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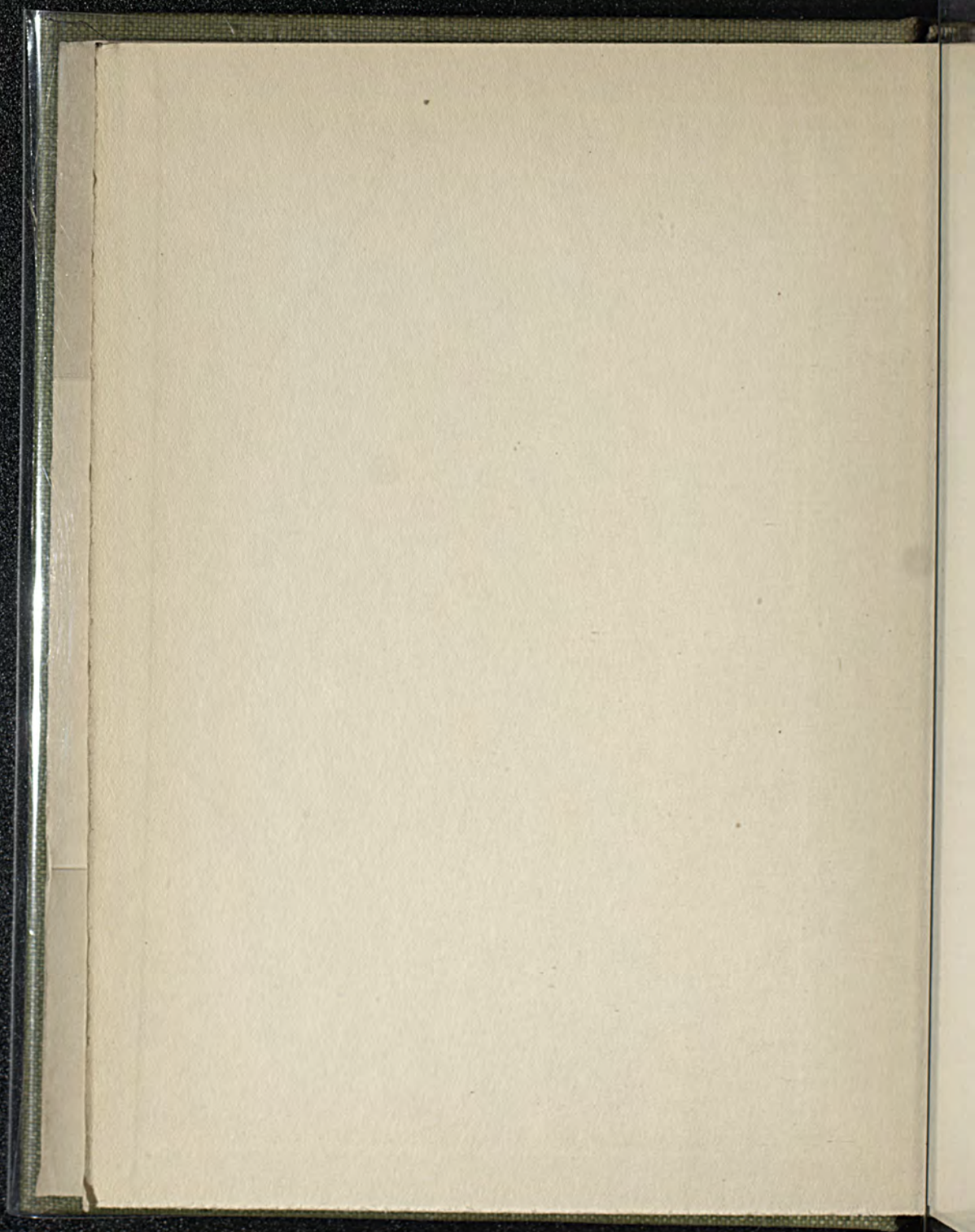
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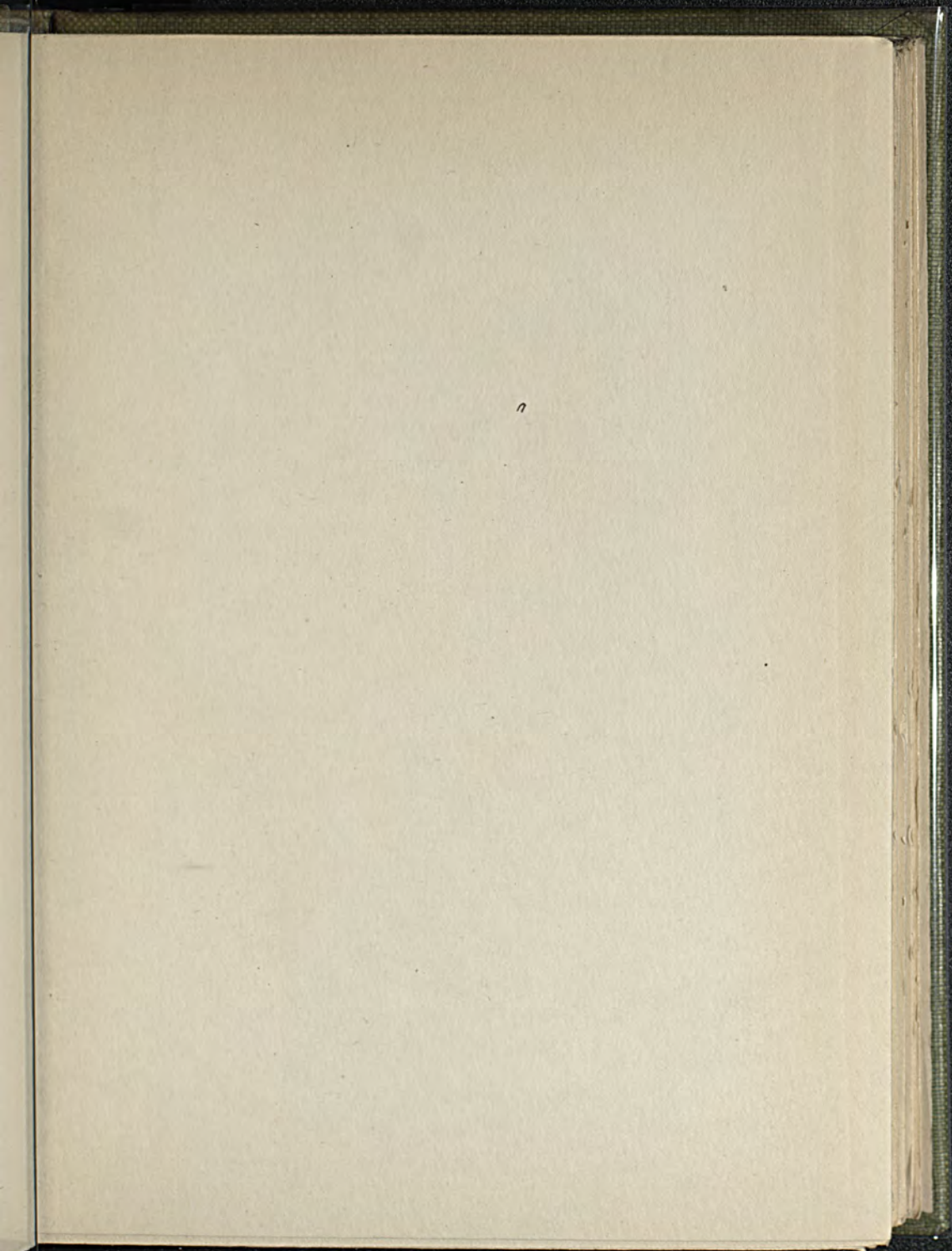
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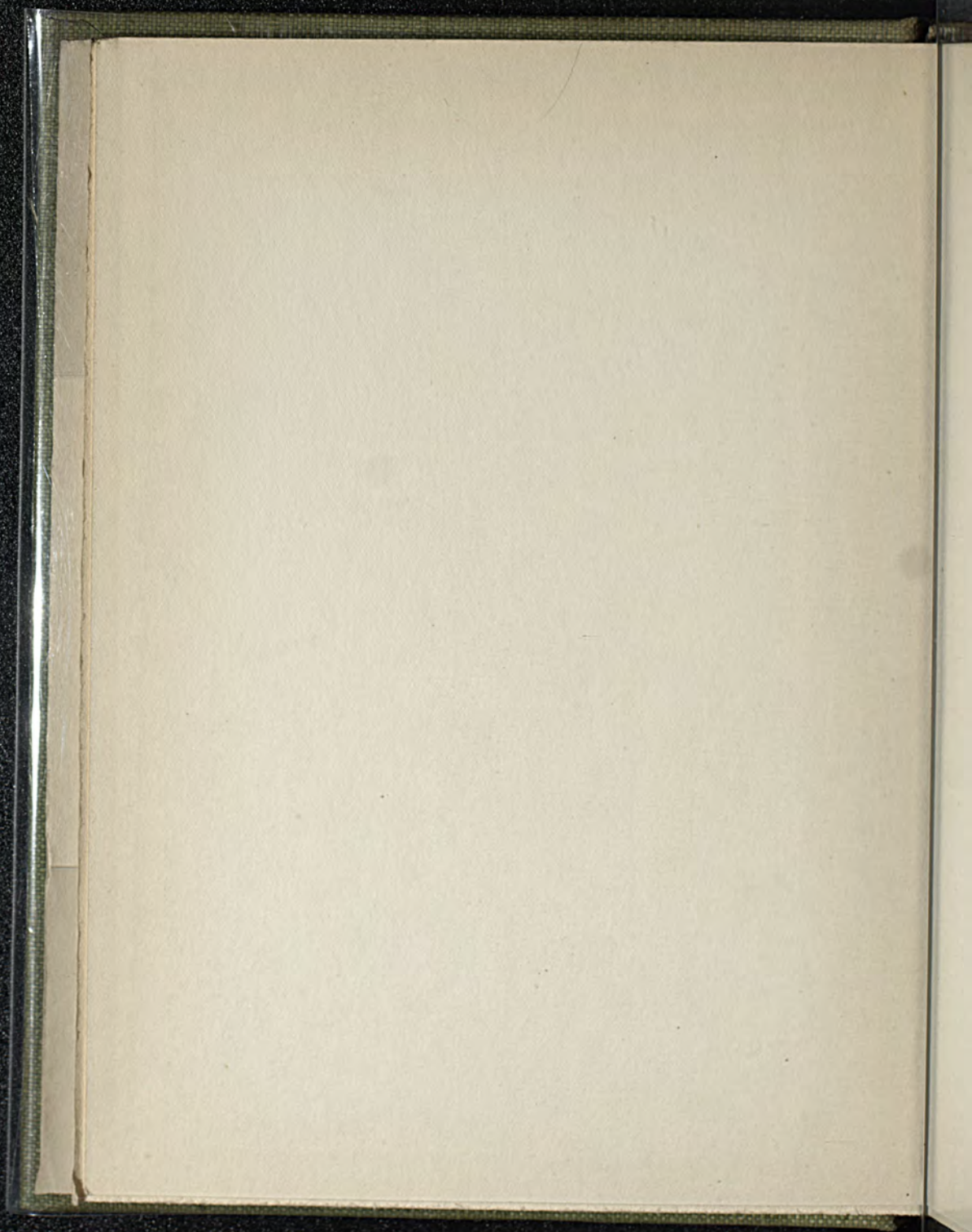
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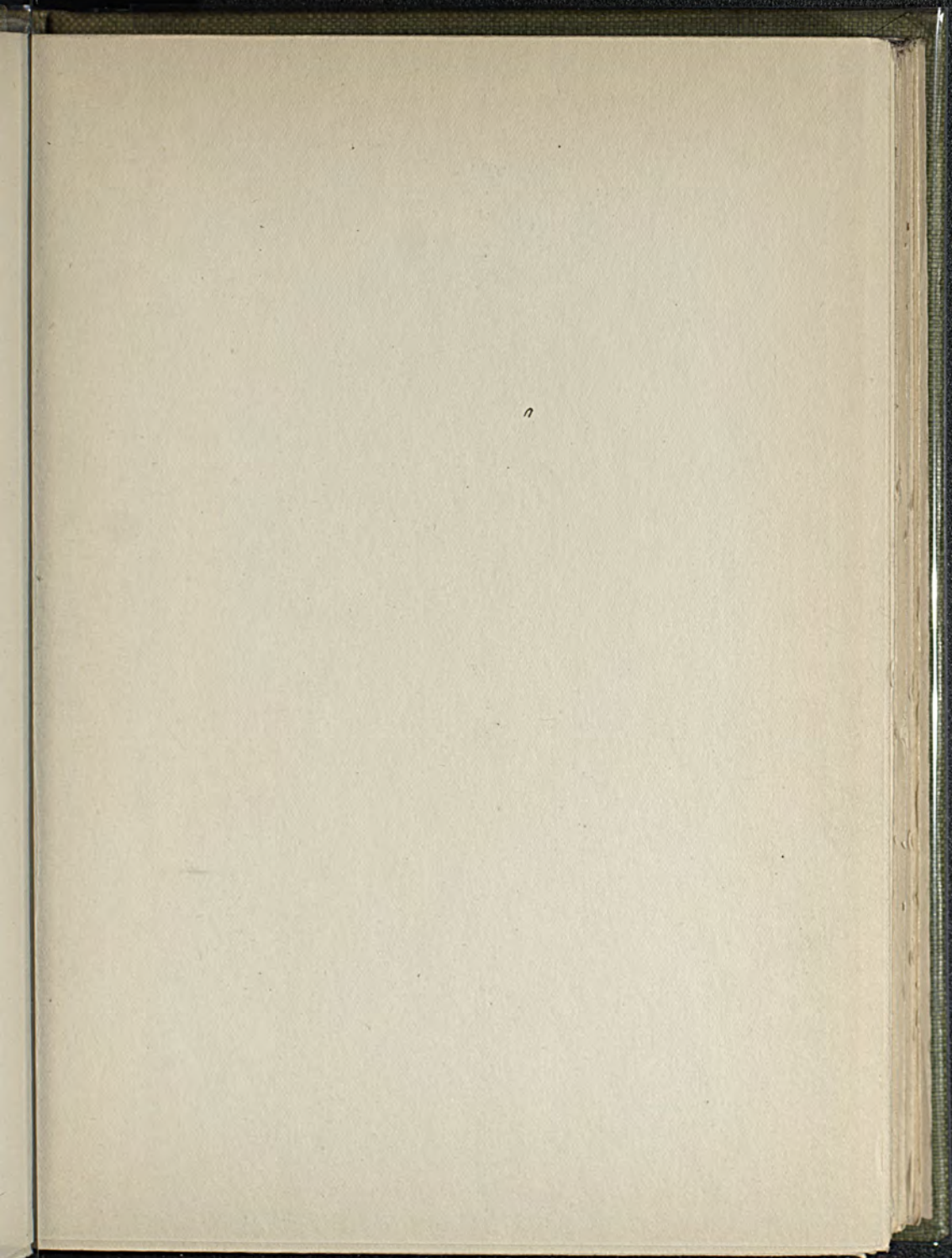
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Arthur Hachen

Notes and Queries

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Notes and Queries

By Arthur Machen

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NOTE

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INTRODUCTION

It is an odd sensation to rummage in old drawers, and to read once more forgotten writings of long ago. I have been rummaging in such a drawer, and have read again articles written in 1908-9. Here they are—some of them. They are about all sorts of matters: Mr Wells, as lively then as he is now; Democracy and Socialism; the art of Casuistry; the obscure instincts and superstitions of men; the power of the imagination to change pure water into a virulent poison; the everlasting question of the moth and the flame; and so on to a great variety of topics.

Now it is said that if a man thinks at forty as he does at twenty, he is either a genius or a fool. I do not know whether this dictum apply to forty and sixty; but if it does, I deny it altogether. I know I am not a genius; and I don't think that I am absolutely a fool. I find myself in pretty general agreement with every opinion, or almost every opinion, that I advanced nearly twenty years ago; and avoiding all extremes,

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conclude that I was then and am now a fairly sensible fellow.

To take one instance: there is the essay entitled, "England and Revolution." The writer of the book which I was reviewing had some phrase about "backward and undeveloped peoples," which seems to have annoyed me a good deal, and I am glad to find that it annoys me still. I have drawn the picture of a little valley as it was in its backward and undeveloped days and as it is now when its natural resources have been developed. On the one hand: peace, pure air, plenty of rough work in the fields in fair weather and foul, small means, and clean food grown in the valley: bacon and beans and potatoes and an occasional trout from the brook. On the other hand, a vastly increased population, the air filthy or even poisonous, so that the people turn yellow and the green things perish from the earth; serried rows of mean, detestable houses on the old hill-sides, nasty shops dispensing nastiness, chilled or tinned: the whole place a horror, and the people within it seething with an obscure fury which they themselves do not understand; a fury which leads them to call themselves

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Radicals, Socialists, Communists, Bolsheviks, to rage against the masters, to believe that everything would suddenly become quite delightful if a Soviet were substituted for the doddering but quite amiable magistrate in the nearest town.

I refused to call this change civilisation in 1909; and I still refuse with even greater emphasis. I allow that by the development of the natural resources of this valley—which is at once imaginary and actual—five thousand people are kept alive for fifty who formerly lived there. I allow this; and declare that I am sorry for it. There is no sense, no reason in breeding men for damnation. There is no good in life unless there be reasonable possibilities of happiness; and there is no possibility of happiness in the hell of industrialism. Every year when I change the air of London for that of Pembroke, I pass through industrial Glamorgan. For a great part of the way the scene is an enchantment. Never elsewhere have I seen such wondrous domed hills, such magic woods hanging on high places, such steepes glittering with bracken in the sunlight, such prospects of the entrances to secret valleys, such wild lands rising far away into

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the unknown. And high on those domed hills, the little whitewashed farms and cottages shining in light that appears to be of the eternal world: here is glory, here enchantment and immortal joy. And yet all this beauty is defiled and cursed with black chimneys and the obscene apparatus of industrialism: clustering round the bases of the happy, mystic hills are serried settlements, rows on rows on rows of ugly houses that seem to swarm like lice on the earth, vile heaps of refuse, stinks and stench and smoke that hides the sun, Calvinist meeting-houses that cry to Heaven for vengeance. And there can only be the profoundest pity for the people who live amidst these horrors. They are quite right in holding that all the circumstances of their lives are hideously wrong; it is a matter for tears, not for anger, that they also hold that everything can be put right by returning Ramsay Macdonald to the House of Commons. Once they held that Mr Bright and Mr Gladstone would do this famous trick, especially if the Church were disestablished. Now, I believe, they are beginning to have their doubts as to the magic powers of Mr Ramsay Macdonald, and to suspect that Dowlais, the Rhondda, and the Neath

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Valley will never turn into heaven on earth till Tomsy, Trotsky, and Rotsky tackle them. Poor people : but how is the world better for such places and such people? But there it is : filth, ugliness unspeakable, and a black smoke and a black stench of burning rage in the heart of the people: that is progress.

And here is another point on which I find the myself of 1926 in profound agreement with the myself of 1908. In the essay called "Rouge et Noir—and the Unknown" I find that I wrote :—

If little boys did not waste their money and imperil their positions in life by taking an interest in "all the winners and S. P."—well, in the first place there would be fewer evening papers in London, and secondly, there never would have been a Homer, a Shakespeare, or a Turner; and the autumn poets, who are now being reviewed in scores, would never have written a line. You cannot imagine a bee backing the winner (or, more probably, the loser), and an ant playing Blind Hookey is a mere nightmare; but then it would be equally ridiculous to imagine the bee writing a book and the ant modelling

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in clay. In other words, our vices and follies come from the same stock as do our gifts and graces ; and the name of that stock is certainly not reason. It is unreasonable to put ten thousand pounds on a horse ; it is unreasonable to volunteer on a forlorn hope ; it is unreasonable to make lyric poetry or to enjoy it.

And, I would add, it is unreasonable to row yourself blue in the face on the Thames, or to face imminent risk of death in climbing an Alpine precipice : all the things that give a relish to life, all the things that make life splendid are quite outside the dominion of reason, and indeed violently opposed to it. It is, of course, to be noted that "reason" is not used here in the sense which Coleridge gave to the word. With him it is the highest spiritual faculty bestowed on man ; we are using the term as it is commonly used in the street and in the market-place ; the reason of Mr Gradgrind of Coketown, the reason (by the way) which has called into existence those horrors of industrialism at which we have just been shuddering. Again let us say it : what men want of the world and in the world is happi-

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ness: and to gain happiness we must be profoundly irrational. We must thoroughly understand that if we were to pull down Westminster Abbey and St Paul's, and give the price of their sites to the poor, we should do very ill indeed. I once created some little disturbance at a lecture by asserting that Judas was the first Protestant. I still hold to this opinion; and I will add that he was an early Rationalist, though, perhaps, not the first of that unfortunate sect.

And all this is highly fanciful? On the contrary, it is highly practical. We have seen that the other way has been tried and has broken down in a lamentable and, indeed, terrific manner. We have gone far to ruin our beautiful land with factories. We have allowed no "sentiment," no "æsthetic nonsense" to stand in our way. As it happens, I am a citizen of what was once no mean city; though the population of it, if I remember, was somewhere between a thousand and twelve hundred souls. This city is Caerleon-on-Usk, once the splendid Isca Silurum, the headquarters of the Second Augustan Legion. And, then, again a golden mist of legend grew about it; it became the capital of King Arthur's court of faerie and

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enchantment, the chief city of a cycle of romance that has charmed all the world. I remember it as it was fifty-six years ago: dreaming in the sun by the yellow Usk, as it always seemed to me; its streets all silent, so that a rare footstep echoed in them, and people came to their windows and doorsteps to spy out who the stranger might be. It was all white, set in its level meadows by the river, the hills fencing it about, and northwards there appeared the wooded heights and slopes of Wentwood, "quivering with leaves, very conspicuous." A wonderful old town for all that it was such a tiny place; and wonderful was it to stand in the evening on the green circle of the Roman amphitheatre, and see the sun flame above Twyn Barlwm, the mystic tumulus on the mountain wall of the west. So the old town dreamed the long years away, not forgetful of the Legions and the Eagles, murmuring scraps of broken Latin in its æonian sleep, speaking of a certain bridge as Pont Sadwrn (Pons Saturni), and of the hamlet across the river as Caerleon-ultra-Pontem.

The dream is broken. They have built a high,

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horrible, huge, damnable mad-house in blaring, shrieking red brick at the very gates of the city. They are going to put up an electric power-house and workmen's dwellings in the heart of the city, close to the Roman amphitheatre. It is all over. Caerleon is to be another pustule on the corrupt body of industrialism. But, I say again, all this is not practical; unless it be practical to create seed-beds and forcing-houses for misery and raging discontent, to make the way ready for the Soviet of Caerleon-on-Usk.

And then there is another matter treated in one of these old Papers that still interests me very strongly; that is the case of the bad little boy of Drury Lane. To recapitulate the adventure: a certain corn chandler of the Lane had bins outside his shop containing samples of the different sorts of grain to be sold within. The youth of old Drury, naturally frolicsome, had made itself a pretty sport of lurking latent for a while near the shop and then rushing violently past it, grabbing grain, *manibus plenis*, as they went by. The chandler was human; he was irritated. He laid in wait and at last grasped a virulent offender, and haled him off at once to the chemist whose shop stood at

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the corner of the way leading into Broad Court. With his prisoner in his fist (as it were) the chandler bent over the counter and confabulated with his old friend, the chemist. Then this latter went about his dreadful business. He took a glass vessel graven with strange symbols—the measuring glass with the signs of drachms and scruples—flitted before bottles which had signatures in an unknown tongue ; went apart into his dark and secret place at the back of the shop, and came forth, his horrible vessel filled with a clear fluid.

“ Now,” said he, to the wretched boy, “ drink that, and you’ll remember it to the last day of your life.”

The lad drank, trembling, and tottered away. He all but died in the night. It was as if all the black purging purges of all the helleborist, calomelist, and jalapist physicians from the days of Galen even unto this present had been exhibited to him. But the chemist, the assistant, and the corn-chandler convinced the boy’s furious mother the next morning that the glass had merely held *aqua pura distillata*.

Now here, it seems to me, should be the taking-off place of a new school of medicine. Christian Science,

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I suppose, is one attempt at such a method, New Thought is another, and Couéism is a third. It would be tedious to examine these systems in detail, but I find in none of them any analogy to the shock of horror and malady that was administered to the boy in his glass of distilled water. What we want is a corresponding shock of health and happiness. We all know what it is to wake up from the terrors of a torturing and fearful dream; such dreams as seem more real and poignant than life itself. Nay, they are so real that they haunt us for many years. I remember that such a dream so possessed me that I never lost the date of it, and can still shudder a little at the recollection of its unutterable, irremediable horror. It was in 1868, and I was five years old. I was straying in my sleep by a bit of wild brake that bordered the lane by the rectory. In an instant, the horrible thing happened. There came along the road the Iron Coach, a black vehicle lined with strong metal, so that no assault upon it could prevail. In it were two awful women, with gaunt and deadly features, and through an opening in the iron they threw darts, venomous and tipped with fire, as they sped to and fro. I was helpless,

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frozen still with horror, so that I could not hide in the thicket: and then I awoke.

And it is from dreams as dread as this (which are not dreams) that I call on the new medicine to arouse us. The Drury Lane chemist had strong and efficacious magic and black enchantment: where is the white incantation which will suddenly make us forget the heavy years, the weary body, and the fainting heart, and bid us arise gladly in the morning and go on our happy way, hardly remembering the terrors and the anguish of the night?

GUINEVERE AND LANCELOT

UPON a morning in May a man kept his master's sheep on the hills that are above the Forest of Dendreath, in the midst of the Isle of Britain. It was very early in the morning when the man came out of the shelter that he had made between two rocks, and the dew was thick upon the short grass, and at the sun rising all the land glittered as if it had been the Shining Isle beyond the waves of ocean, and an odour of sweetness rose up from the region of the leaves. Then the sun ascended in his splendour, and the mists in the forests vanished away, and the shepherd saw before him all the wonders of the Forest of Dendreath. In the west he beheld the Road of the Eagle that issues from the waste land of Cameliard; and suddenly he was amazed, for far away he saw a red flame and a white flame advancing side by side along the alley of the wood.

Now, these flames were indeed nothing but that famous knight of high worship, Sir Lancelot, the

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principal warrior of the Order of the Round Table, and beside him Guinevere, that was to be Arthur's queen. When the shepherd far on the wild hill had seen them they had but come forth from a shade of beechen leaves, and as they appeared suddenly in the open glade the sunbeams smote upon them, and so bright was Lancelot's armour made that it was as if it spouted white fire, and Guinevere was as the burning of vehement flames. Upon her head she bore a cap of golden cloth, curiously adorned with jewels such as rubies and carbuncles and chrysoprases, and her cotehardie was of red samite. And about her she held a cloak of flame-coloured satin, and her belt was of gold and crystals. Golden was the glory of her hair. So they rode through the alleys of the forest in the sweetness of the May morning, amidst the glittering of many leaves stirred by the wind of heaven. And at their passing by all the choir of the birds of the wood exulted. Deep from the shade in the heart of the forest Eos the nightingale chanted the melody of lovers with unwearied antiphons; to him gladly replied the blackbird, a master of song; the blackcap was of their chorus; from the throats of smaller birds there rose

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a sweet sound like that of pipes of faerie. So journeyed Sir Lancelot and the lady by the ways of the happy forest, one glancing gently on the other as they rode at a merry pace.

Now, when Sir Lancelot brought Guinevere from her father's castle in Cameliard, they rode for a day and found no adventure. But as night fell, and the sun went down, and it grew dark, they heard a noise as of crackling flames, and the sky grew red; and they saw a high hill before them, and on the height of it a fair castle was built, with lofty walls and many springing towers and pinnacles. But a black smoke swelled up from it, and great flames encompassed it, and as they looked there was a roaring and a riving as of thunder; and then that fair and goodly place fell apart, and was dashed down into the dust, being consumed with fire. "Alas, fair lord," said Guinevere, "what castle was this, and who was the lord of it? What evil chance hath so piteously destroyed it all?" "Lady," replied Sir Lancelot, "that I may scarcely tell. Let be awhile, and it may be that we shall fall in with some man who shall advise us." And then they pressed a little forward, and Sir Lancelot found a

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poor man hidden amongst the thorns and bushes by the way, and he asked the man what enemy had come upon the castle, and for what cause it had thus been burned and ruined. "Sir," said the poor man, "ye are to understand that this castle was the castle of Sir Sagramour of the Fair Mount, that was a knight of great worship, and a noble warrior, and the lord of all these lands. And it fell out by evil chance that he saw Eglaise, the daughter of King Ryon of the Rugged Island, as she went forth from her chamber to hear mass, and the hearts of these two became inflamed with love, and so they fled away together and dwelt happily at that castle for a year and a day. Then cometh King Ryon against Sir Sagramour and taketh his castle and burneth it as ye have seen, and Sir Sagramour is slain, and his wife with him, and no living man is left therein." Then Sir Lancelot and Guinevere, the queen that was to be, marvelled, and went on their way; and said Guinevere: "I see very well that this love is both piteous and cruel, since by it husband and wife are slain, and a fair hold has its portion with ashes and destruction." "Will ye say so, lady?" answered Lancelot. "Consider well that

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by this same love is all the round earth ordered, with the shining of the stars at night, and with all the spheres of the heavens, and with the perpetual choirs of Paradise. And without this love ye are to understand right as the doctors teach us, that there were no brightness of the sun at all, nor any light of the moon, nor should there be any green thing upon the earth, nor any bird of the wood, nor beast of the rocks, nor fishes in ocean; nay, when love shall pass, then passeth man also. And ye shall not say that this knight and his sweetheart were unhappy nor of an ill end, for to our lord Love they did great worship and great honour, and were well rewarded of him, so that they dwelt for a year and a day in the estate of gladness, and now praise God in Paradise, in the bliss that is perdurable and everlasting." "Oh, knight," said then Guinevere, "I see well that ye are a great lover and a high master—yea, a very doctor of love; and well I wit that in the King's court at Camelot ye have the love of many ladies, and bear the palm of all amorous knights." "Lady, ye judge falsely, since never yet have I loved maid nor wife." "Is this as ye say, of very truth?" "It is as I have said, lady, and ye must

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know that I am none of the knights of the bower, but of the stricken field, where I do battle for my lord, King Arthur, against his enemies, and against the foes of all the land." "Nevertheless, sir knight, of love ye speak very honestly and fairly, and ye hold love in great worship, as is plain to see, and so at last ye shall doubtless receive the high guerdon and reward of that lord Love whose lauds and offices ye so well recite." And then that fair lady looked on Sir Lancelot with right good liking. And as they passed on their way they came to a lake, and all about it there were yew-trees set as a high hedge, and from the shadow of these trees they heard issuing a noise of lamentation. "What is this?" said Guinevere. "Let us delay and listen." And there was a sound of a man who wept, and after his weeping they saw him take a lute, and he sang this melody:

I make an incantation against the brightness of the sky:
I make an incantation against the shining of the sun:
I make an incantation against the wind of heaven.

I utter a spell against the boughs of the oak,
Against the aspen and the alder, the willow and the birch,
Against the budding of every tree that is in the wood.

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I bind a charm against the rose that it blossom not :
May my magic bring darkness on the generation of the
flowers:

May blackness consume the grass of the fields.

Let there be a mighty spell upon the melody of the birds,
Let the green perpetual choir be silent,
Let the song of fairyland be heard no more.

For in Gwenllian was the brightness of the sky,
She was the splendour of the heavenly sun,
She imparted sweetness to the breeze from on high.

In her were contained the delight of the woods,
The sweetness of the rose, the pleasure of the flowers.
Her voice gave rapture to the song of the birds.
The joys of the world have departed with her to Paradise.

And Guinevere and Sir Lancelot went on their way,
considering the sad estate of this desolate lover, and
again the lady spoke and said: "What say ye, sir
knight? Will ye still be so hardy as to praise this love
that bringeth men into so piteous a case? Heard ye
not how he spoke, saying that all joys had departed
with the lady that death has taken from him?"
"Lady," said he, "there shall come a day when ye
shall understand well that, albeit lovers may die and

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perish, yet love remaineth ever immortal, since no pangs of death may ever assail him." And a second time Guinevere looked gently on Sir Lancelot, and in her heart she had him in right good liking.

After this fashion Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere passed through the regions of Britain, till they drew near to Camelot, where King Arthur held his court with his Knights of the Round Table. And as they paced through the Forest of Dendreath they could see through the boughs of the trees the open country shining before them, and Sir Lancelot said: "Lady, in a day's journey we shall come to Camelot, and there shall we find King Arthur and all his Knights of the Round Table, and the ladies of his court, and the saint that shall make you King Arthur's queen." And she knew not what she should have said to this, and her heart grew sad; and then she bethought her of an old tale and matter of wizardry, or so men say. And she gazed at the trees of the wood, searching for a tree that she knew of; and as they came to the wood's verge she saw her desire, and broke off a little bough from a wych-elm that grew by the way. Then she has broken this bough in twain, and one she

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has hidden about her, and the other she has given to the knight, saying: "I wit well that all of my lord's knights are men of truth and gentle dealing, and I think that of them all ye be not the least. Wherefore, whatsoever ye swear to me, sure am I that ye will perform your oath and keep it, and never gainsay it not so long as ye live." "Ye say rightly, lady. What will ye that I swear to you?" "I will have you swear that evermore while ye be quick and in this life ye keep this bough that I give you, for to be a token of this wayfaring and of my wedding of my lord, King Arthur." "So shall it be, very willingly," and Lancelot swore this by holy rood. Then at the end of their way they came to high Camelot, the golden and glorious city of King Arthur, and by the high saint were King Arthur and the Lady Guinevere made man and wife.

There was a day when Queen Guinevere, that now is married to King Arthur, sat with her ladies in her bower, and they were at sport, devising of certain flowers, that were their lovers, and of their divers properties. Said one damosel: "I know a rose-tree that rises not too tall, and it grows in a low garden,

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and four shining waters are about this garden, and five lions keep watch over this garden, and six thorns there be on this rose-tree, and one blossom only. Tell me where my rose is hidden." Then, by computing of numbers, the other ladies made out the name of a knight and spoke it, and they all laughed with glee; and so sped their sport very merrily. But all the while the Queen sat silent, and she looked out of the window of the high tower, and saw far away the green trees in the wood, and the road by which she had passed from Cameliard to Camelot. And whereas her ladies spoke of flowers and of the knights their lovers, so her thoughts fell on the bough of the wych-elm which she had broken with Lancelot; and fervently did she desire the love of this knight in her heart. Then did she wholly burn, then did her heart become as a coal of fire, and forthwith she went apart and wrote a scroll, and sent the writing to one that dwelt in Camelot, being a man reputed a sorcerer and a great clerk in art magic. So it fell out that Guinevere stole away in the night-time, and came to a hidden place in a wood that was near to Camelot, and there the wizard had already his cauldron of sorcery and incantation.

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And he had made set about this cauldron a ring of fires, and a shining smoke went up from the vessel as it were quick glass, and within the ring you might see divers puppets and images in wax and in wood, shamefully devised and foully wrought, having on their foreheads and their breasts the signs and marks of the devils of hell and of the cursed gods and goddesses of heathen men. And with the wizard there was a lad that all the while made the fires to burn with spices and gums of Satan, and a black smoke rose up from these flames. Then came the Queen into the ring, and at the wizard's bidding she doffed all her clothes and stood naked by the cauldron, and so she dipped the elm wand into the bubbling of the cauldron, right as the wizard commanded her. Forthwith ye might hear a noise and a rushing sound amongst the black branches and thickets of the wood, the great boughs of the trees tossed one on other, and said the wizard: "Now, madam, the Hosts of the Air draw near; now is at hand the Army of Tzabaoth." Then, in the shimmering and in the shining of the glassy smoke that rose from the cauldron there showed the shapes of the Mighty Ones, and to the Mightiest did Guinevere

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there make offering of herself; and, this done, "Now," said the wizard, "is the time come." Then drew forth Queen Guinevere the wych-bough from its place and again dipped it down three times into the cauldron of incantation and drew it forth, saying—

One was one in the wood,
On the tree of old enchantment;
One was made twain in the wood,
A word of wisdom was uttered.
Now, one calleth to one,
One tree cannot be dissevered.
By the sign of union
Let the parted be joined together.

Then, with the great word of incantation, the lady made the sign, and forth came flying in the air Sir Lancelot, in his ghostly body. And from that night Sir Lancelot, that was the flower and crown of all King Arthur's warriors, durst not deny the Queen Guinevere in anything, but loved her from that time forth.

Now at that time it is to be understood that Camelot was the wonder and prize of all the cities in the Isle of Britain, nay, of the whole world. For, like that

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city of Syon, it was set on a high hill, and encompassed on every side by rich gardens and bowers of delight and orchards and pleasure places. And on high were the palaces of the warriors and the choirs and altars of the saints, and the most lordly palace of the Emperor Arthur, as it were a mountain on a mountain. And here were assembled all the rarities and precious things of the whole world, and all the instruments of wisdom, and all the books in which the secret things were written, which Merlin had gathered together from all the coasts of the world. In this city did Sir Lancelot and the Queen have their pleasure and delight and dalliance, and by art magic no eye could discern their pleasures, while they lived in wantonness. And ever Sir Lancelot, that was a loyal knight in his heart, must grieve and mourn for his piteous transgression against his lord, and ever must he weep and lament in his chamber for this mortal sin, and ever must he strive that it be put from him. Yet, by virtue of the spell and by the cauldron of incantation, he was without succour and relief, and what the Queen would that must he do. And it fell out that one night he strove against the word of incantation and magic, and it was

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as if his heart was bursten within him, and down fell he on the floor of his chamber, as though he were stark dead. Then came his squire, and to him it seemed that the spirit was departed from Sir Lancelot, and he made a lamentable crying, and still Sir Lancelot lay there like a dead man. And when the life returned to him he that was the mightiest of all King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table was, as it were, a little child, and no strength nor virtue was there left in his body. And while he lay there, there came without his window one of Guinevere's damsels, taught by the Queen, and thus she sang to him:

All through the nightertale I longed for thee,
In loneliness, and harkened for the door
To open, or a footstep on the floor.

O lief sweetheart, I pray thee pity me,
I hunger for thy kisses evermore;
All through the nightertale I longed for thee.

Delight is turned to woe, and misery
Is my solace, certes, my heart is sore,
Yet these poor lips a smile at morning bore,
Though all the nightertale I longed for thee.

Wherefore henceforth Sir Lancelot strove no more,

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but lived deliciously in the golden meshes of the Queen's desires. And so to them twain the fruits of the orchards of Camelot were as apples of Avalon and golden delights, and the gardens were as walks of Paradise, and the feasts in King Arthur's hall were like the perpetual entertainment of the Blessed and Venerable Head of Bran Vendigeid, and the singing of the birds was as the song of the Three Fairy Birds of Rhiannon.

And one year King Arthur kept the feast of Pentecost at Camelot, as his custom was for the most part, and thirteen churches were set apart wherein King Arthur and his court heard mass. And afterwards, when they were in hall, suddenly there fell a silence, and each man looked on other and was afraid. Then there was a noise like thunder, and the roof was all afire; and then they heard in that place a melody as of the choirs of Paradise and the rejoicing of the angels, and ye would have said that there was an odour in that hall as of all the spicery of the world. And all the knights fell down on their knees together, and they saw as it were a hand pass from one end of the hall to the other and go forth; and the hand bore up the

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holy and blessed Vessel of the Sangraal, wrapt about in veils of red samite, and there was a shining of light that made the sun darkness; and to Sir Lancelot, because of his deadly sin, it was as if a sword had pierced his body, for his flesh began to tremble when he beheld the spiritual things. Yet he might not put his sin from him, but ever again returned to his dalliance with the Queen, for the spell that she had set upon him could not yet be broken.

Now, with the passing of the years, it happened that the bough of wych-elm that Queen Guinevere had severed in the wood withered and shrank, and, though the Queen and Sir Lancelot might keep each their portion never so well, the leaves that were on the boughs fell off. And when a leaf fell off then it vanished away, and as it vanished there flew forth a great bird, black as a coal; and these birds perched on the trees of the wood, and cried out as men passed by, "Guinevere is the leman of Sir Lancelot." And so this sin could no longer be covered, and all the court of King Arthur had knowledge of these birds and of what their message was, and some believed it and some not, but all looked strangely on Sir Lancelot

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and Queen Guinevere. And it fell out at last that Guinevere took out her portion of the bough and set it before her, counting the leaves that remained ; and suddenly she must go forth from her chamber to sit in hall; and by ill chance she had forgotten the bough, so that one of her damsels cometh in, and seeing it, casteth it into the fire. And in that moment was Sir Lancelot set free from the virtue of the enchantment and the wizardry that had been done upon him ; and in that moment came the lad that had prepared the fires of the sorcery, and confessed all to the King, and the report of this was made known to all the city of Camelot. Then the anger of King Arthur was like to burning of fire, and he sent ten knights, that were the mightiest that he had, to waylay Sir Lancelot, that they might slay him forthwith and hew his body in pieces. So these knights went forth, and they came upon Sir Lancelot as he walked in his garden, and he had no arms, but only a short sword, upon him. Then they cried: "Now shall ye surely die, thou foul and disloyal knight, for the deep dishonour that ye have done our lord the King," and they ran at him to kill him. But, for all their mail, five of them did he leave

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for dead in that garden, since he was the most valorous and most mightiest of all knights that ever have been in this world; and so the five knights that were left in life fled away from before Sir Lancelot. Then would Sir Lancelot endeavour to bring forth the Queen harmless, but he might not, she was so closely kept; and so Sir Lancelot fled forth from Camelot, and gathered his kinsfolk about him, if haply he might deliver the Queen from prison. For Arthur swore that for wizardry and disloyalty she should be burnt. But afterward King Arthur repented of his oath, and Guinevere dwelt, as all men know, in an abbey of nuns at Amesbury, and in due time was Sir Lancelot hallowed Bishop of Canterbury. And so, having repented of their sins, they both departed from this life: on whose souls may God have pity.

SHAKESPEARE AND SHAKSPERE

I ONCE read an amusing story about Charles Kingsley and Dean Stanley. Kingsley had a letter from Stanley, and was observed to be poring over it with twisted brows all through breakfast-time. At last, after half-an-hour's study, he turned and said: "I am sure that this letter of Stanley's is full of the dearest things, but so far I can only read one word, and that looks like 'damn.'" However, so far as I know, no critic has advanced the opinion that "Stanley," the illegible correspondent, must have been a different man from "Stanley," the cultured author. And yet Mr G. G. Greenwood, M.P., author of "*In re Shakespeare: Beeching v. Greenwood*," has said that "It is hardly possible to conceive that the poems and plays were written in William Shakspeare's illegible, illiterate scrawl." This remark was in Mr Greenwood's "Shakespeare Problem Re-stated." In this "Rejoinder" to Canon Beeching he hardly sticks to his guns and hardly abandons them. And, personally, I cannot quite

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understand how a point which is demonstrably of no earthly importance should have been made at all.

And I confess that I do not think that Mr Greenwood is much happier in his other arguments. Shakespeare or "Shake-speare," he says, is just the sort of name to serve as a pseudonym. Why? Are pseudonyms usually "pictorial" names? Are authors with pictorial names—such as Ashmole and Bacon—to be suspected of imposture? Again, there is the question of "dirty Stratford." Mr Greenwood admits that the dirtiness signifies nothing. Why, then, did he mention it? Because it is "one of the few known facts of Shakspeare's life." But it is not one of the significant facts of Shakspeare's life. The "reeking pile of filth" at the front door of the house in Henley Street is in no sense illative; it stands in no possible or thinkable relation to the "Venus and Adonis" or to the "Sonnets." And Shakespeare was "a rustic." Well, and Burns was a rustic, and Keats was a Cockney, and Hogg was a shepherd, and Boswell was a drunken and dissolute laird, and Tennyson did not take his degree, and Dickens lived in squalid purlieus and stuck labels on blacking-bottles, and Borrow was a vagabond, and Poe

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was a wastrel, and Zola was "ploughed" for his Baccalaureat! And what then? Does Mr Greenwood think that the world's masterpieces are necessarily written by University dons, people of fashion, and members of the Athenæum Club? Shakespeare was a call-boy, or a prompter, or a super, when he came up to London. Certainly; and Chaucer was in the Customs, and Lamb was a clerk, and Dickens—the blacking business over—was a newspaper reporter, and Coleridge enlisted in the Army. Ergo? Really; if it be necessary for Mr Greenwood's thesis to beat up such "arguments" as these, the case against the identity of the "rustic" and play-actor with the playwright must be weak indeed.

A NEW YEAR MEDITATION

I WANT to enter into competition with Mr Sherlock Holmes—or rather, perhaps, with M. Dupin, the great detective of Poe's imagination. We all know, of course, that if we placed before either of these personages a little tooth-powder, a bunch of violets, and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* we should immediately arrive at the most astounding and unexpected results; and so I hope to deduce odd conclusions from three recent events, all chronicled in the daily paper. In the first place, Mr H. G. Wells has published his novel, "The War in the Air," wherein we are instructed that the whole fabric of civilisation is destined to utter destruction and ruin. Secondly, the yearly address delivered at the meeting of the Egypt Exploration Fund showed that in prehistoric times the Egyptians kept pet dogs, whose bodies have been found braceleted about the legs with ivory, whose teeth show traces of overfeeding and systematic pampering. Thirdly, the records of the Birmingham Police Court have dealt

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quite lately with the adventures of five boys charged with breaking into a number of houses at Harborne. "Their abode," said the police, "was a cave which they had constructed at Florida, a lonely district near Harborne Golf Links. Investigations showed the cave to be partly a natural declivity and partly an ingeniously constructed hut, formed of interlaced boughs. Grass and soil laid on the top formed a perfectly rainproof roof. This was supported by stout balks of timber. The walls and floor of the hut had been carefully lined with straw."

Now, I submit that these three items of news, incongruous as they may seem, have, in spite of all appearances, a certain relation to one another. To take Mr Wells's book in the first place. I do not know, nor do I suppose that Mr Wells knows, the precise manner and fashion in which the present structure of things which we call Modern Civilisation will be reduced to dust and ashes, but we may be sure that somehow or other the fabric of our social order will sooner or later come thundering to the ground; commerce and manufactures, machines and great cities, economic systems, means of communication—all these

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things are destined to pass away as the old empires with their civilisation have passed away. The world will go into the melting-pot again, and the great break-up which followed the decline of the Roman Empire will be repeated in a very different form. But in a certain way the results will be similar. A highly artificial state of things will be succeeded by a barbarous and natural state of things. Perhaps a man who wants a knife will not be able to buy one in Oxford Street or in Bond Street, for the reason that both streets will be heaps of ruins overgrown by trees and flowers. The man in need of a knife will be obliged to make it himself as best he can; and it is likely enough that the man incapable of making knives (or spears or swords) will find himself hopelessly handicapped, and doomed to perish. In a word, the arts and crafts will be born again in a world where dilettantism has, perforce, ceased to exist—in a world of sincerities. There will be painting in this new world, as in the old; but nobody will be inspired to paint pictures of fox-terriers capering about a little girl and a Persian kitten. Poetry will be rude enough, but it will be the expression of sheer ecstasy, not to be repressed or controlled;

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people will dance, but they will not waltz; there will be strange songs, but no musical comedies.

It may be said that it is impossible to prophesy; but I think that this opinion is mistaken. I think that the instance of these prehistoric pets of prehistoric Egyptians—one instance of many possible instances—shows that humanity, in spite of surface changes for good or bad, is radically immutable. There is, I know, a sort of assumption, usually rather implied than expressed as a definite proposition, that modern man is really a different creature from mediæval man or ancient man or prehistoric man; that a cabbage has somehow or other turned into a rose-tree—or, if you like, that a rose-tree has become a mangel-wurzel. For the last hundred years or more one has encountered this “transformation-scene” hypothesis or assumption; some people will date the beginning of the miracle from the fall of Constantinople, others from the Reformation, others from the French Revolution. And yet—to take the last date of transmutation—I have met peasants who don’t care twopence for M. le Curé, and spend considerable sums with “le grand divin” when their cattle are out of sorts. And

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I suppose that "palmists" and astrologers gain a very pretty living from the pockets of well-educated people in the London of to-day. Then there is another region: one has heard that the reign of brute force is over. But if that is the case it seems a pity to waste such a lot of money on "Dreadnoughts" and "Invincibles" and "Collingwoods." No, it seems to me that humanity is always humanity. It may be bound down by all kinds of conventions; it may be caged up by every sort of rule and regulation; but it remains unaltered, both for good and for evil. The lion of the Zoo is essentially the lion of the desert. This may be demonstrated by the simple and pleasing experiment of throwing open the gates of his cage.

Probably the boys who recently appeared before the Birmingham magistrates were the children of comparatively well-to-do parents; they were burglars and cave-dwellers not from necessity, but from choice. The boys "bolted" to the best of their ability from civilisation; they made their own house instead of the houses that had been made for them; they won their own food by their own wit: they returned, in a word, as far as they were able, to the primitive state. A

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most interesting example. It shows that the secret has been kept; that in spite of the yearly, monthly, hourly work of the enormous machine that we call civilisation the human spirit yet remains, unchanged and unchangeable, ready, when the opportunity occurs, to wipe out all the lines that have been ruled for it, and to write again the ancient hieroglyphics in place of the modern commercial hand. No doubt those Birmingham boys will get into sad trouble, since so long as the present social structure endures our larders must be protected; and yet in their doings I find grounds for a great optimism. For the whole note of our modern civilisation is that everybody is engaged in "dry-nursing" everybody else, and the dry-nursing is all done by machinery. Now, the fact is that man's happiness really depends on the exercise of his creative faculties, of the power given him of making all sorts of things with his own brains and his own hands; and some have hoped and many have feared that those faculties were becoming more and more atrophied, so that in a hundred years or so nine-tenths of the human race would be unable to do anything beyond touching an electric button. And if this were really

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the truth, we can see that the inevitable collapse of modern civilisation would lead to the extinction of a hopeless and a helpless race.

The secret, as I say, has been well kept through centuries of mechanical oppression; in the heart of man there is still the desire of making, of inventing, of creating. At first in the new age the faculty will be utilitarian; the spear to kill the game and the pot to cook it in will be the things needful. But the spear will be a real spear made out of the man's own head; it will not be a feeble, second-hand copy of some spear made three thousand years ago. And the maker of pots will have no South Kensington Museum to go to, so that he may imitate, very badly, pots that cooked Trojan dinners during the great siege. And from this compulsory sincerity and from the desire of the beautiful and the wonderful that is part of man's unalterable nature will rise the new art, the new literature, and the new music.

CASUISTRY

I HAVE always sympathised with Count Smorltork. Mr Pickwick, it will be remembered, uttered the dictum, "The word politics, sir, comprises in itself a difficult study of no inconsiderable magnitude." And the Count, drawing out his tablets, began to write: "Poltics. The word poltic surprises by himself." The Count had not, perhaps, quite penetrated to the root of the matter; but had Mr Pickwick? And have any of us achieved the feat in question? I, at all events, am ready to confess that I am in comparative, if not positive darkness; and my perplexity has been rather increased than diminished by reading a report of Professor Pollard's recent lecture on "Politics and Character," delivered before the London Institution. Here, for instance, is a sentence from the report in question:

He (Professor Pollard) had no hesitation in saying that it would be a man's duty to tell a lie if thereby he could save his country from a great disaster.

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And in the margin of the paper a friend of mine has scribbled:

The party politician easily defines "a great disaster" as the defeat of his own candidate or fad at the polls.

Exactly; and so we seem to arrive at the proposition that any politician may tell any lie that will benefit his party.

Which is as much as to say that politicians are exempt from all the rules of morality. For if a lie is allowable, why not a theft? Suppose the existence of certain documents to be dangerous in the highest degree to the programme—nay, to the very existence—of the Blues or the Reds. Now we have already granted the premiss that on the success of the Blues—or the Reds—depends the spiritual, moral, and material salvation of England; surely, therefore, it follows on Professor Pollard's showing that it is a duty to steal the documents in question, if it can be done without scandal. Again, let us put the case that the success of the Reds largely depends on the high moral reputation of X, the Red leader, with a numerous class of the community. Clearly, it is the duty of the Blues—to

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whom the success of the Reds is "a great disaster"—to involve X in the most horrible scandal that can be arranged. Suppose X to be a fervent teetotaller, to depend largely on teetotal support. Then it is the business of the Blues, through some discreet and trusty agent, to contrive that X shall be seen dead drunk in Piccadilly at the height of the season. Or again, Y, the champion of the Blues, may have quite innocently involved himself in a chain of incidents which one little word can render utterly and conclusively damning to his reputation; it is, obviously, the Reds' duty to insert that fatal word, and so to deliver England from "a great disaster." And thus we may run pretty well through the range of the Ten Commandments and arrive at the conclusion that the politician is absolved from all obedience to the moral law. You may lie, you may steal, you may bear false witness; nay, you can commit murder. It was the Royalists of the seventeenth century, oddly enough, who quoted the assassination of Cæsar by Brutus as an example to be followed—Cromwell, of course, being Cæsar. And on the other hand, I am sure that many of us at the present day would be ready to maintain

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that the murders of Charles I. and Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were, to say the least, highly excusable. The Good of the People is the Supreme Law. Of course, and anyone not utterly brutish or utterly insane must be aware that it is only Our Party which works or can work for the Good of the People. Therefore, Our Party is at perfect liberty to commit what crimes it pleases, so long as these crimes seem likely to secure its ascendancy.

And, it may be asked, what does this lead to? The conclusion is obviously monstrous—no one believes that it would be right to dope Mr Balfour's tea or to knock Mr Lloyd George on the head, however grave one's conviction of the political mischievousness of the one or the other. What, then, is the truth of the matter? Let us take one point of view—that of absolute ethics; let us deny Professor Pollard's position right out without mincing matters, and say that it is in no circumstances whatever lawful to tell a lie or to commit any other direct sin for any good result whatever. This is a splendid position; we can all approve of it—and a pretty pickle it would lead us into. Suppose you are on a lonely road at night, and a woman flies

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past you and turns to the right. Three minutes after comes a ruffian with a revolver, and asks with imprecations which way the woman went. Are you going to say, "To the right, and take care of the quarry in the second field just by the stile"? Surely not, unless you are a murderer. You may refuse to give any information whatever? Certainly, if you have the courage of martyrdom. It would be easy to construct dozens of such cases to show that again and again, not only in politics but in the whole course of life, men are confronted by such enigmas, are faced by the choice, not between guilt and innocence, but between a minor evil and a major evil. Put again a political case: Suppose yourself to be aware that your leader is an unscrupulous ruffian, who has committed actions which would lead to his instant expulsion from any decent pothouse where his offence was known. You are to expose him? Yes; and with his ruin, which would inevitably follow, would come the ruin of the whole series of good laws which you are convinced would make the desert of modern life blossom like the rose, which, let us say, would redeem many children from early death, and rescue many men and women

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from life-long misery and degradation. No; the problem is indeed a difficult one. I am sure that there is no absolute solution. It is one of the privileges and the paradoxes which constitute the position of man that he can ask many questions to which there is no one clear and definite and absolute answer. We cannot understand Space and Time, and yet we cannot deny Space and Time. Either way we seem driven to absurdity.

I suppose that the only possible answer is to be found in accommodation, which is Latin for making the best of a bad business. Take this specific instance of Politics and Ethics. Personally, I am inclined to conclude that the vast mass of humbug, and "inexactitude," and exaggeration, and bearing of false witness, and downright malignant lying which seems inseparable from modern democratic politics, is, in fact, the *reductio ad absurdum* (or *ad iniquitatem*) of democracy: a practical demonstration that the theory of democracy, however charming and logical it may be as pure theory, is virtually and intrinsically false. A cynic once said that the main difference between the old regime and the new in France was this, that

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whereas of old corruption was the privilege of the few, now it had become the delight of the multitude. This is extreme, but it is not to be denied that while one factory chimney is ugly, a thousand such chimneys, smoking all together, shut out the sun and constitute a grievous pestilence. So, while it may be very bad for the individual courtier to tell lies to the individual despot, it may be much worse when the whole nation enters, as it were, the great market of lies—which is modern politics—and buys and sells falsehood wholesale.

Or, there is another solution; I do not know whether it will be found more tolerable. This is to be sought in the confession that very few actions can be pronounced wholly bad, apart from the circumstances of each individual case; that a lie may be a sacred duty, that the killing of a fellow-creature may be a sacred duty, that to bear false witness against one's neighbour may be a sacred duty, or—at the worst—a very venial sin. And this solution is the solution of casuistry—of making distinctions, of weighing circumstances—of readjusting one's ethical balance a dozen times a day. "Oh, casuistry!" people say, with a vague yet intense shudder, as if every iniquity were comprehended in

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that word. But how about the soldier who levels his rifle against the enemy of his king and country in the day of battle? How about the man who smashes the skull of the ruffian who has attacked his wife or his child? It is written, plain enough, "Thou shalt not kill," and no less a man than Tolstoy holds to the letter of the law. Are we prepared to follow him—into a region of intolerable and indeed wicked absurdity?

SUPERSTITION—OR INSTINCT

WHAT is superstition? The word is in common use enough, but I suppose a good many of us would find ourselves in some difficulty if we were suddenly called upon for a precise definition. The old Latin dictionary explanation, "Excessive fear of the gods," is hardly satisfactory, since the superstitious are often profoundly irreligious; and I remember a character in a novel who hung on the words of the late Mr Bradlaugh, and shuddered at the thought of spilling the salt. As a matter of fact *John o' London* and *Thormanby* have defined the word by example: a superstition is a conventional belief of which we can give no reasonable account. To this category we may refer the horror of salt-spilling and of walking under ladders, the trust in the caul, and the like; in none of these cases is there any obvious or ascertainable connection whatever between cause and effect.

There are many beliefs, which the strictly "scientific" mind would call superstitious, which are not

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really superstitious at all. Only the other day an aunt of mine, in whose veracity I have the most profound confidence, told me the following story, which, I may add, rests on corroborative evidence: Some sixty years ago the aunt in question, having just come home for the holidays, was looking forward to a short visit to a friendly family. Two days before the visit she noticed that her mother looked disturbed in the morning; the day before the visit her mother announced that they were not going to the Garth. No reason was forthcoming, but on the very night of their proposed arrival there was a tropical thunderstorm, the wells in the hills burst and flooded over, the Garth was overwhelmed, and every soul in it perished. Then my grandmother explained that for two nights running she had woke up from sleep with the words *Do not go to the Garth* ringing in her ears.

In this case the event proved clearly enough that it would have been "superstitious"—or foolish, at all events—to have disregarded the warning voice; and yet, in a somewhat similar instance, also authentic, the omen was obeyed and led its victims to destruction.

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A few years ago a husband and wife put off their holiday from the Tuesday to the Thursday. They were going to the Channel Islands, if I remember rightly, and on the Monday night the wife dreamed that she saw the boat wrecked on the rocks. She told her friends, and she and her husband sailed on the Thursday. It was the Thursday boat that was wrecked, and they were amongst the lost. It would be very difficult, it seems to me, to form a plausible theory of this message that went so fatally astray, that was delivered to the destruction of the recipients. But I believe that research would show that many of these "warnings" are purposeless, or accidental. The Cornish farmer's dream, twice repeated, of the assassination of Mr Perceval did not save the statesman's life. Perhaps it is sheer accident which allows us these momentary glimpses of that mysterious region in which there is neither past nor future—only an Everlasting Now.

But, to return to superstition properly so called, to beliefs and practices which seem wholly devoid of rational justification, which are not patient of any theory, however wild: are we to regard the super-

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stitious man as a person who has retained certain fragments of a lost knowledge? A friend of mine holds this theory; he totally rejects the explanations of the Rationalists. He rejects the doctrine of the paint-pot on the ladder and the doctrine of the ancient scarcity of salt; he will have none of the notion that a first tenancy is unlucky, because a brand-new house is often damp. But he takes his stand on the ground that it is always safest to obey the rules of the superstitious game, because superstitions may eventually turn out to be true and well based, though at present we have not the remotest knowledge of their basis.

Many years ago, before the dawn of modern chemistry, old wives used to say that a certain kind of seaweed cured goitre. The faculty of medicine laughed; there was no possible reason why goitre should be cured by seaweed. I do not know how the doctors treated the malady; most likely they followed the famous advice given in Molière's "Interlude." But in process of time it was discovered that the seaweed of the old women was full of iodine, and iodine is undoubtedly good for goitre. But for how many

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centuries before iodine was thought of had the seaweed worked its "irrational" cures?

Now it may be that there is a very strong analogy between this circumstance and many popular superstitions; there may be a real procession of cause and effect in the latter case as in the former. At present one cannot see the remotest connection between spilling salt and misfortune; still, it is possible that the connection exists, and that to one's descendants it may seem the merest commonplace of the most ordinary common sense. But personally I incline to the theory of a survival from the remotest dawn of human history—perhaps even from a period still more remote. Is it not possible that "superstition" may be a corrupted and fragmentary survival of the "instincts" of our half-human, half-bestial ancestor?

Of course, I abandon the attempt to work out the theory. I believe the best scientific authorities have frowned on the well-known doctrine as to certain dreams common to most of us—those dreams which end terribly enough with a fall from a fearful height. It has been surmised that this is an inherited recollec-

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tion of a prehistoric fall from one bough to another; but this, it seems, is an explanation that we must not receive. But perhaps we may imagine a tradition, broken and inconsequent doubtless, passed on from those unimaginable beings who were our first fathers to "articulate-speaking men," as Homer calls them, and not void even in our time, but existent still, and yet powerful in a certain degree in these days of swarming suburbs and fields that bear streets, as if it were mushrooms, in a night.

Perhaps, then, in our very midst to-day, even in this generation that rides in motor cars and writes to the daily paper, beneath the common characters of common life there are discernible the shadowy marks of a most ancient language; so that the morning paper is itself a sort of palimpsest. Who knows what strong reasons there might not have been "once upon a time" against entering a newly discovered cave? And was the ladder once a man-trap?

I remember a curious case of superstition that came under my own notice. An acquaintance of mine, a very well-known *littérateur*, was a devout believer in astrology, who lived, let us say, in Barnes, and was

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happy in that agreeable district. However, he experienced some sort of uneasiness, whether of body or spirit I know not, and promptly consulted his stargazer-in-chief. He was advised that the south of London was highly dangerous to him, that the north-west district meant salvation, and forthwith the Wisdom of the Chaldees drove my acquaintance to some street near Maida Vale, a neighbourhood which he detested most profoundly!

It may be very absurd to believe that the advent of a black cat means good luck. Personally I have no doubt on this point, since by this very event I was translated from penury to (comparative) opulence at a certain Christmastide a few years ago. I had asked a friend to dinner on Christmas Day, and if I had been asked how I proposed to entertain him I expect I should have replied in the spirit of Marcel in the "*Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*." The landlord of the unfurnished rooms saw that his new lodger had no furniture, and observed, naturally enough: "*Au moins vous avez un lit? Sur quoi reposez-vous?*" The reply was: "*Monsieur, je me repose sur la Providence!*" Anyhow, it looked like a banquet of bread and cheese;

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then came the black cat, and in his train abundance. I leave the curious reader to work out for himself any possible connection between black cats and the prehistoric equivalents of Burgundy and banking accounts.

IMAGINATION AND HEALTH

THE other day I read some remarkable statistics. They were given by the President of the British Pharmaceutical Conference, and they relate to the wonderful increase in the consumption of patent medicines. Here they are: "The amount expended in remedies of this description in the years mentioned was approximately as follows: 1860, £350,000; 1870, £580,000; 1880, £1,080,000; 1890, £1,740,000; 1900, £2,310,000; 1907, £2,620,000. Reckoning the population of the British Isles at about twenty-three millions in 1860, and thirty-nine millions in 1906, it followed that the amount spent in patent medicines per head is now five times as great as it was half a century ago." Each of us, therefore, takes five bottles of medicine instead of the one bottle that contented our fathers and mothers; and let it be remembered that these doses leave out of account all medicine save the "proprietary" sort. Besides the bottles and boxes that are bought at the chemist's, we must take

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into account all the physicians' prescriptions that are made up, all the drugs that the "surgeon and apothecary" dispenses in the course of his practice, all the "tabloids" and "tablets" and "pilules" of ascertained contents that so many of us prescribe for ourselves, and, in country places, the medicaments of the herbalist, and even the herbs which are still gathered and dried for healing purposes by labouring folk. One has no idea of the "dem'd total," but its size must be enormous; we are consuming whole oceans of liquid, whole mountains of solid medicine. And I believe that the public health is better than it was fifty years ago. What is the explanation? Are we stronger because we take so much medicine, or do we take so much medicine because, in spite of an improved bill of health, we are more frightened of disease, more anxious about the welfare of our bodies than of old?

Those who mingle their drugs with some tincture of psychology are aware that a ten-ounce bottle may sometimes contain strange ingredients—ingredients that would escape the most subtle analysis of the Pharmaceutical Society. I was once staying with a

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country doctor, and one morning, after opening his letters, my friend came out of the surgery with what I can only call a grin of embarrassment on his face. He explained that he had just heard from a patient to the effect that "that new green medicine has done me a lot of good; it suits me ever so much better than that pink stuff. Please send me another bottle of the green." The doctor then told me what had happened: in sending out his medicines he had mixed up his "pink patient" and his "green patient," if one may call them so. One colour was, we will say, for indigestion, the other for catarrh. Still, the pink man undoubtedly felt better for his green dose. I never heard whether the individual with the bad cold derived great benefit from the indigestion mixture. But it is quite possible that he did.

And here is another case which also came within my own experience. Once upon a time there was a corn-merchant who had a shop somewhere near Drury Lane. Outside the shop, in little bins or receptacles, samples of the various kinds of grain were exposed to view, and small boys who passed by were in many cases unable to resist the temptation of clutching handfuls

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of corn. The enraged proprietor would rush out with fury stamped on his countenance; the small boy would fly, shrieking insult and opprobrium. At last one of these imps was caught in the very act and circumstance of felonious grain-snatching; he was held tight by the collar while the man of the shop informed him that his doom would be swift and horrible. The corn-merchant led his prisoner forthwith to a neighbouring chemist's shop, and whispered something to the two assistants. These immediately busied themselves in horrid preparations, and presently the wretched boy was handed a goblet, on which fearsome and cabalistic characters were graven. It contained a clear, colourless liquid. "Now, drink that, you young rascal," said the dealer, "and you'll find it a dose that you won't forget to the day of your death." The liquid was swallowed, and the boy left the shop; he was already green, and his limbs tottered beneath him. And the next day that lad's mother came round in fury, bringing with her an inspector of police from the adjoining Bow Street. Her son, she said, had all but died in the night; a giant's dose had been administered to him in that shop, and she would have

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the law of the chemist. And the two apothecaries explained that the grim goblet had held no other drug or gum or medicament than pure distilled water!

Now, the curious point is that both my friend the doctor and my friend the apothecary were in the strictest sense of the terms wizards and magicians. The doctor was a "white" wizard, the chemist a wizard pure and simple. And what I want to know is whether the law of England allows the lieges to be slain by black magic? The Act—or Acts—against witchcraft was repealed in the thirties of the eighteenth century—Dr Johnson was a young man of twenty-five or thereabouts—so I suppose that if the corn-stealing urchin had actually died no indictment would have lain against the chemist. The rationale of each case is one and the same; the imagination of the doctor's patient was seized and possessed by the strange green colour of his new bottle of medicine; he was convinced that such queer-looking stuff must be a potent producer of health; he drank, and felt much better. In the other case the imagination was attacked more forcibly; the spell of the chemist's shop, of the strange glass, of the threatening words, transmuted the pure

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water into something very like a poison, and the result was as we have seen. So it seems to me that the repeal of those Witchcraft Acts was an affair of questionable wisdom. And I think that we should not speak slightly of a great and mysterious part of our nature. We are in the habit of saying, "Oh, that is all imagination," or, "That was only imagination." But if this imagination can cure or kill, it must be a somewhat important thing after all.

But here there arises a very important question: What is the strength of this power of the imagination; is it possible to measure it? I suppose not; we can lay down no rules, for the reason that the imagination is a variable and varying quality. The lower degrees of the imagination are so evident in their effects; every doctor knows that a cheerful patient, a man who thinks that he is going to get well, has an infinitely better chance than a man who is frightened and despondent. Is it not, then, reasonable to suppose that a power which all of us, or nearly all of us, possess in a slight degree has been or may be raised to x —to an infinitely high degree? Many of us can write verse—of a sort—and a few of us can write "Hamlet,"

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the "Divine Comedy," and "Lycidas." With a pencil and a bit of paper a child of five can draw something which is recognisable as an attempt to portray the human figure, or a tree; at the other end of the scale are Velasquez and Turner. The physical scientist would say, I suppose, that no imaginative power on earth can help or hinder the operation of strychnine or carbolic acid taken into the system; and I wonder whether he is right, though I am quite sure that I should not like to confute him by the way of personal experiment. I believe, however, that Mr Andrew Lang is convinced that under certain conditions fire does not burn. And if that be so, I should be inclined to think that there may be conditions in which prussic acid does not kill.

ENGLAND AND REVOLUTION

WHEN Robespierre was a young man he was, I believe, an ecclesiastical judge—what is known in England as a bishop's "official"—and in course of time a person guilty of some capital offence was brought before him for judgment. And, so great was the tenderness of the young lawyer's heart, that, rather than pronounce sentence of death, Robespierre resigned his office, became an idealist politician—and drowned Paris in the blood of his victims. And this story of Robespierre illustrates fairly enough one of the main theses of Mr W. Lawler Wilson's "The Menace of Socialism." Mr Wilson has many alarming predictions to make—he tells us that all Socialistic systems, beginning with the reduction of the rich to poverty, must assuredly end in the reduction of the poor to beggary—but he insists, above all, on the fact that the benevolence and philanthropy of Socialist words are the infallible forerunners of ferocious and bloody Socialist deeds. You begin, he says, by professing an almost ecstatic enthu-

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siasm for your brother man's welfare, and you end by plunging a pike into your brother man's breast.

It would be impossible competently to review "The Menace of Socialism" in the course of a brief article. The subject is too vast, and the author's treatment of his matter is complex. But I will try to indicate in a few words the whole scheme of Mr Wilson's book, and to notice some special points which have struck me. Mr Wilson begins, then, by giving various definitions of Socialism, Communism, Collectivism, and Anarchism. He traces the rise of each and all of these forms of political thought to the French Revolution of 1789, which, according to his thesis, he describes as essentially economic in its final ends; he shows the revolutionary, or Socialist, spirit asleep during the Napoleonic period, and again roused at the Revolution of 1830. This rising, he declares, was essentially "red" in its origin, but it was skilfully diverted into other channels by the cautious bourgeoisie. Then he takes us to the period of the unrest of 1848, which broke out in different forms all over Europe, but in each case, according to the author, with a Socialist end in view. Next, we have the

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period of the International, of Marx, and of Lassalle; and Mr Wilson's Lassalle is by no means the sympathetic figure that some of us know in Meredith's "Tragic Comedians." The French Commune marks the end of this period.

From France we pass to Berlin and Bebel's work in the Reichstag and in the constituencies; and the Russian Revolution of 1905-6 closes this general survey. The next section of the book deals with the "English Movement," its origins, its leaders, and its organisation or organisations; then come Mr Wilson's "Anti-Socialist Economics," and, to end all, his "Alternative Policy." And unless this policy, or some equivalent policy, is put into speedy and energetic action, the author is of opinion that all Europe—England not excepted—is in danger of a terrible and destructive revolutionary rising, which will spare neither life nor purse nor land. No doubt, he says in effect, many of the Socialist leaders are amiable enthusiasts who sincerely desire the good of their fellow-men, and would not dream of attaining their ends by any but lawful and pacific means. But the French Revolution was the work of amiable enthusiasts, and

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ended in the bloody orgies of the guillotine. And, besides, in revolution it is the mob which leads, and even the most furious section of the mob. The leaders are, in reality, at the mercy of their followers, and must go forward or be trampled to death. When Robespierre sent the Hebertists—the Extreme Left—to the scaffold and proclaimed the existence of the Supreme Being, his doom was sealed. Such, I think, in fair summary, are the content and the doctrine of “The Menace of Socialism.”

Well, I have said that I cannot pretend to review the whole book or the whole question ; but there are one or two matters that may be discussed by the way. The author says that all wealth is the reward of intelligence, or in his own phrase, “Intelligence is the determining factor in all values.” I disagree with him entirely. Some wealth is the reward of intelligence, and some wealth is the reward of public or private baseness, of downright swindling, of poisoning the poor with adulterated and noxious provisions, of a crafty and detestable capacity for taking advantage of other men’s weaknesses and kindnesses, of the worst possible painting, of the worst possible writing, of

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the worst possible music, and, finally, of sheer luck. Two men are working in the gold-fields: the claim of the one may yield ten thousand pounds, the claim of the other nothing—or a broken neck. I do not know that certain English gentlemen of the sixteenth century were gifted with any especial degree of intelligence; presumably their chief grace was the art of rendering themselves agreeable to Henry VIII. Hence they were endowed with the loot of the monasteries.

Then there is a phrase about “backward and undeveloped peoples” as contrasted, presumably, with industrial and commercial peoples, and I cannot at all agree with the implied judgment. I remember a little valley in the West of England, which I have not seen for many years. When I visited this place twenty years ago it held, I suppose, some four or five homesteads: two farms, let us say, and three cottages. One of these farms was a freehold, the other was rented from a considerate landlord, and each of the cottagers had a bit of land of his own. These people all worked hard but worked healthily; they lived plainly, but they lived wholesomely, and I do not

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think that a little discreet poaching in the shining brook was very severely visited. Their houses, farms, and cottages were sturdy buildings of the sixteenth century, pleasant to look at and pleasant to live in: in a word, the valley was not Avalon, but it was a worthy human place enough. And now, if I revisited that valley, I might very likely find the clear brook transmuted into a black scum-sewer, great chimneys vomiting poisonous smoke into the air, the goodly old houses and their orchards and gardens replaced by rows of mean, jerry-built houses, by emporiums of margarine, and vile cagmag, and bad drink, and every kind of abomination. If any trees should be left, they would be black to the touch; and under these inhuman conditions perhaps five thousand people would exist instead of the twenty-five or thirty who lived there decently and pleasantly twenty years ago.

No doubt the colliery-owner or the mill-owner who has effected this transmutation is extremely comfortable on the profits, but his case would not make me call the former state of things "backward and undeveloped." True, the valley may now support five thousand people instead of only twenty-five, but what

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about the old Latin tag which speaks of "losing all that makes life worth living—for the sake of keeping alive"? There is one thing which I am glad to note in Mr Wilson's book: his mind is quite free from optimistic delusions; he is not writing under the impression that there is nothing the matter with England. On the contrary, he sees plainly that Socialism is the symptom of a deep-rooted disease, that the state of England to-day is not far from desperate. He is probably right in thinking that there is just this choice—remedy or revolution.

CELTIC MAGIC

“IN consequence of that, the men of the Island of the Mighty obtained such success as they had ; but they were not victorious, for only seven men of them all escaped, and Bendigeid Vran himself was wounded in the foot with a poisoned dart. . . . And Bendigeid Vran commanded them that they should cut off his head. ‘ And take you my head,’ said he, ‘ and bear it even unto the White Mount in London, and bury it there with the face towards France. And a long time will you be upon the road. In Harlech you will be feasting seven years, the birds of Rhiannon singing unto you the while. And all that time the head will be to you as pleasant company as it ever was when on my body. And at Gwales in Penvro you will be fourscore years, and you may remain there, and the head with you, uncorrupted, until you open the door that looks towards Aber Henvelen, and towards Cornwall.’ ”

This is from the tale of “ Branwen, the daughter of

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Llyr," in the Mabinogion; and even readers who are not folklorists will guess how the story ends. The heroes who guarded the head of Bran the Blessed feasted in Harlech, and three birds came and sang to them such a song as they had never heard before, birds whose notes were clear and distinct, yet sounding as if they came over the waves of ocean. Then the heroes went to Gwales, to the palace of delights; there they lost all the burden of heavy years, and all sorrows passed from them, and all the time was as one moment of joy, till "Heilyn, the son of Gwynn," opened the forbidden door and looked towards Cornwall and Aber Henvelen, and then their rapture was ended, all their bitter memories returned, and they were cast out of Paradise. Now, so far as I know, the true significance of this most ancient and primitive legend has hitherto escaped notice. Mr Alfred Nutt has pointed out, with his customary acumen, that this Bran, whom no house could contain, is clearly a pre-Christian god or demi-god, and that the tales which made him the first of the saints and evangelists of Britain are late inventions and confusions. Mr Nutt is no doubt

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absolutely right in his contention ; but it seems to me that the vital interest of this story is to be sought in the fact that it is a legend of Loss, a Legend of the Fall of Man. Sir Oliver Lodge, I believe, will not hear of such a thing as the Fall of Man ; he sees nothing in history but the gradual and triumphant Rise of Man ; and it is here that Sir Oliver Lodge differs from the early Celts. No doubt there is a good deal to be said for Sir Oliver's theory ; it is certain, for instance, that travelling is much more comfortable than it was a hundred years ago, and sanitation is almost a science of yesterday. But I am with the Celts.

For it seems to me that it is the sense of a great loss which lies at the root of all the Celtic magic, the Celtic mysticism, the Celtic wonder. The story that I have quoted does not stand alone ; the same message is delivered in many and various symbols. Parallel, to a certain extent, with the Head of Bran is the great mystery of the Sangraal, the holy thing that healed all hurts and doles, that filled those who were privileged to gaze on it with celestial joys, and was in itself a portion of heaven, a gift from Paradise. Corbenic,

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the castle or church of the Graal, was scarcely on earth; the way to it was charted only on the maps of the spirit. And the whole legend of the Graal is a tale of a great and woeful loss. The companions of Bran were like Adam and Eve; they fell through disobedience to a direct command; and the Holy Vessel was withdrawn from Britain by reason of the wickedness of the Britons. In the Norman-French legends with which we are more or less familiar, the Graal is withdrawn finally; the Celts, I think, had a vague hope that it would return in the great day of Redemption, when "Saxons shall be rooted out of the land, and bards shall flourish therein." Still the sense of loss lay deep in the Celtic heart; lost were the magic rarities of the Isle of Britain, for Merlin bore them with him into the House of Glass, where he himself lies lost to the whole world. And King Arthur "changed his life," and passed into the enchanted region of Avalon, where he awaits the signal that he is to return and to restore all things. And it is the sense of this loss that lies at the heart of Wordsworth's wonderful Ode; we dwell very far inland, but we have

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memories of the great deep, the *pelagus vastissimum Dei*, from which we have come.

This, then, is the "Celtic magic." If we are honest we must confess that, in a sense, the Celts have been ineffective ; in Celtdom there is no Homer, nor Dante, nor Shakespeare, nor Milton. There is, instead, the story of the venerable head of Bran the Blessed, and there were doubtless legends, as bare and unadorned as this, from which the Anglo-Normans and the Germans constructed the Quest of the Sangraal, the Parsifal, the whole Arthurian Mythos. Indeed, there is only one line in Welsh literature which foreshadows the Arthur that we know: it occurs in the poem called "The Graves." The burial-places of the heroes are enumerated and described; they lie in the mountain, in the valley, by the ninth wave on the sea-shore, but "not wise is it to seek the grave of Arthur." There is this one line to hint that Arthur was a mystery as well as a warrior ; and this line, no doubt, refers to a legend that has been lost or, rather, survives glorified in the Norman romances. But the Celts, as I say, did not make a great world literature ;

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they set a little leaven in the somewhat solid, somewhat mundane Anglo-Norman lump, and the whole became leavened. The late seventeenth, or early eighteenth century cast out this leaven for a time ; and so, with all our admiration for Mr Pope's wonderful talents, we do not quite esteem him a poet.

Here, then, is the paradox, which is also a truth—that those who write best of the song of the nightingale do so inasmuch as they have heard the song of the Fairy Birds of Rhiannon ; that the actual and tangible earth and sea are best described by men who have visions and memories of domed hills in fairyland, who have accompanied in dreams St Brendan and his fellows sailing in a magic boat across the enchanted deep in search of the holy and heavenly island of the West, which is Avalon, and Atlantis, and also Paradise. Logically, no doubt, the best describer of the primrose and of the flower on the wall should be the man who thinks of the primrose as complete and perfect in itself, as a natural object of purely natural beauty. But actually, in hard fact, the best descriptions of flowers are not to be sought in florists' catalogues.

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but in the pages written by dreamers, who see in earthly blossoms the relics of a lost kingdom, the half-comprehended hieroglyphics of a most ancient speech. To the Celt, and to those who have the Celtic spirit, the whole material universe appears as a vast symbol ; and art is a great incantation which can restore, to a certain extent, the paradise that has been lost. You could not have comforted the heroes who had enjoyed the entertainment of the Venerable Head with a Lord Mayor's banquet ; they would still have sighed for the magic feast that they had lost and for the song of the fairy birds ; and this sorrow of theirs, this longing of theirs which we still suffer, is the true "divine discontent." And perhaps in the first ages of man art was indeed an incantation in the literal sense of the word ; it was an effort to bring back that which had been lost, to renew the delights which no material pleasures can give.

And, as I say, we still suffer this regret and this longing of the Celtic heroes ; for man in his essence is changeless, immutable. All we, like Pryderi, Manawyddan, Taliesin, and the rest of them, have heard,

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secretly, "a certain song," and all the songs that earthly voices sing to us are "unpleasant compared thereto." And the only refuge for us is in incantation, in high magic ; happy are they that find the secret of this concealed mystery.

THE HOLY GRAAL

IF one mentions the term "Holy Graal" in average—not expert—company, I suppose that the majority is reminded of Tennyson's idyll, while a large and respectable minority is aware that Tennyson drew his matter from Malory's "Morte d'Arthur." Some of those present will have read the latter book, and a few will know that Malory was a fifteenth-century editor of older legends. Now these are the rude elements of knowledge of a great and difficult and most complicated literary question; and to those who desire to go further I earnestly recommend "The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal: Its Legends and Symbolism," by A. E. Waite.

I do not think that I exaggerate when I say that the study of the Graal is as perplexed as the study of Liturgies, and the first thing that will astonish Mr Waite's readers will be the number of the sources. These sources, in prose and verse, were written in Old French, Dutch, and German, and were composed,

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roughly speaking, between the years 1170 and 1230. It was the period during which the Order of the Knights of the Temple was at its highest power, during which the dogma of Transubstantiation was formulated. And between these years the massive pillars and round arches of Norman architecture had, somehow or other, become transmuted into the wonderful and unique magic of the Early English or "First Pointed" style: Durham, as it were, had become Salisbury. A principal part of Mr Waite's task—admirably carried out—has been to give a long and elaborate analysis of all these romances. By consequence, every reader of the book has before him the materials for framing a judgment on this fascinating question; he will note the points on which the various romances agree, the numerous points on which they differ; he will be able to form his own conclusions, or perhaps to agree with the conclusion propounded by the author, or again to decide that the problem is an insoluble one, in spite of the wealth of evidence. In any case, "The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal" will be indispensable to all students of the greatest romance-cycle in the world.

The Holy Graal

It would be impossible in the space at my disposal to tell the story of the Graal as it may be collected from the Norman-French Romances—firstly, because of its complexity; secondly, because every statement would have to be qualified by a reference to a varying account in Romance A or B or C. But the general outlines of the legend are very briefly and baldly as follows: St Joseph of Arimathæa collected in a vessel the Precious Blood which dropped from the wounds of our Lord. In this vessel Christ had “made His Sacrament.” The Jews, hearing how Joseph had cared for the Lord’s Body, threw him into prison, where he remained for many years. But Christ, bearing the precious vessel (or Graal), appeared to Joseph and comforted him, telling him that the Eucharist should never be offered without memorial being made of what he had done, and imparting to him certain “secret words” which would give to the faithful hearer power over men and favour with God. As a specimen of the language in which these romances are written, here are some of the words which Christ is supposed to have spoken to Joseph: “Et veisseaux ou l’en sacrifiera et sanctifiera, sénéfiera la pierre en

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quoi tu meis mon cors"—the vessel in which the Eucharist shall be sacrificed and consecrated shall symbolise the stone in which you laid My body. To be brief, Joseph is released at last from prison, and finds his way, with certain of the faithful, after strange adventures, to Britain. Here he founds Christianity; his son (or nephew) succeeds him in the custody of the Holy Relic, and in the super-apostolic priesthood bestowed by Christ Himself. But in the very beginning of the story we have the sense of sin and doom; the Graal is approached by an unlicensed or unworthy person, who is immediately subjected to strange judgments and enchantments; the House of Faith is, apparently, half-ruined before it is built; and a cloud descends upon the sanctuary and upon the whole of Britain. But there is a promise that a knight of the lineage of Joseph shall in due season heal the wounded keeper and put an end to the "adventurous" (*i.e.* evil) days. This knight was Galahad (or Percival). And yet, though the dreary enchantments are removed from Britain, the Graal is at last either lifted up to heaven or taken into still closer hiding, and the predestined knight either renders up his soul to God in

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Sarras, the "spiritual place," or else vanishes, like King Arthur, into some dim Avalon.

Now, this is the baldest and most insufficient of statements of the root-matter of the legend, and I trust that Mr Waite, and all other "questers," will accept the excuse of limited space. But now we are confronted by the great problems: What is the date of the invention of this story? From what materials was it drawn? Is it a Celtic legend amplified and glorified, or is it a French romance into which a few Celtic names have been dropped for ornament? Well, so far as I understand the entrancing but very subtle theory that Mr Waite propounds, the Celtic elements are mere accidents. A pagan legend survived into the twelfth century, and was then informed with a new design. According to Mr Waite, the design which thus gave life to the inert body of folklore was to express the most profound secrets of Christian mysticism; or, using the author's own phraseology, the minstrels and the monks had heard faint and distant rumour proceeding from the "Secret School" which had always been latent in the Christian Church, and, without understanding very well the real intent of the

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message, they constructed this marvellous story of a chalice holier than the chalice of the mass, of a Communion more intimate than that of any earthly altar, of a mass with words more mighty in their operations than the Words of Institution, of a priesthood and episcopate which held their Orders directly from God. It must be added that the author of "The Hidden Church" is careful to point out that he does not use the word "school" in any concrete or corporate sense; he rather implies by it the existence in certain exalted souls of a consciousness of an invisible sanctuary within the visible.

Of course, there have been many other theories. Dr Sebastian Evans advances the impossible view that the whole legend is a politico-ecclesiastical allegory of the events of 1200-1208; Professor Rhys, of Oxford, has invited us to look upon Merlin and Galahad as "sun-heroes." Personally, I am of opinion that the story is of Celtic origin, and that the Knights of the Graal are Welsh saints in armour. A relic of peculiar sanctity—a portable altar, perhaps—used by St David, and famed for its miraculous properties, became confused at a very early period with the Magic Cauldron of pagan tradition; the ruin of the Celtic Church and

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Celtic State found its symbolism in the desolate "enchantment" of Britain; the loss or concealment of the relic became the vanishing of the Graal; the flight and death of Cadwaladr the Blessed are translated into the Passing of Galahad. Such, in rough outline, was the legend as it existed amongst the Celts, *c.* A.D. 1100. Then came the devotion of the Precious Blood, the rumour that St Joseph was buried in Glastonbury, having with him in the grave two phials of the Blood of Christ; and at this moment, I conjecture, the Welsh story passed into the hands of the Norman poets and romancers, who added many things from many sources, who added, above all, the high imagination of sanctity and that marvellous power which, as I have noted, was able to transmute the heavy Norman style into the miracle of the pointed arch. This theory, like all others, is full of difficulties, but I think that one of the strongest points in its favour may be found in the "Parsifal," which, apparently, derives from an early and uncorrupted form of the legend; for, in the "Parsifal," the Graal is neither a cup nor a bowl—it is a stone. And there is no mention of the Precious Blood.

JUSTICE, LIBERTY—AND FALLACY?

SOME months ago Mr Wells's remarkable book, "New Worlds for Old," came into my hands. It was an eloquent appeal for the reconstruction of society on Socialistic lines, and I felt inclined to say to the author, "Almost thou persuadest me." But the whole argument was based on the one premiss—that human nature has improved, is improving, and will improve *ad infinitum*. This, I say, was the base of Mr Wells's pyramid; without it, he acknowledged, the case for Socialism must collapse, and a Socialistic change would only mean a change for the worse. Mr Wells thought this premiss proven; he alleged certain instances of amelioration, declaring, truly enough, that an advertisement in a field, though ugly, was not so ugly as a hanged man on a gibbet. I ventured to question his thesis of a continuous and real and interior improvement in human nature, and I am glad to call as a witness Mr G. Lowes Dickinson.

Justice, Liberty—and Fallacy?

This is what “Martin,” representing, I presume, the author, has to say on the question:

Some of [the great financiers], it would almost seem, are creditable modern representatives of Periander, or of Front-de-Bœuf, or of Cæsar Borgia. For it is Power, not wealth or comfort, at which they aim ; and in pursuit of that aim they trample under foot all law and all morality. As the ancient tyrant or the mediæval baron robbed, so do they; only where he stole lands, and castles, and material goods, they steal the symbols of those things, securities and cash. As the tyrant and the baron tortured and murdered, so do they; only where he with his own hands used the rack and the knife, saw the blood flow, and heard the victim scream, they perhaps never see or learn the consequences of their operations, except when they read in the papers, or hear in conversation as they return from church, that this man is in the Bankruptcy Court, that in the lunatic asylum, while another has committed suicide, leaving his wife and children destitute.

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And in this passage, it seems to me, the whole argument of a steady progression to higher things is confuted. We like beef as well as our ancestors did; the difference between them and us is merely this—that we should not like to slaughter an ox with our own hands. Gravy in the dish pleases us very well, but we are careful to forget the fact that the tasty sirloin implies the bloody horrors of the slaughter-house. I am very fond of lobster mayonnaise, but I should not care to be involved personally in the beginnings of that delicacy. The lobster is said to scream during the process of boiling alive.

And yet, though Mr Dickinson recognises the immutability of human nature, as the instance that I have given demonstrates—though he agrees that under present conditions Socialism would be a curse rather than a blessing—yet he is a Socialist. He confesses that the financier is but a torturing, robbing, mediæval baron in modern disguise, and he thinks that all this can be changed. He does not affirm, with Mr Wells, that we are steadily becoming better by natural process, but he is sure that we can be made better by artificial process—that is, by breeding:

Justice, Liberty—and Fallacy?

With the development of knowledge we may expect that there will come a development in the institution of marriage on the lines of prohibiting, whether by law or opinion or both, unions which it is known will result in bad offspring, and encouraging those which will result in good. . . . Only in quite recent years have a few bold men, like Francis Galton, ventured to assert the importance of breeding for a good stock, and initiated the inquiries that may lead to knowledge on the subject.

And I cannot help speculating as to the possible benefit to humanity that would have ensured if some such entries as these were to be seen in old records: "Considering that one Shakespeare of this town hath been shown to be very slothful in business, and to be but of an unthrifty and ill-chanced wit in his buyings and sellings : resolved that he be declared incapable of Holy Matrimony." Or, again : "Mr Dickens applied for a Matrimonial Licence. Evidence of gross business incapacity and consequent poverty having been given : Licence refused." For I am sure that the elder Shakespeares and the elder Dickens appeared

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to their contemporaries as most unsatisfactory and futile persons, and there must have been a phthisical tendency in the Keats family.

I do not think that I am doing the author an injustice by these imaginary instances. He names some of the just impediments, as he deems them, to marriage, and they are all of the material kind; and later in his book the sentence occurs: "No one who believes, as both Hanington and I do, in a society which is based upon material well-being will deny the importance of maintaining production." And it seems to me that, while Mr Dickinson recognises to the fullest extent the horrible injustices and meannesses and iniquities of the present social order (or disorder), he has failed to detect the cause of all these evils. And I believe that the cause is to be stated in his own words: our society is all wrong because it is "based upon material well-being." As for Mr Dickinson's remedy—his preparation for a true social order by means of "breeding"—I confess that it seems to me as wild as the scheme of the builders of Babel. And what sort of men are we to breed? At first, as I have pointed out, the author seems to say that we are to breed healthy men who will

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succeed in business; later he would appear to assume that we can breed "good" men—men of common sense, decent instincts, and public spirit. I doubt whether it is possible, by taking thought, to produce the former; I am very sure that it would be as easy to run a phœnix-farm as to breed good citizens by careful selection of the parents. Think of the complexities of the law of heredity; think of John Ridd's reflections in "Lorna Doone," that the farmer is thankful if his foals have four legs, not three or five. Imagine the reversions to type in the best-managed human stud-farm—St Francis of Assisi, Mr Charles Peace, and Napoleon Buonaparte—suddenly appearing in Mr Dickinson's placid stock-yards of voters intent upon material well-being.

I am sorry that the space at my disposal does not allow me to do justice to this admirable and thought-provoking book. I have indicated my disagreement with its main doctrine; I wish I could quote the eloquent and beautiful passage in which the writer confesses his belief that man, "sown into the womb of Nature," was "sown a spiritual seed," for it is in that eternal fact that we must seek the answer to the

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riddle of the Sphinx ; it is in the celestial origin of man that we must look for the great work of redemption. Both theory and practice have been busy upon the other hypothesis—that the happiness of man is to be sought in the region of material good. Both “Socialism ” and the modern “muddle ”—or industrial system—are based on this premiss ; they differ merely as to detail. Neither the one system nor the other seems to be aware that human bliss dwells in the region altogether remote from economics, whether competitive or co-operative.

THE ART OF DIVINATION

THERE is a certain theological term which I do not know how to translate. It is *ex opere operato*, and I think it is a near relation of the more familiar *ipso facto*, but as to this I am not quite sure. At any rate, its force is this: if you are tied to the mouth of a cannon and the charge is fired, you will be blown to bits *ex opere operato*, and if you are placed in a certain position under the guillotine blade and the lever is pulled, you will be beheaded *ex opere operato*. In each case, that is, the result is independent of your own will, of your own dispositions ; and, by way of making the case clearer, I may say that roast beef is not nourishing *ex opere operato*. That is, it would probably kill a typhoid patient, since his body would not be "disposed" to receive the nourishment that roast beef contains for the healthy. And I am glad to see that this distinction is clearly recognised by "Grand Orient," the author of "A Manual of Cartomancy, Fortune-telling, and Occult Divination."

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Now, I do not think that it is a matter of belief or of faith or of hypothesis that the prophetic faculty is occasionally found in man. It is clearly a matter of knowledge. I do not even admit that the case depends on the quantity of the evidence, or the number of cases that may be adduced. One dead man is as good a proof of the proposition that humanity is subject to death as ten thousand dead men; one penny, duly superscribed and stamped, demonstrates its existence as well as ten thousand pence. If I have seen one balloon in the air, I am completely and fully convinced of the existence of the balloon: whole fleets of balloons could not make my conviction more of a conviction. Certainty does not admit of degrees. Faith does admit of degrees. Many men might have sufficient faith in a proposition to give up all their worldly goods for the sake of it, and yet the same men might not be willing to offer their bodies to be burned in the same cause. But, there being nothing truer than the truth, or more certain than certainty, it suffices to say that the existence of the prophetic faculty is a truth and is a certainty. I quote the first example that occurs to my mind, that of a Cornishman who

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undoubtedly prophesied the murder of Mr Perceval, the Prime Minister. Here is one balloon: the prophetic faculty, then, is as certain as death, and more certain than the taxes.

So far, so good; but now the question arises: is the faculty latent in every one and capable of being called forth in every one by certain ascertained means? A certain method or methods being followed, can any and every human being prophesy *ex opere operato*? Precise analogies might be rather difficult to find, but we may say roughly, that any man, not being an imbecile, may be taught that the result of adding 15 to 15 is 30. Can we say that, as any man can be taught to calculate to a certain extent, so any man may be taught to prophesy to a certain extent? Well, my own inclination is to return a decided negative; but I am checked by the recollection of the conclusions upon astrology formed by the late Dr Garnett, of the British Museum. Dr Garnett was a man of immense learning, and of a distinctly sceptical disposition, but he certainly came to the conclusion that the abstract principles of astrology were true, though I think he had doubts as to the possibility of their practical application.

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It is possible to have a firm belief in the existence of cosmic laws and yet to hesitate over the question, "What will be the exact state of our earth in ten million years?" Speaking generally and practically, then, we do come to the decision that the prophetic faculty is as the poetic faculty: an inborn and rare gift which cannot be taught, for which there is no recipe. And this, as I understand, is the opinion of "Grand Orient." He is good-humoured enough to tell us "how it is done" in many ways—by the "wheel of destiny," by invoking spirits in the crystal, by "Egyptian" fortune-telling, by the common cards, by the tarot pack, by cabalistic enumerations, and by astrology; but he gives us to understand that, in his opinion, all these things are vanity—vanity, that is, if regarded as methods *ex opere operato*. To put the matter very plainly, "Grand Orient" would not, I think, deny for a moment the possibility of seeing visions in the crystal—or in the teacup, for the matter of that; but he would maintain, very firmly, that the visionary power resides in the seer, and not in the instrument of vision, whether it be crystal, or ink, or the geomantic calculation, or the planetary positions,

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and he would say also that the old magical formulæ—the “consecrations” or “chargings”—are wholly subjective, and not at all objective in their influence. Or, in his own words, “Whatever the process, whatever the instruments, they are simply aids to elicit clairvoyance, and to cast the seer for the time being into a subjective or interior condition.”

I think it may be as well to say a word or two as to the practical aspect of the matter. It is quite true, I believe, that dynamite is a high explosive, and that if a sufficient quantity of it were duly detonated it would blow Westminster Abbey into dust and fragments; it is also quite true that the cholera bacillus may be cultivated. But the truth of these propositions would not justify me in manufacturing dynamite in my back-garden, or in setting up a bacteriological shelf on the kitchen dresser.

OUR ABSURD EDUCATION

"I SAID to a teacher, who was a man, as I looked down on the dirty floor, 'These girls would be better learning how to scrub this floor than learning how to make hydrogen.'" These words, quoted already in *T. P.'s Weekly*, seem to have been, as it were, the low and distant muttering that precedes a storm; since they were reported the storm has burst. The *Daily Mail* has thrown open its columns to the opponents and the partisans of our educational system; the debate has certainly not been wanting in briskness. To begin with, Mrs Close, who is President of the Children's Farm Home, declares that the whole of our elementary education has been a miserable sham; Mr Cyril Jackson, Chairman of the Education Committee of the London County Council, replies that Mrs Close is "completely ignorant of the whole subject," that her facts are inaccurate, and that "her criticism is thirty years old." A medical officer of the County Council Education Department agrees com-

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pletely with Mrs Close, and calls the system absurd ; the head of a well-known commercial college says that 90 per cent. of the Council school children are ignoramuses, and that the standard of knowledge is "not a bit better to-day than it was twenty years ago." The chief of an employment agency says that, in his experience, young people of eighteen or nineteen "have forgotten all they had learned." A leading business man in the City condemns "the results of almost every branch of education in this country":

After seven years at school the average London boy slouches into a business office or warehouse, mumbling or speaking through his closed teeth, unable correctly to copy an address upon an envelope, or to carry a message intelligently from one department to another.

A printer's foreman writes much to the same effect, and Mrs Burgwin, a high official of the County Council Schools Department, declares that modern education is on the whole excellent, and that the manners of children, both in town and country, have greatly improved through the influence of the schools. On

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the one side, it will be seen, are two or three scholastic officials, on the other—almost everybody else.

Such, in brief outline, is the debate; but I think that it may interest my readers if I give some detailed extracts from Mrs Close's act of accusation.

What is the sense (she says) of spending months in teaching country labourers' children the manufacture of raw silk, lead pencils, and raw cocoa, aided by costly boxes of samples of graphite, plumbago, cocoa beans, and silk from the uttermost parts of the earth? The unlucky teacher's knowledge of these substances is, of course, most elementary, and the children know the whole thing to be a sham.

What is the use of teaching our southern counties children the names of the "villages" between Stockport and Manchester, some eleven miles of practically continuous town, this being followed by a list of twenty rivers in Hindustan, and the amazing information that the Mississippi runs up hill! I should say that it was explained (?) that this was due to the position of the river relative to the

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Equator, but we remained as much in the dark as before. . . .

The "domestic economy" classes are, if possible, even more ridiculous. I see girls, not one of whom is much above the charwoman type, studying for weeks together the analysis of the contents of an egg—the quantities being given in decimals, which no one understood. The final item of some dozen being "mineral matter, 00.03," it is not surprising that in the school-yard the girls told me an egg was a mineral containing decimals.

And "Medicus" supports Mrs Close by relating how girls in the slums are taught to keep house on three pounds a week, and to make puddings requiring half a pint of cream as an ingredient. In some schools, it appears, the girls go through a solemn ritual of polishing grates that never have any fire in them, and of cleaning knives that are never used.

Now, first of all, I should like to make a distinction. Are cooking, knife-cleaning, and so forth proper subjects for education at all? Or, in other words, what is education, and what is its object? Setting aside

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the question of religion as hopelessly controversial, I should say that education is, properly speaking, a method of developing the intelligence, of training the faculties of the mind. If this definition be accepted, then it seems clear that the making of puddings (with cream or without), the cleaning of knives (soiled or spotless), the scrubbing of floors (clean or dirty) are very far from being ideal methods of mental training. Equally must we condemn the strange practices of egg analysis, hydrogen manufacture, and plumbago inspection. I do not say that there is no intellectual gymnastic required in these odd pursuits—an idiot can make neither a pudding nor hydrogen—but I do say that there are infinitely preferable ways of teaching children how to think. Given the first elements, the three R's, on which, I suppose we are all agreed, the teacher might hand a copy of "Lorna Doone" to one child, a "Rob Roy" to another, a "David Copperfield" to a third. The result would, I am sure, be infinitely better than anything that a wilderness of hydrogen bottles could produce. Of course, there is a certain difficulty to be faced. Many people will tell me that in the case of poor children, at all events,

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education does not mean a course of intellectual training, but does mean a course of instruction in the useful arts of getting a living and keeping alive. Well, if this be so, the case for our present system is no better, but rather worse. If our boys and girls are to be "educated," to earn so much a week in this, that, or the other occupation, for Heaven's sake let them be educated properly. If a boy is to be a clerk, then let him be taught to write well, to type well, to be an expert in shorthand. If French be regarded as a money-making accomplishment, let him be taught real French, not the queer dialect that Mrs Close heard spoken, which dialect she supposed to be Yiddish. And if a girl wants to be a servant, by all means let her learn the business of a servant. There is much room, certainly, for some such course. I have been in theatrical rooms, in the houses of well-to-do people in Lancashire, where one might imagine that the secret of boiling a potato was as lost as the Great Word of Hiram Abiff, and that the art of cooking a steak transcended the wit of mortal and fallible beings. Let us choose, I say, one system or the other ; let us try to make the children intelligent and civilised human

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beings, or let us make them practical wage-earners, hoping that all such superfluities as thought and civilisation and humanism may be, somehow or other, added unto them. But do not let us continue in the present hopeless muddle, which hesitates between these two objects and achieves neither. It is bad enough for a boy to be devoid of intelligence ; but it is deplorable when, being unintelligent, he cannot copy a letter, deliver a message, or spell the commonest words in his mother tongue.

Then there arises the question as to whether a school is the best place for the learning of many crafts. For those which are concerned with pen and ink school is, or ought to be, the best place possible, but there are crafts which can only be learned by actual apprenticeship. Thus, one would say that the future carpenter, having acquired enough reading, writing, and arithmetic to serve all the needs he is likely to experience, had better be apprenticed to his trade as soon as possible, so that the rough elements may be conquered while he is still young. We hear every day that competition is fierce, and grows still fiercer ; that the number of men unemployed and half-starving is terrible

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to contemplate. Clearly this is not the age in which to waste time in gibbering about plumbago, in egg-mining, in tracing the course of the Mississippi, or in dilating on the exports of Borrioboolah Gha. I do not suppose that the workmen employed by Chippendale knew anything whatever about the place of origin of their mahogany, but they knew a great deal about making chairs and tables out of the mahogany. Again, I say, let us not halt between two opinions, spoiling good workmen and making bad scholars. Let us choose one way or the other, and, if we are to be practical, let us be practical altogether.

THE CULT OF THE SECRET

THE other day, according to the daily Press, an old offence was furnished with a new excuse. The offence was, indeed, painfully unoriginal—it has provided comic writers with material for thoughtless merriment for I don't know how many years. It was simply an affair of an errant husband, of a man who crept upstairs at one in the morning, whereas he should have been at home at six p.m. eating his high-tea. But this bad man's explanation of his conduct was novel and startling. He came home late, he said, because he was a member of a secret society! I forget how the little dispute ended, but one cannot help wishing well to the teller of a daring tale. And, after all, it might have been a true story: perhaps our friend was simply a Freemason who liked to combine the picturesque with the truthful.

The interesting point is that the husband's excuse, though it strikes one as something strange and new when exhibited in the cold columns of the daily Press,

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is, or might be, one of the most ancient in the world. I have just mentioned the Freemasons ; there are those who profess to find the strongest resemblances between the rituals of the Craft and certain ceremonies of ancient Babylon. And, so far, Babylon is the oldest civilisation of which we know anything; its records, I believe, carry us back to the dim borders of the year 7000 B.C. Egypt, too, had its secret rites; though I do not know what authority there is for the theory that the famous Book of the Dead is in reality the ritual of an Initiation Ceremony. In itself this view is not improbable. The Book of the Dead is an account of the passage of the soul from this world to the world to come, and it is possible that by the dramatic representation of this great journey the living were supposed to be prepared for the inevitable and actual experience of death and judgment. However this may be, we know that ancient Greece abounded in rites of secret initiation. There were the mysteries of the Cabeiri at Samothrace, the mysteries of Dionysus (or Bacchus), and, chief of all, the great Eleusinian mysteries, which were amongst the most important features of Greek civilisation. Africa of to-day (which

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is in all probability extremely like the Africa of five thousand or ten thousand years ago) is honeycombed with secret societies, which are not without their terrors even to Europeans ; the Australian Bushman, who represents man in a very early stage of development, has his initiations ; so has the Red Indian, so had the Polynesian. It is clear that the gentleman of the newspaper paragraph was telling an age-old and a world-wide tale.

But, after all, it is not necessary to decipher Babylonian tablets or Egyptian papyri, to visit the Congo or the innermost parts of Australia, to learn that the "Discipline of the Secret" is both ancient and universal. We do not always remember that here in England—nay, in London itself—we have amongst us the most primitive race in the world ; that inset, as it were, into our modern and commonplace and surface civilisation there is another civilisation, antique (or rather prehistoric), fantastic, and hidden. It is hidden because it is everywhere seen, because it is eminently visible ; because its rituals and ceremonies are given names that disguise their real significance. It is a commonplace of human observation that

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the object which everybody can see and everybody does see is apt to become dark and obscure and occult. Familiarity may not always breed contempt, but it certainly breeds indifference and ignorance; and so the world had to wait a long time before the falling apple received its true interpretation. And so it is with the mysterious race to which I am alluding. Even as I write these lines I happen to glance out of the window and see the Strange People engaged in their mysteries.

It is a fine September evening. Men and women are passing to and fro; the workmen are leaving their "job"; one can hear quite plainly the heavy rumble of the "Underground," the hum and rattle of the motor-bus, and the clatter and jingle of the drays. Nobody seems to take the slightest notice of the Strange People. But there they are in the flushed, fading light—some fifteen or twenty of them, dressed in robes of all colours, in the very middle of the street. One, who is in dark attire, stands in the centre, and the others, hand joined to hand, revolve slowly about this figure, chanting as they do in an odd, barbaric mode. I cannot hear the words of the song, and even if I

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could it is quite possible that they would be unintelligible to me. (I wonder how many of my readers know the meaning of "Eener, deener, deiner duss," one of the solemn chants of this People.) But I can see that a distinct ceremony of some kind is being enacted. The revolving figures change places; one suddenly appears standing beside the central personage in the midst of the circle, another is cast into the street without it, and then the rite is interrupted by a hansom cab. This is a faithful description of "children at play" in the north-western district of London, and it is probable that if one wished to know the exact meaning and purport of these proceedings one would have to search the graves of Palæolithic men or the "Proceedings" of the Anthropological Society. Some of the pleasantest of these "games" are dramatic representations of the primitive custom of immolating a human victim and of placing the corpse in the foundations of any new building.

And now that we have got our truly primitive race under close observation we can see how absolutely human is the desire for "a secret," a mystery. If you watch three children together you will probably find

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that Jack and Bill have an inner word that may not be imparted to Ned ; he is "uninitiated." One may say, then, that a "secret society" in its rudest form is well-nigh a necessity of life to average children ; it is an instinct which must be gratified, or else there is a sense of vanity and emptiness. As the child grows older the first crude beginnings are naturally elaborated ; I believe there is hardly such a thing as a boys' or girls' school without its "secret society," a formal and elaborate affair, with a lodge—it may be in a shrubbery, it may be in a barn, with its passwords, its symbols, its vows to keep "the mystery" hidden for ever from the world. And when the boy grows up he very probably becomes a Freemason, a member of a body which, in spite of learned research, remains still obscure and mysterious in its origins as in its ceremonies. It is not, perhaps, so very difficult to discover the fate of Hiram Abiff as it is exhibited to the brothers ; the question is by whom, when, and where were Hiram and his history first imagined?

I suppose that there are thousands, nay, millions of perfectly ordinary, respectable, commonplace people, who go into the City, or on the Bourse, or to Wall

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Street, or to the Great Fair of Nijni-Novgorod, who pay rates and taxes, and cultivate their gardens, and go to church without ever suspecting that they belong to a society which for some centuries was, in the strictest sense, a secret brotherhood, with its initiation ceremony, its second degree, its great third (or Master's) degree, its passwords, symbols, countersigns, and reserved and hidden doctrine. Yet such was the Christian Church of the first centuries ; and still in the East the deacon cries before the most sacred portion of the Liturgy begins:

“ Let all the Catechumens (the uninitiated) depart.”

ROUGE ET NOIR—AND THE UNKNOWN

HERE is a paragraph from a daily paper, which has just attracted my attention:

Lord Rosslyn's first day's trial in the demonstration of his system for overcoming "the bank" at roulette . . . resulted in his being loser of £189 out of his capital of £10,000. His opponent, Sir Hiram Maxim, maintains that no "system" can win in the long run.

Now, I have not followed this great contest day by day; in the first place I am not a betting man, and, secondly, any system which demands a capital of £10,000 is emphatically no concern of mine. But from an abstract point of view the question is not without interest, since if Lord Rosslyn proves that his method is really infallible it is clear that gambling on roulette will become a thing of the past—for the rich, at all events. For, on the one hand, the gambler

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goes to Monte Carlo to enjoy the pleasures of uncertainty, and, on the other hand, the owners of the bank rely on the supposed percentage of chances in their favour. And since rich people can always find unspeculative investments for their money, it is clear that the backing of numbers and colours will become the luxury of the poor!

On the face of it the instinct of gambling is one of the oddest oddities of human nature. I was once in the company of a number of people with pink faces and high collars and light clothes and binoculars, who "talked horse" without intermission; the odds had evidently entered into their souls, and their knowledge of "form" was quite amazing. I felt like a man ignorant of mathematics at the Wranglers' Club, but I took the expert who wore the largest checks apart and asked for his candid opinion on "racing," from the commercial standpoint, and he answered, quite frankly, that it was "a mug's game": a yearly loss, he said, was almost certain. Now, I believe that this would be the verdict of almost any betting man; and one only needs to read the paper to see cases—almost daily cases—in which a "certainty" has turned out,

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indeed, a certainty of ruin and bankruptcy and disaster—sometimes with hard labour thrown in. It is true, of course, that bankers sometimes lose their money, and that grocers come to grief, but then these are exceptional mishaps. As a rule, the banker and the grocer who stick to their business are pretty well assured of a comfortable living and an old age secure from want ; but how many country houses, how many comfortable villa residences have been earned by backing horses? No ; it is clear that my friend with the check suit was quite right: it is “a mug’s game,” a desperate adventure, with the probabilities dead against one, with an almost certain loss at the end of it. And, in spite of all this, man has always gambled and always will gamble, whatever commonsense, morals, a care for the main chance, and the laws of his country may say to him. It is clear that when we define man as a rational animal we must do so with some grave reserves.

For the fact is that man is not a rational animal, he is sometimes a supra-rational animal and sometimes an infra-rational animal. It sounds paradoxical, but it is certainly true that the gambling instinct is a perverted and corrupted form of the greatest human

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qualities. If little boys did not waste their money and imperil their positions in life by taking an interest in "all the winners and S. P."—well, in the first place there would be fewer evening papers in London, and secondly, there never would have been a Homer, a Shakespeare, or a Turner; and the autumn poets, who are now being reviewed in scores, would never have written a line. You cannot imagine a bee backing the winner (or, more probably, the loser), and an ant playing Blind Hookey is a mere nightmare; but then it would be equally ridiculous to imagine the bee writing a book and the ant modelling in clay. In other words, our vices and follies come from the same stock as do our gifts and graces; and the name of that stock is certainly not reason. It is unreasonable to put ten thousand pounds on a horse; it is unreasonable to volunteer on a forlorn hope; it is unreasonable to make lyric poetry or to enjoy it; there is no reason in pure music or in falling in love—but in all these processes and actions there is abundant humanity.

From what has gone before it seems quite clear that the love of gain is not at the root of the gambler's passion. The miser—the man who loves money for

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its own sake—will toil for gain, will starve himself for gain, and perhaps murder for gain; but he will not risk the loss of what he holds so dear. No; the charm of the wager is the charm of the hazard, of uncertainty, of the voyage into the unknown; in the very risk lies all the delight. Gambling, in fact, is the poetry and the adventure of the unimaginative man; it is his poor attempt to satisfy his human instincts; it is his method of escaping from the prison of dulness, of commonplace, of matter-of-fact. It is one of many such methods, most of which are as futile or more futile. Here, again, one sees the strong distinction between the man and the bee. The latter, it is evident, is the happiest of bees living in the best of all possible hives; it is compact of certain strong desires which are perpetually being gratified; it is incapable of trespassing for a moment beyond the bee-world—for it the hive can never be out of joint. And on the other hand man suffers from an eternal dissatisfaction with himself and his surroundings, with his thoughts and his actions; he is like one beating at the doors of a palace, ever striving to enter in. In dreams, perhaps, he has seen a vision of the wonders within, or he has

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caught through cracks and crevices of the walls glimpses of immortal and satisfying delights; his ears have heard faint echoes of an enchanted song. To use a common idiom, man is a fish out of water, who is perpetually trying to get back into water.

Well we know the names of those who have succeeded; these are the saints and the sages, the poets, the musicians, the painters, the architects, the great artists of the world. But the tragedy is that while all desire, few attain: few can understand the means of attaining. Some succeed in killing the impulse altogether, and "settle down" to a life which is almost animal—so many hours of work, so many hours of sleep, sufficient beef and beer, and a little money in the bank. But there are others who back the Red and "have a bit on" a favourite horse. In the East there are people who take bhang and haschisch and smoke opium, in the West there are those who inject morphia and drink huge overdoses of alcohol; they set out for the enchanted palace of their dreams and awake in the gutter, in the hospital, in the home for inebriates.

I have often thought that the ignoring of this secret

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and "irrational" tendency of human nature is the cause of many failures, the explanation of the disaster which has overtaken many well-meant schemes. For instance, I believe the chief dogma of Democracy is that all men are born "free and equal." This may be true; but then most Democratic thinkers must have added (in an undertone, perhaps) "and logical"—which is not true. So with "Temperance" Reform, so with "Anti-Betting" Leagues; they attack a symptom, but not the disease itself; or, to resume my former metaphor, it may be that by some accident or series of accidents certain legitimate doors to the palace have been gradually closed; hence the frantic endeavour to press in by ways that end in failure only—or perhaps in destruction. At all events, it is certain that any survey of humanity which excludes the imaginative faculty and provides no outlet for its exercise is bound to lead to error in theory and to disaster in practice.

THE MOTH AND THE FLAME

LAST month there was an inquest on the body of a woman found drowned on the seashore. "It was stated that she had told a relative that the sight of water always had a powerful fascination for her, and that when she saw it she seemed to have no control over herself. . . . The coroner remarked that incidents of water having a fascination were not unknown. Some people experienced a similar feeling when looking down from a height." The report from which I have quoted is a brief one ; and one wonders whether it occurred to anybody present that Poe had written a curious essay on this very subject, "The Imp of the Perverse." The great American writer points out that many men—perhaps all men at one time or another—are subject to this extraordinary instinct impelling them to seek their own destruction. Like the coroner at the inquest, Poe instances the man on the brink of the precipice: his flesh shudders with horror, all his physical being revolts from the sight of the awful

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depth and the rocks beneath, and yet he lingers, drawn by some mysterious impulse, to his own destruction. Then there is the instance of the murderer who, in spite of himself, feels that he must proclaim his terrible secret to the world, thereby becoming, virtually, his own judge and executioner. In a phrase, we might say that man is subject to the fascination of destruction.

I was reading some time ago a very interesting explanation of the well-known behaviour of moths confronted with a bright light. Everybody has seen the wretched creatures beating about a gas-globe, endeavouring to come to the flame, and success means, of course, scorched wings and death. And yet one has also seen a moth slightly burnt, presumably in pain, returning again and again till it is consumed, or till it can fly no more. Well, the theory that I read, which is that of a very distinguished foreign scientist, is to the effect that the moth, with its peculiar vision, mistakes the candle-flame or gaslight for daylight, that it is trying to get out of the darkness, as man lost in a winding cavern might rush forward on seeing a sudden gleam in the distance.

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Now, speaking with due diffidence, I cannot accept this explanation for a moment, for the reason that the moth is a native of night and of darkness, and avoids the true daylight to the best of its ability. Sometimes one of these creatures, flying into a room at night, conceals itself in a curtain-fold. If you chance to disturb it the next morning, and in doing so expose it to the daylight, it will immediately do its best to take refuge in darkness behind another fold ; it is evidently distressed by the rays of the sun. Clearly, then, the only light which attracts the moth is a light of destruction and death ; it does not desire the star or the sun, but only the candle-flame. And again, birds, which must have a very different kind of vision from that of insects, will dash themselves to pieces against the windows of a lighthouse ; presumably they, too, would fly into the flame if it were not too strongly guarded.

I am sorry to say that I have no theory to propound in place of that which I have rejected. The moth and the candle are to me a mystery, since the creature seems to be acting in direct opposition to the whole course of Nature, to the law of self-preservation. So

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with the birds: they often develop a superhuman sagacity in the detection of snares, in the avoidance of men with guns; and yet they fly madly against the lighthouse window, and fall dead into the sea. Sportsmen have told me that you must use the contrivance of a Machiavel if you wish to get a shot at certain birds, and yet these wary and cautious creatures will dash themselves to pieces in the effort to get at a brilliant light, which they cannot possibly regard as something good to eat! Salmon, too, can be lured to the surface—and to the spear's point—by the exhibition of a flaring torch; and I have heard that there is no better bait for this fish than a morsel of scarlet cloth. Now, the salmon does not feed on burning torches, nor—so far as I know—on large scarlet flies; and yet these objects are an irresistible attraction to it. What is the explanation of this and of the similar conduct of the moths and the birds?

Whatever the solution of the enigma may be, it is interesting to note the parallel between the moth and the man. Both the one and the other suffer from the fascination of death and destruction. Is this a mere coincidence, or have we here varying mani-

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festations of one instinct? In the case which I cited at the beginning of this article the jury, very naturally, brought in a verdict of "Suicide while of unsound mind"; but we must be careful to distinguish between this impulse and ordinary suicidal mania. The unfortunate woman whom the water drew to death had no delusions of any kind or sort; she did not drown herself because she was persecuted by imaginary enemies, because the Emperor of China was plotting against her, or because she had committed the Unpardonable Sin. She perished through a fascination which exercises a certain weak power over most of us, which in her case swelled to an irresistible command, which bore her to the depths of the water as the singed moth is borne to the heart of the flame. And—to quote a very different instance—readers of "Martin Chuzzlewit" will remember how Bailey Junior, certainly not a morbid character, lingered behind on the roof of "Todger's" to walk on the parapet, "contemplating with a delight peculiar to his sex and time of life any chance of dashing himself into small fragments." Bailey, in brief, was obsessed by the "Imp of the Perverse."

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Now the death of the woman was evidently of no service either to herself or to anyone else; it was both spiritually and materially unprofitable. But the question arises whether this instinct, in a modified form, is not demonstratively of the greatest service to humanity. To take an instance. We speak of a great soldier's contempt of death: should we not rather say his love of death or of the chance of death? Perhaps the most wonderful actions of the battlefield have been performed, not by men who overcame their natural fears through a sense of duty and a sense of shame, not by men who by nature or by training were indifferent to danger, but rather by men who loved danger for its own sake, who found in the expectation of instant death the most poignant of all pleasures. And may we not imagine that some of the most heroic rescues of men by men have been the work of those who knew the wonderful fascination of deadly peril? The history is silent as to the after-life of Bailey Junior; but one would not be surprised to hear that he went down a precipitous cliff to rescue some victim of the advancing tide, contemplating with a more exalted delight the "chance of dashing himself into small

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fragments." And, again, there are the explorers, the mountaineers, the men who venture into the waste of ice or into the waste of sand ; these, too, must know something of the " Imp of the Perverse." There must be this mysterious force impelling them to leave comfort, honour, and profit for some desperate adventure of the wilderness or of the rocks, for the risk of a parched or frozen death. The inventor, too, must often be of the same company : the first balloonist, for example, was doubtless acquainted with the joys of peril. And in the spiritual sphere it may seem a paradox, but is it not possible that the martyrs in the flames were men tasting the supremest bliss ? The mathematicians tell us that there is a sphere—they call it infinity—in which parallel straight lines meet ; it has often struck me that this axiom may apply to worlds that are not mathematical—that the supreme life may be the supreme paradox. According to the natural order—or what we think the natural order—the instinct of life is the strongest of all instincts ; perhaps if we carry our analysis a point further we may discover that the instinct of death is stronger still.

Then, returning to the moth and the flame, is it

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not within the bounds of possibility that it and the other creatures who seek their own destruction in such (apparently) aimless fashion are in reality displaying one of the greatest of all human qualities in its rude and primitive condition, in its inchoate state? There is a vast gulf indeed between a hen and her chickens and a mother and her children; but from small rills and petty fountains the great deep of maternal love draws all its mighty and blessed waters. So the moth burning in the candle-flame may be alike the symbol and the physical origin of the highest joy of self-sacrifice.

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