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GEORGE BARRETT

**THE
FIRST
PERSON**

Two Shillings & Sixpence

FREEDOM PRESS

In Memory
of
Edith Ballard
(died May 24, 1963)
without whom this book
would not have been published.

THE FIRST PERSON

by

George Barrett

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by
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Biographical Note

GEORGE BARRETT WAS BORN George Powell Ballard—"Barrett" was a *nom de guerre*—on December 6, 1888, at Ledbury in Herefordshire. His family was well-known in the district—his father being, in the words of a local paper, "a master genius in many bypaths of mechanical handicraft." Tom Ballard, one of his uncles, was an artist and a friend of Samuel Butler. His paternal grandfather was also an artist, as was his brother Jack.

After finishing his education at the Cathedral High School, Hereford, Barrett became an engineering draughtsman. He was also a journalist, a poet and an outstanding orator. In him the artistic and mechanical talents of the Ballard family found a synthesis.

Bristol was the scene of his first propagandist activities. He joined the Bristol Socialist Society, but his opposition to parliamentary tactics led to his resignation and he became an anarchist. It was in Bristol that he met and married the daughter of a leading local socialist, Edith Oxley, who was his staunch helpmate until he died.

London was his next port of call. He joined the Walthamstow Anarchist Group and made his *début* as an anarchist speaker. "Barrett's energy was tremendous", wrote the late Mat Kavanagh. "He spoke almost every night in the week, and would often cycle 20 miles each way to address a meeting, and that after a day's work."

It was in Glasgow, however, that his most active period was spent. He began to speak at various open-air pitches with such success that he soon inspired a vigorous movement. John Paton, now a Labour M.P., devotes a chapter of his book, "Proletarian Pilgrimage", to the time when he was a member of the Glasgow

Anarchist Group shortly before World War I. In it he describes his meeting with George Barrett and it is worth quoting from his account at length for the vivid picture he gives of Barrett at the height of his powers:

"The break with the I.L.P. left me at a loose end. The incessant round of various activity had become a habit. I sought relief from my boredom in my books and studies, but the itch to be doing something was a constant torment. The propaganda meeting drew me, but constantly drove me away as I became conscious that I was now an outsider. A demon of restlessness possessed me.

"It was in this mood that one evening I saw an unfamiliar figure mounted on a box at one of the speaking pitches. I made one of the half-dozen people listening to him. He was engaged in a familiar denunciation of capitalism and a glance at the pamphlets spread on the street told me he was an anarchist.

"I studied him with a new interest. There had been no anarchist propaganda in Glasgow for many years, although at one time there had been an active group. The speaker was a tall, good-looking Englishman, extremely eloquent and able, whose speech betrayed his middle-class origin. The passionate conviction with which he spoke was extraordinarily impressive; he was undoubtedly an unusual personality; the crowd about him swelled in numbers. As the speech developed, my interest quickened with excitement; he progressed from the usual attack on capitalism to a scathing indictment of politicians and particularly the leaders of the Labour Party: here was, at last, being shouted at the street corner, all the criticisms which had become common in the 'left-wing' of the I.L.P., but which we'd keep discreetly for party discussion. My heart rejoiced. But it was much more than a mere attack on personalities; it was a powerful analysis of the causes that produced them. When he proceeded to an equally drastic treatment of the place of religion in the enslavement of the people, his conquest of me was complete. Here, again, it was no mere rehash of the stale gibes at the Bible and the priests which formed the staple of most of the secularist speakers, and which usually bored me to death, but an able survey of the origins and development of religious belief.

"It was an outstanding performance in its power and persuasiveness; it had no loose ends. He spoke for over two hours and ended completely exhausted. Much of what he said must have been over the heads of many who listened, but his deep sincerity and attractive personality held them and his audience had grown to several hundreds before the end."

At the beginning of 1911 the Houndsditch Affair—better known as the "Siege of Sidney Street"—made anarchism headline news. Whether the burglars who shot it out with the police and military had any connection with the anarchist movement is extremely doubtful, but the fact that some of them knew anarchists was enough for the authorities and the popular press to shriek of an "anarchist plot". And "anarchists" they have remained in that peculiar farrago of lies and legend that passes for history among the crowd and its manipulators.

As a result of this affair an outcry was raised against the anarchists and detectives paid a visit to the firm where Barrett worked. He was instantly sacked, although his employers had been on friendly terms with him and had no complaints about his ability. Not only this, but the police blacklisted him with other employers so that he was unable to get another job in Glasgow. From then on he earned a living by writing articles for the engineering press.

May Day, 1912, saw the publication of the first number of "The Anarchist," a weekly paper edited by George Barrett, which lasted for 34 issues. George Davison, a wealthy comrade, gave some initial help, but Barrett was anxious that the paper should be supported by the general anarchist movement and kept from Davison the struggle needed to keep it going. His wife recalled that:

"George was working at very high pressure, writing articles and doing all the work of editing, and often, in addition, doing many odd jobs—getting the paper rolled off, folding, packing and even rushing to the post, for one or two members of the group got tired, so for weeks the strain was tremendous. They were anxious days, and yet thrilling too. Fortunately, a sense of humour pulled us through many a time, even when things went into pawn to pay the 'comps' wages."

As well as writing and editing, Barrett also made several lecture tours throughout England and Scotland, often speaking where anarchist ideas had not been heard of before.

But this intense activity could not last. Barrett caught a chill while speaking at an open-air meeting in May, 1913, and the last years of his life were spent in a long and unavailing fight against acute tuberculosis.

In spite of his illness he did not become inactive. When World War I broke out he wrote a pamphlet called "The Last War" which was published by the Bristol Workers' Freedom

Group. This sold some 10,000 copies before being suppressed by the government. He was a signatory to the international manifesto published by the anti-war section of the anarchist movement as a reply to the pro-war stand of Kropotkin and others. He began a book on "Law and Liberty," and wrote such essays as "Substance and Shadow" and "The First Person." (After his death Freedom Press published two more pamphlets from his pen: "The Anarchist Resolution" and "Objections to Anarchism.")

When he was too weak to write, he dictated his thoughts to friends.

He died in Torquay on January 7, 1917. He was thirty years old.

S.E.P.

Appreciations

SKILLED ENGINEER, BORN journalist to whom the columns of the best technical journals in England were always open, practical designer, mathematician familiar with the deepest intricacies of the Calculus, he was yet poet, orator, dreamer (one supposes)—and anarchist. And his finest integration, the important thing he would have us understand in all its bearings, that "one thought, one grace, one wonder at the least" which it is his virtue to have envisaged and inspired, is the practicality, the sufficiency, the splendour, and the entire reasonableness of Liberty.

W. WILSON.

IT CAN BE SAFELY SAID that George Barrett was one of the clearest and one of the most brilliant speakers of his day. He had every asset a good speaker needs: tall and of good appearance, a ready wit and an exceptionally good flow of cultured English. Either as a speaker or writer, he went straight to the root of things, pushing all superfluous matters on one side. It was his grasp of scientific and economic truths that enabled him to see the necessity for revolutionary thought and action. He knew that nothing short of a complete revolutionary change in the basis of society would be of any social value. He would never compromise with his ideas, and his integrity was always apparent and above suspicion.

MAT KAVANAGH.

TO MEET HIM WAS TO BE attracted by the quickness of his wit, the whimsicality of his humour, the originality of his imagination; to be charmed by his interest and knowledge. It would appear he was a super-specialist in all the various directions in which his very different friends had specialised.

To know him was to be awed by a revelation of the liberty he lived for—yet rather not that he lived for, but that he lived, and of which he had become a part.

The truth which burned in him showed us with a power and a lucidity of reasoning which forced a spark even into our dullness. It would have been as impossible to doubt his sincerity of purpose and his lack of personal ambition as to question his love of mankind. His writings, his life and sayings, all the force he was, and created amongst us and still is, all that made this man we loved, and love, is forever part of the passion in all resistance to oppression and injustice, forever part of the great eternal force in humanity's forward march.

E.A.B.—A SISTER.

KROPOTKIN WROTE regarding Barrett's editing of "The Anarchist":

"Let me tell you, dear comrade, that you are bringing out a splendid paper. You are a journalist, and that is rare. I mean, of course, a 'journalist' in the good sense of the word, and what I always tried to be: that is, to have your own fundamental conception of the thing to be achieved."

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The First Person

THE ENTHUSIAST IS generally one who has seen a tiny particle of the truth, and has mistaken it for the whole structure. Outside it everything is lies, and the truth which he sees is capable of redeeming the world. "Love your neighbour" says one, "and we will establish heaven on earth." "Renounce your joys on earth" replies another, "and you shall have happiness in eternity." "War on the gods!" cries a third, as he sharpens his intellectual battleaxe. "Socialism is the world-hope" says the enthusiast, and "Death to all Governments!" says the Anarchist. "The world will be saved by faith" says the disciple; "Scepticism alone can free us from the dogmas which strangle us!" comes the reply.

So on it goes, this merry and tragic jangle, like the conflicting tunes of the blatant organs at a fair. A fair day indeed is an apt analogy for those to whom noise and shoddy presents something more than discord and glitter, for is there not often a peculiar peace to be found in the midst of chaos, and a pleasant sensation of loneliness in a crowd? It is wonderfully restful sometimes to wander in the confusion of sounds, and, as one machine or another gains ascendancy, to receive some crude and but half-formed notion, while the chaos of noise forms a background to one's thoughts. And moreover, each show in its turn is the greatest on earth, and the only one worth patronising.

So it is wandering among the rival philosophies of the mental world.

The truth is that chaos is the mother of order, just as dissension is the mother of unity. The one develops naturally into the other. Destroy Chaos by regulations and rules and you have an abortive and ugly child instead of its legitimate and beautiful daughter—Order. Crush dissension by law, and it will never give birth to Unity, in her place we have an ugly bratling.

Let us not then be dismayed and even saddened by the chaos of opinions and movements which pull the world this way and that to its salvation. We progress slowly and imperfectly on a system of alternate generations; for Unity born of Dissension gives birth to Dissension, and Dissension which springs from Unity gives place again to Unity. This is the irregular ill-marked rhythm that we may detect in the weird chaos of tunes beaten out by the philosophers, tub-thumpers, archbishops, and men of action, who perform in the booths at the fair of human progress.

Let us then fearlessly take part in the general uproar. Here we will pitch our tent, and reveal to the crowd which cares to enter the "Greatest Discovery of the Age—The First Person."

It is the First Person who will liberate mankind from all slavery of the body and of the mind. He will be complete master of the earth, and none other will share his greatness. He will be mightier than all the kings of history, for they are great by the power of others, and he shall be great by his own strength. Who is he? What is he? This is but the speech outside the booth; come in, and you shall see and understand.

HERE, FIRST OF ALL, I present to you a prisoner condemned to be executed in accordance with the law, and assembled in the same hall are those who have played their part in the little drama which is so soon to end. Let us suppose that the full meaning and horror of this fact has possessed us. Here is a man, so like ourselves—and life is very dear—who in a day or so is to be killed by another appointed and liberally paid to do his work. Suppose now with such a tragedy impending we act not in accordance with our knowledge of the world, but prompted by our instincts and reason. Our one desire is to save this man's life. In horror we rush to those responsible. First we go to the jury and ask them to realise what they have done in depriving this man of life. The "twelve good men and true" however, are but seriously amused by our simplicity. "We have but fulfilled our duty to society" they say. "From evidence we have been asked to deduce a fact, and we have done it in the only way possible. As to this poor fellow to be hanged, we wish him no harm; we have only done the duty set before us." There is reason in this answer, and we excuse them and rush to the counsel for the prosecution who has so eloquently pleaded for the capital sentence. When he realises what he has done, we think, he will surely use his influence to counteract it. The learned man smiles, and condescends to explain. He is but part of the whole, it is his duty to present one

side of the case only, just as it is his learned friend's duty to explain the other side. Between them they set forth an unprejudiced argument. He is but one wheel in the machinery of the law, which in its turn is but a part of society.

Again we are baffled, until we remember the judge, who with his own lips gave orders that this man should be hanged by the neck until he was dead. We hasten to him, but alas! he tells us that what he did was merely the inevitable outcome of what the jury said. In doing his part he has but fulfilled a commonplace duty to society. It was impossible, he assures us, for him to do either more or less. There remains still the executioner; surely he will not deny his guilt. He who fixes the rope and draws the bolt can hardly say he has committed no murder. We confront him with it. He laughs more boldly than the rest. That he should be accused of causing the man's death when he is the meanest servant in the pay of those who have decided and arranged the whole thing! If he who merely draws the bolt is to be held responsible, then what of those who made and erected the scaffold? As to the man who is to be hanged, he would rather drink a glass of beer with him than execute him, but he has his duty to society to fulfil, be it pleasant or unpleasant.

Heaven and earth, but this is wondrous strange! Tomorrow a man is to be killed, they have dug his grave and prepared the means of death; they have planned and plotted, and signed documents, and shut him in prison, and yet no one is responsible. Where shall we find his murderer? Must we go to the churchyard and dig up the mouldy skeleton of some long-dead lawmaker, who passed the act by which the execution is to be carried out? Nay, the law and its maker are dead and putrid, and powerless to destroy the living man who tomorrow must die. Who then is responsible? Who has power to murder while the world stands mute and unprotesting? It is he who does and suffers all things—The First Person.

MILLIONS OF MEN, ARMED with guns, bombs, revolvers, and edged steel, transform Europe into a battlefield. In every nation the scientist and the engineer have combined to perfect the huge engines of war which are now brought into use. In the huge battle ships, submarines, aeroplanes, motor-cars, machine guns, search-lights, and all the paraphernalia of war, we see embodied the labour of almost countless men extending over many years. This labour has now reached its consummation. The spirit of war is triumphant, and calls forth these death-dealing instruments in a true

pageant of destruction. The strong men of all nations go forth and rejoice in the noble task they have been called upon to accomplish.

At first glance it may seem that there is nothing difficult to understand in all this. Conflicting interests among men hot-blooded and courageous may well lead to an actual conflict of arms, but yet there is something indeed mysterious about the whole.

Let us allow ourselves to realise the horror of war, and let us suppose that in our innocence, as in the case of the man who was to be hanged, we hasten from one to another of those who take part, in order that we may yet avoid the slaughter of tomorrow's battle.

We hurry to the House of Commons, which votes the supplies, but its members declare that they are not responsible: they have done their duty to their country only. From Sir Edward Grey, Lord Kitchener, Mr. Asquith, the soldier who fights in the trench, and from all others directly or indirectly concerned, we get similar answers to those received in our inquiry at the Law Courts. From land to land we may carry the inquiry still further, and in every country the result will be the same. All who take part in the great war—one of the most vast and tragic affairs undertaken by humanity—do so but to fulfil their duty. They regret the loss of life, but accept no responsibility for it.

This is all utterly impossible, surely? Such a great scheme must, it is certain, have been conceived and carried through by some purposeful, resourceful, and resolute mind. Someone of great power and daring must have been responsible. Who is it? It is he who does and suffers all things—The First Person.

IF WE CONSIDER A WIDER subject than either of these two it will be found that very much the same phenomenon meets us. Discuss with any man in a broad and general way the results of our present organisation of society, and he will agree that they are regrettable. The palaces of the rich, he admits, are a proof that there is no need for the hovels of the poor; the splendid thoroughfares of the best parts of our cities prove our ability to produce something better than the slums, and the existence of an unemployed problem proves that we have labour to spare for improvements.

But after all this has been admitted what else is to be said? Most of the men whom we know are employed, in one capacity or another, in producing, storing, or distributing wealth. Our first inclination then, is to believe that they are responsible for the

wealth and well-being of the people, but if we conduct the same inquiry as we have already done in regard to the War and the execution, we find it is attended with the same result.

"It is the system which creates poverty" declares the mere workman, "and we are its victims, and cannot be held responsible for it." The managing director is in a similar position; there is much to be regretted, he admits, but "I am but the servant of the shareholders, paid to produce profits; it would be folly for me to refuse to do so—indeed no choice is open unless I ruin the company, or merely resign my post. In either case I should do nothing to alleviate the poverty and suffering, which we all deplore."

What then of the shareholder? "Tell me what I can do?" he asks; "will the poor become richer if I give up my claim? Not one penny will go into their pockets if I give up everything I possess, whereas today I may do a little towards helping humanity. There is much to deplore in the present order of things, but alas! it is the system, and I am powerless to prevent it."

I will conduct the search no further. The reader, if he will, may pick his way through the maze of people engaged in erecting and maintaining this vast structure of civilisation, and let him make his inquiries. From the men who build the prison, the policeman who wields the bludgeon, the magistrate who condemns the woman who takes bread for her child; from those who build the factory walls, the captains of industry, the labourers, the miners, and the railway magnates; from each of these he will get the same reply: "It is the system of which we are the victims; we cannot help ourselves, far less can we prevent the downfall of others."

Who then is it that has the intellect to conceive, and the power to create this system, and compel us to work and drudge for it? Who has so boldly brought into being all the injustice, poverty, and misery, against which we scarcely dare to protest? It is he who does and suffers all things—The First Person.

AND NOW IT BECOMES my task to reveal this king of all monarchs and his power. He is to be found and understood only by those who are able to go back to first principles. Very few seem capable of this. Arguments generally concern themselves with details and the more complex aspects of subjects, but they seldom deal with the essentials. Thus, for example, if we notice our political controversies, we find that the important words in them: 'Government, taxation, the people, etc. are all taken for granted, and never, or

very seldom, subjected to analysis. It is interesting to break into one of these arguments, and begin to question like a child: "What is Government?" "What is taxation?" and "What is the people?" If we pursue such inquiries it will soon be found that the clever men who quote facts and figures to prove the most difficult theories have but the vaguest ideas concerning the first principles upon which, nevertheless, they have fearlessly built up all their beliefs and their party programmes. It is indeed a profound and universal truth that "Except ye become as little children ye shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of God."

In conducting such searches among realities one may stumble upon strange things. It was in such an inquiry that I discovered the First Person. The expression which I was pursuing was that one which above all others the politician so easily uses and so little understands—the people. Those interested in social theories never cease to discuss what *the people* need, what they ought to do, and what ought to be done for them. The sincere man before venturing opinions upon the subject however, finds it necessary first to search out and understand *the people*. He who sets himself this task will encounter many strange adventures, but strangest of all will be the conclusion to which he is at last forced to come. Let us accompany him in his search.

In the first place we will look among the upper class, and ask: "Are these *the people*?" A very short study of their interests and conversation will convince us that they are not. Indeed we find that they refer to *the people* in a tone of pity, and sometimes of contempt.

Among the middle class we shall find very much the same attitude of mind.

Both classes are united in many benevolent desires to do something for the *people*. They are convinced that they should be given better houses and more education; but as neither the houses are the kind they would care to live in themselves, nor the education of that nature which they would give their own children, we have at once positive proof that these indeed are not *the people*.

It now seems obvious that in the working class we shall find the object of our search. There surely are *the people* about whom the politicians have talked so much. Here, however, a strange surprise awaits us. We get among them and study their social life; but even in these surroundings we hear all men discussing *the people*—what they need, and what they ought to do. We attend their meetings, and their orators declare that: "The people need

to be properly housed, clothed, and fed—and why are they not? It is because they are themselves lazy, ignorant, and apathetic." These orators then are not of *the people*, for assuredly they do not despise themselves! From them we turn to the crowds, and behold! each man turns to his neighbour, and they all agree: "It is true; it is the fault of *the people* themselves that they are in need."

These too are not *the people*! Alas, then where shall we look? Our search is ended, and now comes the knowledge and understanding. The *people* of the politicians do not exist, they are a myth—the last superstition; when that is gone there remains the great vital power of humanity: The First Person.

HOW SHALL THIS BE understood? Like all great things—simply. Haeckel, the scientist, has written that the greatest moment in the life of a child is when it first uses the word *I*. for then, he says, it springs to self-conscious existence. A very young child talks in the third person; it says "Baby is tired", "Baby wants to do this or that". But there comes a time when it says "*I* want this"; that, according to the scientist, is the greatest moment in its life.*

So it is with humanity today. It talks of itself invariably in the third person. It speaks of the housing, clothing, and feeding, of the people. The time is near at hand when it will discover the *first person*, and then it will say *we*. That will be the greatest moment in the life of humanity.

It is we who feed, house, and clothe, and it is we who need food and shelter. It is we who commit murders, wage wars, and run the whole social system, and are responsible for its poverty and wealth. It is we, and we only, who can re-mould it all, for it is we who do and suffer all things.

THIS COMPLETE CHANGE in attitude of mind, more fundamental than any that has hitherto been made, is but the logically next link in a long chain of mental evolution.

In the earliest days the unknown and unknowable god was held responsible for all our misfortunes. The epidemic and the

* It is interesting to notice that some people never reach the turning point in their career, and frequently use the third person even after they are grown up. One example from literature is Durdles in "Edwin Drood", of whom Dickens says: "He often speaks of himself in the third person; perhaps being a little misty as to his own identity when he narrates."

famine were as much his work as were the earthquake and the hurricane. This direct and complete dependence on a force so mystic and so shadowy, however, proved unsatisfactory, and eventually the Priest-King was evolved. This creature had the ordinary attributes of a man, but at the same time was, or was supposed to be, gifted with divine power. He was obviously more approachable than god himself, but still, by virtue of his divinity, he was far distant from the ordinary man. Time eventually separated these two functions, and the King and Priest have since had many struggles for power. For the purposes of this argument it is only necessary to follow that line of descent which is headed by the kingship, and that but briefly, for the power of the king after this point gradually wanes. He is compelled to share it with the allies who have helped him to ascend the throne and maintain his position there. Thus Government by an individual gives place to Government by a powerful class. Finally *the people* appear to claim their rights, and gradually pushing forward they eventually assert their power to become the ruling class.

Each one of these successive and gradual steps has been clearly in the same direction. God to whom we first looked for all reform was a power entirely outside ourselves, of a different nature, and ununderstandable. The Priest-King was by no means so far away; he was unmistakably like a man, although his Priesthood surrounded him with mystery. The king stripped of his priesthood was frankly a part of humanity, but royal blood flowed in his veins, and his life was unlike that of the common people. When however, the power passed into the hands of a class it came very much nearer home. There were many points of contact between this class and the commons. It was impossible to surround so many familiar and ordinary men with mystery, or to associate them with the divinity. The next step is democracy, in which the ruling force is actually, or at least nominally, the people themselves.

Throughout all this process we have been coming nearer and nearer to ourselves, but nevertheless we have been placing our faith in some outside power: God, the Priest-King, the King, the Nobles, and finally the People.

Is it not obvious that the next step—if progress is to continue—is to place our faith in ourselves? Then indeed shall we recognise the power of the First Person. All these external powers are myths—**THE PEOPLE** of the politicians as much as the avenging personal God. To sacrifice oneself for either is the old crime

of ignorance when the blood of children smoked on the altars of the brutal gods.

When at length that great moment is reached in the life of humanity, and it begins to lisp its thoughts in the first person, then we shall know ourselves as the great reality and moving power of humanity. It is we who must remodel civilisation to suit ourselves.

In this struggle it is always self-development, and no sacrifice, even though it lead to the scaffold.

[1916]

Substance and Shadow

THERE IS NO MORE pathetic sight than the man who worships the shadow and sees not the substance. We meet him every day, we work with him and perhaps admire his enthusiasm and consistency, he gives as much as we do and his reward is so much smaller. He never sees the essentials and the grandeur of the ideal, yet he is faithful. Such, at least, he may be and such he may not. The more usual type is he, who, seeing nothing but shadows, fights with them and for them. He wastes much energy and kicks up no end of a dust which makes it difficult to get a clear view of what is really essential. Every movement is blessed with and cursed by these enthusiasts who, not having the habit of thinking very thoroughly, easily come to conclusions and seldom entertain any misgivings as to the completeness and accuracy of the opinions they have adopted.

Generally—at any rate in the Anarchist movement—they pride themselves on thoroughness and like to be considered extremists, but when it comes to action they either paralyse the movement by their dogmas about organisation and freedom or they frankly settle everything by themselves turning autocrats. Let us try to understand these shadow worshippers. When the mind of man first conceived the idea of God it felt the greatest reverence for this omnipotent being and experienced a desire to humble itself in admiration. In fact, to obtain this state of mind of meekness and worship was the religious impulse itself and to assist those who wished to glorify God in the spirit, all kinds of arts were employed. It was naturally difficult to fully realise the presence of God when surrounded by the trivial realities of everyday existence and for this reason they originated the symbols of God; the subdued light, the intonation of voice, the choirs and all the paraphernalia of

mysticism with which we are familiar. So far so good—or so bad, as we may consider it. At any rate we can, I think, understand that there was really a direct religious purpose behind the art that was called in to assist the worshipper. Time, however, developed quite a curiously differently state of affairs from this innocent beginning, the symbols of God were so well done that they began imperceptibly to take the place of God. God's representative became a mighty temporal power and the religious people bent down and deemed it the greatest honour to be permitted to kiss his feet. The art which had been invented merely to make God more visible had grown so great that it obscured the mighty original altogether. The people worshipped the shadow and saw not the substance.

So far the blunder has been fairly obvious and it may be argued that it is not the kind of mistake keen minds are likely to make. Perhaps not, but to such positive mistakes there are generally corresponding negative blunders more subtle and very much more easy to commit. Turning to actual history we may take it that the group of shadow worshippers referred to here are represented by the Catholic party against whom the Puritans waged their war. Now the Puritans realised that the older church had substituted something quite artificial for both God and religion and their object was to get back to the direct and simple worship of the Deity without the intervention of the Priests and their stage properties. Had they stuck to this very substantial and real desire to worship and to organise the worship of God according to their simple and earnest ideas, it is probable that they would never have been sneered at as they have been ever since. Unfortunately in their attacks upon the High Church Party they made the very same essential mistake that that party had made. The Catholics with mighty solemnity had worshipped shadows and now the Puritans with intense earnestness began to fight these same shadows. The starting point of the Puritans Party was the fact that the forms, ceremonies and symbols used in the church do not matter, God himself is everything.

The ending point of the party was the assumption that the abolition of forms, ceremonies and symbols was all important.

Thus both parties became essentially the same in that they were agreed that the manner of worship was the thing which concerned them most.

To repeat once more, and sum up: The one adopted art to assist him in coming into close touch with God, and then gradually

made the art the all important. The other adopted simplicity to assist him into close touch with God, and then made that simplicity the all important. The one was a positive ritualist, the other was a negative ritualist. Both lost the substance, and sought the shadow. The more thorough and drastic the Puritan was in denouncing all the colour of religion, the more did he pride himself on being an uncompromising puritan, but, in reality, the more did he show himself to have missed the essentials. Now this is what takes place in almost every movement, I believe, and it is certainly what has taken place to a large extent among Anarchists. Many young Anarchists today are priding themselves on their uncompromising anarchism, while they have actually missed the real meaning of the whole philosophy and are in reality merely negative-governmentalists or negative-leaders using the terms in a similar manner to the way in which I have used "negative-ritualists" above.

Let me start a supplementary argument. There has been an immense amount of quarrelling about the existence or non-existence of God. Those who do not believe in his existence have spent much time in exposing and tearing to pieces the "bogey set up by the believer". They are apt to forget one thing, however, and that is, that although God perhaps never existed, yet the belief and trust in him did, and it was just this that mattered. The belief in God would do no harm if trust in him did not follow as a logical consequence. Men trusted God to do what they ought to have got about doing themselves and that is why belief in him has been a hindrance to progress. How is it that this faith in God has so largely decayed today? It is not, I believe, the work of the God-slayers who were "negative-deists" and thought that the absence of God was as great as the "positive-deists" thought his presence was, but it is the work of the positive scientists who quietly slipped something in to take the place of God.

For ages the people had trembled at disease as a manifestation of the wrath of God and to cure it they fell on their knees, and prayed hard. Then the sanitary man came along and cleaned the drains and the disease stopped and the people got up off their knees and found that better. God was to that extent disposed of. One by one the things which God had been trusted to do, experience taught could be done better by man himself, and thus God gradually lost power. He fell from his position, not because anyone knocked him down but because something was substituted in his place. By these arguments I hope it may be seen that the

anarchist who is the most extreme in his denunciations of government, of law, and of leadership, may very well have quite failed to grasp the real meaning of the philosophy and that this is often so is too often proved. The analogy between them and the negative-deists quoted above is remarkably close. Like their puritans they do not fight the substance. The evils of leadership they denounce and then proceed to fight its shadows. They declare:

"Thou shalt not speak from a platform
Thou shalt not stand up to speak,
Thou shalt not sign thy name to an article,
Thou shalt not have a chairman for thy meeting nor a secretary for thy organisation."

All these dogmas and many others I have heard urged by those who firmly believe themselves to be the most consistent soldiers of Liberty. They are indeed true descendents of the later puritans, who fought for the abolition of the ring in marriage and of the parson's surplice as if these things were the cause and not the effect of impurity in religion. To these dogmas, then, I would reply that I would use any platform so long as it helped me to reach my crowd with my arguments. I would stand up, or stand on my head, if I find that by so doing I could better throw myself into my theme; I would sign my name to articles because I believe in personality, and see no reason to disguise myself or even hide myself for being made a leader. I would have a chairman whenever it was necessary to make announcements, or to introduce speakers or even make a meeting go with a "swing". I would certainly have a secretary if any letters had to be written and anyone would volunteer to undertake them.

The truth is Organisation is necessary and if we are going to do away with the Leadership form of it, it will be because we have substituted a true comradeship. The one-sided bargain by which the workman places his welfare in the hands of his leader must disappear, but in its place the mutual trust, suggested by the comradeship, must spring up. It seems to me that, in the anarchist movement today, those enthusiasts, who as I have endeavoured to show, have just missed the essentials of the philosophy, have in their attempts to destroy leadership largely destroyed comradeship also. At the first sign of misunderstanding some comrade who has perhaps devoted a long life to the movement immediately falls under their condemnation in order that they may show their independence of thought. "Who is this man?" they ask and repeat

the question as if it were an unanswerable argument. They clearly think to prove themselves true anarchists by their attacks on so great a man, and they then proceed to settle the dispute in the way they think is right. They are quite unable to see the grotesque travesty that this makes of their anarchism. This unreasonable element will probably always exist in our movement but that does not mean that all who form a part of it at present will remain in it. It is a passing phase with many and if they will make the effort, and do a little self criticism, and examine more fully their philosophy, they will quickly become thorough and useful anarchists.

I wish that by this article I could persuade some to do so.
[About 1916]

Originality and Machine Design

A CAREFUL SEARCH THROUGH the patent records with the object of studying the evolution of any one modern machine will surprise us time after time with the ever-increasing amount of ingenuity in the attempts, successful and otherwise, to overcome the defects of the more primitive apparatus. If, however, we survey these attempts critically, and at the same time take a wide view of the subject, we are forced to admit that this ingenuity has not advanced hand in hand with a corresponding progress of originality. The new idea does eventually appear suddenly, of course, and then the slow process of improvement goes on, until again the new principle is introduced and once more the period of eliminating weaknesses begins.

The evolution of a machine may thus be compared to the evolution of any organism. The process is indeed very similar to the revolution and evolution of society itself. Sudden political revolutions are followed by slow evolution until a yet more advanced political ideal is conceived and the old one is roughly cast aside, and then once more the quiet process of evolution is resumed. Neither is it surprising that this analogy should be so close when we remember that the machine, just as society, can be nothing more than the reflex of associated minds.

There is, however, one important feature peculiar to the evolution of a machine. In sociology we find that advanced men holding the new ideas are held back until a sufficiently powerful party is organised to adopt their view. It would be stepping on treacherous ground to illustrate this by an example. In natural science the newly acquired truth is often recognised by a few only and boycotted if not indignantly denied by the many. The experiences of Darwin, among many others, serve as an example of this unfortunate habit. In medical science similarly the new remedy is often

viewed with something more like prejudice than healthy scepticism. The reception of the theory of open-air treatment for consumptives serves as a melancholy illustration of this. It would be easy to show that this difficulty of reform ran through almost every branch of human activity, neither would it be fair to say that mechanical engineering is free from it, but it may safely be claimed that it is far less marked in this science than in others.

This fact may be proved by another reference to the patent records. If we note the date of any new idea patented and then turn up our engineering papers of that period, we shall be surprised to find how quickly this idea has received general notice, and, if found to be sound, how soon after it has sprung into prominence in the engineering world.

Let an individual once prove by tests that his machine will accomplish the work required of it with less or cheaper labour than the previously existing machines, and the innovation is practically accomplished. Prejudice is powerful, but it cannot stand against the individual who has mastered the problem of cheap production.

Again, the very existence of the patent laws suggests the truth of this assertion. In sociology or natural science or religion, the new idea is proclaimed to the public from the house-tops, and they are asked to accept it. In the mechanical world it is kept in the secret chamber until the law has encircled it and secured it to the privileged few. In one case we beg the public to accept, in the other case we put a barrier to stop the rush and charge for admission. As a matter of ethics it is to be feared that we cannot boast of this latter course, and as a matter of practical utility it is debatable. One good point, however, it does undeniably indicate, namely, that the engineering trade will accept and appreciate new ideas. So much we admit, but we reserve the right to view this eagerness to accept the new inspiration merely as evidence of the fact that it is already long overdue. The new ideas do not come forward with the same frequency that they should. An amazing mass of ingenuity is constantly being expended on established principles. The old order is being improved long after it ought to have given place to the new, because no one has found the new, or in many cases even suggested that it was to be found.

The original thinker is as a rule absent in the engineering workshops and offices, and if we ask ourselves what is responsible for this absence, we are bound to answer by placing in a prominent position among these causes, our much boasted and universally advocated technical education, evening classes and examinations.

The benefits of these institutions is obvious, yet viewed a little more closely it becomes doubtful if they have not done as much to retard advancement as they have to create progress. The technical student has spent his days or his evenings at the college not in pursuit of knowledge, but in pursuit of his diploma, his B.Sc., or what not. The fact that he has had to accumulate knowledge has been to him simply a barrier to be surmounted before his goal can be reached. Should he be successful he will probably rely for his future career rather on his qualifications as set forth in his certificate than on his actual ability. He will go into the workshop or office armed with a list of formulae from which to select one to fit any problem that may be presented to him. His originality has been killed. He can only think along the lines of the text books. If he is asked to design a machine for any given purpose he will know the approved practice and adopt it. Needless to say, this rule is not absolute, but the tendency is very marked. Now take on the contrary the case of the purely practical man who considers himself rather superior to the theoretical side of the question, and who is set to design a machine. He will know the complete list of the firms already making machines for the same purpose, he will be familiar with their designs and will probably start away at once, contentedly working in accordance with precedent. Thus the "practical" man and the theoretical man are alike in that they seldom think out their designs, starting directly from the purpose of the machine—a method of thought absolutely essential for the production of a simple, direct and original design.

First Principles and Originality

The important question before us is, then, how this originality of thought can best be stimulated and cultivated. One of the chief methods is by always sticking to first principles. By becoming familiar with the real fundamentals and learning to reason from these, rather than by committing to memory endless formulae. By studying pure mathematics rather than practical mathematics, theoretical mechanics rather than applied mathematics (the process of application should be left as far as possible to the individual.) By recognising that the text books dealing with these subjects do not go to the root of things—advanced enough they may be, but elementary enough they never are. For example—Mechanics deals with three fundamental ideas: space, time and matter. Here is a quotation from one of the text books referring to these ideas.

"It is difficult to give an exact definition of these notions, but they are so familiar to us that this is hardly necessary."

Doubtless it is not within the province of Mechanics to attempt to explain these words, but to say that such an enquiry is unnecessary is characteristic of the narrow mind which unfortunately is too common among engineers.

The student who wished really to understand his science will go much further in his inquiry into the meaning of these terms, but let him be prepared to receive scant encouragement in his task from either his technical teacher or the practical engineer.

The trigonometrical formulae are learnt and the application of the calculus, but ask any man who has used them all his life a few questions on the first principles upon which these sciences are based and probably he will admit or at least display his ignorance. The first principles are seldom taught, these having been previously established by the originators of the science are ever afterwards assumed, and thus our textbooks are little more than a series of articles on how to solve various problems. The excuse raised in defence of this method is that enough is thus obtained for practical purposes. If the principles were taught and the details of the application given only a secondary importance, these *practical purposes* would be found to be constantly extending.

It is interesting to quote here a remark made by a correspondent in a recent number of the "Mechanical World".

"There is a curious thing about workmen that I never could quite explain, and that is that if a half-skilled or even unskilled man can be taught to produce a piece of work or perform a certain operation, he is often quicker than the skilled man. I could give many instances of this, and one of the large American twistdrill companies has so far recognised this that they will not employ anyone to turn their drills who has ever handled a lathe before.

"I believe that the real reason of it is that the skilled men are to some extent hampered by traditions, and will persist in doing work the way they have always seen it done."

This is undoubtedly true and following the same line of reasoning we reach further truths. If a workman is given a tool with instructions only as to how and when to use it, he will probably be contented to use it as he is told. If on the other hand he is given a tool, the nature of which is explained to him and its application indicated as secondary instruction only, he will probably extend that application for himself, finding new uses to which to put the new instrument. Similarly, if a student becomes familiar

with a science by learning how to solve this or that problem with it, he will probably be contented to use it for solving similar problems on future occasions, and it will be difficult to make him see any further possibilities, because like the man at the lathe, he will be "hampered by traditions and will persist in doing work the way he has always seen it done". If, on the other hand, he becomes first thoroughly familiar with the first principles of that same science, the variety of problems to which he will apply it will be ever increasing. The latter course means the creating of pioneers; the former course, *necessarily fostered by the rush for diplomas*, kills all originality.

One necessary step then towards real progress is a radical, though perhaps subtle, change in our system of education. But this is not all that is wrong. The very atmosphere of our engineering works seems to be poisonous to any real originality of thought.

The works manager is constantly on the look-out for a young man who will devote himself solely to his trade, give his evenings' study to it and never think outside it. In reality this young man will be incapable of thought at all. He will rearrange others' ideas and probably "get on". This is one method by which originality is killed.

The man who thinks widely—has ideas on varying subjects—will come to his work each day with a mind made fresh and vigorous by its change of occupation.

He will focus upon the comparatively narrow field of his trade thoughts collected from a wide range, for all sciences are related and art is the complement of science.

The Essentials for Original Design

The essentials for original, simple, and direct design are: Firstly, of course, what may be best described perhaps as "Mechanical Instinct", which, coupled with a little practical experience is a better guide in the treacherous domains of stress, strains and strengths than all the formulae that were ever discovered, absolutely essential as these latter are.

Secondly, as has been suggested above, the whole of the design should be directly based upon the purpose of the machine. If it is a machine for cutting metal, start, as it were, thinking from the cutting edge of the tool and work back from it, if a crane the one important thing to have in mind throughout the whole construction is the load. Every line in the design should bear a relationship to this. The purpose must not be lost sight of for one moment.

Should the designer be troubled with an aesthetic temperament he may set his mind at rest, since, providing he adheres strictly to this principle, there will seldom be any reason to fear clumsiness in appearance. A simple crane or piece of structural engineering, constructed for *use*, often finds its way into a picture by an artist who is looking for the *beautiful*. It appeals to the artistic sense because by a few simple lines it expresses some idea. Directness and its companion simplicity are the very essence of art. Again, a ship is beautiful to the layman, engineer, or artist, because the shapes of each of its parts are dictated directly by the forces of nature. The curves of the hull are fixed by the standard of utility, they are generated directly from the purpose of cleaving the water, and *because* of this directness they are beautiful.

Thus the designer who is anxious to see his finished machine look presentable may go boldly on, always guided only by the practical object he has in view, and when he has finished he will find there is nothing to complain of as to appearance. Though the relationship between design and purpose may be more remote than in the cases indicated above, yet, to the mechanical eye at least, providing the purpose has been his real guide, there will be no faults to find as to appearance.

Details and Final Purposes of a Machine

A critical study and comparison of the machines in an engineering works will confirm this, and convince anyone that the tool which immediately strikes the observer as being neat is probably not the one which has had thought expended on its appearance. It is the one in which every part has been designed in intelligent relation to the central purpose of the whole. To some it may seem that this truth is obvious, but experience shows that very few have any idea of applying it in practice. It is not unusual to see a whole row of machines in some textile factory all similar in outline yet for performing operations of a totally different nature. If the interchangeability of parts is suggested as a reason for this, the advantages invariably make a very poor excuse for bad design.

The writer once spent six months preparing drawings for one of a series of machines doing various operations in a textile factory. The purpose of this machine was to handle and polish some very thin brass caps not more than $\frac{5}{8}$ in. diameter. Some details of the mechanism were admirable, but the ensemble was horrible. There were several spindles running at the speed of from 4 to 5,000 revs. per minute, while the only ball bearing was in a jockey

pulley. The driving pulley ran at 80 revs. per minute, and at each revolution a spring of 500 lbs. pressure was brought into action. The frame of the machine was 3 in. thick, and the whole was supported on four legs built of $\frac{5}{8}$ in. cast iron.

The writer lost his job before the drawings were completed for foretelling that the machine would not run. (It is doubtful if it could stand with those legs.) It is safe to predict that that was the only good turn this wonderful tool ever did for anyone.

This instance is, of course, extreme, but it is typical. The Chief responsible for this design was often clever at obtaining pretty mechanical motions, and could set out well proportioned details, but was quite unable to assemble the machine as a whole and keep the true relationship between each part and its final purpose.

There are plenty of clever men in the engineering trade, but there are few original thinkers, and worse than that there are few who are doing anything to develop originality, rather they are helping to crush it.

The young engineer should be exhorted *not* to give all his time to his trade. Let him get a fully developed mind which he cannot do by studying one subject alone, and not only will he constantly bring to the trade new ideas, but, having a due sense of proportion, will be able to make proper use of those ideas. What is wanted is men who can originate a machine from first principles. The designer begins to live when he sets himself the problem in its true simplicity; for example: given a wheel blank of any diameter up to a given number of inches, it is required to cut in it any number of teeth at regular intervals and with truly generated involutes, through so many inches of space. Instead of reaching down the catalogues and studying what others have done, the proper course to take is first by a mental effort to forget all former machines for this purpose, and then endeavour to originate a series of motions by which the involute can be generated in relation to the motions implied by the statement of the problem. Technical and practical knowledge should take a place entirely subordinate to initial effort.

Such a method may take time, but it should be remembered that progress cannot be obtained by following precedent, and that even should no new idea result, yet the investigation will have the effect of giving the designer a thorough knowledge of what he wants before he starts drawing, and this, as we have already repeated perhaps too many times, is the first and last essential.

A poem cannot be written by learning a language theoretically

and practically. The poetic temperament is necessary; and the poem must grow into being from the concentration of the mind on the central idea; knowledge of the language is essential but secondary. Ingenious rhymes are written by the student and the journalist. Real advance in poetic art is made only by men of genius. Similarly, ingenious mechanical devices may be designed by the technical student or the "practical" man, but real mechanical steps of advancement are notched only by men of original genius.

[ENGINEERING REVIEW, August 15, 1911]

The Education of the Rebel

MANY A SOCIALIST SAYS: "Let us get hold of the child's mind when it is young and susceptible. This is the possibility of real propaganda. The churches have done it; why should not we?" "Why, indeed," I agree; that is, if the socialists are out for the same thing as the Church. If their object is to make the child accept as true their beliefs, then let them follow the example of the Church and organise schools and dispense dogmas. But remember, all this is opposed to progress in exactly the same way that all churches must necessarily be reactionary. The rich and vigorous idea of this age, which startles us with the power of its truth, will be a dead and mouldy lie to the next generation. The pioneers of the future will be slaying it in order that it may be replaced by something better; and the reactionary majority will be keeping it alive, fighting the men of advanced thought, and singing the praises of the pioneers of the past ages. Let the dead bury their dead. We shall be the dead of the next generation, and there is no need to wish our ghosts to walk among our descendants.

For these reasons, then, let us not attempt to imprint our ideas on the susceptible mind of the child. I say "attempt" because, after all, it is impossible to systematically teach *revolt*. Bring the rugged old doctrine inside the school and it dies like a dog in a lethal chamber or a revolutionist in parliament. The Church Sunday school has taught the child, "He that loseth his life for my sake, the same shall save it." The child believes it, but he is taking no risks. He learns a whole host of things which become imbedded

and lifeless in his pliable mind. It is not different when we attempt to teach the doctrine of revolt. It is of small account, we tell the child, whether a man fails to put his sentences together grammatically, or what may be the cut of his clothes. We may teach logically and well that there is something better to strive for than wealth and power above other men, and the child will dutifully learn its lesson; but all is in vain. The little half-being becomes an individual and sees the world in a different aspect. It is completely blind to the great land of possibilities in which you live, and sees only as far as the narrow confines of the little world of real circumstances that immediately surround its life. In vain you have taught it that the laws of conventionality are not necessarily the last word of human morality, for it sees the world only in its conventional aspect; to disobey such laws is to fail in relation to the only world it knows. And do not *failure* and *success* contain the meaning of all human activity and philosophy?

You may teach the blind musician that the art of the painter is greater than his music, and he will believe, perhaps; but nevertheless the world continues to express itself to him in sounds, and he cannot know the world of the artist. The painter, perchance, has no ear for music, and the world to him is only a thing of shapes and colours; it is useless to tell him that his art is slight and trivial when compared to that of the musician; should he believe you, he will still paint on. So it is with the rebel and the man at peace with the world. The one sees a world of possibilities which to him is more real, vital, and valuable than his transient circumstances; the other is blind to, or but dimly sees, the world under this aspect, and lives among, and as part of, his immediate circumstances. Teach the rebel the importance of attending to the world in which the citizen lives, and he will learn the lesson; but he will continue to live as before. Teach the citizen about the world as the rebel sees it, and he too may memorise all that you say; but his life continues in its old course.

Even though the musician admits the greatness of the art of the painter, it will always be a discord that jars him, while he can pass a Royal Academy picture unshocked. The painter, on the other hand, who has learnt of the great musicians will still be shocked by an ill-drawn picture, while a circus band will not discomfort him. Similarly, the rebel is shocked by every circumstance of the respectable life around which conflicts with his world of possibilities; and the citizen, on the other hand, is upset at every action which tends to disturb the even tenor of the world of circumstances in which he lives. The rebel is driven almost mad

with rage as he sees the daily order of society, which to him is sullen tragedy, preserved by the preacher's soothing voice and the policeman's bludgeon; and the citizen is beside himself with holy rage and horror should any "outrage" be committed which threatens this "order", which to him is harmony. Each has his standard of life, sees the world under a different aspect, admires in it other beauties. To learn of the world that the other sees, is not sufficient; he must live in it before he can be considered as of the same nature.

To create the rebel, then, by education is no easy task. His chief characteristics are a passionate love of life and a great and powerful hatred of the principle and structure of the society which stifles him and prevents his breathing freely the air that he loves. This may sound purely selfish and so it is. The individual struggle for life leads to co-operation and the social struggle, and indeed to society itself. The starting point of the revolution is, to each man, *himself*. It is his own fight for a full and rich life, and this implies a *social* life.

Since, then, our revolutionary education is simply gained in our search to satisfy our love and hatred, it is the effect more than the cause of our revolt. We must ask, how can we best generate these necessary passions? The truth is the revolutionist must first be born a sensitive being. Then his perfect education would be to give him in early youth a life of refinement, surrounded by the beauties and peace of the country, enjoying what the poets, artists and musicians have to offer him, and studying the sciences. This gives him a true love of life and beauty—a well-proportioned general outlook. Then let him be placed among the hives of the workers in a great industrial city—and be assured he will learn how to hate and revolt.

But such an education, it will be argued, is impracticable. That is true, and so also is the creation of the rebel impracticable. Our greatest efforts achieve but little, for we are creatures of the age in which we live, and those whom we would educate have learned their lesson in a wider school than we can give. All the effort that is spent in giving children a wider knowledge of the universe and a richer love of life is well spent and must lead to revolt and progress; but all that is spent in teaching dogmas, however true they may appear to us, is ill spent and must turn to reaction.

But this we know already, cry our teachers. That is so; but as I have pointed out above, there is so much that so many people know, and yet so little that even the few *realise*.

[FREEDOM—March, 1913]

“Objections to Anarchism”

A FEW YEARS OF ROUGH and tumble of propaganda in the Anarchist movement leaves a strange impression of crowds on the speaker's mind. His answers to questions and opposition form much the most satisfactory part of his work after he has sufficient experience to be able to deal with them adequately, and it is just from them he gets to understand his crowd. One of the strangest things that experience at such work reveals is the similarity of the crowd's mind (if one may use such an expression) wherever it may be found.

Let the speaker choose his pitch in the middle of London, or let him go to the strange mining villages north of the Forth, and in both cases he will get the same questions in almost the same words. If he is able to understand his crowd, he will find it suffering from the same difficulties, and making the same weary and half-hearted struggle to break the bonds of the old superstitions that still bind it. It is passing strange that amid the theatres, the picture galleries, and museums of London—so suggestive of the fullness and richness of life; among the great engineering works and structures of Manchester and the Clyde, which speaks so eloquently of the power man has of producing wealth; in the midst of the fruitful valleys of England, or the vast Scotch mountains—it matters not where—there is the same lack of vision, the same sad, kind-hearted men willing to hear the new gospel, but alas! the same despair. This hopelessness on the faces of the men who are all powerful is the most exasperating and the most tragic thing in all human existence. “Your strength lies no nearer and no further off than your own limbs”.

“The world grows rich by your strength, no more surely than you grow poor by the same power. It were easier for you to

make yourselves great than to make others so while you bring misery on yourselves". Such is the message of the revolutionist, and the mute answer might be expressed in the tragic words of Goethe:

"Hush! Leave us where we are, resigned,
Wake not ambitious longings in the mind,
Born of the night, akin with night alone,
Scarce to ourselves, and to none others known."

But I write so far of crowds, and crowds after all do not count. He who speaks merely to his crowd will become an Orator, a success, and probably a Member of Parliament; but he who sees in each face confronting him a potential individual will have an experience as dear to him as it is painful. He will never grow to the size of an M.P. He will not set out to teach the ignorant people, for they will teach him. Above all he will not sacrifice his pleasure for the movement, for in it he will find all the meaning of his life, and with the unshakeable confidence of the great Titan he will say: "I know but this, that it must come." But I fear I grow too sensible, and must apologise to my reader for thus wasting his time.

The questions which I have set myself to answer are not arranged to give an exhibition of skill in dealing with them. Everyone of them is an old friend. They have turned up persistently and cheerfully in all sorts of halls, and at any street corner. Be they crushed with the greatest severity, they, boldly and serenely, come tumbling up to the platform on the very next occasion, until one comes to know them, and love them for their very stupidity—for there is no denying that some of them are stupid in the extreme. It is strange indeed to wonder how some of these questions have been born; who originated them, and why they have become so widespread. Thus, for example, No. 2 (which implies that the House of Commons can be used to obtain our ends because it has been successfully used by the capitalists to obtain theirs) is a question as common as any, and is, as its nature implies, usually put by a Parliamentary Socialist. Now, is it not a strange problem whence this question can have come, and why it should be so persistent? It is surely certain that the man who originated it must have had intelligence enough to see that the thing is absurd on the face of it. I am perfectly sure that the men who generally ask it would be quite capable of thinking out the answer to it if they devoted two minutes to the attempt. Yet that question has been created by someone, and either re-created or repeated endlessly throughout the whole country. It forms a good example of

the blindness with which people fight for their political party. This party blindness and deafness (a pity it were not dumbness also), is one of the greatest difficulties to be overcome. Against it our weapons are useless.

Let our arguments be of the boldest or most subtle type, they can make no headway against him whose faith is in his party.

This is indeed a subject fit for the introduction to not merely a little pamphlet, but to the whole world's literature, for it is difficult to realise how many books are sealed, how many libraries are closed to that great crowd who remain loyal to their party, and consequently regardless of the truth. If it is necessary to take an example we may always find one near at hand. The Socialist politicians are as good as any. For years their energies have been expended in advocating State control and guardianship in all things.

Today we have Old Age Pensions, Insurance Acts and Mr. Lloyd George plans for "Socialisation" as he terms it, i.e. Government control of the munition works, and some prospect of compulsory military service; but though these things work towards the universal State, the average party Socialist quarrels with them all—and why?

They are not perfect from his point of view, it may be admitted; but who can deny that they are steps in the direction he has been advocating? Why then does he not hail them with delight?

They have not been introduced by his party.

For such men the arguments in this little book are not written. They lie under a heavy curse, which no wit of mine can lessen. Their lives in their own small way are like that of Ibsen's Emperor Julian, and with him, on the eve of battle, they cry with their petty voices: "I must call upon something without and above me . . . I will sacrifice to this God and to that. I will sacrifice to many. One or the other must surely hear me."

Our advanced men have ceased to pray and sacrifice to the Gods in the hour of need, but still at every little difficulty they feel the necessity of some power outside themselves. Almost every objection given here is prompted by this modern form of superstition, and almost every answer may be put in the words of the philosopher Maximum, who tries in vain to stimulate self-reliance to his friend Julian: "To what Gods, oh fool? Where are they? . . . I believe in you." [1912(?)].

From Law and Liberty

IT IS OFTEN SAID that the pen is more powerful than the sword, and those who make the assertion do so with an air of finality which at once suggests to us that their conviction is too great to be founded on any wide experience.

If we tested their belief in the all-powerful pen by asking them which of these two weapons they would prefer to wield in their controversies there is no doubt that the vast majority would be very willing to practice what they preach and rely on the pen. If on the other hand, however, we were to ask which weapon should be put into the hand of the opponent I am inclined to believe that they would choose, for him, also the pen rather than the sword. This we must admit is rather a strange state of affairs and indicates either an unnatural anxiety for the welfare of the enemy, or a latent knowledge that the sword has certain peculiar advantages which the pen lacks.

I argue this not to prove the uselessness of the work now in hand, for a true critic will be fully convinced of that before having begun to read the book, but rather that I may make the reader understand the relative insignificance of all books—relative I mean to that great power which they might wield if received by a people who understood the relationship between theory and practice.

I will venture to write for a moment on this subject. This relationship between theory and practice has received its fair share of attention in industrial matters recently. The manufacturer is realising that he must ally himself with the scientist and the scientist in his turn begins to perceive that unless his knowledge is applied to practical matters, it is of very little use in the world. What may be said of the scientist, may, in a more limited way, be said of the artist.

Those who are more guilty of holding theories which may never materialise are just those who least suspect themselves of such a crime; the *intellectuals* and *advanced people*.

In conversation it is very easy to prove the truth of this accusation. Get an intellectual on the subject of modern literature, and we shall find his sympathies are as wide as the limits of humanity. Talk to him of Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" for example, and we shall find him full of admiration for the author's treatment of this theme. He cannot too much praise the skill with which Mr. Hardy leads the reader through his awful tragedy, with a powerful art which never needs to use the more brutal methods (like Masefield and Strindberg) in order to get the full tragedy and beauty of his story. Our *intellectual* probably loves Tess, and will agree that it was a fine thought that prompted Hardy to choose such a theme and so treat it. All this and more we may expect from the *advanced thinker*, so long as we talk to him of literature and life.

If we meet the same man in the train on the way to business and discuss the morning news over our papers, it is very seldom that he displays the same philosophic outlook on things. What does he think of the latest murder sensation? Here are the facts: a young woman, in a lowly position in life, has an illegitimate child by a rich man. The child dies, and by concealing the fact she has been a mother, she succeeds in marrying a parson's son. After marriage she confesses and her shocked husband leaves her. She goes back to the child's father, but afterwards on seeing the chance to return to her husband she murders the man she is living with and immediately returns to him.

This, is of course, is the story of Tess, unsympathically told, as the paper would record it. Imagine that our intellectual now hears it from the newspaper for the first time. Now that he meets this heroine in real life, his feelings are, I fear, strangely different from those which, as a literary man, he would have entertained if he had met her in the library. It is folly, he will tell us, to pretend there is no difference between good and bad or between a low woman of the streets and a pure girl. He will remind us that if she did not happen to be a good looking woman there would be no foolish sentiment about the case. That is what I mean when I speak of the ignorance of the relationship between theory and fact. The story of the girl murderess is simply the story of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles". As a matter of literature the girl murderess is much to be loved by that class of people which prides itself on being advanced and unconventional, but let him meet her in the

street or read of her in a newspaper and they know her not.

"Pity it, think of it
Stood on the Brink of it
Oh it was pitiful
Near a whole city full
Friend she had none."

Tears come to our eyes as Tom Hood tells us of this bedraggled corpse and we think of the girl hungering for human sympathy. The best that is in us comes uppermost and we instinctively feel proud to recognise this poor lost soul as our troubled sister, while we loathe with the deepest hatred the cold smug city which has denied her what she asked.

But shut up the book and go out into the street and how many of us have the consistency and courage not to feel, or pretend to feel, that we are perfect strangers to the girl under the lamp whose eyes meet ours. That is where books are powerless, hopeless, worse than useless as it seems, for by their aid we so divide theory and fact that we content both sides of our nature. That which is best in us we indulge in the library. It grows fat on Thomas Hardy, Shelley, Ibsen, Strindberg, if we pride ourselves on being advanced, if we are more conventional it thrives on Tennyson, but the gratifying feeling of wide sympathy we have experienced in the armchair of the library is by no means allowed to accompany us into the world. There, on the contrary, we indulge the other side of our nature, we get for ourselves the best job we can and we pride ourselves on our common sense and then with that constant boast that we are practical we construct a system of society which it is practically impossible to run and which, in its endeavours to make human life richer, starves a third of our population and depraves the others in a system of ugly monotony.

Books like religions are always a danger if not a curse. How many men are there who are religious instead of being honourable and straight forward in their dealings with others? This is in fact the meaning of the Church, the law and our other sacred institutions.

In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt, but being seasoned with a gracious voice obscures the shows of evil?

In religion, what damned error, but some sober brow will bless it and approve it with a text. Which of us would demand "an eye for an eye" and hang our brother, but that the law seasons our revenge with a gracious voice and the Church views, blesses and approves of it with a text. Would any of us dare to take part in

this present social system—this "conspiracy of the rich against the poor" if we saw the meaning and the misery of our works enforced to us in the form of the human degradation that it creates—if indeed our sacred institutions were not with us to obscure the show of evil?

Just as these great institutions have been and ever must be, captured by the conventional parties, so have our books also been made to serve the same purpose. It is well that we bind them in leather and gold, for they are the veriest slaves. They feed the enthroned few and those who grow fat on such fare, become narrower in their sympathies and less generous even as they grow more refined. They have become in their thoughts cultured instead of becoming more sympathetic in their actions.

Thus are the books defeated and bound and rendered as impotent as dead men, while the battle still remains to be fought. To all this there is an obvious answer, for it seems manifestly absurd to write in order to prove that writing is useless, but herein I am not so inconsistent as may at first appear. That books are entirely useless I have not argued, while the faults I have found with them have been more objective than subjective, in other words I have complained more of their treatment than of themselves. The amount of wisdom—of scientific facts generalised with a philosophy—which awaits us in every well stocked library is one of man's most valuable achievements, considered and viewed so far it is an amazing success; but when from this we turn to the folly of governments, and the social life of the people, we are forced to understand that that knowledge, however great and wonderful it may be, has failed to play its part and fulfil the obvious meaning of its existence.

The engineer has realised "pure mechanics" as a science is useless and meaningless without its sister "applied mechanics". The artists have yet to learn that pure art is merely a nuisance and an evil unless it goes hand in hand with applied art, and thus they mope about the world complaining of the ugliness of civilisation. They are quite oblivious to the obvious fact that such complaints are self-condemnatory. If the world is not artistic it is because the artists have failed in their work.

In literature both readers and writers have not realised that pure literature is but the stepping stone to applied literature. I hope I have made my point clear.

Let the reader study this volume if he will, but let him also remember that it is possible he will do more useful work with it by taking careful aim at some superior person's head. I write it

and trust that it may find its way to the reader's shelves, but I have strange misgivings that more might be done by smashing his library windows.

There is one essential by which we may distinguish the really artistic work from the indifferent. The author who fails may perhaps cleverly suggest to us his characters and may neatly lead them from one interesting situation to another until he has woven a pleasing plot. Yet he may still lack an all-important something. Though his figures are well carved and he pulls the strings nimbly, yet it is still a marionette show. It is he who poses and places them, and their muscles and movements are lifeless, though his imitation of reality may be as perfect as skill can make it.

The real artist may lack this excellence of plot, and his characters may be grotesquely unlike anything we have ever met in our experience of life, but there is one thing that distinguishes them, whatever they do, however extravagant and unlikely may be their actions—these actions are never committed until the necessary psychological momentum has been reached.

Before the act of suicide, that agony of mind which makes death preferable to life must be generated. Before the crime, must be that growth of passion which makes it possible for the mind to extinguish its social instinct. Before the deed of self-sacrifice, we must see that philosophic condition develop which rejects the narrow pleasures of self-indulgence and prefers the higher altruistic enjoyment, even though it be accompanied by pain.

That an author shall always succeed in depicting this relationship between mind and action is too much to ask, but that he shall always realise the importance of it and constantly make the attempt, seems to me to be absolutely essential. The sceptic tells us that the works of the historians should be classed as fiction. In this he pays them an undeserved compliment. Their works are not half as true as the well written novel. In the greater drama where *peoples* take the place of *persons* it is even more essential than in fiction that we should study not merely the events but the development of that psychological momentum which carries them through.

If I tell you that King Lear was an elderly monarch who became mentally deranged owing to the conduct of his daughters, I have given you a fact. I have not, however, in the least helped you to appreciate Shakespeare's magnificent work of art. What I have said is true, but is not essential. It helps you no more than if I had deliberately lied and said Lear was a hairdresser in Tottenham Court Road. In neither case have I touched the great

reality which Shakespeare gives us. Similarly, when the historian tells us that Wat Tyler led the peasants to revolt in 1381 because of the poll tax and the king's fine gentleman insulted his daughter, he has given us no information of importance. It might have well as been a lie for none of the reality is there. Yet that is how historians write. They have the events, they have the prominent characters, as carefully copied from life as possible. They have pulled the strings and walk the characters through the events in the correct sequence. Thus in history great men and spectacular events create human progress.

In life it is different, although I am aware that our contemporary historians—the journalists—and the great majority fail to realise it. The historians of the future will have to reveal to us the growth of the momentum—that force which is the result of weight and movement combined which carries humanity forward through its great crises. When this view of history is taken we shall be in a position to judge the question before us. The line of progress will become clear as the resultant of conflicting forces and the part which government plays will become plain.

I am aware of the absurdity of any attempt on my part to rectify these errors of the historians. I have ventured this criticism merely to explain the method here adopted in studying progressive forces, and because I think that the more conventional position from which past and current events are seen is largely responsible for distorted and disproportional ideas. The great vital forces which create progress are scarcely noticed, while the most superficial and shady events which laggardly follow and never lead are hailed with praise due elsewhere. This criticism, indeed, has been made by writers here and there but they have, I believe, seldom realised its full significance, while outside the library and the study, as a conscious doctrine, it has a very limited existence. Long experience has made man rather reluctant to leave great affairs in the hands of his God. His belief today is but a feeble descendent of the faith of his ancestors. Yet it is perhaps more that he has changed his religion. One of his kind, dressed in the awful robes of authority, a prison for a background, the occasional glimpse of steel and the all-pervading odour of explosives form an inspiring and persuasive vision. Man has made God not only in his own image, but even of his own flesh and blood. Authority—whose whole power must ultimately rest on violence—has usurped the throne of the more abstract deity. It has its followers divided into as many conflicting sects as were those of the God of Heaven—High Church, Low Church, aristocrat and democrat. It is to

these superior powers that we are told not only to look for guidance, but in which we must expect to find the motive forces of progress.

In these chapters, as I have already said, we look elsewhere for such forces; it is not by, nor even through, the power of authority that progress makes its way. Humanity will step out of government into liberty . . .

[From the introduction to LAW AND LIBERTY]

Some Last Thoughts

*(Dictated by George Barrett to W. Wilson on
December 30, 1916)*

"AS MEN APPROACH THE limit which time puts to life it is usual for them to fall under influences which make their passions less extreme and which makes them become what we would call in ordinary English moderate men rather than extremists. The somewhat unusual circumstances in which I have endeavoured to write this book (i.e. "Law and Liberty"—S.E.P.) tempt me to add this note as to the different influences these different circumstances, I suppose, have created in me.

"Looking back upon what is in some respects a peculiarly complete life, but in most respects peculiarly fragmentary, I feel very distinctly these mellowing influences which tend to make one feel at peace with the world and make all our thoughts that are brought into contact with sound and fury begin to mean less and less. But at the same time I believe more and more that the philosophy of the extremist is more true in general than that of the moderate man."

"THE THEORY EXPLOITED today is that if you seek the cause of anything and destroy the cause, you destroy the effect. That is obviously absurd because a match may be the origin of a fire but you do not seek the match and put it out. The fire has become an entity in itself and exists by its own laws. So with political institutions. They may or may not require to be destroyed by external force. Another analogy is that of a shell or husk which becomes outgrown, perfectly useless, but still goes on drawing sustenance. Perhaps it were better to destroy it, forcibly."

"JUST AS IN MECHANICS there is theoretical mechanics and applied mechanics, pure art and applied art, so there is pure liberty and applied liberty. When a word becomes common in its use like that, it becomes also useless and merely academic. The ordinary liberty in which people believe has obviously become useless because it is part of everything crude and is a description of everything, and therefore is not interesting and not a description and becomes meaningless as a word.

"Definiteness is necessary when we look around and see all the sects struggling for their 'Liberty'. A new word must be used to mean something definite—to express applied liberty. The best word, it seems to me, to describe this actual practice of liberty is 'Anarchism', as it simply names the object and suggests the action also. The method of liberty is the abolition of government."