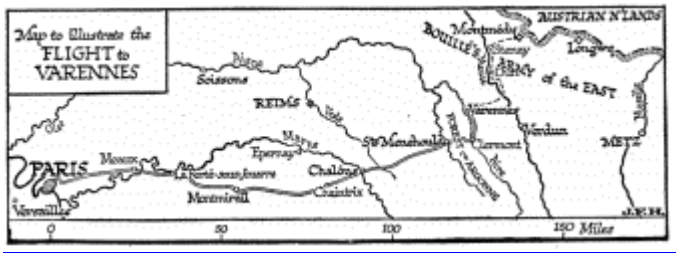
§ 10

It is quite possible that with the loyal support of the crown and a reasonable patriotism on the part of the nobility, the National Assembly, in spite of its noisy galleries, its Rousseauism, and its inexperience, might have blundered through to a stable form of parliamentary government for France. In Mirabeau it had a statesman with clear ideas of the needs of the time; he knew the strength and the defects of the British system, and apparently he had set himself to establish in France a parallel political organization upon a wider, more honest franchise. He had, it is true, indulged in a sort of Ruritanian flirtation with the queen, seen her secretly, pronounced her very solemnly the "only *man*" about the king, and made rather a fool of himself in that matter, but his schemes were drawn upon a much larger scale than the scale of the back stairs of the Tuileries. By his death in 1791 France certainly lost one of her most constructive statesmen, and the National Assembly its last chance of any co-operation with the king. When there is a court there is usually a conspiracy, and royalist schemes and royalist mischief-making were the last straw in the balance against the National Assembly. The royalists did not care for Mirabeau, they did not care for France; they wanted to be back in their lost paradise of privilege, haughtiness, and limitless expenditure, and it seemed to them that if only they could make{v2-322} the government of the National Assembly impossible, then by a sort of miracle the dry bones of the ancient régime would live again. They had no sense of the other possibility, the gulf of the republican extremists, that yawned at their feet.



One June night in 1791, between eleven o'clock and midnight, the king and queen and their two children slipped out of the Tuileries disguised, threaded their palpitating way through Paris, circled round from the north of the city to the east, and got at last into a travelling-carriage that was waiting upon the road to Chalons. They were flying to the army of the east.[439] The army of the east was "loyal," that is to say, its general and officers at least were prepared to betray France to the king and court. Here was adventure at last after the queen's heart, and one can understand the pleasurable excitement of the little party as the miles lengthened between themselves and Paris.

Away over the hills were reverence, deep bows, and the kissing of hands. Then back to Versailles. A little shooting of the mob in Paris—artillery, if need be. A few executions—but not of the sort of people who matter. A White Terror for a few months. Then all would be well{v2-323} again. Perhaps Calonne might return too, with fresh financial expedients. He was busy just then gathering support among the German princes. There were a lot of chateaux to rebuild, but the people who burnt them down could hardly complain if the task of rebuilding them pressed rather heavily upon their grimy necks....

All such bright anticipations were cruelly dashed that night at Varennes. The king had been recognized at Sainte Menehould by the landlord of the post house, and as the night fell, the eastward roads clattered with galloping messengers rousing the country, and trying to intercept the fugitives. There were fresh horses waiting in the upper village of Varennes—the young officer in charge had given the king up for the night and gone to bed—while for half an hour in the lower village the poor king, disguised as a valet, disputed with his postillions, who had expected reliefs in the lower village and refused to go further. Finally they consented to go on. They consented too late. The little party found the postmaster from Sainte Menehould, who had ridden past while the postillions wrangled, and a number of worthy republicans of Varennes whom he had gathered together, awaiting them at the bridge between the two parts of the town. The bridge was barricaded. Muskets were thrust into the carriage: "Your passports?"

The king surrendered without a struggle. The little party was taken into the house of some village functionary. "Well," said the king, "here you have me!" Also he remarked that he was hungry. At dinner he commended the wine, "quite excellent wine." What the queen said is not recorded. There were royalist troops at hand, but they attempted no rescue. The tocsin began to ring, and the village "illuminated itself," to guard against surprise....

A very crestfallen coachload of royalty returned to Paris and was received by vast crowds—*in silence*. The word had gone forth that whoever insulted the king should be thrashed, and whoever applauded him should be killed....

It was only after this foolish exploit that the idea of a republic took hold of the French mind. Before this flight to Varennes there was no doubt much abstract republican sentiment, but there was{v2-324} scarcely any expressed disposition to abolish monarchy in France. Even in July, a month after the flight, a great meeting in the Champ de Mars, supporting a petition for the dethronement of the king, was dispersed by the authorities, and many people were killed. But such displays of firmness could not prevent the lesson of that flight soaking into men's minds. Just as

in England in the days of Charles I, so now in France men realized that the king could not be trusted—he was dangerous. The Jacobins, the extreme republican party, grew rapidly in strength. Their leaders, Robespierre, Danton, Marat, who had hitherto been a group of impossibles on the extreme left, began to dominate the National Assembly.

These Jacobins were the equivalents of the American radicals, men with untrammelled advanced ideas. Their strength lay in the fact that they were unencumbered and downright. They were poor men with nothing to lose. The party of moderation, of compromise with the relics of the old order, was led by such men of established position as General Lafayette, the general who had commanded the French troops in America, and Mirabeau, an aristocrat who was ready to model himself on the rich and influential aristocrats of England. But Robespierre was a needy but clever young lawyer from Arras, whose most precious possession was his faith in Rousseau; Danton was a scarcely more wealthy barrister in Paris, one of those big roaring gesticulating Frenchmen who are in normal times the heroic loud-talkers of provincial cafés; Marat was an older man, a Swiss of very great scientific distinction, but equally unembarrassed by possessions. On Marat's scientific standing it is necessary to lay stress because there is a sort of fashion among English writers to misrepresent the leaders of great revolutionary movements as ignorant men. This gives a false view of the mental processes of revolution; and it is the task of the historian to correct it. Marat, we find, was conversant with English, Spanish, German, and Italian; he had spent several years in England, he was made an honorary M.D. of St. Andrew's, and had published some valuable contributions to medical science in English. Both Benjamin Franklin and Goethe were greatly interested in his work in physics. This is the man who is called by Carlyle "rabid dog," "atrocious,{v2-325}" "squalid," and "Dog-leech"—this last by way of tribute to his science.

The revolution called Marat to politics, and his earliest contributions to the great discussion were fine and sane. There was a prevalent delusion in France that England was a land of liberty. His *Tableau des vices de la constitution d'Angleterre* showed the realities of the English position. His last years were maddened by an almost intolerable skin disease which he caught while hiding in the sewers of Paris to escape the consequences of his denunciation of the king as a traitor after the flight to Varennes. Only by sitting in a hot bath could he collect his mind to write. He had been treated hardly and suffered, and he became hard; nevertheless he stands out in history as a man of rare, unblemished honesty. His poverty seems particularly to have provoked the scorn of Carlyle.

"What a road he has travelled; and sits now, about half-past seven of the clock, stewing in slipper-bath; sore afflicted; ill of Revolution Fever.... Excessively sick and

worn, poor man: with precisely elevenpence half penny of ready-money, in paper; with slipper-bath; strong three-footed stool for writing on, the while: and a squalid Washerwoman for his sole household ... that is his civic establishment in Medical-School Street; thither and not elsewhere has his road led him.... Hark, a rap again! A musical woman's voice, refusing to be rejected: it is the Citoyenne who would do France a service. Marat, recognizing from within, cries, Admit her. Charlotte Corday is admitted."

The young heroine—for republican leaders are fair game, and their assassins are necessarily heroines and their voices "musical"—offered to give him some necessary information about the counter-revolution at Caen, and as he was occupied in making a note of her facts, she stabbed him with a large sheath knife (1792)....

Such was the quality of most of the leaders of the Jacobin party. They were men of no property—untethered men. They were more dissociated and more elemental, therefore, than any other party; and they were ready to push the ideas of freedom and equality to a logical extremity. Their standards of patriotic virtue were high and harsh. There was something inhuman even in their humanitarian zeal. They saw without humour the disposition{v2-326} of the moderates to ease things down, to keep the common folk just a little needy and respectful, and royalty (and men of substance) just a little respected. They were blinded by the formulæ of Rousseauism to the historical truth that man is by nature oppressor and oppressed, and that it is only slowly by law, education, and the spirit of love in the world that men can be made happy and free.

And while in America the formulæ of eighteenth-century democracy were on the whole stimulating and helpful because it was already a land of open-air practical equality so far as white men were concerned, in France these formulæ made a very heady and dangerous mixture for the town populations, because considerable parts of the towns of France were slums full of dispossessed, demoralized, degraded, and bitter-spirited people. The Parisian crowd was in a particularly desperate and dangerous state, because the industries of Paris had been largely luxury industries, and much of her employment parasitic on the weaknesses and vices of fashionable life. Now the fashionable world had gone over the frontier, travellers were restricted, business disordered, and the city full of unemployed and angry people.

But the royalists, instead of realizing the significance of these Jacobins with their dangerous integrity and their dangerous grip upon the imagination of the mob, had the conceit to think they could make tools of them. The time for the replacement of the National Assembly under the new-made constitution by the "Legislative Assembly"

was drawing near; and when the Jacobins, with the idea of breaking up the moderates, proposed to make the members of the National Assembly ineligible for the Legislative Assembly, the royalists supported them with great glee, and carried the proposal. They perceived that the Legislative Assembly, so clipped of all experience, must certainly be a politically incompetent body. They would "extract good from the excess of evil,"[440] and presently France would fall back helpless into the hands of her legitimate masters. So they thought. And the royalists did more than this. They backed the election of a Jacobin as Mayor of Paris. It was about as clever as if a man brought home a hungry tiger to convince his wife of her need of him.{v2-327} There stood another body ready at hand with which these royalists did not reckon, far better equipped than the court to step in and take the place of an ineffective Legislative Assembly, and that was the strongly Jacobin Commune of Paris installed at the Hôtel de Ville.

So far France had been at peace. None of her neighbours had attacked her, because she appeared to be weakening herself by her internal dissensions. It was Poland that suffered by the distraction of France. But there seemed no reason why they should not insult and threaten her, and prepare the way for a later partition at their convenience. At Pillnitz, in 1791, the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria met, and issued a declaration[441] that the restoration of order and monarchy in France was a matter of interest to all sovereigns. And an army of emigrés, French nobles and gentlemen, an army largely of officers, was allowed to accumulate close to the frontier.

It was France that declared war against Austria. The motives of those who supported this step were conflicting. Many republicans wanted it because they wished to see the kindred people of Belgium liberated from the Austrian yoke. Many royalists wanted it because they saw in war a possibility of restoring the prestige of the crown. Marat opposed it bitterly in his paper *L'Ami du Peuple*, because he did not want to see republican enthusiasm turned into war fever. His instinct warned him of Napoleon. On April 20th, 1792, the king came down to the Assembly and proposed war amidst great applause.

The war began disastrously. Three French armies entered Belgium, two were badly beaten, and the third, under Lafayette, retreated. Then Prussia declared war in support of Austria, and the allied forces, under the Duke of Brunswick, prepared to invade France. The duke issued one of the most foolish proclamations in history; he was, he said, invading France to restore the royal{v2-328} authority. Any further indignity shown the king he threatened to visit upon the Assembly and Paris with "military execution." This was surely enough to make the most royalist Frenchman a republican—at least for the duration of the war.

The new phase of revolution, the Jacobin revolution, was the direct outcome of this proclamation. It made the Legislative Assembly, in which orderly republicans (Girondins) and royalists prevailed, it made the government which had put down that republican meeting in the Champ de Mars and hunted Marat into the sewers, impossible. The insurgents gathered at the Hôtel de Ville, and on the tenth of August the Commune launched an attack on the palace of the Tuileries.

The king behaved with a clumsy stupidity, and with that disregard for others which is the prerogative of kings. He had with him a Swiss guard of nearly a thousand men as well as National Guards of uncertain loyalty. He held out vaguely until firing began, and then he went off to the adjacent Assembly to place himself and his family under its protection, leaving his Swiss fighting. No doubt he hoped to antagonize Assembly and Commune, but the Assembly had none of the fighting spirit of the Hôtel de Ville. The royal refugees were placed in a box reserved for journalists (out of which a small room opened), and there they remained for sixteen hours while the Assembly debated their fate. Outside there were the sounds of a considerable battle; every now and then a window would break. The unfortunate Swiss were fighting with their backs to the wall because there was now nothing else for them to do....

The Assembly had no stomach to back the government's action of July in the Champ de Mars. The fierce vigour of the Commune dominated it. The king found no comfort whatever in the Assembly. It scolded him and discussed his "suspension." The Swiss fought until they received a message from the king to desist, and then—the crowd being savagely angry at the needless bloodshed and out of control—they were for the most part massacred.

The long and tedious attempt to "Merovingianize" Louis, to make an honest crowned republican out of a dull and inadaptable absolute monarch, was now drawing to its tragic close. The Commune of Paris was practically in control of France. The{v2-329} Legislative Assembly—which had apparently undergone a change of heart—decreed that the king was suspended from his office, confined him in the Temple, replaced him by an executive commission, and summoned a National Convention to frame a new constitution.

The tension of patriotic and republican France was now becoming intolerable. Such armies as she had were rolling back helplessly toward Paris. Longwy had fallen, the great fortress of Verdun followed, and nothing seemed likely to stop the march of the allies upon the capital. The sense of royalist treachery rose to panic cruelty. At any rate the royalists had to be silenced and stilled and scared out of sight. The Commune set itself to hunt out every royalist that could be found, until the prisons of Paris were

full. Danton incited the crowd against the prisoners, Marat saw the danger of a massacre. Before it was too late Marat tried to secure the establishment of emergency tribunals to filter the innocent from the guilty in this miscellaneous collection of schemers, suspects, and harmless gentlefolk. He was disregarded, and early in September the inevitable massacre occurred.

Suddenly, first at one prison and then at others, bands of insurgents took possession. A sort of rough court was constituted, and outside gathered a wild mob armed with sabres, pikes, and axes. One by one the prisoners, men and women alike, were led out from their cells, questioned briefly, pardoned with the cry of “Vive la Nation,” or thrust out to the mob at the gates. There the crowd jostled and fought to get a slash or thrust at a victim. The condemned were stabbed, hacked, and beaten to death, their heads hewn off, stuck on pikes, and carried about the town, their torn bodies thrust aside. Among others, the Princesse de Lamballe, whom the king and queen had left behind in the Tuileries, perished. Her head was carried on a pike to the Temple for the queen to see.

In the queen’s cell were two National Guards. One would have had her look out and see this grisly sight. The other, in pity, would not let her do so.

Even as this red tragedy was going on in Paris, the French general Dumouriez, who had rushed an army from Flanders into the forests of the Argonne, was holding up the advance of the allies{v2-330} beyond Verdun. On September 20th occurred a battle, mainly an artillery encounter, at Valmy. A not very resolute Prussian advance was checked,[442] the French infantry stood firm, their artillery was better than the allied artillery. For ten days after this repulse the Duke of Brunswick hesitated, and then he

began to fall back towards the Rhine. This battle at Valmy—it was little more than a cannonade—was one of the decisive battles in the world's history. The Revolution was saved. The National Convention met on September 21st, 1792, and immediately proclaimed a republic. The trial and execution of the king followed with a sort of logical necessity upon these things. He died rather as a symbol than as a man. There was nothing else to be done with him; poor man, he cumbered the earth. France could not{v2-331} let him go to hearten the emigrants, could not keep him harmless at home; his existence threatened her. Marat had urged this trial relentlessly, yet with that acid clearness of his he would not have the king charged with any offence committed before he signed the constitution, because before then he was a real monarch, super-legal, and so incapable of being illegal. Nor would Marat permit attacks upon the king's counsel.... Throughout Marat played a bitter and yet often a just part; he was a great man, a fine intelligence, in a skin of fire; wrung with that organic hate in the blood that is not a product of the mind but of the body.

Louis was beheaded in January, 1793. He was guillotined—for since the previous August the guillotine had been in use as the official instrument in French executions.

Danton, in his leonine rôle, was very fine upon this occasion. "The kings of Europe would challenge us," he roared. "We throw them the head of a king!"

§ 11

And now followed a strange phase in the history of the French people. There arose a great flame of enthusiasm for France and the Republic. There was to be an end to compromise at home and abroad; at home royalists and every form of disloyalty were to be stamped out; abroad France was to be the protector and helper of all revolutionaries. All Europe, all the world, was to become republican. The youth of France poured into the Republican armies; a new and wonderful song spread through the land, a song that still warms the blood like wine, the Marseillaise. Before that chant and the leaping columns of French bayonets and their enthusiastically served guns the foreign armies rolled back; before the end of 1792 the French armies had gone far beyond the utmost achievements of Louis XIV; everywhere they stood on foreign soil. They were in Brussels, they had overrun Savoy, they had raided to Mayence; they had seized the Scheldt from Holland. Then the French Government did an unwise thing. It had been exasperated by the expulsion of its representative from England upon the execution of Louis, and it declared war against England. It was an unwise thing to do, because the revolution which had given France a new enthusiastic infantry and a{v2-332} brilliant artillery, released from its aristocratic officers and many cramping traditions,[443] had destroyed the discipline of its navy, and the

English were supreme upon the sea. And this provocation united all England against France, whereas there had been at first a very considerable liberal movement in Great Britain in sympathy with the revolution. It robbed France of her one prospective ally.[444]

Of the fight that France made in the next few years against a European coalition we cannot tell in any detail. She drove the Austrians for ever out of Belgium, and made Holland a republic. The Dutch fleet, frozen in the Texel, surrendered to a handful of cavalry without firing its guns. For some time the French thrust towards Italy was hung up, and it was only in 1796 that a new general, Napoleon Bonaparte, led the ragged and hungry republican armies in triumph across Piedmont to Mantua and Verona. An *Outline of History* cannot map out campaigns; but of the new quality that had come into war, it is bound to take note. The old professional armies had fought for the fighting, as slack as workers paid by the hour; these wonderful new armies fought hungry and thirsty, for victory. Their enemies called them the "New French." Says C. F. Atkinson,[445] "What astonished the Allies most of all was the number and the velocity of the Republicans. These improvised armies had in fact nothing to delay them. Tents were unprocurable for want of money, untransportable for want of the enormous number of wagons that would have been required, and also unnecessary, for the discomfort that would have caused wholesale desertion in professional armies was cheerfully borne by the men of 1793-4. Supplies for armies of then unheard-of size could not be carried in convoys, and the French soon became familiar with 'living on the country.' Thus 1793 saw the birth of the modern system of war—rapidity of{v2-333} movement, full development of national strength, bivouacs, requisitions and force as against cautious manœuvring, small professional armies, tents and full rations, and chicane. The first represented the decision-compelling spirit, the second the spirit of risking little to gain a little...."

And while these ragged hosts of enthusiasts were chanting the Marseillaise and fighting for *la France*, manifestly never quite clear in their minds whether they were looting or liberating the countries into which they poured, the republican enthusiasm in Paris was spending itself in a far less glorious fashion. Marat, the one man of commanding intelligence among the Jacobins, was now frantic with an incurable disease, and presently he was murdered; Danton was a series of patriotic thunderstorms; the steadfast fanaticism of Robespierre dominated the situation. This man is difficult to judge; he was a man of poor physique, naturally timid, and a prig. But he had that most necessary gift for power, faith. He believed not in a god familiar to men, but in a certain Supreme Being, and that Rousseau was his prophet. He set himself to save the Republic as he conceived it, and he imagined it could be saved by

no other man than he. So that to keep in power was to save the republic. The living spirit of the republic, it seemed, had sprung from a slaughter of royalists and the execution of the king. There were insurrections: one in the west, in the district of La Vendée, where the people rose against the conscription and against the dispossession of the orthodox clergy, and were led by noblemen and priests; one in the south, where Lyons and Marseilles had risen and the royalists of Toulon had admitted an English and Spanish garrison. To which there seemed no more effectual reply than to go on killing royalists.

Nothing could have better pleased the fierce heart of the Paris slums. The Revolutionary Tribunal went to work, and a steady slaughtering began.[446] The invention of the guillotine was opportune to this mood. The queen was guillotined, most of Robespierre's antagonists were guillotined, atheists who argued that there was no Supreme Being were guillotined, Danton was guillotined because he thought there was too much guillotine; day by{v2-334} day, week by week, this infernal new machine chopped off heads and more heads and more. The reign of Robespierre lived, it seemed, on blood, and needed more and more, as an opium-taker needs more and more opium.

Danton was still Danton, leonine and exemplary upon the guillotine. "Danton," he said, "no weakness!"

And the grotesque thing about the story is that Robespierre was indubitably honest. He was far more honest than any of the group of men who succeeded him. He was inspired by a consuming passion for a new order of human life. So far as he could contrive it, the Committee of Public Safety, the emergency government of twelve which had now thrust aside the Convention, *constructed*. The scale on which it sought to construct was stupendous. All the intricate problems with which we still struggle to-day were met by swift and shallow solutions. Attempts were made to equalize property. "Opulence," said St. Just, "is infamous." The property of the rich was taxed or confiscated in order that it should be divided among the poor. Every man was to have a secure house, a living, a wife and children. The labourer was worthy of his hire, but not entitled to an advantage. There was an attempt to abolish *profit* altogether, the rude incentive of most human commerce since the beginning of society. Profit is the economic riddle that still puzzles us to-day. There were harsh laws against "profiteering" in France in 1793—England in 1919 found it necessary to make quite similar laws. And the Jacobin government not only replanned—in eloquent outline—the economic, but also the social system. Divorce was made as easy as marriage; the distinction of legitimate and illegitimate children was abolished.... A new calendar was devised, with new names for the months, a

week of ten days, and the like—that has long since been swept away; but also the clumsy coinage and the tangled weights and measures of old France gave place to the simple and lucid decimal system that still endures.... There was a proposal from one extremist group to abolish God among other institutions altogether, and to substitute the worship of Reason. There was, indeed, a Feast of Reason in the cathedral of Notre-Dame, with a pretty actress as the goddess of Reason. But against this Robespierre set his face; he was no atheist.{v2-335} "Atheism," he said, "is aristocratic. The idea of a Supreme Being who watches over oppressed innocence and punishes triumphant crime is essentially the idea of the people."

So he guillotined Hébert, who had celebrated the Feast of Reason, and all his party.

A certain mental disorder became perceptible in Robespierre as the summer of 1794 drew on. He was deeply concerned with his religion. (The arrests and executions of suspects were going on now as briskly as ever. Through the streets of Paris every day rumbled the Terror with its carts full of condemned people.) He induced the Convention to decree that France believed in a Supreme Being, and in that comforting doctrine, the immortality of the soul. In June he celebrated a great festival, the festival of his Supreme Being. There was a procession to the Champ de Mars, which he headed, brilliantly arrayed, bearing a great bunch of flowers and wheat ears. Figures of inflammatory material, representing Atheism and Vice, were solemnly burnt; then, by an ingenious mechanism, and with some slight creakings, an incombustible statue of Wisdom rose in their place. There were discourses—Robespierre delivered the chief one—but apparently no worship....

Thereafter Robespierre displayed a disposition to brood aloof from affairs. For a month he kept away from the Convention.

One day in July he reappeared and delivered a strange speech that clearly foreshadowed fresh prosecutions. "Gazing on the multitude of vices which the torrent of Revolution has rolled down," he cried, in his last great speech in the Convention, "I have sometimes trembled lest I should be soiled by the impure neighbourhood of wicked men.... I know that it is easy for the leagued tyrants of the world to overwhelm a single individual; but I know also what is the duty of a man who can die in the defence of humanity."...

And so on to vague utterances that seemed to threaten everyone.

The Convention heard this speech in silence; then when a proposal was made to print and circulate it, broke into a resentful uproar and refused permission. Robespierre

went off in bitter resentment to the club of his supporters, and *reread his speech to them*!

That night was full of talk and meetings and preparations for{v2-336} the morrow, and the next morning the Convention turned upon Robespierre. One Tallien threatened him with a dagger. When he tried to speak, he was shouted down, and the President jingled the bell at him. “President of Assassins,” cried Robespierre, “I demand speech!” It was refused him. His voice deserted him; he coughed and spluttered. “The blood of Danton chokes him,” cried someone.

He was accused and arrested there and then with his chief supporters.

Whereupon the Hôtel de Ville, still stoutly Jacobin, rose against the Convention, and Robespierre and his companions were snatched out of the hands of their captors. There was a night of gathering, marching, counter-marching; and at last, about three in the morning, the forces of the Convention faced the forces of the Commune outside the Hôtel de Ville. Henriot, the Jacobin commander, after a busy day was drunk upstairs; a parley ensued, and then, after some indecision, the soldiers of the Commune went over to the Government. There was a shouting of patriotic sentiments, and someone looked out from the Hôtel de Ville. Robespierre and his last companions found themselves betrayed and trapped.

Two or three of these men threw themselves out of a window, and injured themselves frightfully on the railings below without killing themselves. Others attempted suicide. Robespierre, it seems, was shot in the lower jaw by a gendarme. He was found, his eyes staring from a pale face whose lower part was blood.

Followed seventeen hours of agony before his end. He spoke never a word during that time; his jaw being bound up roughly in dirty linen. He and his companions, and the broken, dying bodies of those who had jumped from the windows, twenty-two men altogether, were taken to the guillotine instead of the condemned appointed for that day. Mostly, his eyes were closed, but, says Carlyle, he opened them to see the great knife rising above him, and struggled. Also it would seem he screamed when the executioner removed his bandages. Then the knife came down, swift and merciful.

The Terror was at an end. From first to last there had been condemned and executed about four thousand people.{v2-337}

§ 12

It witnesses to the immense vitality and the profound rightness of the flood of new ideals and intentions that the French Revolution had released into the world of

practical endeavour, that it could still flow in a creative torrent after it had been caricatured and mocked in the grotesque personality and career of Robespierre. He had shown its deepest thoughts, he had displayed anticipations of its methods and conclusions, through the green and distorting lenses of his preposterous vanity and egotism, he had smeared and blackened all its hope and promise with blood and horror, and the power of these ideas was not destroyed. They stood the extreme tests of ridiculous and horrible presentation. After his downfall, the Republic still ruled unassailable. Leaderless, for his successors were a group of crafty or commonplace men, the European republic struggled on, and presently fell and rose again, and fell and rose and still struggles, entangled but invincible.

And it is well to remind the reader here of the real dimensions of this phase of the Terror, which strikes so vividly upon the imagination and which has therefore been enormously exaggerated relatively to the rest of the revolution. From 1789 to late in 1791 the French Revolution was an orderly process, and from the summer of 1794 the Republic was an orderly and victorious state. The Terror was not the work of the whole country, but of the town mob which owed its existence and its savagery to the misrule and social injustice of the ancient régime; and the explosion of the Terror could have happened only through the persistent treacherous disloyalty of the royalists which, while it raised the extremists to frenzy, disinclined the mass of moderate republicans from any intervention. The best men were busy fighting the Austrians and royalists on the frontier. Altogether, we must remember, the total of the killed in the Terror amounted to a few thousands, and among those thousands there were certainly a great number of active antagonists whom the Republic, by all the standards of that time, was entitled to kill. It included such traitors and mischief-makers as Philip, Duke of Orleans, of the Palais Royal, who had voted for the death of Louis XVI. More lives were wasted by the British generals alone on the opening day{v2-338} of what is known as the Somme offensive of July, 1916, than in the whole French revolution from start to finish. We hear so much about the martyrs of the French Terror because they were notable, well-connected people, and because there has been a sort of propaganda of their sufferings. But let us balance against them in our minds what was going on in the prisons of the world generally at that time. In Britain and America, while the Terror ruled in France, far more people were slaughtered for offences—very often quite trivial offences—against property than were condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal for treason against the State. Of course, they were very common people indeed, but in their rough way they suffered. A girl was hung in Massachusetts in 1789 for forcibly taking the hat, shoes, and buckles of another girl she had met in the street.[447] Again, Howard the philanthropist (about 1773) found a number of

perfectly innocent people detained in the English prisons who had been tried and acquitted, but were unable to pay the gaoler's fees. And these prisons were filthy places under no effective control. Torture was still in use in the Hanoverian dominions of his Britannic majesty King George III. It had been in use in France up to the time of the National Assembly. These things mark the level of the age. It is not on record that anyone was deliberately tortured by the French revolutionaries during the Terror. Those few hundreds of French gentlefolk fell into a pit that most of them had been well content should exist for others. It was tragic, but not, by the scale of universal history, a great tragedy. The common man in France was more free, better off, and happier during the "Terror" than he had been in 1787.

The story of the Republic after the summer of 1794 becomes a tangled story of political groups aiming at everything from a radical republic to a royalist reaction, but pervaded by a general desire for some definite working arrangement even at the price of considerable concessions. There was a series of insurrections of the Jacobins and of the royalists, there seems to have been what we should call nowadays a hooligan class in Paris which was quite ready to turn out to fight and loot on either side; nevertheless the Convention produced a government, the Directory of five members,{v2-339} which held France together for five years. The last, most threatening revolt of all, in October, 1795, was suppressed with great skill and decision by a rising young general, Napoleon Bonaparte.

The Directory was victorious abroad, but uncreative at home; its members were far too anxious to stick to the sweets and glories of office to prepare a constitution that would supersede them, and far too dishonest to handle the task of financial and economic reconstruction demanded by the condition of France. We need only note two of their names, Carnot, who was an honest republican, and Barras, who was conspicuously a rogue. Their reign of five years formed a curious interlude in this history of great changes. They took things as they found them. The propagandist zeal of the revolution carried the French armies into Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, south Germany, and north Italy. Everywhere kings were expelled and republics set up. But such propagandist zeal as animated the Directorate did not prevent the looting of the treasures of the liberated peoples to relieve the financial embarrassment of the French Government. Their wars became less and less the holy war of freedom, and more and more like the aggressive wars of the ancient régime. The last feature of Grand Monarchy that France was disposed to discard was her tradition of foreign policy, grasping, aggressive, restless, French-centred. One discovers it still as vigorous under the Directorate as if there had been no revolution.

§ 13

The ebb of this tide of Revolution in the world, this tide which had created the great Republic of America and threatened to submerge all European monarchies, was now at hand. It is as if something had thrust up from beneath the surface of human affairs, made a gigantic effort, and spent itself. It swept many obsolescent and evil things away, but many evil and unjust things remained. It solved many problems, and it left the desire for fellowship and order face to face with much vaster problems that it seemed only to have revealed. Privilege of certain types had gone, many tyrannies, much religious persecution. When these things of the ancient régime had vanished, it seemed as if they had never mattered. What did matter was that for all their votes{v2-340} and enfranchisement, and in spite of all their passion and effort, common men were still not free and not enjoying an equal happiness; that the immense promise and air of a new world with which the Revolution had come, remained unfulfilled.

Yet, after all, this wave of revolution had realized nearly everything that had been clearly thought out before it came. It was not failing now for want of impetus, but for want of finished ideas. Many things that had oppressed mankind were swept away for ever. Now that they were swept away it became apparent how unprepared men were for the creative opportunities this clearance gave them. And periods of revolution are periods of action; in them men reap the harvests of ideas that have grown during phases of interlude, and they leave the fields cleared for a new season of growth, but they cannot suddenly produce ripened new ideas to meet an unanticipated riddle.

The sweeping away of king and lord, of priest and inquisitor, of landlord and tax-gatherer and task-master, left the mass of men face to face for the first time with certain very fundamental aspects of the social structure, relationships they had taken for granted, and had never realized the need of thinking hard and continuously about before. Institutions that had seemed to be in the nature of things, and matters that had seemed to happen by the same sort of necessity that brought round the dawn and springtime, were discovered to be artificial, controllable, were they not so perplexingly intricate, and—now that the old routines were abolished and done away with—in urgent need of control. The New Order found itself confronted with three riddles which it was quite unprepared to solve: Property, Currency, and International Relationship.

Let us take these three problems in order, and ask what they are and how they arose in human affairs. Every human life is deeply entangled in them, and concerned in their solution. The rest of this history becomes more and more clearly the development of the effort to solve these problems; that is to say, so to interpret property, so to establish currency, and so to control international reactions as to render possible a world-wide, progressive and happy community of will. They are the three riddles of the

sphinx of fate, to which the human commonweal must find an answer or perish.{v2-341}

The idea of property arises out of the combative instincts of the species. Long before men were men, the ancestral ape was a proprietor. Primitive property is what a beast will fight for. The dog and his bone, the tigress and her lair, the roaring stag and his herd, these are proprietorship blazing. No more nonsensical expression is conceivable in sociology than the term "primitive communism." The Old Man of the family tribe of early palæolithic times insisted upon his proprietorship in his wives and daughters, in his tools, in his visible universe. If any other man wandered into his visible universe he fought him, and if he could he slew him. The tribe grew in the course of ages, as Atkinson showed convincingly in his *Primal Law*, by the gradual toleration by the Old Man of the existence of the younger men, and of their proprietorship in the wives they captured from outside the tribe, and in the tools and ornaments they made and the game they slew. Human society grew by a compromise between this one's property and that. It was largely a compromise and an alliance forced upon men by the necessity of driving some other tribe out of its visible universe. If the hills and forests and streams were not *your* land or *my* land, it was because they had to be our land. Each of us would have preferred to have it *my* land, but that would not work. In that case the other fellows would have destroyed us. Society, therefore, is from its beginnings the mitigation of ownership. Ownership in the beast and in the primitive savage was far more intense a thing than it is in the civilized world to-day. It is rooted more strongly in our instincts than in our reason.

In the natural savage and in the untutored man to-day—for it is well to keep in mind that no man to-day is more than four hundred generations from the primordial savage—there is no limitation to the sphere of ownership. Whatever you can fight for, you can own; women-folk, spared captive, captured beast, forest glade, stone pit, or what not. As the community grew and a sort of law came to restrain internecine fighting, men developed rough and ready methods of settling proprietorship. Men could own what they were the first to make or capture or claim. It seemed natural that a debtor who could not pay up should become the property of his creditor. Equally natural was it that, after{v2-342} claiming a patch of land ("Bags I," as the schoolboy says), a man should exact payments and tribute from anyone else who wanted to use it. It was only slowly, as the possibilities of organized life dawned on men, that this unlimited property in anything whatever began to be recognized as a nuisance. Men found themselves born into a universe all owned and claimed, nay! they found themselves born, owned, and claimed. The social struggles of the earlier civilization are difficult to trace now, but the history we have told of the Roman republic shows a

community waking up to the idea that they may become a public inconvenience and should then be repudiated, and that the unlimited ownership of land is also an inconvenience. We find that later Babylonia severely limited the rights of property in slaves. Finally, we find in the teaching of that great revolutionist, Jesus of Nazareth, such an attack upon property as had never been before. Easier it was, he said, for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the owner of great possessions to enter the kingdom of heaven. A steady, continuous criticism of the permissible scope of property seems to have been going on in the world for the last twenty-five or thirty centuries. Nineteen hundred years after Jesus of Nazareth we find all the world that has come under the Christian teaching persuaded that there could be no property in persons. There has been a turn over in the common conscience in that matter. And also the idea that "a man may do what he likes with his own" was clearly very much shaken in relation to other sorts of property. But this world of the closing eighteenth century was still only in the interrogative stage in this matter. It had got nothing clear enough, much less settled enough, to act upon. One of its primary impulses was to protect property against the greed and waste of kings and the exploitation of noble adventurers. It was to protect private property that the Revolution began. But its equalitarian formulæ carried it into a criticism of the very property it had risen to protect. How can men be free and equal when numbers of them have no ground to stand upon and nothing to eat, and the owners will neither feed nor lodge them unless they toil? Excessively—the poor complained.

To which riddle the Jacobin reply was to set about "dividing up." They wanted to intensify and universalize property. Aiming{v2-343} at the same end by another route, there were already in the eighteenth century certain primitive socialists—or, to be more exact, communists—who wanted to "abolish" private property altogether. The state (a democratic state was of course understood) was to own all property. It was only as the nineteenth century developed that men began to realize that property was not one simple thing, but a great complex of ownerships of different values and consequences, that many things (such as human beings, the implements of an artist, clothing, toothbrushes) are very profoundly and incurably personal property, and that there is a very great range of things, railways, machinery of various sorts, homes, cultivated gardens, pleasure-boats, for example, which need each to be considered very particularly to determine how far and under what limitations it may come under private ownership, and how far it falls into the public domain and may be administered and let out by the state in the collective interest. On the practical side these questions pass into politics, and the problem of making and sustaining efficient state administration. They open up issues in social psychology, and interact with the

enquiries of educational science. We have to-day the advantage of a hundred and thirty years of discussion over the first revolutionary generation, but even now this criticism of property is still a vast and passionate ferment rather than a science. Under the circumstances it was impossible that eighteenth-century France should present any other spectacle than that of vague and confused popular movements seeking to dispossess owners, and classes of small and large owners holding on grimly, demanding, before everything else, law, order, and security, and seeking to increase their individual share of anything whatever that could be legally possessed.

Closely connected with the vagueness of men's ideas about property was the vagueness of their ideas about currency. Both the American and the French republics fell into serious trouble upon this score. Here, again, we deal with something that is not simple, a tangle of usages, conventions, laws, and prevalent mental habits, out of which arise problems which admit of no solution in simple terms, and which yet are of vital importance to the everyday life of the community. The validity of the acknowledgement a man is given for a day's work is manifestly of quite primary importance{v2-344} to the working of the social machine. The growth of confidence in the precious metals and of coins, until the assurance became practically universal that good money could be trusted to have its purchasing power anywhere, must have been a gradual one in human history. And being fairly established, this assurance was subjected to very considerable strains and perplexities by the action of governments in debasing currency and in substituting paper promises to pay for the actual metallic coins. Every age produced a number of clever people intelligent enough to realize the opportunities for smart operations afforded by the complex of faiths and fictions upon which the money system rested, and sufficiently unsound morally to give their best energies to growing rich and so getting people to work for them, through tricks and tampering with gold, coinage, and credit. So soon as serious political and social dislocation occurred, the money mechanism began to work stiffly and inaccurately. The United States and the French Republic both started their careers in a phase of financial difficulty. Everywhere governments had been borrowing and issuing paper promises to pay interest, more interest than they could conveniently raise. Both revolutions led to much desperate public spending and borrowing, and at the same time to an interruption of cultivation and production that further diminished real taxable wealth. Both governments, being unable to pay their way in gold, resorted to the issue of paper money, promising to pay upon the security of undeveloped land (in America) or recently confiscated church lands (France). In both cases the amount of issue went far beyond the confidence of men in the new security. Gold was called in, hidden by the cunning ones, or went abroad to pay for imports; and people found

themselves with various sorts of bills and notes in the place of coins, all of uncertain and diminishing value.

However complicated the origins of currency, its practical effect and the end it has to serve in the community may be stated roughly in simple terms. The money a man receives for his work (mental or bodily) or for relinquishing his property in some consumable good, must ultimately be able to purchase for him for his use a fairly equivalent amount of consumable goods. ("Consumable goods" is a phrase we would have understood in{v2-345} the widest sense to represent even such things as a journey, a lecture or theatrical entertainment, housing, medical advice, and so forth.) When everyone in a community is assured of this, and assured that the money will not deteriorate in purchasing power, then currency—and the distribution of goods by trade—is in a healthy and satisfactory state. Then men will work cheerfully, and only then. The imperative need for that steadfastness and security of currency is the fixed datum from which the scientific study and control of currency must begin. But under the most stable conditions there will always be fluctuations in currency value. The sum total of saleable consumable goods in the world and in various countries varies from year to year and from season to season; autumn is probably a time of plenty in comparison with spring; with an increase the purchasing power of currency will increase, unless there is also an increase in the amount of currency. On the other hand, if there is a diminution in the production of consumable goods or a great and unprofitable destruction of consumable goods, such as occurs in a war, the share of the total of consumable goods represented by a sum of money will diminish and prices and wages will rise. In modern war the explosion of a single big shell, even if it hits nothing, destroys labour and material roughly equivalent to a comfortable cottage or a year's holiday for a man. If the shell hits anything, then that further destruction has to be added to the diminution of consumable goods. Every shell that burst in the recent war diminished by a little fraction the purchasing value of every coin in the whole world. If there is also an increase of currency during a period when consumable goods are being used up and not fully replaced—and the necessities of revolutionary and war-making governments almost always require this—then the enhancement of prices and the fall in the value of the currency paid in wages is still greater. Usually also governments under these stresses borrow money, that is to say, they issue interest-bearing paper, secured on the willingness and ability of the general community to endure taxation. Such operations would be difficult enough if they were carried out frankly by perfectly honest men, in the full light of publicity and scientific knowledge. But hitherto this has never been the case; at every point the clever egotist, the bad rich man,{v2-346} is trying to deflect things a little to his own advantage.

Everywhere too one finds the stupid egotist ready to take fright and break into panic. Consequently we presently discover the state encumbered by an excess of currency, which is in effect a non-interest-paying debt, and also with a great burthen of interest upon loans. Both credit and currency begin to fluctuate wildly with the evaporation of public confidence. They are, we say, demoralized.

The ultimate consequence of an entirely demoralized currency would be to end all work and all trade that could not be carried on by payment in kind and barter. Men would refuse to work except for food, clothing, housing, and payment in kind. The immediate consequence of a partially demoralized currency is to drive up prices and make trading feverishly adventurous and workers suspicious and irritable. A sharp man wants under such conditions to hold money for as brief a period as possible; he demands the utmost for his reality, and buys a reality again as soon as possible in order to get this perishable stuff, the currency paper, off his hands. All who have fixed incomes and saved accumulations suffer by the rise in prices, and the wage-earners find, with a gathering fury, that the real value of their wages is continually less. Here is a state of affairs where the duty of every clever person is evidently to help adjust and reassure. But all the traditions of private enterprise, all the ideas of the later eighteenth century, went to justify the action of acute-minded and dexterous people who set themselves to accumulate claims, titles, and tangible property in the storms and dislocations of this currency breakdown. The number of understanding people in the world who were setting themselves sincerely and simply to restore honest and workable currency and credit conditions were few and ineffectual. Most of the financial and speculative people of the time were playing the part of Cornish wreckers—not apparently with any conscious dishonesty, but with the completest self-approval and the applause of their fellow men. The aim of every clever person was to accumulate as much as he could of really negotiable wealth, and then, and only then, to bring about some sort of stabilizing political process that would leave him in advantageous possession of his accumulation. Here were the factors{v2-347} of a bad economic atmosphere, suspicious, feverish, greedy, and speculative....

In the third direction in which the Revolution had been unprepared with clear ideas, the problem of international relationships, developments were to occur that interacted disastrously with this state of financial and economic adventure, this scramble and confusion, this pre-occupation of men's minds with the perplexing slipperiness of their private property and their monetary position at home. The Republic at its birth found itself at war. For a time that war was waged by the new levies with a patriotism and a zeal unparalleled in the world's history. But that could not go on. The Directory found itself at the head of a conquering country, intolerably

needy and embarrassed at home, and in occupation of rich foreign lands, full of seizable wealth and material and financial opportunity. We have all double natures, and the French in particular seem to be developed logically and symmetrically on both sides. Into these conquered regions France came as a liberator, the teacher of Republicanism to mankind. Holland and Belgium became the Batavian Republic, Genoa and its Riviera the Ligurian Republic, north Italy the Cisalpine Republic, Switzerland was rechristened the Helvetian Republic, Mülhausen, Rome, and Naples were designated republics. Grouped about France, these republics were to be a constellation of freedom leading the world. That was the ideal side. At the same time the French government, and French private individuals in concert with the government, proceeded to a complete and exhaustive exploitation of the resources of these liberated lands.

So within ten years of the meeting of the States General, New France begins to take on a singular likeness to the old. It is more flushed, more vigorous; it wears a cap of liberty instead of a crown; it has a new army—but a damaged fleet; it has new rich people instead of the old rich people, a new peasantry working even harder than the old and yielding more taxes, a new foreign policy curiously like the old foreign policy disrobed, and—there is no Millennium.{v2-348}

XXXVIII

THE CAREER OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE[448]

§ 1

AND now we come to one of the most illuminating figures in modern history, the figure of an adventurer and a wrecker, whose story seems to display with an extraordinary vividness the universal subtle conflict of egotism, vanity, and personality with the weaker, wider claims of the common good. Against this background of confusion and stress and hope, this strained and heaving France and Europe, this stormy and tremendous dawn, appears this dark little archaic personage, hard, compact, capable, unscrupulous, imitative, and neatly vulgar. He was born (1769) in the still half-barbaric island of Corsica, the son of a rather prosaic father, a lawyer who had been first a patriotic Corsican against the French monarchy which was trying to subjugate Corsica, and who had then gone over to the side of the invader. His mother was of sturdier stuff, passionately patriotic and a strong and managing woman. (She

birched her sons; on one occasion she birched Napoleon when he was sixteen.) There were numerous brothers and sisters, and the family pursued the French{v2-349} authorities with importunities for rewards and jobs. Except for Napoleon it seems to have been a thoroughly commonplace, "hungry" family. He was clever, bad-tempered, and overbearing. From his mother he had acquired a romantic Corsican patriotism.

Through the patronage of the French governor of Corsica he got an education first at the military school of Brienne and then at the military school of Paris, from which he passed into the artillery in 1785. He was an industrious student both of mathematics and history, his memory was prodigiously good, and he made copious note-books which still exist. These note-books show no very exceptional intelligence, and they contain short pieces of original composition—upon suicide and similar adolescent topics. He fell early under the spell of Rousseau; he developed sensibility and a scorn for the corruptions of civilization. In 1786 he wrote a pamphlet against a Swiss pastor who had attacked Rousseau. It was a very ordinary adolescent production, rhetorical and imitative. He dreamt of an independent Corsica, freed from the French. With the revolution, he became an ardent republican and a supporter of the new French régime in Corsica. For some years, until the fall of Robespierre, he remained a Jacobin.

§ 2

He soon gained the reputation of a useful and capable officer, and it was through Robespierre's younger brother that he got his first chance of distinction at Toulon. Toulon had been handed over to the British and Spanish by the Royalists, and an allied fleet occupied its harbour. Bonaparte was given the command of the artillery, and under his direction the French forced the allies to abandon the port and town.

He was next appointed commander of the artillery in Italy, but he had not taken up his duties when the death of Robespierre seemed likely to involve his own; he was put under arrest as a Jacobin, and for a time he was in danger of the guillotine. That danger passed. He was employed as artillery commander in an abortive raid upon Corsica, and then went to Paris (1795) rather down at heel. Madame Junot in her Memoirs describes his lean{v2-350} face and slovenly appearance at this time, "his ill-combed, ill-powdered hair hanging down over his grey overcoat," his gloveless hands and badly blacked boots. It was a time of exhaustion and reaction after the severities of the Jacobite republic. "In Paris," says Holland Rose, "the star of Liberty was paling before Mercury, Mars, and Venus"—finance, uniforms, and social charm. The best of the common men were in the armies, away beyond the frontiers. We have already noted the last rising of the royalists in this year (1795). Napoleon had the luck to be in

Paris, and found his second opportunity in this affair. He saved the Republic—of the Directory.

His abilities greatly impressed Carnot, the most upright of the Directors. Moreover, he married a charming young widow, Madame Josephine de Beauharnais, who had great influence with Barras. Both these things probably helped him to secure the command in Italy.

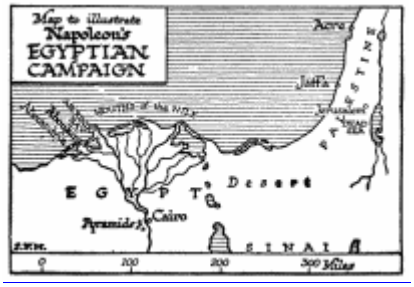
We have no space here for the story of his brilliant campaigns in Italy (1796-7), but of the spirit in which that invasion of Italy was conducted we must say a word or two, because it illustrates so vividly the double soul of France and of Napoleon, and how revolutionary idealism was paling before practical urgencies. He proclaimed to the Italians that the French were coming to break their chains—*and they were*! He wrote to the Directory: "We will levy 20,000,000 francs in exactions in this country; it is one of the richest in the world." To his soldiers he said, "You are famished and nearly naked.... I lead you into the most fertile plain in the world. There you will find great towns, rich provinces, honour, glory, riches...."

We are all such mixed stuff as this; in all of us the intimations of a new world and a finer duty struggle to veil and control the ancient greeds and lusts of our inherited past; but these passages, written by a young man of twenty-seven, seem to show the gilt of honourable idealism rubbed off at an unusually early age. These are the bribes of an adventurer who has brought whatever impulse of devotion to a great cause once stirred within him, well under the control of his self love.

His successes in Italy were brilliant and complete; they enormously stimulated his self-confidence and his contempt for the{v2-351} energy and ability of his fellow creatures. He had wanted to go into Italy because there lay the most attractive task—he had risked his position in the army by refusing to take up the irksome duties of a command against the rebels in La Vendée—and there are clear signs of a vast expansion of his vanity with his victories. He had been a great reader of Plutarch's Lives and of Roman history, and his extremely active but totally uncreative imagination was now busy with dreams of a revival of the eastern conquests of the Roman Empire. He got the republic of Venice out of his way by cutting it up between the French and Austria, securing the Ionian Islands and the Venetian fleet for France. This peace, the peace of Campo Formio, was for both sides a thoroughly scoundrelly and ultimately a disastrous bargain. The new republic of France assisted in the murder of an ancient republic—Napoleon carried his point against a considerable outcry in France—and Austria got Venetia, in which land in 1918 she was destined to bleed to death. There were also secret clauses by which both France and Austria were later to

acquire south German territory. And it was not only the Roman push eastward that was now exciting Napoleon's brain. This was the land of Cæsar—and Cæsar was a bad example for the successful general of a not very stable republic.

Cæsar had come back to Rome from Gaul a hero and conqueror. His new imitator would come back from Egypt and India—Egypt and India were to be his Gaul. There was really none of the genius about which historians write so glibly in this decision. It was a tawdry and ill-conceived imitation. The elements of failure stared him in the face. The way to Egypt and India was by sea, and the British, in spite of two recent naval mutinies, whose importance Napoleon exaggerated, were stronger than the French at sea. Moreover, Egypt was a part of the Turkish empire, by no means a contemptible power in those days. Nevertheless he persuaded the Directory, which was dazzled by his Italian exploits, to let him go. An Armada started from Toulon in May, 1798, captured Malta, and had the good luck to evade the British fleet and arrive at Alexandria. He landed his troops hurriedly, and the battle of the Pyramids made him master of Egypt.{v2-352}



The main British fleet at that time was in the Atlantic outside Cadiz, but the admiral had detached a force of his best ships, under Vice-Admiral Nelson—a man certainly as great a genius in naval affairs as was Napoleon in things military—to chase and engage the French flotilla.[449] For a time Nelson sought the French fleet in vain; finally, on the evening of the first of August, he found it at anchor in Aboukir Bay. He had caught it unawares; many of the men were ashore and a council was being held in the flagship. He had no charts, and it was a hazardous thing to sail into the shallow water in a bad light. The French admiral concluded, therefore, that he would not attack before morning, and so made no haste in recalling his men aboard until it was too late to do so. Nelson struck at once—against the advice of some of his captains. One ship only went aground. She marked the shoal for the rest of the fleet. He sailed to the attack in a double line about sundown, putting the French between two fires. Night fell as the battle was joined; the fight thundered and crashed in the darkness,

until it was lit presently by the flames of burning French ships, and then by the flare of the French flag-ship, the Orient, blowing up.... Before midnight the battle of the Nile was over, and Napoleon's fleet was destroyed. Napoleon was cut off from France.{v2-353}

Says Holland Rose, quoting Thiers, this Egyptian expedition was "the rashest attempt history records." Napoleon was left in Egypt with the Turks gathering against him and his army infected with the plague. Nevertheless, with a stupid sort of persistence, he went on for a time with this Eastern scheme. He gained a victory at Jaffa, and, being short of provisions, *massacred all his prisoners*. Then he tried to take Acre, where his own siege artillery, just captured at sea by the English, was used against him. Returning baffled to Egypt, he gained a brilliant victory over a Turkish force at Aboukir, and then, deserting the army of Egypt—it held on until 1801, when it capitulated to a British force—made his escape back to France (1799), narrowly missing capture by a British cruiser off Sicily.

Here was muddle and failure enough to discredit any general—had it been known. But the very British cruisers which came so near to catching him, helped him by preventing any real understanding of the Egyptian situation from reaching the French people. He could make a great flourish over the battle of Aboukir and conceal the shame and loss of Acre. Things were not going well with France just then. There had been military failures at several points; much of Italy had been lost, Bonaparte's Italy, and this turned men's minds to him as the natural saviour of that situation; moreover, there had been much peculation, and some of it was coming to light; France was in one of her phases of financial scandal, and Napoleon had not filched; the public was in that state of moral fatigue when a strong and honest man is called for, a wonderful, impossible healing man who will do everything for everybody. People, poor lazy souls, persuaded themselves that this specious young man with the hard face, so providentially back from Egypt, was the strong and honest man required—another Washington.

With Julius Cæsar rather than Washington at the back of his mind, Napoleon responded to the demand of his time. A conspiracy was carefully engineered to replace the Directory by three "Consuls"—everybody seems to have been reading far too much Roman history just then—of whom Napoleon was to be the chief. The working of that conspiracy is too intricate a story for our space; it involved a Cromwell-like dispersal of the Lower House{v2-354} (the Council of Five Hundred), and in this affair Napoleon lost his nerve. The deputies shouted at him and hustled him, and he seems to have been very much frightened. He nearly fainted, stuttered, and could say nothing, but the situation was saved by his brother Lucien, who brought in the soldiers

and dispersed the council. This little hitch did not affect the final success of the scheme. The three Consuls were installed at the Luxembourg palace, with two commissioners, to reconstruct the constitution.

With all his confidence restored and sure of the support of the people, who supposed him to be honest, patriotic, republican, and able to bring about a good peace, Napoleon took a high hand with his colleagues and the commissioners. A constitution was produced in which the chief executive officer was to be called the First Consul, with enormous powers. He was to be Napoleon; this was part of the constitution. He was to be re-elected or replaced at the end of ten years. He was to be assisted by a Council of State, appointed by himself, which was to initiate legislation and send its proposals to two bodies, the Legislative Body (which could vote, but not discuss) and the Tribunate (which could discuss, but not vote), which were *selected* by an appointed Senate from a special class, the "notabilities of France," who were elected by the "notabilities of the departments," who were elected by the "notabilities of the commune," who were elected by the common voters. The suffrage for the election of the notabilities of the commune was universal. This was the sole vestige of democracy in the astounding pyramid. This constitution was chiefly the joint production of a worthy philosopher Sieyès, who was one of the three consuls, and Bonaparte. But so weary was France with her troubles and efforts, and so confident were men in the virtue and ability of this adventurer from Corsica, that when, at the birth of the nineteenth century, this constitution was submitted to the country, it was carried by 3,011,007 votes to 1,562. France put herself absolutely in Bonaparte's hands, and prepared to be peaceful, happy, and glorious.

§ 3

Now surely here was opportunity such as never came to man {v2-355}before. Here was a position in which a man might well bow himself in fear of himself, and search his heart and serve God and man to the utmost. The old order of things was dead or dying; strange new forces drove through the world seeking form and direction; the promise of a world republic and an enduring world peace whispered in a multitude of startled minds. Had this man any profundity of vision, any power of creative imagination, had he been accessible to any disinterested ambition, he might have done work for mankind that would have made him the very sun of history. All Europe and America, stirred by the first promise of a new age, was waiting for him. Not France alone. France was in his hand, his instrument, to do with as he pleased, willing for peace, but tempered for war like an exquisite sword. There lacked nothing to this great occasion but a noble imagination. And failing that, Napoleon could do no more than strut upon the crest of this great mountain of opportunity like a cockerel on a dunghill.

The figure he makes in history is one of almost incredible self-conceit, of vanity, greed, and cunning, of callous contempt and disregard of all who trusted him, and of a grandiose aping of Cæsar, Alexander, and Charlemagne which would be purely comic if it were not caked over with human blood. Until, as Victor Hugo said in his tremendous way, "God was bored by him," and he was kicked aside into a corner to end his days, explaining and explaining how very clever his worst blunders had been, prowling about his dismal hot island shooting birds and squabbling meanly with an underbred gaoler who failed to show him proper "respect."

His career as First Consul was perhaps the least dishonourable phase in his career. He took the crumbling military affairs of the Directory in hand, and after a complicated campaign in North Italy brought matters to a head in the victory of Marengo, near Alessandria (1800). It was a victory that at some moments came very near disaster. In the December of the same year General Moreau, in the midst of snow, mud, and altogether abominable weather, inflicted an overwhelming defeat upon the Austrian army at Hohenlinden. If Napoleon had gained this battle, it would have counted among his most characteristic and brilliant exploits. These things made the hoped-for peace possible. In 1801 the preliminaries of peace with England and Austria were signed. Peace with England, the Treaty of Amiens, was concluded{v2-356} in 1802, and Napoleon was free to give himself to the creative statecraft of which France, and Europe through France, stood in need. The war had given the country extended boundaries, the treaty with England restored the colonial empire of France and left her in a position of security beyond the utmost dreams of Louis XIV. It was open to Napoleon to work out and consolidate the new order of things, to make a modern state that should become a beacon and inspiration to Europe and all the world.

He attempted nothing of the sort. He did not realize that there were such things as modern states in the scheme of possibility. His little imitative imagination was full of a deep cunning dream of being Cæsar over again—as if this universe would ever tolerate anything of that sort over again! He was scheming to make himself a real emperor, with a crown upon his head and all his rivals and school-fellows and friends at his feet. This could give him no fresh power that he did not already exercise, but it would be more splendid—it would astonish his mother. What response was there in a head of that sort for the splendid creative challenge of the time? But first France must be prosperous. France hungry would certainly not endure an emperor. He set himself to carry out an old scheme of roads that Louis XV had approved; he developed canals in imitation of the English canals; he reorganized the police and made the country safe; and, preparing the scene for his personal drama, he set himself to make Paris

look like Rome, with classical arches, with classical columns. Admirable schemes for banking development were available, and he made use of them. In all these things he moved with the times, they would have happened—with less autocracy, with less centralization, if he had never been born. And he set himself to weaken the republicans whose fundamental convictions he was planning to outrage. He recalled the émigrés, provided they gave satisfactory assurances to respect the new régime. Many were very willing to come back on such terms, and let Bourbons be bygones. And he worked out a great reconciliation, a Concordat, with Rome. Rome was to support him, and he was to restore the authority of Rome in the parishes. France would never be obedient and manageable, he thought; she would never stand a new monarchy, without religion. "How can you have order in a{v2-357} state," he said, "without religion? Society cannot exist without inequality of fortunes, which cannot endure apart from religion. When one man is dying of hunger near another who is ill of surfeit, he cannot resign himself to this difference, unless there is an authority which declares—'God wills it thus: there must be poor and rich in the world: but hereafter and during all eternity the division of things will take place differently.'" Religion—especially of the later Roman brand—was, in fact, excellent stuff for keeping the common people quiet. In his early honest Jacobin days he had denounced it for that very reason.

Another great achievement which marks his imaginative scope and his estimate of human nature was the institution of the Legion of Honour, a scheme for decorating Frenchmen with bits of ribbon which was admirably calculated to divert ambitious men from subversive proceedings. (Washington, when he became President of the United States, abolished the only order that has ever adorned any citizen of the American republic, the Order of Cincinnatus, because he had no use for the snob in his fellow man.)

And also Napoleon interested himself in Christian propaganda. Here is the Napoleonic view of the political uses of Christ, a view that has tainted all French missions from that time forth. "It is my wish to re-establish the institution for foreign missions; for the religious missionaries may be very useful to me in Asia, Africa, and America, as I shall make them reconnoitre all the lands they visit. The sanctity of their dress will not only protect them, but serve to conceal their political and commercial investigations. The head of the missionary establishment shall reside no longer at Rome, but in Paris."

These are the ideas of a roguish merchant rather than a statesman. His treatment of education shows the same narrow vision, the same blindness to the realities of the dawn about him. Elementary education he neglected almost completely; he left it to

the conscience of the local authorities, and he provided that the teachers should be paid out of the fees of the scholars; it is clear he did not want the common people to be educated; he had no glimmering of any understanding why they should be; but he interested himself in the provision of technical and higher schools because his state needed the services of clever, self-seeking, well-informed{v2-358} men. This was an astounding retrogression from the great scheme, drafted by Condorcet, for the Republic in 1792, for a complete system of free education for the entire nation. Slowly but steadfastly the project of Condorcet comes true; the great nations of the world are being compelled to bring it nearer and nearer to realization, and the cheap devices of Napoleon pass out of our interest. As for the education of the mothers and wives of our race, this was the quality of Napoleon's wisdom: "I do not think that we need trouble ourselves with any plan of instruction for young females, they cannot be better brought up than by their mothers. Public education is not suitable for them, because they are never called upon to act in public. Manners are all in all to them, and marriage is all they look to."

The First Consul was no kinder to women in the Code Napoleon. A wife, for example, had no control over her own property; she was in her husband's hands. This code was the work very largely of the Council of State. Napoleon seems rather to have hindered than helped its deliberations. He would invade the session without notice, and favour its members with lengthy and egotistical monologues, frequently quite irrelevant to the matter in hand. The Council listened with profound respect; it was all the Council could do. He would keep his councillors up to unearthly hours, and betray a simple pride in his superior wakefulness. He recalled these discussions with peculiar satisfaction in his later years, and remarked on one occasion that his glory consisted not in having won forty battles, but in having created the Code Napoleon.... So far as it substituted plain statements for inaccessible legal mysteries his Code was a good thing; it gathered together, revised and made clear a vast disorderly accumulation of laws, old and new. Like all his constructive work, it made for immediate efficiency, it defined things and relations so that men could get to work upon them without further discussion. It was of less immediate practical importance that it frequently defined them wrongly. There was no intellectual power, as distinguished from intellectual energy, behind this codification. It took everything that existed for granted. ("Sa Majesté ne croit que ce qui est."[450]) The fundamental ideas of the civilized community and{v2-359} of the terms of human co-operation were in a process of reconstruction all about Napoleon—and he never perceived it. He accepted a phase of change, and tried to fix it for ever. To this day France is cramped by this early nineteenth-century strait-waistcoat into which he clapped her. He fixed the status of

women, the status of labourers, the status of the peasant; they all struggle to this day in the net of his hard definitions.

So briskly and forcibly Napoleon set his mind, hard, clear, narrow, and base, to brace up France. That bracing up was only a part of the large egotistical schemes that dominated him. His imagination was set upon a new Cæsarism. In 1802 he got himself made First Consul for life with the power of appointing a successor, and his clear intention of annexing Holland and Italy, in spite of his treaty obligations to keep them separate, made the Peace of Amiens totter crazily from the very beginning. Since his schemes were bound to provoke a war with England, he should, at any cost, have kept quiet until he had brought his navy to a superiority over the British navy. He had the control of great resources for ship-building, the British government was a weak one, and three or four years would have sufficed to shift that balance. But in spite of his rough experiences in Egypt, he had never mastered the importance of sea power, and he had not the mental steadfastness for a waiting game and long preparation. In 1803 his occupation of Switzerland precipitated a crisis,[451] and war broke out again with England. The weak Addington in England gave place to the greater Pitt. The rest of Napoleon's story turns upon that war.

During the period of the Consulate, the First Consul was very active in advancing the fortunes of his brothers and sisters. This was quite human, very clannish and Corsican, and it helps us to understand just how he valued his position and the opportunities before him. Few of us can live without an audience, and the first audience of our childhood is our family; most of us to the end of our days are swayed by the desire to impress our parents and{v2-360} brothers and sisters. Few "letters home" of successful men or women display the graces of modesty and self-forgetfulness. Only souls uplifted, as the soul of Jesus of Nazareth was uplifted, can say of all the world, "Behold my mother and my brethren!" A large factor in the making of Napoleon was the desire to amaze, astonish, and subdue the minds of the Bonaparte family, and their neighbours. He promoted his brothers ridiculously—for they were the most ordinary of men. The hungry Bonapartes were in luck. Surely all Corsica was open-mouthed! But one person who knew him well was neither amazed nor subdued. This was his mother. He sent her money to spend and astonish the neighbours; he exhorted her to make a display, to live as became the mother of so marvellous, so world-shaking, a son. But the good lady, who had birched the Man of Destiny at the age of sixteen for grimacing at his grandmother, was neither dazzled nor deceived by him at the age of thirty-two. All France might worship him, but she had no illusions. She put by the money he sent her; she continued her customary economies. "When it is all over," she said, "you will be glad of my savings."

Napoleon as Emperor

§ 4

We will not detail the steps by which Napoleon became Emperor. His coronation was the most extraordinary revival of stale history that it is possible to imagine. Cæsar was no longer the model; Napoleon was playing now at being Charlemagne. He was crowned emperor, not indeed at Rome, but in the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris; the Pope (Pius VII) had been brought from Rome to perform the ceremony; and at the climax Napoleon I seized the crown, waved the Pope aside, and crowned himself. The attentive reader of this *Outline* will know that a thousand{v2-361} years before this would have had considerable significance; in 1804 it was just a ridiculous scene. In 1806 Napoleon revived another venerable antiquity, and, following still the footsteps of Charlemagne, crowned himself with the iron crown of Lombardy in the cathedral of Milan. All this mummery was to have a wonderful effect upon the imagination of western Germany, which was to remember that it too had been a part of the empire of Charlemagne.

The four daughter republics of France were now to become kingdoms; in 1806 he set up brother Louis in Holland and brother Joseph in Naples. But the story of the subordinate kingdoms he created in Europe, helpful though this free handling of frontiers was towards the subsequent unification of Italy and Germany, is too complex and evanescent for this *Outline*.

The pact between the new Charlemagne and the new Leo did not hold good for very long. In 1807 he began to bully the Pope, and in 1811 he made him a close prisoner at Fontainebleau. There does not seem to have been much reason in these proceedings. They estranged all Catholic opinion, as his coronation had estranged all liberal opinion. He ceased to stand either for the old or the new. The new he had betrayed; the old he had failed to win. He stood at last for nothing but himself.

There seems to have been as little reason in the foreign policy that now plunged Europe into a fresh cycle of wars. Having quarreled with Great Britain too soon, he

(1804) assembled a vast army at Boulogne for the conquest of England, regardless of the naval situation. He even struck a medal and erected a column at Boulogne to commemorate the triumph of this projected invasion. In some “Napoleonic” fashion the British fleet was to be decoyed away, this army of Boulogne was to be smuggled across the Channel on a flotilla of rafts and boats, and London was to be captured before the fleet returned. At the same time his aggressions in south Germany forced Austria and Russia steadily into a coalition with Britain against him. In 1805 two fatal blows were struck at any hope he may have entertained of ultimate victory, by the British Admirals Calder and Nelson. In July the former inflicted a serious reverse upon the French fleet in the Bay of Biscay; in October the latter destroyed the joint{v2-362} fleets of France and Spain at the battle of Trafalgar. Nelson died splendidly upon the *Victory*, victorious. Thereafter Napoleon was left with Britain in pitiless opposition, unattainable and unconquerable, able to strike here or there against him along all the coasts of Europe.

But for a while the mortal wound of Trafalgar was hidden from the French mind altogether. They heard merely that “storms have caused us to lose some ships of the line after an imprudent fight.” After Calder’s victory he had snatched his army from Boulogne, rushed it across half Europe, and defeated the Austrian and Russian armies at Ulm and Austerlitz. Under these inauspicious circumstances Prussia came into the war against him, and was utterly defeated and broken at the battle of Jena (1806). Although Austria and Prussia were broken, Russia was still a fighting power, and the next year was devoted to this unnecessary antagonist of the French, against whom an abler and saner ruler would never have fought at all. We cannot trace in any detail the difficulties of the Polish campaign against Russia; Napoleon was roughly handled at Pultusk—which he announced in Paris as a brilliant victory—and again at Eylau. Then the Russians were defeated at Friedland (1807). As yet he had never touched Russian soil, the Russians were still as unbeaten as the British; but now came an extraordinary piece of good fortune for Napoleon. By a mixture of boasting, subtlety, and flattery he won over the young and ambitious Tsar, Alexander I—he was just thirty years old—to an alliance. The two emperors met on a raft in the middle of the Niemen at Tilsit, and there came to an understanding.

Tsar Alexander I.

This meeting was an occasion for sublime foolishness on the part of both the principal actors. Alexander had imbibed much{v2-363} liberalism during his education at the court of Catherine II, and was all for freedom, education, and the new order of the world—subject to his own pre-eminence. “He would gladly have everyone free,” said one of his early associates, “provided that everyone was prepared to do freely exactly what he wished.” And he declared that he would have abolished serfdom if it had cost him his head—if only civilization had been more advanced. He made war against France, he said, because Napoleon was a tyrant, to free the French people. After Friedland he saw Napoleon in a different light. These two men met eleven days after that rout; Alexander no doubt in the state of explanatory exaltation natural to his type during a mood of change.

To Napoleon the meeting must have been extremely gratifying. This was his first meeting with an emperor upon terms of equality. Like all men of limited vision, this man was a snob to the bone, his continual solicitude for his titles shows as much, and here was a real emperor, a born emperor, taking his three-year-old dignities as equivalent to the authentic imperialism of Moscow. Two imaginations soared together upon the raft at Tilsit. “What is Europe?” said Alexander. “*We* are Europe.” They discussed the affairs of Prussia and Austria in that spirit, they divided Turkey in anticipation, they arranged for the conquest of India, and indeed of most of Asia, and that Russia should take Finland from the Swedes; and they disregarded the disagreeable fact that the greater part of the world’s surface is sea, and that on the seas the British fleets sailed now unchallenged. Close at hand was Poland, ready to rise up and become the passionate ally of France had Napoleon but willed it so. But he was blind to Poland. It was a day of visions without vision. Napoleon even then, it seems, concealed the daring thought that he might one day marry a Russian princess, a real princess. But that, he was to learn in 1810, was going a little too far.

After Tilsit there was a perceptible deterioration in Napoleon’s quality; he became rasher, less patient of obstacles, more and more the fated master of the world, more and more intolerable to everyone he encountered.

In 1808 he committed a very serious blunder. Spain was his abject ally, completely under his control, but he saw fit to depose{v2-364} its Bourbon king in order to promote his brother Joseph from the crown of the two Sicilies. Portugal he had already conquered, and the two kingdoms of Spain and Portugal were to be united. Thereupon the Spanish arose in a state of patriotic fury, surrounded a French army at Baylen, and compelled it to surrender. It was an astonishing break in the French career of victory.

The British were not slow to seize the foothold this insurrection gave them. A British army under Sir Arthur Wellesley (afterwards the Duke of Wellington) landed in Portugal, defeated the French at Vimiero, and compelled them to retire into Spain. The news of these reverses caused a very great excitement in Germany and Austria, and the Tsar assumed a more arrogant attitude towards his ally.

There was another meeting of these two potentates at Erfurt, in which the Tsar was manifestly less amenable to the dazzling tactics of Napoleon than he had been. Followed four years of unstable “ascendancy” for France, while the outlines on the map of Europe waved about like garments on a clothesline on a windy day. Napoleon’s personal empire grew by frank annexations to include Holland, much of western Germany, much of Italy, and much of the eastern Adriatic coast. But one by one the French colonies were falling to the British, and the British armies in the Spanish peninsula, with the Spanish auxiliaries, slowly pressed the French northward. All Europe was getting very weary of Napoleon and very indignant with him; his antagonists now were no longer merely monarchs and ministers, but whole peoples also. The Prussians, after the disaster of Jena in 1807, had set to work to put their house in order. Under the leadership of Freiherr von Stein they had swept aside their feudalism, abolished privilege and serfdom, organized popular education and popular patriotism, accomplished, in fact, without any internal struggle nearly everything that France had achieved in 1789. By 1810 a new Prussia existed, the nucleus of a new Germany. And now Alexander, inspired it would seem by dreams of world ascendancy even crazier than his rival’s, was posing again as the friend of liberty. In 1810 fresh friction was created by Alexander’s objection to Napoleon’s matrimonial ambitions. For he was now divorcing his old helper Josephine, because she{v2-365} was childless, in order to secure the “continuity” of his “dynasty.” Napoleon, thwarted of a Russian princess, snubbed indeed by Alexander, turned to Austria, and married the arch-duchess Marie Louise. The Austrian statesmen read him aright. They were very ready to throw him their princess. By that marriage Napoleon was captured for the dynastic system; he might have been the maker of a new world, he preferred to be the son-in-law of the old.

In the next two years this adventurer's affairs crumbled apace. Nobody believed in his pretensions any more. He was no longer the leader and complement of the revolution; no longer the embodied spirit of a world reborn; he was just a new and nastier sort of autocrat. He had estranged all free-spirited men, and he had antagonized the church. Kings and Jacobins were at one, when it came to the question of his overthrow. Only base and self-seeking{v2-366} people supported him, because he seemed to have the secret of success. Britain was now his inveterate enemy, Spain was blazing with a spirit that surely a Corsican should have understood; it needed only a breach with Alexander I to set this empire of bluff and stage scenery swaying towards its downfall. The quarrel came. Alexander's feelings for Napoleon had always been of a very mixed sort; he envied Napoleon as a rival, and despised him as an underbred upstart. Moreover, there was a kind of vague and sentimental greatness about Alexander; he was given to mystical religiosity, he had the conception of a mission for Russia and himself to bring peace to Europe and the world—by destroying Napoleon. In that respect he had an imaginative greatness Napoleon lacked. But bringing peace to Europe seemed to him quite compatible with the annexation of Finland, of most of Poland, and of great portions of the Turkish empire. This man's mind moved in a luminous fog. And particularly he wanted to resume trading with Britain, against which Napoleon had set his face. For all the trade of Germany had been dislocated and the mercantile classes embittered by the Napoleonic "Continental System," which was to ruin Britain by excluding British goods from every country in Europe. Russia had suffered more even than Germany.

The breach came in 1811, when Alexander withdrew from the "Continental System." In 1812 a great mass of armies, amounting altogether to 600,000 men, began to move towards Russia under the supreme command of the new emperor. About half this

force was French; the rest was drawn from the French allies and subject peoples. It was a conglomerate army like the army of Darius or the army of Kavadh. The Spanish war was still going on; Napoleon made no attempt to end it. Altogether, it drained away a quarter of a million men from France. He fought his way across Poland and Russia to Moscow before the winter—for the most part the Russian armies declined battle—and even before the winter closed in upon him his position became manifestly dangerous. He took Moscow, expecting that this would oblige Alexander to make peace. Alexander would not make peace, and Napoleon found himself in much the same position as Darius had been in 2,300 years before in South Russia. The{v2-367} Russians, still unconquered in a decisive battle, raided his communications, wasted his army—disease helped them; even before Napoleon reached Moscow 150,000 men had been lost. But he lacked the wisdom of Darius, and would not retreat. The winter remained mild for an unusually long time—he could have escaped; but instead he remained in Moscow, making impossible plans, at a loss. He had been marvellously lucky in all his previous flounderings; he had escaped undeservedly from Egypt, he had been saved from destruction in Britain by the British naval victories; but now he was in the net again, and this time he was not to escape. Perhaps he would have wintered in Moscow, but the Russians smoked him out; they set fire to and burnt most of the city.[452]

It was late in October, too late altogether, before he decided to return. He made an ineffectual attempt to break through to a fresh line of retreat to the southwest, and then turned the faces of the survivors of his Grand Army towards the country they had devastated in their advance. Immense distances separated them from any friendly territory. The winter was in no hurry. For a week the Grand Army struggled through mud; then came sharp frosts, and then the first flakes of snow, and then snow and snow....

Slowly discipline dissolved. The hungry army spread itself out in search of supplies until it broke up into mere bands of marauders. The peasants, if only in self-defence, rose against them, waylaid them, and murdered them; a cloud of light cavalry—Scythians still—hunted them down. That retreat is one of the great tragedies of history.

At last Napoleon and his staff and a handful of guards and attendants reappeared in Germany, bringing no army with him, followed only by straggling and demoralized bands. The Grand Army, retreating under Murat, reached Königsberg in a disciplined state, but only about a thousand strong out of six hundred thousand. From Königsberg Murat fell back to Posen. The Prussian contingent had surrendered to the Russians;

the Austrians had gone homeward to the south. Everywhere scattered fugitives, ragged, lean, and frost-bitten, spread the news of the disaster.{v2-368}

Napoleon's magic was nearly exhausted. He did not dare to stay with his troops in Germany; he fled post haste to Paris. He began to order new levies and gather fresh armies amidst the wreckage of his world empire. Austria turned against him (1813); all Europe was eager to rise against this defaulting trustee of freedom, this mere usurper. He had betrayed the new order; the old order he had saved and revived now destroyed him. Prussia rose, and the German "War of Liberation" began. Sweden joined his enemies. Later Holland revolted. Murat had rallied about 14,000 Frenchmen round his disciplined nucleus in Posen, and this force retreated through Germany, as a man might retreat who had ventured into a cageful of drugged lions and found that the effects of the drug were evaporating. Napoleon, with fresh forces, took up the chief command in the spring, won a great battle at Dresden, and then for a time he seems to have gone to pieces intellectually and morally. He became insanely irritable, with moods of inaction. He did little or nothing to follow up the Battle of Dresden. In September the "Battle of the Nations" was fought round and about Leipzig, after which the Saxons, who had hitherto followed his star, went over to the allies. The end of the year saw the French beaten back into France.

1814 was the closing campaign. France was invaded from the east and the south; Swedes, Germans, Austrians, Russians, crossed the Rhine; British and Spanish came through the Pyrenees. Once more Napoleon fought brilliantly, but now he fought ineffectually. The eastern armies did not so much defeat him as push past him, and Paris capitulated in March. A little later at Fontainebleau the emperor abdicated.

In Provence, on his way out of the country, his life was endangered by a royalist mob.

§ 5

This was the natural and proper end of Napoleon's career. So this raid of an intolerable egotist across the disordered beginnings of a new time should have closed. At last he was suppressed. And had there been any real wisdom in the conduct of human affairs, we should now have to tell of the concentration of human science and will upon the task his treachery and vanity{v2-370} had interrupted, the task of building up a world system of justice and free effort in the place of the bankrupt ancient order. But we have to tell of nothing of the sort. Science and wisdom were conspicuously absent from the great council of the allies. Came the vague humanitarianism and dreamy vanity of the Tsar Alexander, came the shaken Habsburgs of Austria, the resentful Hohenzollerns of Prussia, the aristocratic traditions of Britain, still badly frightened by the revolution and its conscience all awry with stolen commons and sweated factory children. No peoples came to the Congress, but only monarchs and foreign ministers; and though you bray a foreign office in the bloodiest of war mortars, yet will its diplomatic habits not depart from it. The Congress had hardly assembled before the diplomatists set to work making secret bargains and treaties behind each other's backs. Nothing could exceed the pompous triviality of the Congress which gathered at Vienna after a magnificent ceremonial visit of the allied sovereigns to London. The social side of the congress was very strong, pretty ladies abounded, there was a galaxy of stars and uniforms, endless dinners and balls, a mighty flow of bright anecdotes and sparkling wit. Whether the two million dead men upon the battle-fields laughed at the jokes, admired the assemblies, and marvelled at the diplomatists is beyond our knowledge. It is to be hoped their poor wraiths got something out of the display. The brightest spirit of the gathering was a certain Talleyrand, one of Napoleon's princes, a very brilliant man indeed, who had been a pre-revolutionary

cleric, who had proposed the revolutionary confiscation of the church estates, and who was now for bringing back the Bourbons.

The allies, after the fashion of Peace Congresses, frittered away precious time in more and more rapacious disputes; the Bourbons returned to France. Back came all the remainder of the émigrés with them, eager for restitution and revenge. One great egotism had been swept aside—only to reveal a crowd of meaner egotists. The new king was the brother of Louis XVI; he had taken the title of Louis XVIII very eagerly so soon as he learnt that his little nephew (Louis XVII) was dead in the Temple. He was gouty and clumsy, not perhaps ill-disposed, but the symbol of the ancient system; all that was new in France felt the heavy threat{v2-371} of reaction that came with him. This was no liberation, only a new tyranny, a heavy and inglorious tyranny instead of an active and splendid one. Was there no hope for France but this? The Bourbons showed particular malice against the veterans of the Grand Army, and France was now full of returned prisoners of war, who found themselves under a cloud. Napoleon had been packed off to a little consolation empire of his own, upon the island of Elba. He was still to be called Emperor and keep a certain state. The chivalry or whim of Alexander had insisted upon this treatment of his fallen rival. The Habsburgs, who had toadied to his success, had taken away his Habsburg empress—she went willingly enough—to Vienna, and he never saw her again.

After eleven months at Elba Napoleon judged that France had had enough of the Bourbons; he contrived to evade the British ships that watched his island, and reappeared at Cannes in France for his last gamble against fate. His progress to Paris was a triumphal procession; he walked on white Bourbon cockades. For a hundred days, “the Hundred Days,” he was master of France again.

His return created a perplexing position for any honest Frenchman. On the one hand there was this adventurer who had betrayed the republic; on the other the dull weight of old kingship restored. The allies would not hear of any further experiments in republicanism; it was the Bourbons or Napoleon. Is it any wonder that on the whole France was with Napoleon? And he came back professing to be a changed man; there was to be no more despotism; he would respect the constitution régime....

He gathered an army, he made some attempts at peace with the allies; when he found these efforts ineffectual, he struck swiftly at the British, Dutch, and Prussians in Belgium, hoping to defeat them before the Austrians and Russians could come up. He did very nearly manage this. He beat the Prussians at Ligny, but not sufficiently; and then he was hopelessly defeated by the tenacity of the British under Wellington at Waterloo (1815), the Prussians, under Blücher, coming in on his right flank as the day

wore on. Waterloo ended in a rout; it left Napoleon without support and without hope. France fell away from him again. Everyone who had joined him was eager now to attack him, and{v2-372} so efface that error. A provisional government in Paris ordered him to leave the country; was for giving him twenty-four hours to do it in.

He tried to get to America, but Rochefort, which he reached, was watched by British cruisers. France, now disillusioned and uncomfortably royalist again, was hot in pursuit of him. He went aboard a British frigate, the *Bellerophon*, asking to be received as a refugee, but being treated as a prisoner. He was taken to Plymouth, and from Plymouth straight to the lonely tropical island of St. Helena.

There he remained until his death from cancer in 1821, devoting himself chiefly to the preparation of his memoirs, which were designed to exhibit the chief events of his life in a misleading and attractive light and to minimize his worst blunders. One or two of the men with him recorded his conversations and set down their impressions of him.

These works had a great vogue in France and Europe. The Holy Alliance of the monarchs of Russia, Austria, and Prussia (to which other monarchs were invited to adhere) laboured under the delusion that in defeating Napoleon they had defeated the Revolution, turned back the clock of fate, and restored Grand Monarchy—on a sanctified basis for evermore. The cardinal document of the scheme of the Holy Alliance is said to have been drawn up under the inspiration of the Baroness von Krüdener, who seems to have been a sort of spiritual director to the Russian emperor. It opened, “In the name of the Most Holy and Indivisible Trinity,” and it bound the participating monarchs “regarding themselves towards their subjects and armies as fathers of families,” and “considering each other as fellow-countrymen,” to sustain each other, protect true religion, and urge their subjects to strengthen and exercise themselves in Christian duties. Christ, it was declared, was the real king of all Christian peoples, a very Merovingian king, one may remark, with these reigning sovereigns as his mayors of the palace. The British king had no power to sign this document, the Pope and the sultan were not asked; the rest of the European monarchs, including the king of France, adhered. But the king of Poland did not sign because there was no king in Poland; Alexander, in a mood of pious abstraction,{v2-373} was sitting on the greater part of Poland. The Holy Alliance never became an actual legal alliance of states; it gave place to a real league of nations, the Concert of Europe, which France joined in 1818, and from which Britain withdrew in 1822.

There followed a period of peace and dull oppression in Europe over which Alexander brooded in attitudes of orthodoxy, piety, and unquenchable self-satisfaction. Many people in those hopeless days were disposed to regard even Napoleon with charity,

and to accept his claim that in some inexplicable way he had, in asserting himself, been asserting the revolution and France. A cult of him as of something mystically heroic grew up after his death.[453]

§ 6

In the long perspectives of history the cult of Napoleon, and his peculiar effect upon certain types of mind, is of far more interest and far more importance than his actual adventures. The world has largely recovered from the mischief he did; perhaps that amount of mischief had to be done by some agency; perhaps his career, or some such career, was a necessary consequence of the world's mental unpreparedness for the crisis of the revolution. But that his peculiar personality should dominate the imaginations of great numbers of people, throws a light upon factors of enduring significance in our human problem.

It would be difficult to find a human being less likely to arouse affection. One reads in vain through the monstrous accumulations of Napoleonic literature for a single record of self-forgetfulness. Laughter is one great difference between man and the lower animals, one method of our brotherhood, and there is no evidence that Napoleon ever laughed. Nor can we imagine another of the most beautiful of human expressions upon the face of this saturnine egotist, that expression of disinterested interest that one sees in the face of an artist or artisan "lost," as we say, in his work. Out of his portraits he looks at us with a thin scorn upon his lips, the scorn of the criminal who believes that he can certainly cheat such fools as we are, and withal with a certain uneasiness in his{v2-374} eyes. That uneasiness haunts all his portraits. Are we really convinced he is quite right? Are his laurels straight? He had a vast contempt for man in general and men in particular, a contempt that took him at last to St. Helena, that same contempt that fills our jails with forgers, poisoners, and the like victims of self-conceit. There is no proof that this unbrotherly, unhumorous egotist was ever sincerely loved by any human being. The Empress Josephine was unfaithful to him as he to her. His young Austrian wife would not accompany him to Elba. A certain Polish countess followed him thither, but not, it would seem, for love, but on account of the son she had borne him. She wanted settlements. She stayed only two days with him. He had never even a dog to love him. He estranged most of his colleagues and fellow generals. He had no familiar friend. No one who knew him felt safe with him. In his intimacy, his unflinching self-concentration must have been a terrible bore. His personal habits were unpleasant; the moodiness of bad health came to him early. True it is that his soldiers, who, save for a few rare melodramatic encounters, saw nothing of him, idolized their "Little Corporal." But it was not him they idolized, but a

carefully fostered legend of an incredibly clever, recklessly brave little man, a little pet of a man, who was devoted to France and them.

Why, then, is there an enormous cult of Napoleon, an endless writing of books about him, an insatiable collecting of relics and documents, a kind of worship of his memory? Marat was a far more noble, persistent, subtle, and pathetic figure; Talleyrand a greater statesman and a much more amusing personality; Moreau and Hoche abler leaders of armies; his rival, the Tsar Alexander, as egotistical, more successful, more emotional, and with a finer imagination. Are men dazzled simply by the scale of his flounderings, by the mere vastness of his notoriety?

No doubt scale has something to do with the matter; he was a "record," the record plunger; but there is something more in it than that. There is an appeal in Napoleon to something deeper and more fundamental in human nature than mere astonishment at bigness. His very deficiencies bring out starkly certain qualities that lurk suppressed and hidden in us all. He was unhampered. He had never a gleam of religion or affection or the sense of duty.{v2-375} He was, as few men are or dare to be, a scoundrel, bright and complete. Most of us are constrained more or less and now and then to serve God or our fellow men, to do things disinterestedly, to behave decently when no one is watching us. He was not so constrained. Most men do a little regret and resent their good deeds, and find a secret satisfaction in their unpunished bad ones. The early palæolithic strain is still strong in us; we are being made over, slowly and reluctantly, into social and fraternal creatures. Few of us thoroughly enjoy being good citizens. Our moral conflicts, therefore, are intricate and comic; the constant effort to explain to ourselves and others that there is a fine moral purpose in this shirking of our duty or in that self-seeking act. We are all regretfully of the race of Tsar Alexander, who destroyed the freedom of Poland, annexed Finland, and secured his imperial predominance piously, "in the name of the most Holy and Indivisible Trinity"—when it would have been far more agreeable to have done it in the name of the most Holy and Magnificent Alexander. There was none of this robing of greed and crime about Napoleon. His self-conceit and his instinctive and fundamental atheism made him at least magnificently direct. What we all want to do secretly, more or less, he did in the daylight.

Directness was his distinctive and immortalizing quality. He had no brains to waste in secondary considerations. He flung his armies across Europe straight at their mark, there never were such marches before; he fought to win; when he struck he struck with all his might. And what he wanted, he wanted simply and completely, and got—if he could.

There lies his fascination. Since his time his name has been one of the utmost reassurance to great multitudes of doubting men; to the business man hesitating over a more than shady transaction, to the clerk fingering a carelessly written cheque that could so easily be altered, to the trustee in want of ready money, to the manufacturer meditating the pros and cons of an adulteration, to thousands of such people the word “Napoleonic” has come with an effect of decisive relief. We live in a world full of would-be Napoleons of finance, of the press, of the turf; half the cells in our jails and many in our mad-houses are St. Helenas. He was the very embodiment of that sound, clear, self-centred{v2-376} common sense, without sentiment or scruples or reflection, that struggles with our feebler better nature, that may ultimately destroy mankind. In all history there is no figure so completely antithetical to the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, whose pitiless and difficult doctrine of self-abandonment and self-forgetfulness we can neither disregard nor yet bring ourselves to obey. That summons to a new way of life haunts our world to-day, haunts wealth and comfort and every sort of success. It is a trouble to us all. Our uneasiness grows. Napoleon was free from it. The cultivation of the Napoleonic legend seems to offer a kind of refuge. From salvation.

In that antithesis lies the essential historical importance of Napoleon. His career marks the beginning of a new phase in the elations of strong and able and energetic and advantageously placed men to the main mass of mankind. They are robbed of Self-deception; they must either serve or openly defy the idea of service. They must be humble or Napoleonic; there is no more service with privilege and pride. Napoleon adorned himself with ancient titles and antiquated robes, but the more he brought himself into contact with tradition, the more manifestly he displayed himself as something new. In the Tsar Alexander I, who was never direct, this direct new imperialism met the old. Hitherto the kings and potentates of the world had taken themselves in good faith, had had the support of religion in their consciences, had believed they were serving God in their kingship, and that they were necessary to mankind and beneficial to mankind. In many cases they were no doubt swayed by very mixed motives, his majesty had “weaknesses,” his majesty almost always had a sensitive personal vanity. Sometimes, indeed, a born rascal like Charles II of England would have the grace or the gracelessness to laugh at himself, but the generality of kings and tyrants had the profoundest faith in themselves, and were sustained by the sincere faith of their loyal supporters. The emperor Charles V and his son Philip II, Charles I of England, Louis XIV, and the Tsar Alexander were all inspired by a complete assurance of their own righteousness, were convinced that opposition to them was sheer wickedness, wickedness to be overcome in any way and punished with the

utmost severity. But Napoleon knew himself{v2-377} for what he was, an individual man getting the better of his fellow men. He had small doubt in his struggle with the republicans, where the moral superiority lay. With Napoleon, we note the beginning of a clearer-headed age. The self-deceptions of wealth, power, and prominence wear thin. His new imperialism reflected upon the old.

For a time the Concert of Europe struggled valiantly to carry on upon the old lines, but the French Revolution had shrivelled the heart of monarchy. In 1830, and again in 1848, the evaporation of the simple old royalist faith became very evident. Alexander I and his narrow-minded successor, Nicholas I, could still sustain the delusion of divine right in Russia—that did not perish until 1917—the idea hung on in Prussia in spite of much muttered criticism,[454] but for the rest of Europe the days of the unchallenged claim of kingship had gone. “What good are you?” said the world to monarchs; “and what do you do for us?”

So challenged, many of the monarchs became apologetic and fussily useful. One or two, as we shall have to tell, became “Napoleonic.” But so far no European monarch has betrayed any disposition to waive the remnant of his ancient trappings, to cease his passive and traditional opposition to political readjustment, and to move of his own accord towards that more broadly conceived government of human affairs as one world-wide community of will, which the future welfare of mankind demands.

§ 7[455]

For nearly forty years the idea of the Holy Alliance, the Concert of Europe which arose out of it, and the series of congresses and conferences that succeeded the concert, kept an insecure peace in war-exhausted Europe. Two main things prevented that period from being a complete social and international peace, and prepared the way for the cycle of wars between 1854 and 1871. The first of these was the tendency of the royal courts concerned,{v2-378} towards the restoration of unfair privilege and interference with freedom of thought and writing and teaching. The second was the impossible system of boundaries drawn by the diplomatists of Vienna.

The obstinate disposition of monarchy to march back towards past conditions was first and most particularly manifest in Spain. Here even the Inquisition was restored. Across the Atlantic the Spanish colonies had followed the example of the United States and revolted against the European Great Power system, when Napoleon set up his brother Joseph upon the Spanish throne in 1810. The Washington of South America was General Bolivar. Spain was unable to suppress this revolt, it dragged on much as the United States War of Independence had dragged on, and at last the suggestion was made by Austria in accordance with the spirit of the Holy Alliance, that

the European monarchs should assist Spain in this struggle. This was opposed by Britain in Europe, but it was the prompt action of President Monroe of the United States in 1823 which conclusively warned off this projected monarchist restoration. He announced that the United States would regard any extension of the European system in the Western Hemisphere as a hostile act. Thus arose the Monroe Doctrine, which has kept the Great Power System out of America for nearly a hundred years, and permitted the new states of Spanish America to work out their destinies along their own lines. But if Spanish monarchism lost its colonies, it could at least, under the protection of the Concert of Europe, do what it chose in Europe. A popular insurrection in Spain was crushed by a French army in 1823, with a mandate from a European congress, and simultaneously Austria suppressed a revolution in Naples. The moving spirit in this conspiracy of governments against peoples was the Austrian statesman, Metternich.

In 1824 Louis XVIII died, and was succeeded by that Count d'Artois whom we have seen hovering as an émigré on the French frontiers in 1789; he took the title of Charles X. Charles set himself to destroy the liberty of the press and universities, and to restore absolute government; the sum of a billion francs was voted to compensate the nobles for the château burnings and sequestrations of 1789. In 1830 Paris rose against this embodiment of the{v2-379} ancient régime, and replaced him by the son of that sinister Philip, Duke of Orleans, whose execution was one of the brightest achievements of the Terror. The other continental monarchies, in face of the open approval of the revolution by Great Britain and a strong liberal ferment in Germany and Austria, did not interfere in this affair. After all, France was still a monarchy. This young man, Louis Philippe (1830-48), remained the constitutional king of France for eighteen years. He went down in 1848, a very eventful year for Europe, of which we shall tell in the next chapter.

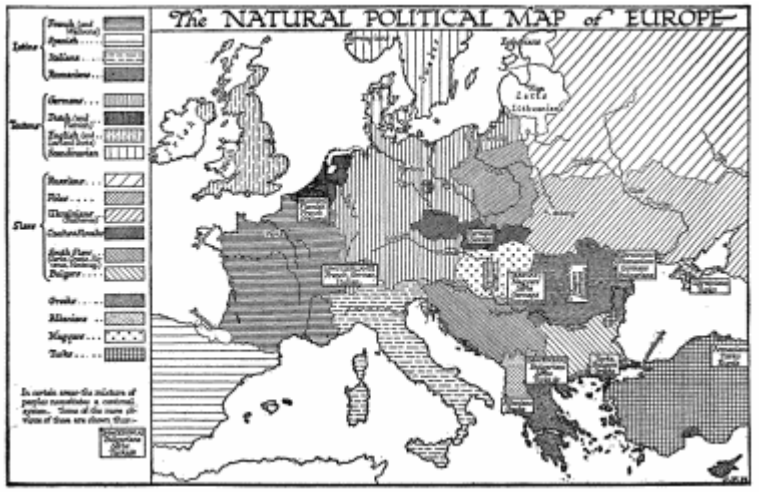
Such were the uneasy swayings of the peace of the Congress of Vienna, which were provoked by the reactionary proceedings to which, sooner or later, all monarchist courts seem by their very nature to gravitate. The stresses that arose from the unscientific map-making of the diplomatists gathered force more deliberately,{v2-380} but they were even more dangerous to the peace of mankind. It is extraordinarily inconvenient to administer together the affairs of peoples speaking different languages and so reading different literatures and having different general ideas, especially if those differences are exacerbated by religious disputes. Only some strong mutual interest, such as the common defensive needs of the Swiss mountaineers, can justify a close linking of peoples of dissimilar languages and faiths; and even in Switzerland there is the utmost local autonomy. Ultimately, when the Great Power tradition is certainly dead and buried, those Swiss populations may gravitate towards their natural affinities in Germany, France, and Italy. When, as in Macedonia, populations are mixed in a patchwork of villages and districts, the cantonal system is imperatively needed. But if the reader will look at the map of Europe as the Congress of Vienna drew it, he will see that this gathering seems almost as if it had planned the maximum of local exasperation. It destroyed the Dutch Republic, quite needlessly, it lumped together the Protestant Dutch with the French-speaking Catholics of the old Spanish (Austrian) Netherlands, and set up a kingdom of the Netherlands. It handed over not merely the old republic of Venice, but all of North Italy as far as Milan to the German-speaking Austrians. French-speaking Savoy it combined with pieces of Italy to restore the kingdom of Sardinia.[456] Austria and Hungary, already a sufficiently explosive mixture of discordant nationalities, Germans, Hungarians, Czecho-Slovaks, Jugo-Slavs, Roumanians, and now Italians, was made still more impossible by confirming Austria's Polish acquisitions of 1772 and 1795.

The Polish people, being catholic and republican-spirited, were chiefly given over to the less civilized rule of the Greek-orthodox Tsar, but important districts went to Protestant Russia. The Tsar was also confirmed in his acquisition of the entirely alien Finns. The very dissimilar Norwegian and Swedish peoples were bound together under one king. Germany, the reader will see, was left{v2-381} in a particularly dangerous state of muddle. Prussia and Austria were both partly in and partly out of a German confederation, which included a multitude of minor states. The King of Denmark came into the German confederation by virtue of certain German-speaking possessions in Holstein. Luxembourg was included in the German Confederation, though its ruler was also King of the Netherlands, and though many of its peoples talked French. Here was a crazy tangle, an outrage on the common sense of mankind, a preposterous disregard of the fact that the people who talk German and base their ideas on German literature, the people who talk Italian and base their ideas on Italian literature, and the people who talk Polish and base their ideas on Polish literature, will all be far better off and most helpful and least obnoxious to the rest of mankind if they conduct their own affairs in their own idiom within the ring-fence of their own speech. Is it any wonder that one of the most popular songs in Germany during this period declared that wherever the German tongue was spoken, there was the German Fatherland?

Even to-day men are still reluctant to recognize that areas of government are not matters for the bargaining and interplay of tsars and kings and foreign offices. There is *a natural and necessary political map of the world* which transcends these things. There is *a best way possible* of dividing any part of the world into administrative areas, and a best possible kind of government for every area, having regard to the speech and race of its inhabitants, and it is the common concern of all men of intelligence to secure those divisions and establish those forms of government quite irrespective of diplomacies and flags, “claims” and melodramatic “loyalties” and the existing political map of the world. The natural political map of the world insists upon itself. It heaves and frets beneath the artificial political map like some misfitted giant. In 1830 French-speaking Belgium, stirred up by the current revolution in France, revolted against its Dutch association in the kingdom of the Netherlands. The Powers, terrified at the possibility of a republic and of annexation to France, hurried in to pacify this situation, and gave the Belgians a monarch from that rich breeding-ground of monarchs, Germany, Leopold I of Saxe-Coburg Gotha. There were also ineffectual revolts in Italy{v2-382} and Germany in 1830, and a much more serious one in Russian Poland. A republican government held out in Warsaw for a year against Nicholas I (who succeeded Alexander in 1825), and was then stamped out of existence with

great violence and cruelty. The Polish language was banned, and the Greek Orthodox church was substituted for the Roman Catholic as the State religion....

An outbreak of the natural political map of the world, which occurred in 1821, ultimately secured the support of England, France, and Russia. This was the insurrection of the Greeks against the Turks. For six years they fought a desperate war, while the governments of Europe looked on. Liberal opinion protested against this inactivity; volunteers from every European country joined the insurgents, and at last Britain, France, and Russia took joint action. The Turkish fleet was destroyed by the French and English at the Battle of Navarino (1827), and the Tsar invaded Turkey. By the treaty of Adrianople (1829) Greece was declared free, but she was not permitted to resume her ancient republican traditions. There is a sort of historical indecency in a Greek monarchy. But a Greek republic would have been dangerous to all monarchy in a Europe that fretted under the ideas of the Holy Alliance. One monarch makes many. A German king was found for Greece, one Prince Otto of Bavaria, slightly demented, but quite royal—he gave way to delusions about his divine right, and was ejected in 1862—and Christian governors were set up in the Danubian provinces (which are now Roumania) and Serbia (a part of the Jugo-Slav region). This was a partial concession to the natural political map, but much blood had still to run before the Turk was altogether expelled from these lands. A little later the natural political map was to assert itself in Italy and Germany.{v2-383}



{v2-384}

XXXIX

THE REALITIES AND IMAGINATIONS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY[457]

§ 1. *The Mechanical Revolution*. § 2. *Relation of the Mechanical to the Industrial Revolution*. § 3. *The Fermentation of Ideas, 1848*. § 4. *The Development of the Idea of Socialism*. § 5. *Shortcomings of Socialism as a Scheme of Human Society.* § 6. *How Darwinism Affected Religious and Political Ideas*. § 7. *Mr. Gladstone and the Idea of Nationalism*. § 8. *Europe between 1848 and 1878*. § 9. *The (Second) Scramble for Overseas Empires*. § 10. *The Indian Precedent in Asia*. § 11. *The History of Japan*. § 12. *Close of the Period of Overseas Expansion*. § 13. *The British Empire in 1914*.

§ 1

THE career and personality of Napoleon I bulks disproportionately in the nineteenth century histories. He was of little significance to the broad onward movement of human affairs; he was an interruption, a reminder of latent evils, a thing like the bacterium of some pestilence. Even regarded as a pestilence, he was not of supreme rank; he killed far fewer people than the influenza epidemic of 1918, and produced less political and social disruption than the plague of Justinian. Some such interlude had to happen, and some such patched-up settlement of Europe as the Concert of Europe, because there was no worked-out system of ideas upon which a new world could be constructed.{v2-385} And even the Concert of Europe had in it an element of progress. It did at least set aside the individualism of Machiavellian monarchy and declare that there was a human or at any rate a European commonweal. If it divided the world among the kings, it made respectful gestures towards human unity and the service of God and man.

The permanently effective task before mankind which had to be done before any new and enduring social and political edifice was possible, the task upon which the human intelligence is, with many interruptions and amidst much anger and turmoil, still engaged, was, and is, the task of working out and applying a Science of Property as a basis for freedom and social justice, a Science of Currency to ensure and preserve an efficient economic medium, a Science of Government and Collective Operations whereby in every community men may learn to pursue their common interests in harmony, a Science of World Politics, through which the stark waste and cruelty of warfare between races, peoples, and nations may be brought to an end and the common interests of mankind brought under a common control, and, above all, a world-wide System of Education to sustain the will and interest of men in their common human adventure. The real makers of history in the nineteenth century, the

people whose consequences will be determining human life a century ahead, were those who advanced and contributed to this fivefold constructive effort. Compared to them, the foreign ministers and "statesmen" and politicians of this period were no more than a number of troublesome and occasionally incendiary schoolboys—and a few metal thieves—playing about and doing transitory mischief amidst the accumulating materials upon the site of a great building whose nature they did not understand.

And while throughout the nineteenth century the mind of Western civilization, which the Renascence had released, gathered itself to the task of creative social and political reconstruction that still lies before it, there swept across the world a wave of universal change in human power and the material conditions of life that the first scientific efforts of that liberated mind had made possible. The prophecies of Roger Bacon began to live in reality. The accumulating knowledge and confidence of the little succession{v2-386} of men who had been carrying on the development of science, now began to bear fruit that common men could understand. The most obvious firstfruit was the steam-engine. The first steam-engines in the eighteenth century were pumping engines used to keep water out of the newly opened coal mines. These coal mines were being worked to supply coke for iron smelting, for which wood-charcoal had previously been employed. It was James Watt, a mathematical instrument maker of Glasgow, who improved this steam-pumping engine and made it available for the driving of machinery. The first engine so employed was installed in a cotton mill in Nottingham in 1785. In 1804 Trevithick adapted the Watt engine to transport, and made the first locomotive. In 1830 the first railway, between Liverpool and Manchester, was opened, and Stephenson's "Rocket," with a thirteen-ton train, got up to a speed of forty-four miles per hour. From 1830 onward railways multiplied. By the middle of the century a network of railways had spread all over Europe.

Here was a sudden change in what had long been a fixed condition of human life, the maximum rate of land transport. After the Russian disaster, Napoleon travelled from near Vilna to Paris in 312 hours. This was a journey of about 1,400 miles. He was travelling with every conceivable advantage, and he averaged under five miles an hour. An ordinary traveller could not have done this distance in twice the time. These were about the same maximum rates of travel as held good between Rome and Gaul in the first century A.D., or between Sardis and Susa in the fourth century B.C. Then suddenly came a tremendous change. The railways reduced this journey for any ordinary traveller to less than forty-eight hours. That is to say, they reduced the chief European distances to about a tenth of what they had been. They made it possible to

carry out administrative work in areas ten times as great as any that had hitherto been workable under one administration. The full significance of that possibility in Europe still remains to be realized. Europe is still netted in boundaries drawn in the horse and road era. In America the effects were immediate. To the United States of America, sprawling westward, it meant the possibility of a continuous access to Washington, however far the frontier travelled across the continent.{v2-387} It meant unity, sustained on a scale that would otherwise have been impossible.

The steamboat was, if anything, a little ahead of the steam-engine in its earlier phases. There was a steamboat, the *Charlotte Dundas*, on the Firth of Clyde Canal in 1802, and in 1807 an American named Fulton had a paying steamer, *The Clermont*, with British-built engines, upon the Hudson River above New York. The first steamship to put to sea was also an American, the *Phœnix*, which went from New York (Hoboken) to Philadelphia. So, too, was the first ship using steam (she also had sails) to cross the Atlantic, the *Savannah* (1819). All these were paddle-wheel boats, and paddle-wheel boats are not adapted to work in heavy seas. The paddles smash too easily, and the boat is then disabled. The screw steamship followed rather slowly. Many difficulties had to be surmounted before the screw was a practicable thing. Not until the middle of the century did the tonnage of steamships upon the sea begin to overhaul that of sailing-ships. After that the evolution in sea transport was rapid. For the first time men began to cross the seas and oceans with some certainty as to the date of their arrival. The transatlantic crossing, which had been an uncertain adventure of several weeks—which might stretch to months—was accelerated, until in 1910 it was brought down, in the case of the fastest boats, to under five days, with a practically notifiable hour of arrival. All over the oceans there was the same reduction in the time and the same increase in the certainty of human communications.

Concurrently with the development of steam transport upon land and sea a new and striking addition to the facilities of human intercourse arose out of the investigations of Volta, Galvani, and Faraday into various electrical phenomena. The electric telegraph came into existence in 1835. The first underseas cable was laid in 1851 between France and England. In a few years the telegraph system had spread over the civilized world, and news which had hitherto travelled slowly from point to point became practically simultaneous throughout the earth.

These things, the steam railway and the electric telegraph, were to the popular imagination of the middle nineteenth century the most striking and revolutionary of inventions, but they were{v2-388} only the most conspicuous and clumsy firstfruits of a far more extensive process. Technical knowledge and skill were developing with an extraordinary rapidity, and to an extraordinary extent measured by the progress of any

previous age. Far less conspicuous at first in everyday life, but finally far more important, was the extension of man's power over various structural materials. Before the middle of the eighteenth century iron was reduced from its ores by means of wood-charcoal, was handled in small pieces, and hammered and wrought into shape. It was material for a craftsman. Quality and treatment were enormously dependent upon the experience and sagacity of the individual iron worker. The largest masses of iron that could be dealt with under those conditions amounted at most (in the sixteenth century) to two or three tons. (There was a very definite upward limit, therefore, to the size of cannon.) The blast furnace arose in the eighteenth century, and developed with the use of coke. Not before the eighteenth century do we find rolled sheet iron (1728) and rolled rods and bars (1783). Nasmyth's steam hammer came as late as 1838. The ancient world, because of its metallurgical inferiority, could not use steam. The steam engine, even the primitive pumping engine, could not develop before sheet iron was available. The early engines seem to the modern eye very pitiful and clumsy bits of ironmongery, but they were the utmost that the metallurgical science of the time could do. As late as 1856 came the Bessemer process, and presently (1864) the open-hearth process, in which steel and every sort of iron could be melted, purified, and cast in a manner and upon a scale hitherto unheard of. To-day in the electric furnace one may see tons of incandescent steel swirling about like boiling milk in a saucepan. Nothing in the previous practical advances of mankind is comparable in its consequences to the complete mastery over enormous masses of steel and iron and over their texture and quality which man has now achieved. The railways and early engines of all sorts were the mere first triumphs of the new metallurgical methods. Presently came ships of iron and steel, vast bridges, and a new way of building with steel upon a gigantic scale. Men realized too late that they had planned their railways with far too timid a gauge, that they could have organized their{v2-389} travelling with far more steadiness and comfort upon a much bigger scale.

Before the nineteenth century there were no ships in the world much over 2,000 tons burthen; now there is nothing wonderful about a 50,000-ton liner. There are people who sneer at this kind of progress as being a progress in "mere size," but that sort of sneering merely marks the intellectual limitations of those who indulge in it. The great ship or the steel-frame building is not, as they imagine, a magnified version of the small ship or building of the past; it is a thing different in kind, more lightly and strongly built, of finer and stronger materials; instead of being a thing of precedent and rule-of-thumb, it is a thing of subtle and intricate calculation. In the old house or ship, matter was dominant—the material and its needs had to be slavishly obeyed; in

the new, matter has been captured, changed, coerced. Think of the coal and iron and sand dragged out of the banks and pits, wrenched, wrought, molten and cast, to be flung at last, a slender, glittering pinnacle of steel and glass, six hundred feet above the crowded city!

We have given these particulars of the advance in man's knowledge of the metallurgy of steel and its results by way of illustration. A parallel story could be told of the metallurgy of copper and tin, and of a multitude of metals, nickel and aluminium to name but two, unknown before the nineteenth century dawned. It is in this great and growing mastery over substances, over different sorts of glass, over rocks and plasters and the like, over colours and textures, that the main triumphs of the mechanical revolution have thus far been achieved. Yet we are still in the stage of the firstfruits in the matter. We have the power, but we have still to learn how to use our power. Many of the first employments of these gifts of science have been vulgar, tawdry, stupid, or horrible. The artist and the adaptor have still hardly begun to work with the endless variety of substances now at their disposal.

Concurrently with this extension of mechanical possibilities the new science of electricity grew up. It was only in the eighties of the nineteenth century that this body of inquiry began to yield results to impress the vulgar mind. Then suddenly came electric light and electric traction; and the transmutation of forces,{v2-390} the possibility of sending *power*, that could be changed into mechanical motion or light or heat as one chose, along a copper wire, as water is sent along a pipe, began to come through to the ideas of ordinary people....

The British and the French were at first the leading peoples in this great proliferation of knowledge; but presently the German, who had learnt humility under Napoleon, showed such zeal and pertinacity in scientific inquiry as to overhaul these leaders. British science was largely the creation of Englishmen and Scotchmen[458] working outside the ordinary centres of erudition.[459] We have told how in England the universities after the reformation ceased to have a wide popular appeal, how they became the educational preserve of the nobility and gentry, and the strongholds of the established church. A pompous and unintelligent classical pretentiousness dominated them, and they dominated the schools of the middle and upper classes. The only knowledge recognized was an uncritical textual knowledge of a selection of Latin and Greek classics, and the test of a good style was its abundance of quotations, allusions, and stereotyped expressions. The early development of British science went on, therefore, in spite of the formal educational organization, and in the teeth of the bitter hostility of the teaching and clerical professions. French education, too, was dominated by the classical tradition of the Jesuits, and consequently it was

not difficult for the Germans to organize a body of investigators, small indeed in relation to the possibilities of the case, but large in proportion to the little band of British and French inventors and experimentalists. And though this work of research and experiment was making Britain and France the most rich and powerful countries in the world, it was not making scientific and inventive men rich and powerful. There is a necessary unworldliness about a sincere scientific man; he is too preoccupied with his research to plan and scheme how to make money out of it. The economic exploitation of his discoveries falls very{v2-391} easily and naturally, therefore, into the hands of a more acquisitive type; and so we find that the crops of rich men which every fresh phase of scientific and technical progress has produced in Great Britain, though they have not displayed quite the same passionate desire to insult and kill the goose that laid the national golden eggs as the scholastic and clerical professions, have been quite content to let that profitable creature starve. Inventors and discoverers came by nature, they thought, for cleverer people to profit by.

In this matter the Germans were a little wiser. The German "learned" did not display the same vehement hatred of the new learning. They permitted its development. The German business man and manufacturer again had not quite the same contempt for the man of science as had his British competitor. Knowledge, these Germans believed, might be a cultivated crop, responsive to fertilizers. They did concede, therefore, a certain amount of opportunity to the scientific mind; their public expenditure on scientific work was relatively greater, and this expenditure was abundantly rewarded. By the latter half of the nineteenth century the German scientific worker had made German a necessary language for every science student who wished to keep abreast with the latest work in his department, and in certain branches, and particularly in chemistry, Germany acquired a very great superiority over her western neighbours. The scientific effort of the sixties and seventies in Germany began to tell after the eighties, and the Germans gained steadily upon Britain and France in technical and industrial prosperity.

In an *Outline of History* such as this it is impossible to trace the network of complex mental processes that led to the incessant extension of knowledge and power that is now going on; all we can do here is to call the reader's attention to the most salient turning-points that finally led the toboggan of human affairs into its present swift ice-run of progress. We have told of the first release of human curiosity and of the beginnings of systematic inquiry and experiment. We have told, too, how, when the plutocratic Roman system and its resultant imperialism had come and gone again, this process of inquiry was renewed. We have told of the escape of investigation from ideas of secrecy and personal advantage to the idea of publication and a

brotherhood{v2-392} of knowledge, and we have noted the foundation of the British Royal Society, the Florentine Society, and their like as a consequence of this socializing of thought. These things were the roots of the mechanical revolution, and so long as the root of pure scientific inquiry lives, that revolution will progress. The mechanical revolution itself began, we may say, with the exhaustion of the wood supply for the ironworks of England. This led to the use of coal, the coal mine led to the simple pumping engine, the development of the pumping engine by Watt into a machine-driving engine led on to the locomotive and the steamship. This was the first phase of a great expansion in the use of steam. A second phase in the mechanical revolution began with the application of electrical science to practical problems and the development of electric lighting, power-transmission, and traction.

A third phase is to be distinguished when in the eighties a new type of engine came into use, an engine in which the expansive force of an explosive mixture replaced the expansive force of steam. The light, highly efficient engines that were thus made possible were applied to the automobile, and developed at last to reach such a pitch of lightness and efficiency as to render flight—long known to be possible—a practical achievement. A successful flying-machine—but not a machine large enough to take up a human body—was made by Professor Langley of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington as early as 1897. By 1909 the aeroplane was available for human locomotion. There had seemed to be a pause in the increase of human speed with the perfection of railways and automobile road traction, but with the flying-machine came fresh reductions in the effective distance between one point of the earth's surface and another. In the eighteenth century the distance from London to Edinburgh was an eight days' journey; in 1918 the British Civil Air Transport Commission reported that the journey from London to Melbourne, half-way round the earth, would probably, in a few years' time, be accomplished in that same period of eight days.

Too much stress must not be laid upon these striking reductions in the time distances of one place from another. They are merely one aspect of a much profounder and more momentous enlargement of human possibility. The science of agriculture and agricultural{v2-393} chemistry, for instance, made quite parallel advances during the nineteenth century. Men learnt so to fertilize the soil as to produce quadruple and quintuple the crops got from the same area in the seventeenth century. There was a still more extraordinary advance in medical science; the average duration of life rose, the daily efficiency increased, the waste of life through ill-health diminished.

Now here altogether we have such a change in human life as to constitute a fresh phase of history. In a little more than a century this mechanical revolution has been brought about. In that time man made a stride in the material conditions of his life

vaster than he had done during the whole long interval between the palæolithic stage and the age of cultivation, or between the days of Pepi in Egypt and those of George III. A new gigantic material framework for human affairs has come unto existence. Clearly it demands great readjustments of our social, economical, and political methods. But these readjustments have necessarily waited upon the development of the mechanical revolution, and they are still only in their opening stage to-day.

§ 2

There is a tendency in many histories to confuse together what we have here called the *mechanical revolution*, which was an entirely new thing in human experience arising out of the development of organized science, a new step like the invention of agriculture or the discovery of metals, with something else, quite different in its origins, something for which there was already an historical precedent, the social and financial development which is called the *industrial revolution*. The two processes were going on together, they were constantly reacting upon each other, but they were in root and essence different. There would have been an industrial revolution of sorts if there had been no coal, no steam, no machinery; but in that case it would probably have followed far more closely upon the lines of the social and financial developments of the later years of the Roman republic. It would have repeated the story of dispossessed free cultivators, gang labour, great estates, great financial fortunes, and a socially destructive financial process. Even the factory method came before power and machinery.{v2-394} Factories were the product not of machinery, but of the "division of labour." Drilled and sweated workers were making such things as millinery, cardboard boxes, and furniture, and colouring maps and book illustrations, and so forth, before even water-wheels had been used for industrial processes. There were factories in Rome in the days of Augustus. New books, for instance, were dictated to rows of copyists in the factories of the booksellers. The attentive student of Defoe and of the political pamphlets of Fielding will realize that the idea of herding poor people into establishments to work collectively for their living was already current in Britain before the close of the seventeenth century. There are intimations of it even as early as More's *Utopia* (1516). It was a social and not a mechanical development.

Up to past the middle of the eighteenth century the social and economic history of western Europe was in fact retreading the path along which the Roman State had gone in the three last centuries B.C. America was in many ways a new Spain, and India and China a new Egypt. But the political disunions of Europe, the political convulsions against monarchy, the recalcitrance of the common folk and perhaps also the greater accessibility of the western European intelligence to mechanical ideas and

inventions, turned the process into quite novel directions. Ideas of human solidarity, thanks to Christianity, were far more widely diffused in this newer European world, political power was not so concentrated, and the man of energy anxious to get rich turned his mind, therefore, very willingly from the ideas of the slave and of gang labour to the idea of mechanical power and the machine.

The mechanical revolution, the process of mechanical invention and discovery, was a new thing in human experience, and it went on regardless of the social, political, economic, and industrial consequences it might produce. The industrial revolution, on the other hand, like most other human affairs, was and is more and more profoundly changed and deflected by the constant variation in human conditions caused by the mechanical revolution. And the essential difference between the amassing of riches, the extinction of small farmers and small business men, and the phase of big finance in the latter centuries of the Roman republic on{v2-395} the one hand, and the very similar concentration of capital in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on the other, lies in the profound difference in the character of labour that the mechanical revolution was bringing about. The power of the old world was human power; everything depended ultimately upon the driving power of human muscle, the muscle of ignorant and subjugated men. A little animal muscle, supplied by draft oxen, horse traction, and the like, contributed. Where a weight had to be lifted, men lifted it; where a rock had to be quarried, men chipped it out; where a field had to be ploughed, men and oxen ploughed it; the Roman equivalent of the steamship was the galley with its banks of sweating rowers. A vast proportion of mankind in the early civilizations was employed in purely mechanical drudgery. At its onset, power-driven machinery did not seem to promise any release from such unintelligent toil. Great gangs of men were employed in excavating canals, in making railway cuttings and embankments, and the like. The number of miners increased enormously. But the extension of facilities and the output of commodities increased much more. And as the nineteenth century went on, the plain logic of the new situation asserted itself more clearly. Human beings were no longer wanted as a source of mere indiscriminated power. What could be done mechanically by a human being could be done faster and better by a machine. The human being was needed now only where choice and intelligence had to be exercised. Human beings were wanted only as human beings. The *drudge*, on whom all the previous civilizations had rested, the creature of mere obedience, the man whose brains were superfluous, had become unnecessary to the welfare of mankind.

This was as true of such ancient industries as agriculture and mining as it was of the newest metallurgical processes. For ploughing, sowing, and harvesting, swift

machines came forward to do the work of scores of men.[460] The Roman civilization was built upon cheap and degraded human beings; modern civilization is being rebuilt upon cheap mechanical power. For a hundred years power has been getting cheaper and labour dearer. If for a generation or so machinery has had to wait its turn in the{v2-396} mine, it is simply because for a time men were cheaper than machinery.[461]

Now here was a change-over of quite primary importance in human affairs. The chief solicitude of the rich and of the ruler in the old civilization had been to keep up a supply of drudges. As the nineteenth century went on, it became more and more plain to the intelligent directive people that the common man had now to be something better than a drudge. He had to be educated—if only to secure "industrial efficiency." He had to understand what he was about. From the days of the first Christian propaganda, popular education had been smouldering in Europe, just as it has smouldered in Asia wherever Islam has set its foot, because of the necessity of making the believer understand a little of the belief by which he is saved, and of enabling him to read a little in the sacred books by which his belief is conveyed. Christian controversies, with their competition for adherents, ploughed the ground for the harvest of popular education. In England, for instance, by the thirties and forties of the nineteenth century, the disputes of the sects and the necessity of catching adherents young had produced an abundance of night schools, Sunday schools, and a series of competing educational organizations for children, the dissenting British schools, the church National Schools, and even Roman Catholic elementary schools. The earlier, less enlightened manufacturers, unable to take a broad view of their own interests, hated and opposed these schools. But here again needy Germany led her richer neighbours. The religious teacher found the profit-seeker at his side, unexpectedly eager to get the commonalty, if not educated, at least "trained." The student of the English magazines of the middle and later Victorian period may trace the steadily spreading recognition of the new necessity for popular education. The upper and middle classes of England, themselves by no means well educated, for a generation or so regarded popular education with a sort of tittering hostility. In the middle Victorian period it was thought to be extraordinarily funny that a shop assistant should lean across the counter and{v2-397} ask two lady customers not to speak French, as he "understood the langwidge." This was a "joke" in that monumental record of British humour, *Punch*. It was almost as amusing to the Victorian English as the story of Balaam's ass. The German competitor later on robbed that joke of its fun. Before the death of Queen Victoria, English shop assistants were being badgered to attend evening classes to learn French.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of rapid advance in popular education throughout all the Westernized world. There was no parallel advance in the education of the upper classes, some advance no doubt, but nothing to correspond, and so the great gulf that had divided that world hitherto into the readers and the non-reading mass became little more than a slightly perceptible difference in educational level. At the back of this process was the mechanical revolution, apparently regardless of social conditions, but really insisting inexorably upon the complete abolition of a totally illiterate class throughout the world.

The economic revolution of the Roman republic had never been clearly apprehended by the common people of Rome. The ordinary Roman citizen never saw the changes through which he lived, clearly and comprehensively as we see them. But the industrial revolution, as it went on towards the end of the nineteenth century, was more and more distinctly *seen* as one whole process by the common people it was affecting, because presently they could read and discuss and communicate, and because they went about and saw things as no commonalty had ever done before.

In this Outline of History we have been careful to indicate the gradual appearance of the ordinary people as a class with a will and ideas in common. It is the writer's belief that massive movements of the "ordinary people" over considerable areas only became possible as a result of the propagandist religions, Christianity and Islam, and their insistence upon individual self-respect. We have cited the enthusiasm of the commonalty for the First Crusade as marking a new phase in social history. But before the nineteenth century even these massive movements were comparatively restricted. The equalitarian insurrections of the{v2-398} peasantry, from the Wycliffe period onward, were confined to the peasant communities of definite localities, they spread only slowly into districts affected by similar forces. The town artisan rioted indeed, but only locally. The château-burning of the French revolution was not the act of a peasantry who had overthrown a government, it was the act of a peasantry released by the overthrow of a government. The Commune of Paris was the first effective appearance of the town artisan as a political power, and the Parisian crowd of the First Revolution was a very mixed, primitive-thinking, and savage crowd compared with any Western European crowd after 1830.

But the mechanical revolution was not only pressing education upon the whole population, it was leading to a big-capitalism and to a large-scale reorganization of industry that was to produce a new and distinctive system of ideas in the common people in the place of the mere uncomfortable recalcitrance and elemental rebellions of an illiterate commonalty. We have already noted how the industrial revolution had split the manufacturing class, which had hitherto been a middling and various sort of

class, into two sections, the employers, who became rich enough to mingle with the financial, merchandizing, and landowning classes, and the employees, who drifted to a status closer and closer to that of mere gang and agricultural labour. As the manufacturing employee sank, the agricultural labourer, by the introduction of agricultural machinery and the increase in his individual productivity, rose. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Karl Marx (1818-83), a German Jew of great scholarly attainments, who did much of his work in the British Museum library in London, was pointing out that the organization of the working classes by the steadily concentrating group of capitalist owners, was developing a new social classification to replace the more complex class systems of the past (see chapter xx, §§ 4, 5, and 6). Property, so far as it was power, was being gathered together into relatively few hands, the hands of the big rich men, the capitalist class; while there was a great mingling of workers with little or no property, whom he called the "expropriated," or "proletariat"—a misuse of this word (see chap. xxvii, § 2)—who were bound to develop a common "class consciousness" of the conflict of their interests with those{v2-399} of the rich men. Differences of education and tradition between the various older social elements which were in process of being fused up into the new class of the expropriated, seemed for a time to contradict this sweeping generalization; the traditions of the professions, the small employers, the farmer peasant and the like were all different from one another and from the various craftsman traditions of the workers; but with the spread of education and the cheapening of literature, this "Marxian" generalization becomes now more and more acceptable. These classes, who were linked at first by nothing but a common impoverishment, were and are being reduced or raised to the same standard of life, forced to read the same books and share the same inconveniences. A sense of solidarity between all sorts of poor and propertyless men, as against the profit-amassing and wealth-concentrating class, is growing more and more evident in our world. Old differences fade away, the difference between craftsman and open-air worker, between black coat and overall, between poor clergyman and elementary school-master, between policeman and bus-driver. They must all buy the same cheap furnishings and live in similar cheap houses; their sons and daughters will all mingle and marry; success at the upper levels becomes more and more hopeless for the rank and file. Marx, who did not so much advocate the class-war, the war of the expropriated mass against the appropriating few, as foretell it, is being more and more justified by events.[462]

§ 3

To trace any broad outlines in the fermentation of ideas that went on during the mechanical and industrial revolution of the nineteenth century is a very difficult task.

But we must attempt it if we are to link what has gone before in this history with the condition of our world to-day.{v2-400}

It will be convenient to distinguish two main periods in the hundred years between 1814 and 1914. First came the period 1814-48, in which there was a very considerable amount of liberal thinking and writing *in limited circles*, but during which there were no great changes or development of thought in the general mass of the people. Throughout this period the world's affairs were living, so to speak, on their old intellectual capital, they were going on in accordance with the leading ideas of the Revolution and the counter-revolution. The dominant liberal ideas were freedom and a certain vague equalitarianism; the conservative ideas were monarchy, organized religion, social privilege, and obedience.

Until 1848 the spirit of the Holy Alliance, the spirit of Metternich, struggled to prevent a revival of the European revolution that Napoleon had betrayed and set back. In America, both North and South, on the other hand, the revolution had triumphed and nineteenth-century liberalism ruled unchallenged. Britain was an uneasy country, never quite loyally reactionary nor quite loyally progressive, neither truly monarchist nor truly republican, the land of Cromwell and also of the Merry Monarch, Charles; anti-Austrian, anti-Bourbon, anti-papal, yet weakly repressive. We have told of the first series of liberal storms in Europe in and about the year 1830; in Britain in 1832 a Reform Bill, greatly extending the franchise and restoring something of its representative character to the House of Commons, relieved the situation. Round and about 1848 came a second and much more serious system of outbreaks, that overthrew the Orleans monarchy and established a second Republic in France (1848-52), raised North Italy and Hungary against Austria, and the Poles in Posen against the Germans, and sent the Pope in flight from the republicans of Rome. A very interesting Pan-Slavic conference held at Prague foreshadowed many of the territorial readjustments of 1919. It dispersed after an insurrection at Prague had been suppressed by Austrian troops.

Ultimately all these insurrections failed; the current system staggered, but kept its feet. There were no doubt serious social discontents beneath these revolts, but as yet, except in the case of Paris, these had no very clear form; and this 1848 storm, so far as the rest of Europe was concerned, may be best described, in{v2-401} a phrase, as a revolt of the natural political map against the artificial arrangements of the Vienna diplomatists, and the system of suppressions those arrangements entailed.

The history of Europe, then, from 1815 to 1848 was, generally speaking, a sequel to the history of Europe from 1789 to 1814. There were no really new *motifs* in the

composition. The main trouble was still the struggle, though often a blind and misdirected struggle, of the interests of ordinary men against the Great Powers system which cramped and oppressed the life of mankind.

But after 1848, from 1848 to 1914, though the readjustment of the map still went on towards a free and unified Italy and a unified Germany, there began a fresh phase in the process of mental and political adaptation to the new knowledge and the new material powers of mankind. Came a great irruption of new social, religious, and political ideas into the general European mind. In the next three sections we will consider the origin and quality of these irruptions. They laid the foundations upon which we base our political thought to-day, but for a long time they had no very great effect on contemporary politics. Contemporary politics continued to run on in the old lines, but with a steadily diminishing support in the intellectual convictions and consciences of men. We have already described the way in which a strong intellectual process undermined the system of Grand Monarchy in France before 1789. A similar undermining process was going on throughout Europe during the Great Power period of 1848-1914. Profound doubts of the system of government and of the liberties of many forms of property in the economic system spread throughout the social body. Then came the greatest and most disorganizing war in history, so that it is still impossible to estimate the power and range of the accumulated new ideas of those sixty-six years. We have been through a greater catastrophe even than the Napoleonic catastrophe, and we are in a slack-water period, corresponding to the period 1815-30. Our 1830 and our 1848 are still to come and show us where we stand.

§ 4

We have traced throughout this history the gradual restriction of the idea of property from the first unlimited claim of the strong{v2-402} man to possess everything and the gradual realization of brotherhood as something transcending personal self-seeking (see especially chap. xxxvii, § 13). Men were first subjugated into more than tribal societies by the fear of monarch and deity. It is only within the last three or at most four thousand years that we have any clear evidence that voluntary self-abandonment to some greater end, without fee or reward, was an acceptable idea to men, or that anyone had propounded it. Then we find spreading over the surface of human affairs, as patches of sunshine spread and pass over the hillsides upon a windy day in spring, the idea that there is a happiness in self-devotion greater than any personal gratification or triumph, and a life of mankind different and greater and more important than the sum of all the individual lives within it. We have seen that idea become vivid as a beacon, vivid as sunshine caught and reflected dazzlingly by some window in the landscape, in the teaching of Buddha, Lao Tse, and, most clearly of all,

of Jesus of Nazareth. Through all its variations and corruptions Christianity has never completely lost the suggestion of a devotion to God's commonweal that makes the personal pomps of monarchs and rulers seem like the insolence of an over-dressed servant and the splendours and gratifications of wealth like the waste of robbers. No man living in a community which such a religion as Christianity or Islam has touched can be altogether a slave; there is an ineradicable quality in these religions that compels men to judge their masters and to realize their own responsibility for the world.

As men have felt their way towards this new state of mind from the fierce self-centred greed and instinctive combativeness of the early Palæolithic family group, they have sought to express the drift of their thoughts and necessities very variously. They have found themselves in disagreement and conflict with old-established ideas, and there has been a natural tendency to contradict these ideas flatly, to fly over to the absolute contrary. Faced by a world in which rule and classes and order seem to do little but give opportunity for personal selfishness and unrighteous oppression, the first impatient movement was to declare for a universal equality and a practical anarchy. Faced by a world in which property seemed little more than a protection for selfishness{v2-403} and a method of enslavement, it was as natural to repudiate all property. Our history shows an increasing impulse to revolt against rulers and against ownership. We have traced it in the middle ages burning the rich man's châteaux and experimenting in theocracy and communism. In the French revolutions this double revolt is clear and plain. In France we find side by side, inspired by the same spirit and as natural parts of the same revolutionary movement, men who, with their eyes on the ruler's taxes, declared that property should be inviolable, and others who, with their eyes on the employer's hard bargains, declared that property should be abolished. But what they are really revolting against in each case is that the ruler and the employer, instead of becoming servants of the community, still remain, like most of mankind, self-seeking, oppressive individuals.

Throughout the ages we find this belief growing in men's minds that there can be such a rearrangement of laws and powers as to give rule and order while still restraining the egotism of any ruler and of any ruling class that may be necessary, and such a definition of property as will give freedom without oppressive power. We begin to realize nowadays that these ends are only to be attained by a complex constructive effort; they arise through the conflict of new human needs against ignorance and old human nature; but throughout the nineteenth century there was a persistent disposition to solve the problem by some simple formula. (And be happy ever

afterwards, regardless of the fact that all human life, all life, is throughout the ages nothing but the continuing solution of a continuous synthetic problem.)

The earlier half of the nineteenth century saw a number of experiments in the formation of trial human societies of a new kind. One of these, the Oneida Community (1845-79), under the leadership of a man of very considerable genius and learning, John Humphry Noyes, did for a number of decades succeed in realizing many of the most striking proposals of Plato's *Republic*; it became wealthy and respected; but it broke up in 1879 largely because of the disposition of the younger generation to leave its peculiar limitations in order to play a part in the larger community of the world outside. A powerful business corporation still preserves{v2-404} its industrial tradition.[463] But the Oneida experiment was too bold and strange a departure to influence the general development of modern civilization. Far more important historically were the experiments and ideas of Robert Owen (1771-1858), a Manchester cotton-spinner. He is very generally regarded as the founder of modern Socialism; it was in connection with his work that the word "socialism" first arose (about 1835).

He seems to have been a thoroughly competent business man; he made a number of innovations in the cotton-spinning industry, and acquired a fair fortune at an early age. He was distressed by the waste of human possibilities among his workers, and he set himself to improve their condition and the relations of employer and employed. This he sought to do first at his Manchester factory and afterwards at New Lanark, where he found himself in practical control of works employing about two thousand people. Between 1800 and 1828 he achieved very considerable things: he reduced the hours of labour, made his factory sanitary and agreeable, abolished the employment of very young children, improved the training of his workers, provided unemployment pay during a period of trade depression, established a system of schools, and made New Lanark a model of a better industrialism, while at the same time sustaining its commercial prosperity. He wrote vigorously to defend the mass of mankind against the charges of intemperance and improvidence which were held to justify the economic iniquities of the time.[464] He held that men and women are largely the product of their educational environment, a thesis that needs no advocacy to-day. And he set himself to a propaganda of the views that New Lanark had justified. He attacked the selfish indolence of his fellow manufacturers, and in 1819, largely under his urgency, the first Factory Act was passed, the first attempt to restrain employers from taking the most stupid and intolerable advantages of their workers' poverty. Some of the restrictions of that Act amaze us to-day. It seems incredible now that it

should ever have been necessary to protect little children of{v2-405} *nine* (!) from work in factories, or to limit the nominal working day of such employees to *twelve hours*!

People are perhaps too apt to write of the industrial revolution as though it led to the enslavement and overworking of poor children who had hitherto been happy and free. But this misinterprets history. From the very beginnings of civilization the little children of the poor had always been obliged to do whatever work they could do. But the factory system gathered up all this infantile toil and made it systematic, conspicuous, and scandalous. The factory system challenged the quickening human conscience on that issue. The British Factory Act of 1819, weak and feeble though it seems to us, was the Magna Carta of childhood; thereafter the protection of the children of the poor, first from toil and then from bodily starvation and ignorance, began.

We cannot tell here in any detail the full story of Owen's life and thought.[465] His work at New Lanark had been, he felt, only a trial upon a small working model. What could be done for one industrial community could be done, he held, for every industrial community in the country; he advocated a resettlement of the industrial population in townships on the New Lanark plan. For a time he seemed to have captured the imagination of the world. The *Times* and *Morning Post* supported his proposals; among the visitors to New Lanark was the Grand Duke Nicholas who succeeded Alexander I as Tsar; a fast friend was the Duke of Kent, son of George III and father of Queen Victoria. But all the haters of change and all—and there are always many such—who were jealous of the poor, and all the employers who were likely to be troubled by his projects, were waiting for an excuse to counter-attack him, and they found it in the expression of his religious opinions, which were hostile to official Christianity, and through those he was successfully discredited. But he continued to develop his projects and experiments, of which the chief was a community at New Harmony in Indiana (U. S. A.), in which he sank most of his capital. His partners bought him out of the New Lanark business in 1828.

Owen's experiments and suggestions ranged very widely, and{v2-406} do not fall under any single formula. There was nothing doctrinaire about him. His New Lanark experiment was the first of a number of "benevolent businesses" in the world; Lord Leverhulme's Port Sunlight, the Cadburys' Bournville, and the Ford businesses in America are contemporary instances; it was not really a socialist experiment at all; it was a "paternal" experiment. But his proposals for state settlements were what we should call state socialism to-day. His American experiment and his later writings point to a completer form of socialism, a much wider departure from the existing state of affairs. It is clear that the riddle of currency exercised Owen. He understood that we can no more hope for real economic justice while we pay for work with money of

fluctuating value than we could hope for a punctual world if there was a continual inconstant variability in the length of an hour. One of his experiments was an attempt at a circulation of labour notes representing one hour, five hours, or twenty hours of work. The co-operative societies of to-day, societies of poor men which combine for the collective buying and distribution of commodities or for collective manufacture or dairying or other forms of agriculture, arose directly out of his initiatives, though the pioneer co-operative societies of his own time ended in failure. Their successors have spread throughout the whole world, and number to-day some thirty or forty million of adherents.

A point to note about this early socialism of Owen's is that it was not at first at all "democratic." Its initiative was benevolent, its early form patriarchal; it was something up to which the workers were to be educated by liberally disposed employers and leaders. The first socialism was not a worker's movement; it was a master's movement.

Concurrently with this work of Owen's, another and quite independent series of developments was going on in America and Britain which was destined to come at last into reaction with his socialistic ideas. The English law had long prohibited combinations in restraint of trade, combinations to raise prices or wages by concerted action. There had been no great hardship in these prohibitions before the agrarian and industrial changes of the eighteenth century let loose a great swarm of workers living from{v2-407} hand to mouth and competing for insufficient employment. Under these new conditions, the workers in many industries found themselves intolerably squeezed. They were played off one against another; day by day and hour by hour none knew what concession his fellow might not have made, and what further reduction of pay or increase of toil might not ensue. It became vitally necessary for the workers to make agreements—illegal though they were—against such underselling. At first these agreements had to be made and sustained by secret societies. Or clubs, established ostensibly for quite other purposes, social clubs, funeral societies, and the like, served to mask the wage-protecting combination. The fact that these associations were illegal disposed them to violence; they were savage against "blacklegs" and "rats" who would not join them, and still more savage with traitors. In 1824 the House of Commons recognized the desirability of relieving tension in these matters by conceding the right of workmen to form combinations for "collective bargaining" with the masters. This enabled Trade Unions to develop with a large measure of freedom. At first very clumsy and primitive organizations and with very restricted freedoms, the Trade Unions have risen gradually to be a real Fourth Estate in the country, a great system of bodies representing the mass of industrial workers.

Arising at first in Britain and America, they have, with various national modifications, and under varying legal conditions, spread to France, Germany, and all the westernized communities.

Organized originally to sustain wages and restrict intolerable hours, the Trade Union movement was at first something altogether distinct from socialism. The Trade Unionist tried to make the best for himself of the existing capitalism and the existing conditions of employment; the socialist proposed to change the system. It was the imagination and generalizing power of Karl Marx which brought these two movements into relationship. He was a man with the sense of history very strong in him; he was the first to perceive that the old social classes that had endured since the beginning of civilization were in process of dissolution and regrouping. His racial Jewish commercialism made the antagonism of property and labour very plain to him. And his{v2-408} upbringing in Germany—where, as we have pointed out, the tendency of class to harden into caste was more evident than in any other European country—made him conceive of labour as presently becoming "class conscious" and collectively antagonistic to the property-concentrating classes. In the Trade Union movement which was spreading over the world, he believed he saw this development of class-conscious labour.

What, he asked, would be the outcome of the "class war" of the capitalist and proletariat? The capitalist adventurers, he alleged, because of their inherent greed and combativeness, would gather power over capital into fewer and fewer hands,[466] until at last they would concentrate all the means of production, transit, and the like into a form seizable by the workers, whose class consciousness and solidarity would be developed *pari passu* by the process of organizing and concentrating industry. They would seize this capital and work it for themselves. This would be the social revolution. Then individual property and freedom would be restored, based upon the common ownership of the earth and the management by the community as a whole of the great productive services which the private capitalist had organized and concentrated. This would be the end of the "capitalist" system, but not the end of the system of capitalism. State capitalism would replace private owner capitalism.

This marks a great stride away from the socialism of Owen. Owen (like Plato) looked to the common sense of men of any or every class to reorganize the casual and faulty political, economic, and social structure. Marx found something more in the nature of a driving force in his class hostility based on expropriation and injustice. And he was not simply a prophetic theorist; he was also a propagandist of the revolt of labour, the revolt of the so-called "proletariat." Labour, he perceived, had a common interest

against the capitalist everywhere, though under the test of the Great Power wars of the time, and particularly of the liberation of Italy, he showed that he failed to grasp the fact that labour everywhere has a common interest in the peace of the world. But{v2-409} with the social revolution in view he did succeed in inspiring the formation of an international league of workers, the First International.

The subsequent history of socialism is chequered between the British tradition of Owen and the German class feeling of Marx. What is called Fabian Socialism, the exposition of socialism by the London Fabian Society, makes its appeal to reasonable men of all classes. What are called "Revisionists" in German Socialism incline in the same direction. But on the whole, it is Marx who has carried the day against Owen, and the general disposition of socialists throughout the world is to look to the organization of labour and labour only to supply the fighting forces that will disentangle the political and economic organization of human affairs from the hands of the more or less irresponsible private owners and adventurers who now control it.

These are the broad features of the project which is called Socialism. We will discuss its incompletenesses and inadequacies in our next section. It was perhaps inevitable that socialism should be greatly distraught and subdivided by doubts and disputes and sects and schools; they are growth symptoms like the spots on a youth's face. Here we can but glance at the difference between state socialism, which would run the economic business of the country through its political government, and the newer schools of syndicalism and guild socialism which would entrust a large measure in the government of each industry to the workers of every grade—including the directors and managers—engaged in that industry. This "guild socialism" is really a new sort of capitalism with a committee of workers and officials in each industry taking the place of the free private capitalists of that industry. The *personnel* becomes the collective capitalist. Nor can we discuss the undemocratic idea of the Russian leader Lenin, that a population cannot judge of socialism before it has experienced it, and that a group of socialists are therefore justified in seizing and socializing, if they can, the life of a country without at first setting up any democratic form of general government at all, for which sort of seizure he uses the Marxian phrase, a very incompetent phrase, the "dictatorship of the proletariat." All Russia now is a huge experiment in that dictatorship (August,{v2-410} 1920).[467] The "proletariat" is supposed to be dictating through committees of workmen and soldiers, the Soviets, but at present we have no means of ascertaining how far Russian affairs are under the direction of a genuine mass intelligence and will, and how far the activities of the Soviets are restrained and directed by the group of vigorous personalities which leads the revolution. Nor do we know if the methods of election used for the Soviets are

any{v2-411} improvement upon the unsatisfactory methods in use in the Atlantic democracies. Non-workers have no representation in this new Russian state.