propose now to ask what is really happening in this matter? How is human opinion changing? I have opinions of my own and they are bound to colour my discussion. The reader must allow for that, and as far as possible I will remind him where necessary to make his allowance.

Now first I would ask, is any really continuous and thorough mental process going on at all about this war? I mean, is there any considerable number of people who are seeing it as a whole, taking it in as a whole, trying to get a general idea of it from which they can form directing conclusions for the future? Is there any considerable number of people even trying to do that? At any rate let me point out first that there is quite an enormous



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mass of people who—in spite of the fact that their minds are concentrated on aspects of this war, who are at present hearing, talking, experiencing little else than the war—are nevertheless neither doing nor trying to do anything that deserves to be called thinking about it at all. They may even be suffering quite terribly by it. But they are no more mastering its causes, reasons, conditions, and the possibility of its future prevention than a monkey that has been rescued in a scorching condition from the burning of a house will have mastered the problem of a fire. It is just happening to and about them. It may, for anything they have learnt about it, happen to them again.

A vast majority of people are being swamped by the spectacular side of the business. It was very largely my fear of being so swamped myself that made me reluctant to go as a spectator to the front. I knew that my chances of being hit by a bullet were infinitesimal, but I was extremely afraid of being hit by some too vivid impression. I was afraid that I might see some horribly wounded man or some decayed dead body that would so scar my memory and stamp such horror into me as to reduce me to a mere useless, gibbering, stop-the-war-at-any-price pacifist. Years ago my mind was once



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darkened very badly for some weeks with a kind of fear and distrust of life through a sudden unexpected encounter one tranquil evening with a drowned body. But in this journey in Italy and France, although I have had glimpses of much death and seen many wounded men, I have had no really horrible impressions at all. That side of the business has, I think, been overwritten. The thing that haunts me most is the impression of a prevalent relapse into extreme untidiness, of a universal discomfort, of fields, and of ruined houses treated disregardfully. . . . But that is not what concerns us now in this discussion. What concerns us now is the fact that this war is producing spectacular effects so tremendous and incidents so strange, so remarkable, so vivid, that the mind forgets both causes and consequences and simply sits down to stare.

For example, there is this business of the Zeppelin raids in England. It is a supremely silly business; it is the most conclusive demonstration of the intellectual inferiority of the German to the Western European that it should ever have happened. There was the clearest *a priori* case against the gas-bag. I remember the discussions ten or twelve years ago in which it was established to the satisfaction of every reasonable man that ultimately the "heavier



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than air" machine (as we called it then) must fly better than the gas-bag, and still more conclusively that no gas-bag was conceivable that could hope to fight and defeat aeroplanes. Nevertheless the German, with that dull faith of his in mere "Will," persisted along his line. He knew instinctively that he could not produce aviators to meet the Western European; all his social instincts made him cling to the idea of a great motherly, an almost sow-like bag of wind above him. At an enormous waste of resources Germany has produced these futile monsters, that drift in the darkness over England promiscuously dropping bombs on fields and houses. They are now meeting the fate that was demonstrably certain ten years ago. If they found us unready for them it is merely that we were unable to imagine so idiotic an enterprise would ever be seriously sustained and persisted in. We did not believe in the probability of Zeppelin raids any more than we believed that Germany would force the world into war. It was a thing too silly to be believed. But they came—to their certain fate. In the month after I returned from France and Italy, no less than four of these fatuities were exploded and destroyed within thirty miles of my Essex home. . . . There in chosen phrases you have the truth



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about these things. But now mark the perversion of thought due to spectacular effect.

I find over the Essex countryside, which has been for more than a year and a half a highway for Zeppelins, a new and curious admiration for them that has arisen out of these very disasters. Previously they were regarded with dislike and a sort of distrust, as one might regard a sneaking neighbour who left his foot-steps in one's garden at night. But the Zeppelins of Billericay and Potter's Bar are—heroic things. (The Cuffley one came down too quickly, and the fourth one which came down for its crew to surrender is despised.) I have heard people describe the two former with eyes shining with enthusiasm.

“First,” they say, “you saw a little round red glow that spread. Then you saw the whole Zeppelin glowing. Oh, it was *beautiful*! Then it began to turn over and come down, and it flamed and pieces began to break away. And then down it came, leaving flaming pieces all up the sky. At last it was a pillar of fire eight thousand feet high. . . . Everyone said, ‘Ooooo!’ And then someone pointed out the little aeroplane lit up by the flare—such a leetle thing up there in the night! It is the greatest thing I have ever seen. Oh! the most wonderful—most wonderful!”



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There is a feeling that the Germans really must after all be a splendid people to provide such magnificent pyrotechnics.

Some people in London the other day were pretending to be shocked by an American who boasted he had been in "two *bully* bombardments," but he was only saying what everyone feels more or less. We are at a spectacle that—as a spectacle—our grandchildren will envy. I understand now better the story of the man who stared at the sparks raining up from his own house as it burnt in the night and whispered, "*Lovely! Lovely!*"

The spectacular side of the war is really an enormous distraction from thought. And against thought there also fights the native indolence of the human mind. The human mind, it seems, was originally developed to think about the individual; it thinks reluctantly about the species. It takes refuge from that sort of thing if it possibly can. And so the second great preventive of clear thinking is the tranquillising platitude.

The human mind is an instrument very easily fatigued. Only a few exceptions go on thinking restlessly—to the extreme exasperation of their neighbours. The normal mind craves for decisions, even wrong or false decisions rather than none. It clutches at comforting



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falsehoods. It loves to be told, "*There*, don't you worry. That'll be all right. That's *settled*." This war has come as an almost overwhelming challenge to mankind. To some of us it seems as if it were the Sphinx proffering the alternative of its riddle or death. Yet the very urgency of this challenge to think seems to paralyse the critical intelligence of very many people altogether. They will say, "This war is going to produce enormous changes in everything." They will then subside mentally with a feeling of having covered the whole ground in a thoroughly safe manner. Or they will adopt an air of critical aloofness. They will say, "How is it possible to foretell what may happen in this tremendous sea of change?" And then, with an air of superior modesty, they will go on doing—whatever they feel inclined to do. Many others, a degree less simple in their methods, will take some entirely partial aspect, arrive at some guesswork decision upon that, and then behave as though that met every question we have to face. Or they will make a sort of admonitory forecast that is conditional upon the good behaviour of other people. "Unless the Trade Unions are more reasonable," they will say. Or, "Unless the shipping interest is grappled with and controlled." Or, "Unless England wakes up." And with that they seem



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to wash their hands of further responsibility for the future.

One delightful form of put-off is the sage remark, "Let us finish the war first, and then let us ask what is going to happen after it." One likes to think of the beautiful blank day after the signing of peace when these wise minds swing round to pick up their deferred problems. . . .

I submit that a man has not done his duty by himself as a rational creature unless he has formed an idea of what is going on, as one complicated process, until he has formed an idea sufficiently definite for him to make it the basis of a further idea, which is his own relationship to that process. He must have some notion of what the process is going to do to him, and some notion of what he means to do, if he can, to the process. That is to say, he must not only have an idea how the process is going, but also an idea of how he wants it to go. It seems so natural and necessary for a human brain to do this that it is hard to suppose that everyone has not more or less attempted it. But few people, in Great Britain at any rate, have the habit of frank expression, and when people do not seem to have made out any of these things for themselves there is a considerable element of secretiveness and

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inexpressiveness to be allowed for before we decide that they have not in some sort of fashion done so. Still, after all allowances have been made, there remains a vast amount of jerry-built and ready-made borrowed stuff in most of people's philosophies of the war. The systems of authentic opinion in this world of thought about the war are like comparatively rare thin veins of living mentality in a vast world of dead repetitions and echoed suggestions. And that being the case, it is quite possible that history after the war, like history before the war, will not be so much a display of human will and purpose as a resultant of human vacillations, obstructions and inadvertences. We shall still be in a drama of blind forces following the line of least resistance.

One of the people who is often spoken of as if he were doing an enormous amount of concentrated thinking is "the man in the trenches." We are told—by gentlemen writing for the most part at home—of the most extraordinary things that are going on in those devoted brains, how they are getting new views about the duties of labour, religion, morality, monarchy, and any other notions that the gentleman at home happens to fancy and wishes to push. Now that is not at all the impression of the khaki mentality I have reluctantly accepted



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as correct. For the most part the man in khaki is up against a round of tedious immediate duties that forbid consecutive thought; he is usually rather crowded and not very comfortable. He is bored.

The real horror of modern war, when all is said and done, is the boredom. To get killed or wounded may be unpleasant, but it is at any rate interesting; the real tragedy is in the desolated fields, the desolated houses, the desolated hours and days, the bored and desolated minds that hang behind the *mêlée* and just outside the *mêlée*. The peculiar beastliness of the German crime is the way the German war cant and its consequences have seized upon and paralysed the mental movement of Western Europe. Before 1914 war was theoretically unpopular in every European country; we thought of it as something tragic and dreadful. Now everyone knows by experience that it is something utterly dirty and detestable. We thought it was the Nemean lion, and we have found it is the Augean stable. But being bored by war and hating war is quite unproductive *unless you are thinking about its nature and causes so thoroughly that you will presently be able to take hold of it and control it and end it*. It is no good for everyone to say unanimously, "We will have no more



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war," unless you have thought out how to avoid it, and mean to bring that end about. It is as if everyone said, "We will have no more catarrh," or "no more flies" or "no more east wind." And my point is that the immense sorrows at home in every European country and the vast boredom of the combatants are probably not really producing any effective remedial mental action at all, and will not do so unless we get much more thoroughly to work upon the thinking-out process.

In such talks as I could get with men close up to the front I found beyond this great boredom and attempts at distraction only very specialised talk about changes in the future. Men were keen upon questions of army promotion, of the future of conscription, of the future of the temporary officer, upon the education of boys in relation to army needs. But the war itself was bearing them all upon its way, as unquestioned and uncontrolled as if it were the planet on which they lived.



## II

### THE YIELDING PACIFIST AND THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

#### § 1

AMONG the minor topics that people are talking about behind the western fronts is the psychology of the Yielding Pacifist and the Conscientious Objector. Of course, we are all pacifists nowadays; I know of no one who does not want not only to end this war but to put an end to war altogether, except those blood-red terrors, Count Reventlow, Mr. Leo Maxse—how he does it on a vegetarian dietary I cannot imagine!—and our wild-eyed desperadoes of *The Morning Post*. But most of the people I meet, and most of the people I met on my journey, are pacifists like myself who want to *make* peace by beating the armed man until he gives in and admits the error of his ways, disarming him and re-organising the world for the forcible suppression of military adventures in the future. They want belligerency put into the same category as burglary, as a matter for forcible suppression.



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The Yielding Pacifist who will accept any sort of peace, and the Conscientious Objector who will not fight at all, are not of that opinion.

Both Italy and France produce parallel types to those latter, but it would seem that in each case England displays the finer developments. The Latin mind is directer than the English, and its standards—shall I say?—more primitive; it gets more directly to the fact that here are men who will not fight. And it is less charitable. I was asked quite a number of times for the English equivalent of an *embusqué*. “We don’t generalise,” I said, “we treat each case on its merits!”

One interlocutor near Udine was exercised by our Italian Red Cross work.

“Here,” he said, “are sixty or seventy young Englishmen, all fit for military service. . . . Of course they go under fire, but it is not like being junior officers in the trenches. Not one of them has been killed or wounded.”

He reflected. “One, I think, has been decorated,” he said. . . .

My French and Italian are only for very rough common jobs; when it came to explaining the Conscientious Objector sympathetically they broke down badly. I had to construct long parenthetical explanations of our antiquated legislative methods to show how it was



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that the "conscientious objector" had been so badly defined. The foreigner does not understand the importance of vague definition in British life. "Practically, of course, we offered to exempt anyone who conscientiously objected to fight or serve. Then the Pacifist and Pro-German people started a campaign to enrol objectors. Of course every shirker, every coward and slacker in the country decided at once to be a conscientious objector. Anyone but a British legislator could have foreseen that. Then we started Tribunals to wrangle with the objectors about their *bona fides*. Then the Pacifists and the Pro-Germans issued little leaflets and started correspondence courses to teach people exactly how to lie to the Tribunals. Trouble about the freedom of the pamphleteer followed. I had to admit—it has been rather a sloppy business. "The people who made the law knew their own minds, but we English are not an expressive people."

These are not easy things to say in Elementary (and slightly Decayed) French or in Elementary and Corrupt Italian.

"But why do people support the sham conscientious objector and issue leaflets to help him—when there is so much big work clamouring to be done?"

"That," I said, "is the Whig tradition."

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When they pressed me further, I said: "I am really the questioner. I am visiting *your* country, and you have to tell *me* things. It is not right that I should do all the telling. Tell me all about Romain Rolland."

And also I pressed them about the official socialists in Italy and the Socialist minority in France until I got the question out of the net of national comparisons and upon a broader footing. In several conversations we began to work out in general terms the psychology of those people who were against the war. But usually we could not get to that; my interlocutors would insist upon telling me just what they would like to do or just what they would like to see done to stop-the-war pacifists and conscientious objectors; pleasant rather than fruitful imaginative exercises from which I could effect no more than platitudinous uplifts.

But the general drift of such talks as did seem to penetrate the question was this, that among these stop-the-war people there are really three types. First there is a type of person who hates violence and the infliction of pain under any circumstances, and who has a mystical belief in the rightness (and usually in the efficacy) of non-resistance. These are generally Christians, and then their cardinal text is the instruction to "turn the other cheek." Often



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they are Quakers. If they are consistent they are vegetarians and wear *Lederlos* boots. They do not desire police protection for their goods. They stand aloof from all the force and conflict of life. They have always done so. This is an understandable and respectable type. It has numerous Hindu equivalents. It is a type that finds little difficulty about exemptions—provided the individual has not been too recently converted to his present habits. But it is not the prevalent type in stop-the-war circles. Such genuine ascetics do not number more than a thousand or so, in all three of our western allied countries. The mass of the stop-the-war people is made up of quite other elements.

### § 2

In the complex structure of the modern community there are two groups or strata or pockets in which the impulse of social obligation, the gregarious sense of a common welfare, is at its lowest; one of these is the class of the Resentful Employee, the class of people who, without explanation, adequate preparation or any chance, have been shoved at an early age into uncongenial work and never given a chance to escape, and the other is the class of people with small fixed incomes or with small

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salaries earned by routine work, or half independent people practising some minor artistic or literary craft, who have led uneventful, irresponsible lives from their youth up, and never came at any point into relations of service to the state. This latter class was more difficult to define than the former—because it is more various within itself. My French friends wanted to talk of the “Psychology of the Rentier.” I was for such untranslatable phrases as the “Genteel Whig,” or the “Donnish Liberal.” But I lit up an Italian—he is a Milanese manufacturer—with “these Florentine English who would keep Italy in a glass case.” “I know,” he said. Before I go on to expand this congenial theme, let me deal first with the Resentful Employee, who is a much more considerable, and to me a much more sympathetic, figure in European affairs. I began life myself as a Resentful Employee. By the extremest good luck I have got my mind and spirit out of the distortions of that cramping beginning, but I can still recall even the anger of those old days.

He becomes an employee between thirteen and fifteen; he is made to do work he does not like for no other purpose than that he can see except the profit and glory of a fortunate person called his employer, behind whom stand church and



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state blessing and upholding the relationship. He is not allowed to feel that he has any share whatever in the employer's business, or that any end is served but the employer's profit. He cannot see that the employer acknowledges any duty to the state. Neither church nor state seems to insist that the employer has any public function. At no point does the employee come into a clear relationship of mutual obligation with the state. There does not seem to be any way out for the employee from a life spent in this subordinate, toilsome relationship. He feels put upon and cheated out of life. He is without honour. If he is a person of ability or stubborn temper he struggles out of his position; if he is a kindly and generous person he blames his "luck" and does his work and lives his life as cheerfully as possible—and so live the bulk of our amazing European workers; if he is a being of great magnanimity he is content to serve for the ultimate good of the race; if he has imagination he says, "Things will not always be like this," and becomes a socialist or a guild socialist, and tries to educate the employer to a sense of reciprocal duty; but if he is too human for any of these things, then he begins to despise and hate the employer and the system that made him. He wants to hurt them. Upon that hate it is easy to trade.



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A certain section of what is called the Socialist press and the Socialist literature in Europe is no doubt great-minded; it seeks to carve a better world out of the present. But much of it is socialist only in name. Its spirit is Anarchistic. Its real burthen is not construction but grievance; it tells the bitter tale of the employee, it feeds and organises his malice, it schemes annoyance and injury for the hated employer. The state and the order of the world is confounded with the capitalist. Before the war the popular so-called socialist press reeked with the cant of rebellion, the cant of any sort of rebellion. "I'm a rebel," was the silly boast of the young disciple. "Spoil something, set fire to something," was held to be the proper text for any girl or lad of spirit. And this blind discontent carried on into the war. While on the one hand a great rush of men poured into the army saying, "Thank God! we can serve our country at last instead of some beastly profiteer," a sourer remnant, blind to the greater issues of the war, clung to the reasonless proposition, "the state is only for the Capitalist. This war is got up by Capitalists. Whatever has to be done—we are rebels."

Such a typical paper as the British *Labour Leader*, for example, may be read in vain, number



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after number, for any sound and sincere constructive proposal. It is a prolonged scream of extreme individualism, a monotonous repetition of incoherent discontent with authority, with direction, with union, with the European effort. It wants to do nothing. It just wants effort to stop—even at the price of German victory. If the whole fabric of society in western Europe were to be handed over to those pseudo-socialists to-morrow, to be administered for the common good, they would fly the task in terror. They would make excuses and refuse the undertaking. They do not want the world to go right. The very idea of the world going right does not exist in their minds. They are embodied discontent and hatred, making trouble, and that is all they are. They want to be “rebels”—to be admired as “rebels.”

That is the true psychology of the Resentful Employee. He is a de-socialised man. His sense of the State has been destroyed.

The Resentful Employees are the outcome of our social injustices. They are the failures of our social and educational systems. We may regret their pitiful degradation, we may exonerate them from blame; none the less they are a pitiful crew. I have seen the hardship of the trenches, the gay and gallant wounded. I do a little understand what our soldiers, officers



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and men alike, have endured and done. And though I know I ought to allow for all that I have stated, I cannot regard these conscientious objectors with anything but contempt. Into my house there pours a dismal literature rehearsing the hardships of these men who set up to be martyrs for liberty ; So and So, brave hero, has been sworn at—positively sworn at by a corporal ; a nasty rough man came into the cell of So and So and dropped several h's ; So and So, refusing to undress and wash, has been undressed and washed, and soap was rubbed into his eyes—perhaps purposely ; the food and accommodation are not of the best class ; the doctors in attendance seem hasty ; So and So was put into a damp bed and has got a nasty cold. Then I recall a jolly vanload of wounded men I saw out there. . . .

But after all, we must be just. A church and state that permitted these people to be thrust into dreary employment in their early 'teens, without hope or pride, deserves such citizens as these. The marvel is that there are so few. There are a poor thousand or so of these hopeless, resentment-poisoned creatures in Great Britain. Against five willing millions. The Allied countries, I submit, have not got nearly all the conscientious objectors they deserve.



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### § 3

If the Resentful Employee provides the emotional impulse of the resisting pacifist, whose horizon is bounded by his one passionate desire that the particular social system that has treated him so ill should collapse and give in, and its leaders and rulers be humiliated and destroyed, the intellectual direction of a mischievous pacifism comes from an entirely different class.

The Genteel Whig, though he differs very widely in almost every other respect from the Resentful Employee, has this much in common, that he has never been drawn into the whirl of the collective life in any real and assimilative fashion. This is what is the matter with both of them. He is a little, loose, shy, independent person. Except for eating and drinking—in moderation, he has never done anything real from the day he was born. He has frequently not even faced the common challenge of matrimony. Still more frequently is he childless, or the daring parent of one peculiar child. He has never traded nor manufactured. He has drawn his dividends or his salary with an entire unconsciousness of any obligations to policemen or navy for these punctual payments. Probably he has never ventured even to re-invest his little legacy. He is acutely aware

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of possessing an exceptionally fine intelligence, but he is entirely unconscious of a fundamental unreality. Nothing has ever occurred to him to make him ask why the mass of men were either not possessed of his security or discontented with it. The impulses that took his school friends out upon all sorts of odd feats and adventures struck him as needless. As he grew up he turned with an equal distrust from passion or ambition. His friends went out after love, after adventure, after power, after knowledge, after this or that desire, and became men. But he noted merely that they became fleshly, that effort strained them, that they were sometimes angry or violent or heated. He could not but feel that theirs were vulgar experiences, and he sought some finer exercise for his exceptional quality. He pursued art or philosophy or literature upon their more esoteric levels, and realised more and more the general vulgarity and coarseness of the world about him, and his own detachment. The vulgarity and crudity of the things nearest him impressed him most; the dreadful insincerity of the Press, the meretriciousness of success, the loudness of the rich, the baseness of the common people in his own land. The world overseas had by comparison a certain glamour. Except that when you said "United States"



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to him, he would draw in the air sharply between his teeth and beg you not to . . .

Nobody took him by the collar and shook him.

If our world had considered the advice of William James and insisted upon national service from everyone, national service in the drains or the nationalised mines or the nationalised deep-sea fisheries if not in the army or navy, we should not have had any such men. If it had insisted that wealth and property are no more than a trust for the public benefit, we should have had no genteel indispensables. These discords in our national unanimity are the direct consequence of our bad social organisation. We permit the profiteer and the usurer; they evoke the response of the Reluctant Employee, and the inheritor of their wealth becomes the Genteel Whig.

But that is by the way. It was of course natural and inevitable that the German onslaught upon Belgium and civilisation generally should strike these recluse minds not as a monstrous ugly wickedness to be resisted and overcome at any cost, but merely as a nerve-racking experience. Guns were going off on both sides. The Genteel Whig was chiefly conscious of a repulsive vast excitement all about him, in which many people did inelegant and

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irrational things. They waved flags—nasty little flags. This child of the ages, this last fruit of the gigantic and tragic tree of life, could no more than stick its fingers in its ears and say, “Oh, please, do *all* stop!” and then as the strain grew intenser and intenser set itself with feeble pawings now to clamber “Au-dessus de la Mêlée,” and now to—in some weak way—stop the conflict. (“Au-dessus de la Mêlée”—as the man said when they asked him where he was when the bull gored his sister.) The efforts to stop the conflict at any price, even at the price of entire submission to the German Will, grew more urgent as the necessity that everyone should help against the German Thing grew more manifest.

Of all the strange freaks of distressed thinking that this war has produced, the freaks of the Genteel Whig have been among the most remarkable. With an air of profound wisdom he returns perpetually to his proposition that there are faults on both sides. To say that is his conception of impartiality. I suppose that if a bull gored his sister he would say that there were faults on both sides; his sister ought not to have strayed into the field, she was wearing a red hat of a highly provocative type; she ought to have been a cow and then everything would have been different. In the



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face of the history of the last forty years, the Genteel Whig struggles persistently to minimise the German outrage upon civilisation and to find excuses for Germany. He does this, not because he has any real passion for falsehood, but because by training, circumstance, and disposition he is passionately averse from action with the vulgar majority and from self-sacrifice in a common cause, and because he finds in the justification of Germany and, failing that, in the blackening of the Allies to an equal blackness, one line of defence against the wave of impulse that threatens to submerge his private self. But when at last that line is forced he is driven back upon others equally extraordinary. You can often find simultaneously in the same Pacifist paper, and sometimes even in the utterances of the same writer, two entirely incompatible statements. The first is that Germany is so invincible that it is useless to prolong the war since no effort of the Allies is likely to produce any material improvement in their position, and the second is that Germany is so thoroughly beaten that she is now ready to abandon militarism and make terms and compensations entirely acceptable to the countries she has forced into war. And when finally facts are produced to establish the truth that Germany, though still largely wicked and im-



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penitent, is being slowly and conclusively beaten by the sanity, courage and persistence of the Allied common men, then the Genteel Whig retorts with his last defensive absurdity. He invents a national psychology for Germany. Germany, he invents, loves us and wants to be our dearest friend. Germany has always loved us. The Germans are a loving, unenvious people. They have been a little misled—but nice people do not insist upon that fact. But beware of beating Germany, beware of humiliating Germany; then indeed trouble will come. Germany will begin to dislike us. She will plan a revenge. Turning aside from her erstwhile innocent career, she may even think of hate. What are our obligations to France, Italy, Serbia and Russia, what is the happiness of a few thousands of the Herero, a few millions of Belgians—whose numbers moreover are constantly diminishing—when we weigh them against the danger, the most terrible danger, of incurring *permanent German hostility*? . . .

A Frenchman I talked to knew better than that. "What will happen to Germany," I asked, "if we are able to do so to her and so; would she take to dreams of a *Revanche*?"

"She will take to Anglomania," he said, and added after a flash of reflection, "In the long run it will be the worse for you."



### III

## THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

### § 1

ONE of the indisputable things about the war, so far as Britain and France go—and I have reason to believe that on a lesser scale things are similar in Italy—is that it has produced a very great volume of religious thought and feeling. About Russia in these matters we hear but little at the present time, but one guesses at parallelism. People habitually religious have been stirred to new depths of reality and sincerity, and people are thinking of religion who never thought of religion before. But as I have already pointed out, thinking and feeling about a matter is of no permanent value unless something is *thought out*, unless there is a change of boundary or relationship, and it is an altogether different question to ask whether any definite change is resulting from this universal ferment. If it is not doing so, then the sleeper merely dreams a dream that he will forget again. . . .



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Now in no sort of general popular mental activity is there so much froth and waste as in religious excitements. This has been the case in all periods of religious revival. The number who are rather impressed, who for a few days or weeks take to reading their Bibles or going to a new place of worship or praying or fasting or being kind and unselfish, is always enormous in relation to the people whose lives are permanently changed. The effort needed if a contemporary is to blow off the froth, is always very considerable.

Among the froth that I would blow off is I think most of the tremendous efforts being made in England by the Anglican church to attract favourable attention to itself *à propos* of the war. I came back from my visit to the Somme battlefields to find the sylvan peace of Essex invaded by a number of ladies in blue dresses adorned with large white crosses, who, regardless of the present shortage of nurses, were visiting every home in the place on some mission of invitation whose details remained obscure. So far as I was able to elucidate this project, it was in the nature of a magic incantation; a satisfactory end of the war was to be brought about by convergent prayer and religious assiduities. The mission was shy of dealing with me personally, although as a



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lapsed communicant I should have thought myself a particularly hopeful field for Anglican effort, and it came to my wife and myself merely for our permission and countenance in an appeal to our domestic assistants. My wife consulted the household; it seemed very anxious to escape from that appeal, and as I respect Christianity sufficiently to detest the identification of its services with magic processes, the mission retired—civilly repulsed. But the incident aroused an uneasy curiosity in my mind with regard to the general trend of Anglican teaching and Anglican activities at the present time. The trend of my enquiries is to discover the church much more incoherent and much less religious—in any decent sense of the word—than I had supposed it to be.

Organisation is the life of material and the death of mental and spiritual processes. There could be no more melancholy exemplification of this than the spectacle of the Anglican and Catholic churches at the present time, one using the tragic stresses of the war mainly for pew-rent touting, and the other paralysed by its Austrian and South German political connections from any clear utterance upon the moral issues of the war. Through the opening phases of the war the Established Church of England was inconspicuous; this is no longer



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the case, but it may be doubted whether the change is altogether to its advantage. To me this is a very great disappointment. I have always had a very high opinion of the intellectual value of the leading divines of both the Anglican and Catholic communions. The self-styled Intelligentsia of Great Britain is all too prone to sneer at their equipment; but I do not see how any impartial person can deny that Father Bernard Vaughan is in mental energy, vigour of expression, richness of thought and variety of information fully the equal of such an influential lay publicist as Mr. Horatio Bottomley. One might search for a long time among prominent laymen to find the equal of the Bishop of London. Nevertheless it is impossible to conceal the impression of tawdriness that this latter gentleman's work as head of the National Mission has left upon my mind. Attired in khaki he has recently been preaching in the open air to the people of London upon Tower Hill, Piccadilly, and other conspicuous places. Obsessed as I am by the humanities, and impressed as I have always been by the inferiority of material to moral facts, I would willingly have exchanged the sight of two burning Zeppelins for this spectacle of ecclesiastical fervour. But as it is, I am obliged to trust to newspaper reports and the descriptions of



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hearers and eye-witnesses. They leave to me but little doubt of the regrettable superficiality of the bishop's utterances.

We have a multitude of people chastened by losses, ennobled by a common effort, needing support in that effort, perplexed by the reality of evil and cruelty, questioning and seeking after God. What does the National Mission offer? On Tower Hill the bishop seems to have been chiefly busy with a wrangling demonstration that ten thousand a year is none too big a salary for a man subject to such demands and expenses as his see involves. So far from making anything out of his see he was, he declared, two thousand a year to the bad. Some day, when the church has studied efficiency, I suppose that bishops will have the leisure to learn something about the general state of opinion and education in their dioceses. The Bishop of London was evidently unaware of the almost automatic response of the sharp socialists among his hearers. Their first enquiry would be to learn how he came by that mysterious extra two thousand a year with which he supplemented his stipend. How did he earn *that*? And if he didn't earn it——! And secondly they would probably have pointed out to him that his standard of housing, clothing, diet and entertaining was probably a little



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higher than theirs. It is really no proof of virtuous purity that a man's expenditure exceeds his income. And finally some other of his hearers were left unsatisfied by his silence with regard to the current proposal to pool all clerical stipends for the common purposes of the church. It is a reasonable proposal, and if bishops must dispute about stipends instead of preaching the kingdom of God, then they are bound to face it. The sooner they do so, the more graceful will the act be. From these personal apologetics the bishop took up the question of the exemption, at the request of the bishops, of the clergy from military service. It is one of our contrasts with French conditions—and it is all to the disadvantage of the British churches.

In his Piccadilly contribution to the National Mission of Repentance and Hope the bishop did not talk politics but sex. He gave his hearers the sort of stuff that is handed out so freely by the Cinema Theatres, White Slave Traffic talk, denunciations of "Night Hawks"—whatever "Night Hawks" may be—and so on. On this or another occasion the bishop—he boasts that he himself is a healthy bachelor—lavished his eloquence upon the Fall in the Birth Rate, and the duty of all married people, from paupers upward, to have children persistently. Now sex, like diet, is a department



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of conduct and a very important department, but *it isn't religion!* The world is distressed by international disorder, by the monstrous tragedy of war; these little hot talks about indulgence and begetting have about as much to do with the vast issues that concern us as, let us say, a discussion of the wickedness of eating very new and indigestible bread. It is talking round and about the essential issue. It is fogging the essential issue, which is the forgotten and neglected kingship of God. The sin that is stirring the souls of men is the sin of this war. It is the sin of national egotism and the devotion of men to loyalties, ambitions, sects, churches, feuds, aggressions, and divisions that are an outrage upon God's universal kingdom.

### § 2

The common clergy of France, sharing the military obligations and the food and privations of their fellow parishioners, contrast very vividly with the home-staying types of the ministries of the various British churches. I met and talked to several. Near Frise there were some barge gunboats—they have since taken their place in the fighting, but then they were a surprise—and the men had been very anxious to have their craft visited and seen. The priest



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who came after our party to see if he could still arrange that, had been decorated for gallantry. Of course the English too have their gallant chaplains, but they are men of the officer caste, they are just young officers with peculiar collars ; not men among men, as are the French priests.

There can be no doubt that the behaviour of the French priests in this war has enormously diminished anti-clerical bitterness in France. There can be no doubt that France is far more a religious country than it was before the war. But if you ask whether that means any return to the church, any reinstatement of the church, the answer is a doubtful one. Religion and the simple priest are stronger in France to-day ; the church, I think, is weaker.

I trench on no theological discussion when I record the unfavourable impression made upon all western Europe by the failure of the Holy Father to pronounce definitely upon the rights and wrongs of the war. The church has abrogated its right of moral judgment. Such at least seemed to be the opinion of the Frenchmen with whom I discussed a remarkable interview with Cardinal Gasparri that I found one morning in *Le Journal*.

It was not the sort of interview to win the hearts of men who were ready to give their lives to set right what they believe to be the



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greatest outrage that has ever been inflicted upon Christendom, that is to say the forty-three years of military preparation and of diplomacy by threats that culminated in the ultimatum to Serbia, the invasion of Belgium and the murder of the Visé villagers. It was adorned with a large portrait of "Benoit XV.," looking grave and discouraging over his spectacles, and the headlines insisted it was "*La Pensée du Pape.*" Cross-heads sufficiently indicated the general tone. One read :

"*Le Saint Siège impartial . . .*  
*Au-dessus de la bataille. . . .*"

The good Cardinal would have made a good lawyer. He had as little to say about God and the general righteousness of things as the Bishop of London. But he got in some smug reminders of the severance of diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Perhaps now France will be wiser. He pointed out that the Holy See in its Consistorial Allocution of January 22nd, 1915, invited the belligerents to observe the laws of war. Could anything more be done than that? Oh!—in the general issue of the war, if you want a judgment on the war as a whole, how is it possible for the Vatican to decide? Surely the French know that excellent principle of justice, *Audiatur et altera*



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*pars*, and how under existing circumstances can the Vatican do that? . . . The Vatican is cut off from communication with Austria and Germany. The Vatican has been deprived of its temporal power and local independence (another neat point). . . .

So France is bowed out. When peace is restored the Vatican will perhaps be able to enquire if there was a big German army in 1914, if German diplomacy was aggressive from 1875 onward, if Belgium was invaded unrighteously, if (Catholic) Austria forced the pace upon (non-Catholic) Russia. But now—now the Holy See must remain as impartial as an unbought mascot in a shop window. . . .

The next column of *Le Journal* contained an account of the Armenian massacres; the blood of the Armenian cries out past the Holy Father to heaven; but then Armenians are after all heretics, and here again the principle of *Audiatur et altera pars* comes in. Communications are not open with the Turks. Moreover, Armenians, like Serbs, are worse than infidels; they are heretics. Perhaps God is punishing them. . . .

*Audiatur et altera pars*, and the Vatican has not forgotten the infidelity and disrespect of both France and Italy in the past. These are the things, it seems, that really matter to the



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Vatican. Cardinal Gasparri's portrait, in the same issue of *Le Journal*, displays a countenance of serene contentment, a sort of incarnate "Told-you-so."

So the Vatican lifts its pontifical skirts and shakes the dust of western Europe off its feet.

It is the most astounding renunciation in history.

Indubitably the Christian church took a wide stride from the kingship of God when it placed a golden throne for the unbaptised Constantine in the midst of its most sacred deliberations at Nicæa. But it seems to me that this abandonment of moral judgments in the present case by the Holy See is an almost wider step from the church's allegiance to God. . . .

### § 3

Thought about the great questions of life, thought and reasoned direction, this is what the multitude demands mutely and weakly, and what the organised churches are failing to give. They have not the courage of their creeds. Either their creeds are intellectual flummery or they are the solution to the riddles with which the world is struggling. But the churches make no mention of their creeds. They chatter about sex and the magic effect of church attend-



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ance and simple faith. If simple faith is enough, the churches and their differences are an imposition. Men are stirred to the deepest questions about life and God, and the Anglican church, for example, obliges—as I have described.

It is necessary to struggle against the unfavourable impression made by these things. They must not blind us to the deeper movement that is in progress in a quite considerable number of minds in England and France alike towards the realisation of the kingdom of God.

What I conceive to be the reality of the religious revival is to be found in quarters remote from the religious professionals. Let me give but one instance of several that occur to me. I met soon after my return from France a man who has stirred my curiosity for years, Mr. David Lubin, the prime mover in the organisation of the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome. It is a movement that has always appealed to my imagination. The idea is to establish and keep up to date a record of the production of food staples in the world with a view to the ultimate world control of food supply and distribution. When its machinery has developed sufficiently it will of course be possible to extend its activities to a control in the interests of civilisation of many



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other staples besides foodstuffs. It is in fact the suggestion and beginning of the economic world peace and the economic world state, just as the Hague Tribunal is the first faint sketch of a legal world state. The King of Italy has met Mr. Lubin's idea with open hands. (It was because of this profoundly interesting experiment that in a not very widely known book of mine, *The World Set Free* (May, 1914), in which I represented a world state as arising out of Armageddon, I made the first world conference meet at Brissago in Italian Switzerland under the presidency of the King of Italy.) So that when I found I could meet Mr. Lubin I did so very gladly. We lunched together in a pretty little room high over Knightsbridge, and talked through an afternoon.

He is a man rather after the type of Gladstone; he could be made to look like Gladstone in a caricature, and he has that compelling quality of intense intellectual excitement which was one of the great factors in the personal effectiveness of Gladstone. He is a Jew, but until I had talked to him for some time that fact did not occur to me. He is in very ill health, he has some weakness of the heart that grips and holds him at times white and silent.

At first we talked of his Institute and its



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work. Then we came to shipping and transport. Whenever one talks now of human affairs one comes presently to shipping and transport generally. In Paris, in Italy, when I returned to England, everywhere I found "cost of carriage" was being discovered to be a question of fundamental importance. Yet transport, railroads and shipping, these vitally important services in the world's affairs, are nearly everywhere in private hands and run for profit. In the case of shipping they are run for profit on such antiquated lines that freights vary from day to day and from hour to hour. It makes the business of food supply a gamble. And it need not be a gamble.

But that is by the way in the present discussion. As we talked, the prospect broadened out from a prospect of the growing and distribution of food to a general view of the world becoming one economic community.

I talked of various people I had been meeting in the previous few weeks. "So many of us," I said, "seem to be drifting away from the ideas of nationalism and faction and policy, towards something else which is larger. It is an idea of a right way of doing things for human purposes, independently of these limited and localised references. Take such things as international hygiene for example, take *this* move-



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ment. We are feeling our way towards a bigger rule."

"The rule of Righteousness," said Mr. Lubin.

I told him that I had been coming more and more to the idea—not as a sentimentality or a metaphor, but as the ruling and directing idea, the structural idea, of all one's political and social activities—of the whole world as one state and community and of God as the King of that state.

"But *I* say that," cried Mr. Lubin, "I have put my name to that. And—it is *here*!"

He struggled up, seized an Old Testament that lay upon a side table, and flung it upon the table. He stood over it and rapped its cover. "It is *here*," he said, looking more like Gladstone than ever, "in the Prophets."

### § 4

That is all I mean to tell at present of that conversation.

We talked of religion for two hours. Mr. Lubin sees things in terms of Israel and I do not. For all that we see things very much after the same fashion. That talk was only one of a number of talks about religion that I have had with hard and practical men who want to get the world straighter than it is, and who



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perceive that they must have a leadership and reference outside themselves. That is why I assert so confidently that there is a real deep religious movement afoot in the world. But not one of those conversations could have gone on, it would have ceased instantly, if anyone bearing the uniform and brand of any organised religious body, any clergyman, priest, mollah, or suchlike advocate of the ten thousand patented religions in the world, had come in. He would have brought in his sectarian spite, his propaganda of church-going, his persecution of the heretic and the illegitimate, his ecclesiastical politics, his taboos and his doctrinal touchiness. . . . That is why, though I perceive there is a great wave of religious revival in the world to-day, I doubt whether it bodes well for the professional religious. . . .

The other day I was talking to an eminent Anglican among various other people, and someone with an eye to him propounded this remarkable view.

“There are four stages between belief and utter unbelief. There are those who believe in God, those who doubt him like Huxley the Agnostic, those who deny him like the Atheists but who do at least keep his place vacant, and lastly those who have set up a Church in his place. That is the last outrage of unbelief.”