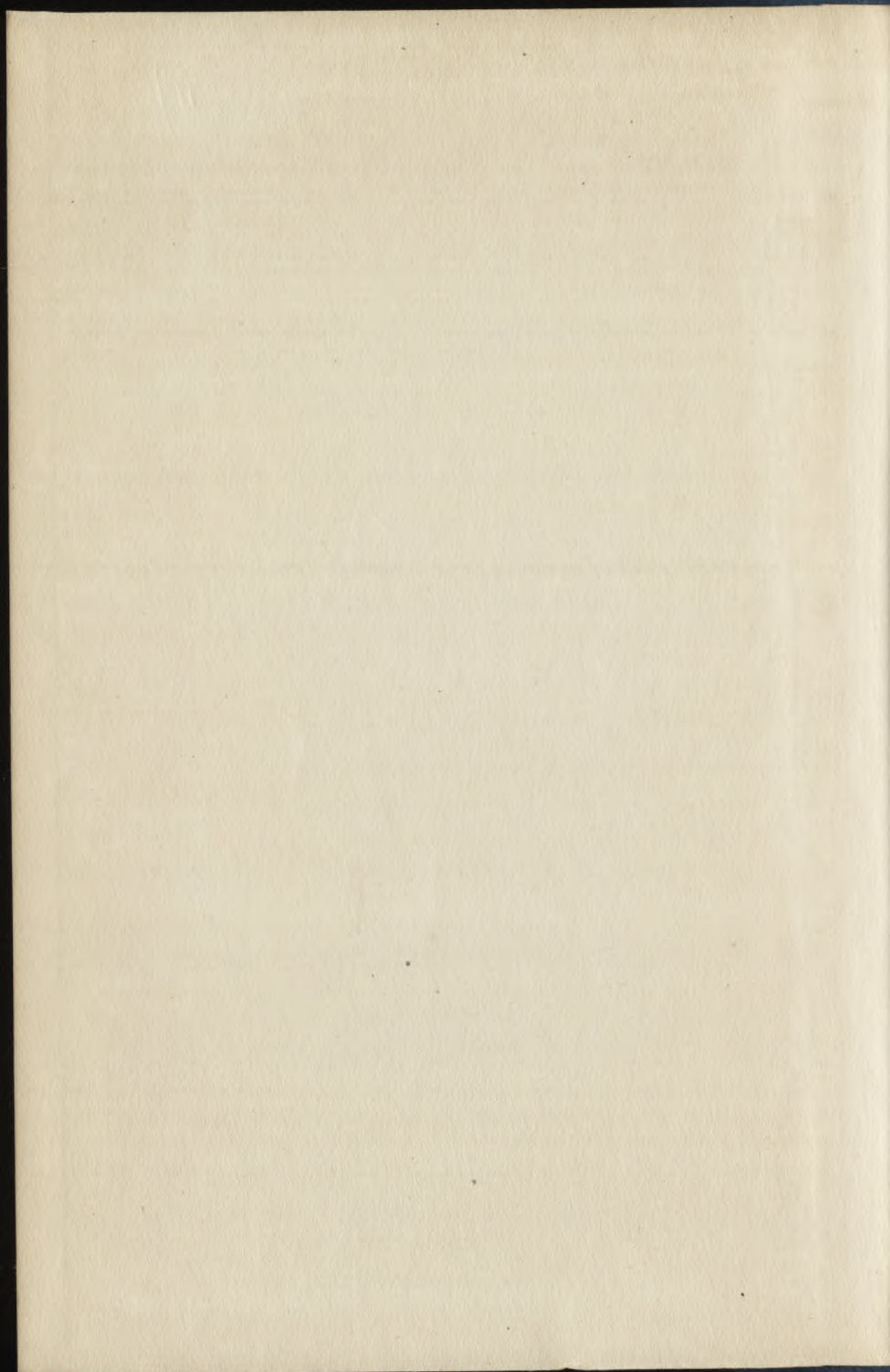


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HOME AND AWAY

Books by ADAM DE HEGEDUS

Hungarian Background

Don't Keep the Vanman Waiting

Rehearsal Under the Moon

The State of the World

We Are Strangers Here Ourselves

Home and Away

Ask No Questions

Adam de Hegedus

HOME
and
AWAY

Notes on England after
the Second World War

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CHAPTER I

HOME

NOT far from the *Angel* at Islington there lives a motor mechanic, Eric by name, an old friend who has done repairs for me from time to time. This morning he examined my car very thoroughly and said he would not advise me to start on a long journey as many of the engine parts were worn, but he would do his best to get the spares as soon and as cheaply as possible. I thereupon decided to do the first part of my journey by train and Eric disappeared under the chassis of an ancient van. It was twelve-thirty as I parked the car diagonally in Upper Street and looked round a little before I went to have my lunch. Islington is one of my favourite districts in London and, as I took stock of it, I was compensating myself for the home-sickness I had felt at times in America. (I had only returned to England a few weeks before.)

Upper Street, which stretches from the *Angel* to Canonbury Station, is a strange jumble with the encrusted deposit of at least five Englands on it. Some of its houses are Georgian with pretty doorways and good ironwork over the basement areas; then there is heavy mid-Victorian brickwork and flimsy Edwardian stucco side by side with what you might call "late George V", such as a "Tudor" pub in half-timber and a radio shop with a front of black and amber glass; finally, there is a post-war block of flats of pink bricks with tiny balconies, the period of Aneurin Bevan. There are seven radio shops in Upper Street, three cinemas and a Woolworths, which help to give the place an anonymous and "contemporary" veneer. At first blush Upper Street could be anywhere in London, but only at first blush, and it depends who does the blushing, for under the thin coating of anonymous uniformity there is a rich and attractive groundwork of individuality and strong local-historical differences. Upper Street, and the whole of Islington, for that matter, may look the same to you as Deptford or Camberwell, Dalston or Hackney, Paddington or Bermondsey, but not to those who live in them. They are "London" today, but they have not been London for long.

Upper Street is busy, crowded, noisy and a little down at heel. A dump you might call it, but I am fascinated by this dump. To me it is Europe, for better or worse, "a piece of the Continent, a part of the Main", as Donne said in his best sermon. One of the results of my long stay—well over a year—in America was that on my return I began to feel clearly and intensely what I had always suspected, that England was a

European country, where the best and worst European traditions (perhaps the best) still stand firm. A European country, furthermore, which a hundred-odd years ago made a conscious effort to run away from Europe and failed in the effort.

But my liking for Islington has a far more personal background. I noticed, for example, that they were painting the outside of the Commodore Cinema opposite the *Angel*. It needed painting badly. In earlier days I knew the Commodore perhaps even better than most of its patrons. I knew the offices upstairs and the enormous stage behind the screen—it had once been a famous Music Hall. A few years ago, when I was a van-driver, I used to deliver the display placards that decorate the entrance and advertise the feature of this week as well as the “forthcoming attraction” of the next. I knew the manager and the ushers. And I knew the *Swan*, the public-house next door. It, too, needed painting, and yet I felt that any redecoration scheme might destroy its slightly sordid albeit warm and intimate atmosphere. The rich carved glass surround behind the bar certainly ought to be cleaned, but never, for God’s sake, taken away. A pianist used to play in the corner, and I wondered if he was still about.

The shoe-shop opposite the *Swan* was full of “the Bold Look” in footwear. Shoes for the adolescent, largely, for the hunter and the hunted, shoes with a basket-weave pattern or with a thick seam across the centre, loafers, casuals, moccasins. Masculine swaggish shoes in angry red, in shivery ice-calf, in golden-brown cordovan and resigned suede. The outfitter’s next door had cast off its war-time seediness. Behind its new chromium front it displayed bright, surrealist ties trying to implant a little transatlantic zest into a country that was doing its best to talk itself into gloom. There were a few “Basque Shirts” with horizontal stripes, and “Casual Shirts” with Windsor and Spearpoint collars, together with one-button suits with a semi-drape back. Past the dusty windows of the jeweller—it was founded in 1760—the radio shop displayed television sets, and there were transparent plastic dentures in the window of Dental Repairs. “A gold tooth at the right place gives your dentures a lively appearance.” The war still lingered over the photographs in Asquith’s window, but the marble angels had assumed a new significance in Repuke’s, the undertaker.

I walked past the deserted pintable saloon to eat at Alf’s Café. It looked somewhat cleaner than it had before I went to America, and it had striplights over the counters, but the atmosphere had not changed. The customers, some of them bookies’ runners, a spiv or two and their admirers and understudies, had the same, *new* faces. When he saw me Reg smiled across the counter.

"Back again, stranger?"

"Yes," I said.

"Wouldn't you rather live in America?"

"Well——"

"I know," Reg nodded, but he was busy. There were two lorry-drivers behind me and a sailor, so I gave my order and sat down by the counter. I didn't quite understand what Reg meant when he said "I know"; probably he didn't quite understand himself. Many years ago, when we were lying on the grass beside the Serpentine in Hyde Park, he suddenly broke the silence and said, "In London you feel the whole blooming place belongs to you." It was then I who had said "I know."

The café was now getting full so I finished my sandwich and tea and said "See you later" and walked out, past the busy market in Chapel Street into the decayed Regency glories of Liverpool Road. The back streets of Islington have a strange suspended animation about them during the working hours of the day which for me invests them occasionally with an awe-inspiring beauty. What Reg in all probability "knew" was that I was glad to be home.

Home? I was not born in Islington and have never even lived there. Much to my regret, it has been impossible to find a flat in the really attractive parts there during the last fifteen years. I am a Londoner by emotion and adoption, and English only by habit and legal process, yet England is the country I have learnt to call my home, without pride, or shame, but with an enormous affection and contentment. It was in England that I completed my growth, in the physical aspect at least: I have actually grown an inch and a half since I came here. During the last twenty years half of me has become English, perhaps my body, which I always suspect is man's basically patriotic half, the body which adapted itself to climate, food, water and air, sounds and smells and ways of life. But my mind—the uncertain half—has not only remained "foreign", but in the course of the last twenty years has become "professionally alien". Half of me, for various reasons, cannot get "naturalized" in any country, even though it shows a strong preference for one in particular. This process began early in that uncertain, unquiet, restless and dangerous age around fourteen, when vital decisions are sometimes made for your whole future, usually independent of your own volition.

At fourteen I suddenly discovered that I was a "foreigner" in Hungary, the country which gave me birth and the country where my family had lived for three hundred years ennobled and God only knows for how long unennobled. Less than six years later I made up my mind and left Hungary without bidding it good-bye, without any regret, and I have seldom looked back. On a few occasions I have been called a

"Cosmopolitan", to which I have smiled socially. Well, what else is there to do but "smile socially" when one hears a piece of unintentional and inoffensive untruth? Cosmopolitan Man is dead and has joined the company of that other famous and attractive corpse, The Man of the world. The meaning of the word has changed in the same way as the tailcoat from the country gentleman's habitual attire has become the uniform of menials. Cosmopolitan Man in our age—an age of Migrations among other things—is the currency smuggler, the merchant seaman, the spy and the refugee. I suppose I was a refugee once, but I could never find out for what reason or reasons I took "refuge" in England. If anything, I was born into a "privileged group", yet I ran away for a frivolous reason, frivolous simply because it was unknown.

I ran away from the brutal sunshine of the Danube plains to the tepid warmth of the Thames Valley. I ran away from the circular porcelain stove and the moth-eaten Aubusson carpet of Budapest II to a room in South Kensington with a mantelpiece and an Axminster carpet bought at a sale at Pontings around 1920. I ran away from the diplomatic career not realizing that, twenty years later, the diplomat was to become a glorified underling. I wanted to be a writer, yes, but a writer of a language which I hardly knew. It may have been the Hungarian language which I found unsatisfactory: attractive and sonorous to the ear but cumbersome and heavy to handle with its embarrassing elasticity. Hungarian is a language which cannot easily differentiate between the past and the imperfect, and I knew that the difference was enormous. In any case, I found English more attractive, a rich, vigorous, masculine tongue, even though it mercilessly shows up woolly thinking and faulty construction, and despite a rigid, classical structure that does not permit much manipulation despite cunning, hidden, unwritten rules and a number of final secrets which this noble, ancient texture refuses to divulge to the stranger at the right, the "decisive" moment. A lean prospect, to say the least of it, because, for a writer, nearly every minute he spends with his pen in his hand is the "decisive" moment.

There may have been other reasons too. There was an "indifference" in London and a privacy which many writers may find painful, but which for me was heaven after the intense concern of Central Europe.

It may even have been the English women. I was discussing this point only recently with an old friend, who is now a lady-in-waiting to Princess Elizabeth. She could, of course, easily have been a hairdresser or a novelist, but it so happened that it was the lady-in-waiting who asked me to dinner. Women in Hungary were attractive to the eye, but hard, very hard, outside and very, very soft and helpless inside, or so I thought. One could not then have heart-to-heart and man-to-man talks with them (now

one could but one is no longer nineteen). Englishwomen, I thought, were soft outside and hard as metal inside; later I found that somehow the higher their social class the thicker their skin became. I liked their physical features, their big bones, their firm features, and even their occasional ugliness. I appreciated their sense of humour, their courtesy, and, above all, their capacity for unexacting friendships.

But all this is a blind. There was a good deal more behind my decision to change my country of which I am not aware, a good deal more which I should like to find out. Because this—as you may have already guessed—is not only my private affair. It is very much a public affair. It has a close and intimate connection with the greatest problem of our time: the problem of nationality, the most vital and most obscure factor of contemporary politics. And the most actual; the revolution of our time is largely around our conception of nationality; in our century the sovereign nation-state, our mother, that “professional eternal” is undergoing a transformation. She won’t die. She is not a “professional eternal” for nothing, in fact she will be bigger and stronger, but growth is a difficult process, especially when the lady in question is about three hundred years old, and pretends to be much older.

I bumped into Len as I walked back to the car. He used to be one of the corner boys around Alf’s Café, the Commodore Cinema, Collins’ Music Hall and Chapel Street market. I knew him when I was driving the van and had a suspicion that he was a deserter.

He looked at the car, then he looked at my necktie. I expected him to make some comment on it, but he lowered his eyes.

“Read your book,” he said, “*The Vanman*,” and his smile was a leer.

“How did you like it?”

“Smasher!” His voice sank into a lower key. “All the boys read it in Wandsworth.” His expression suddenly became businesslike. “Good books were difficult to get from the Prison Library, see, so we floated the good ones over to one another. The geezer who floated yours to me used to go to a posh school, ‘Arrow or something. His father was a Sir. It was in the papers. Told him I knew you. He’s out, too. Came out a week after me, like.”

“Why did you have to go to Wandsworth? Not desertion?”

“Naw,” Len said with contempt, “I’s properly discharged from the R.A.F. I’ve got the papers at home.” He added with detachment, a trifle absentmindedly: “Attempted burglary. You still writing?”

“Yes. I’m starting a new book soon.”

“What’s the name of it?”

“*Home and Away*.”

“Going in for football pools?”

"No. It will be a book on post-war England."

"*Home and Away*. I'll read it."

"Yes, but——"

Len grinned. "I know what you was going to say; 'not inside Wandsworth'. Well, you c'n bet your life on it, I won't go back, not to Wandsworth or any other effing jail. I'm going straight."

"What are you doing now?"

"Working for a street bookmaker. I like the tie you're wearing. American? Thought so. And the whistle too." He placed his hand under my lapel. "Smasher. Well, hope to see you soon. What was the name of your new book again?"

I had the idea of the book a few minutes before we landed at Southampton. Somebody in the dining-room said, "You must declare how many dollars you have on you when we land," and I thought, "This is where I came in. . . ."

It was not the first time I had felt this. It came to my mind, almost as a frivolous suggestion, around 1933, then after Munich with growing certainty and alarm. I became conscious of an ever-growing similarity between the Central Europe of my childhood and the England of my approaching middle age. Expressions of my youth such as "hard currency" and "government subsidy", "controls" and "planning", which were private words of experts in the England of the 'thirties, suddenly became words on everybody's lips. There is an ever-growing power for the State and an ever-shrinking power for the individual. There is more opportunity for leisure, but there is less security. Public events are stunting private life, which is becoming more and more of an underground activity.

At one time I wondered why it was that, whereas, between eighteen-twenty and nineteen-twenty, it was England that led Central Europe, now the direction of the wind has changed and it is Central Europe that seems to give England inspiration. Then I corrected myself, there is no inspiration, but the world is getting smaller and smaller and the circumstances which forced Central Europe to act in certain ways are now forcing England to act in similar ways. England is still leading in many respects that matter, but this time Central Europe is unable to follow.

One may dismiss features like exchange control and conscription, "official cars" for ministers and nationalized railways, ballet and opera out of the taxpayer's money, a state-subsidized "Come to Britain" movement, or a tendency to live in blocks of flats, features which were the accepted order of things in your childhood. But one cannot easily dismiss other identities and similarities which go much deeper beneath the surface

of the history of our time. Nevertheless I for one am not alarmed at the prospect of seeing a scene which I have seen before, at hearing lines of thought, pieces of dialogue, which I have heard before, when I came in for the "first house", because now the "cast" is different and I can guess already that even though a few "basic ideas" have been borrowed along with a few familiar "situations", the script of the film is different and so will be the end of the story.

Standing on the deck in Southampton waiting to declare my dollars, I reflected that it would be worth while making a tour of England, a personal tour by a man who has spent just about more than half his lifetime there, bearing in mind things seen in America and elsewhere, and the first half of his lifetime. I have certain guesses about the coming scenes in the "script" which I should like to concretize, a balance between the identities and the differences which I should like to estimate. That was the reason I decided to write this book before I wrote another. To a certain extent it will be an "interim report", a type of writing very typical of our anxious and uncertain times, but I shall also attempt to look into the future. My own generation, God only knows why, is not afraid of the future.

"I DINE AT BLENHEIM TWICE A WEEK"

AS I had received an invitation to spend a week in Cornwall, I decided to start with South-west England and do the first part of my journey by train. Time was pressing, and I wanted to cover as much of the country as possible while the summer lasted, not merely because the landscape looks more attractive then, but because the "figures" in front of the landscape are friendlier and more communicative in summer. There is a greater difference between the habits and behaviour of the English people in warm weather and in cold than of any other people I know. The recognizable summer is short and the warmth of the sun, like a drink, lures the English out of their shells. They become amorous, lazy, indiscreet, expectant, hopeful and emotional, in fact human. In the winter they need stimulants, both liquid and mental, slogans, exhortations, cheerful rumours and well-calculated lies to rescue them from lethargy.

On the train I got into conversation with three young soldiers on leave from Germany on their way to Exeter. One was twenty, the other two nineteen. I asked them a few questions about Germany and their answers were vague. They were stationed somewhere near Munster and they didn't know much about the place. None of the three disliked the Germans, nor were they interested in them. I can quite understand this. They were working-class boys from a country district, full of vague goodwill and a somewhat muddled sense of decency, but they were not curious and not very receptive. I can't say they are typical of the young national service men of today, but they are very typical of a certain section of it. One was the son of a plumber, the other of a barber and the third of a farm labourer. They left school at fifteen, did a little work, then were called up. A safe job is their greatest ambition in life, and football pools, films and beer their chief diversions. In their early years they had not had much leisure and now nobody is teaching them how to use it. Loneliness is about the worst that could happen to them. "We have too much time on our hands," one of them said.

"What about sports?" I asked.

"There's hockey and football, but you can't play 'em all the time," the one in the middle seat said.

"I reckon all this national service's just a waste of time," said the boy who had first spoken.

I shrugged my shoulders. I have heard that remark frequently since the end of the war. By retaining the Conscription Act in peacetime another English tradition has gone and another link with the rest of Europe established. Very few people in England doubt the importance of Conscription, but even fewer people can decide whether it is possible for this system to produce a trained reserve which contemporary warfare demands; I certainly am not one of those few.

One of the boys had a magazine on his lap. I noticed it as soon as I got into the compartment. It was *Superman*, a magazine whose influence and significance is not even guessed at by educated people. I borrowed it from the soldier and found its contents practically unchanged since before the war, for the probable reason that its readers accept it as it is. It is a publication meant for boys between the ages of ten and fourteen, but I noticed that it, and certain other Boys' Weeklies, are particular favourites with young servicemen of a certain group, the group to which these three apparently belonged. How big is that group? I should estimate it at about twenty-five per cent of the population. And yet it is not even the second lowest (the "lowest" being the completely illiterate), for there is a small group of young men all over England who do not read newspapers at all as they find even *The Mirror* and the *News of the World* heavy going for them.

In other ways the Army in all probability did these boys good. They all looked healthy, all of them had grown at least an inch and put on some weight and they may have learnt a few useful lessons in discipline.

I asked them whether they knew that, generally speaking, the Devonians—who come from one of the sunniest and most prosperous English counties—have a much poorer physique than Londoners from the slums or Tynesiders from former "Distressed Areas". They had noticed that fact and thought it strange. This observation, incidentally, is supported by Army statistics and nobody so far has suggested a completely acceptable explanation for it.

I have also noticed that National Service is having a good effect on the posture of the young. For a long time the British working class have been conspicuous for their bad carriage, their ungainly deportment, unnecessary movements and undisciplined walk. In many cases, of course, it is due to their particular occupation, which either over-develops or under-develops certain muscles, as with plasterers, miners, sedentary workers. More often than not, however, it is the result of the English caste system which in external features conspicuously survives long after most of its substance has gone. I think it was Wyndham Lewis who said that the British worker was "branded on the tongue". This is true, but I would go further and say that to an experienced observer he is branded on

his gait too. In many cases he is what I would call "physically illiterate", which immediately classes him to the trained eye, even if he is tall and expensively dressed, long before he speaks and so establishes his class identity to the trained ear. This "physical illiteracy", like his speech, is improving today, and National Service may be partly responsible.

A long silence followed my questions. One of the boys resumed reading *Superman*, another looked out of the window and the third finally offered to roll me a cigarette. He made me one from the tobacco issued to His Majesty's Forces in Germany, pressed it together with sausage-like fingers, generously licked the sticky side and handed it to me. There was a drop of saliva on the paper, but centuries of friendliness and hospitality in the gesture.

The three soldiers got out at Exeter and as the train took me on to Truro I began to think of my last visit to Penliffe House. It was early in 1939, and though the weather was mild and sunny as is usual in Cornwall, it was nevertheless winter and I saw little of the county, except a glimpse of the tourist's Cornwall: Land's End, St. Mawes, King Harry's Ferry, Truro, Penzance. I was taken to three Hunt Balls and a few dinner parties, shot a couple of rabbits and bathed in the sea one morning. It was disagreeably cold.

I wondered what Penliffe looked like now. I recalled to mind the somewhat austere late Georgian House with the eight Doric pillars overlooking Falmouth Bay, the large park and the even larger estate bordered by the sea on three sides. I remembered that one could see the sea from the dining-room table and, at night, the harbour lights of Falmouth.

Then I remembered the squire, who had since died. He was a private banker, a member of one of the old English City families, with an elder brother who had at one time been Governor of the Bank of England. He had been one of my last links with the Edwardians, the Edwardians at their best I should say. At seventy he was a strikingly handsome person with beautiful manners and none of those streaks of vulgarity so frequently found in the Edwardian upper class, none of their frivolous ways and their habit of sneering at intelligence and culture.

I remembered, too, Captain Ponting, another Edwardian, but from a different class. The Captain was butler at Penliffe and had been with his master for some thirty-five years, except for his years in the Army during the First World War, in the course of which he gained a commission. At Penliffe House he remained "Ponting" but to the outside world he was known as "Captain Ponting, M.C." During the 'thirties Anthony Eden, Duff Cooper, Clement Attlee, Osbert Sitwell and many others from the upper and middle-class dropped their former military ranks, but it was

easy to understand why Ponting and thousands of other "temporary Gentlemen" clung to theirs. Today, however, the same social group likes to forget it. I know a taxi-driver, a native of Holloway, with a good knowledge of rhyming slang, who would hate to admit that he had been a Pilot Officer during the last war. And a shop assistant who became a Naval Commander, in spite of his noticeable Cockney accent, who would be mortally ashamed if his "past" were known.

Ponting managed Penliffe and the town house in Eaton Square with beautiful competence. He was tall and dignified, a text-book example of the pre-war butler, and he spoke a precise elegant English, a trifle too pedantic perhaps, with a strong preference for words of Latin origin. While at Penliffe he waited on me and I don't think I was ever looked after better. His table silver was a miracle of accomplishment. "It's just elbow-grease, sir," he said when I commented on it, and that was his only lapse into slang. No doubt during his military service he had to mix with "all sorts of people".

Silver today is no longer the embodiment of perfection at Penliffe House, but it is still clean and gleaming; the same elegant, Regency pieces with chased edges. Today there is no butler in the house, but there are still two footmen, in blue serge suits, two untrained but willing and efficient brothers, with Hitler moustaches, who still retain some of the attractive accents of their native Dorset.

Penliffe now belongs to the Squire's daughter, who let her other house in the Midlands and retired with her husband to Cornwall. The East wing of Penliffe, which includes the Solarium, is now occupied by a friend with his wife and three children, so that the house is not actually impossible to run, though it is still too big. Like all people who maintain largish country houses, with farms that are let on pre-war rents, my friends are spending capital.

I arrived mid-afternoon, and consequently had plenty of time on my hands till dinner, so I took a stroll in the gardens. The inner gardens with their famous rhododendrons were still beautiful kept by the two gardeners—against the pre-war eight—and although it was only mid-May a good many of the summer flowers were already out.

The outer gardens which slope towards the sea were reverting to nature. It was near this spot that the Squire told me of a Cornish idiosyncrasy. "I bought this house thirty years ago and have spent nearly as many summers in Cornwall and the Cornish still regard me as a foreigner," he said. I am wondering how much of this attitude still lingers in Cornwall. England and France are the oldest national units in Europe, especially England, and yet there still survive some traces of an attitude which is older than the territorial unity of the English nation. The fact is that

consciousness of being "English" is still new to a number of people. It is a relic, of course, and without significance except to the man who is thinking not so much about a "United World" or even of a "United Europe" as about territorial amalgamations, which within one generation, for better or worse, seem almost inevitable in our time.

Walking carefully over the soft turf that covers the side of the hill about the bay, I passed the rusty minesweeper which had been "billeted" on my friends since the end of 1945, then I found my way to the lily pond which I had only seen once before one winter afternoon, when it looked unreal and picture-postcardy. Now it gave me a pleasant shock. The pond lies low, about half a mile from the house; it has been neglected since the war and neglect has done it good. We all know how exciting "beautiful decay" can be in a building; in a garden the excitement is still greater. The lily pond at Penliffe looks insane and beautiful, like the nobleman's attractive daughter who is kept under "private attention" in the South Wing of the mansion and is not referred to in polite conversation. The waterfall is still there, but it no longer functions according to the landscape gardener's original intentions. The gunneras had gone hardy, I noticed, like the married ballerina after twenty years in county society. The arum lilies had lost their innocence and the trunks of the palm trees were overgrown with hair. On the bank the Haensel and Gretel cottage was falling into decay. Its rooms looked damp and haunted through the broken window-panes. There were chains, anchors and other maritime objects inside, fishing nets and buoys: all favourite subjects for one particular surrealist school of painting.

As I walked over to the sea I noticed that everything was overgrown with weeds, but the weeds were rich and strong and luxuriant, like lower orders when the laws of natural selection are allowed to assert themselves in a society which is losing its stratification. I had seen the same picture on the estates of eccentric noblemen in the Hungary of my earliest youth, but they were not quite so dramatic, not quite so rich, not so exciting as this. They lacked that indescribable "English" insanity about them which is so wildly attractive. For Cornwall is very English, in spite of its isolation and private climate, and in spite of the eccentric un-Englishness of some of its inhabitants. A certain amount of it must be pure show and self-dramatization, I am sure. Local patriotism and even nationality itself is partly play-acting in real life, conforming to patterns which are supposed to be "typical" and a pose which people adapt and carry through a lifetime. The strength of the nation—the "everyday's plebiscite"—derives from strange sources, as well as sources which are cruelly logical.

Now, because it has absorbed some of the contents of two other houses,

Penliffe looks a little jumbled. There is Italian baroque and Chinese Chippendale mixed with early Victorian mahogany. On the walls framed episcopal vestments with Florentine primitives look askance at the Louis XIV gobelins. You can see the dark square patches on the green silk tapestries of the drawing-room marking the positions of certain pictures that the Squire willed to the Fitzwilliam Museum. But the impression is pleasing and homely. Those strictly disciplined "period" rooms with calculated emphasis on pictures are always a little cold. They either give you the impression of a museum or the National Trust. Penliffe is lived in, friendly, alive with people. There is knitting in the Queen Anne arm-chair, and a spectacle-case on the *escritoire*, dogs romp in the hall, and seed catalogues rest on the mantelpiece.

In the West Wing there are eight spare bedrooms and they are always full of guests. It is an extrovert house. The host has little private life, the hostess hardly any. She is a member of the Borough Council, a Commissioner of the Girl Guides, and is always on tap to open garden fêtes, church bazaars and crown beauty queens. Then there are Mothers' Meetings, National Association of Women, the Conservative Party and a large number of other activities that our mothers used to call "good works". She is no longer in Parliament—where she had made nothing but friends and one good piece of industrial reform—and both of her children are married, but her correspondence is still enormous. A born matchmaker, she is responsible for more successful marriages than Charles Dickens. The Empire is kept together. There are always nieces from Kenya, sisters-in-law from the West Indies, brothers from Tanganyika and cousins from Canada and Australia. There is invariably a retired Dominion premier walking by the rhododendrons in the garden and one usually finds a Rhodes Scholar in the Library. The family itself is very large; not counting what Debrett would call "Collateral Branches", and those who are unable to move owing to infirmity or advanced age, I estimate their number at fifty-five. Then the hostess from time to time makes sudden and dramatic excursions. A nephew out of the Army has bought a superannuated Turkish battleship and is threatened with a lawsuit; the daughter of an aged country cousin is seriously ill in a Bayswater boarding-house: she takes the train in a hurry, equipped with a tiny suit-case, lavender gloves and a spirited hat, and arrives on the scene like the good fairy to turn the scales at the last moment.

I began by thinking that as a piece of reportage on "how the rich live" or "how the 'county' lives" in post-Second-World-War England, a description of Penliffe might be a little misleading, but later as I walked round part of the estate and talked to some of the other guests and

reflected a bit on the subject, I came to the conclusion that it wasn't really misleading. In England it is very easy to confuse the rich man who buys himself a country estate with the "genuine" landowner, because as a rule both let their farms, and because both of them have often the same origin. Town and country in England have been mixing with each other for a longer period and on a larger scale than in most other places in Europe.

If you scratch your great "feudal" landowner dukes and earls, and even the "simple" landed gentry which at times looks as if it has been living there since the Norman Conquest, you find that some of their ancestors were in trade or one of the professions and that they came from the towns. On the other hand some of the manufacturing families offer to prove that their ancestors had once been country squires. I agree that the number of these is small and that a yeoman or village artisan ancestor is more likely, but it is certainly a fact that, before the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions, it was quite the thing for the younger sons to enter trade and that this tradition never completely disappeared in England.

Besides, the newcomer to the country-side after a time becomes indistinguishable from the "genuine" landowner. How long that time is, I don't know, but I should think it would take quite a long period for a Jewish stockbroker to become a country squire. They become indistinguishable partly because of their new way of life and partly because they want to be indistinguishable. And it is impossible to be a poseur for a lifetime without some effect on one's character.

I had known for a long while that there was no difference between the life at Penliffe and at any of the aristocratic "Stately Homes" except that the servants addressed the host as "Sir" instead of "M'Lord", and there is no difference today. They live the life of the landed gentry which lets its farms (and that is more than half of the landed gentry), but I somehow feel as I have felt for some time, that the owners of Penliffe in a few respects are not quite representative of their class, and this I consider very unfortunate. They are a little "out of step", or you might even call them old-fashioned people, but this in the finest sense of the word. England and their class may have changed, but they have not. One could only wish the rest of the country were as "old-fashioned". Not only are they kind and generous, but they have a deep sense of responsibility, which springs partly from the fact that they are deeply religious and partly from the old English, semi-feudal tradition of responsibility towards the poor. You might call them "the deserving rich"; a very, very rare species which is now becoming extinct, partly—I say partly—because it is so rare; because the general run of the rich is not "deserving".

The Greek word "aristos" means *best* and my friends are aristocrats in many senses of the word. The wife's grandfather was a baronet, a brother of Francis Galton, the husband's grandfather had been Lord Mayor of London and the factory that bears his name has been in the family's hands since 1776. Before that, in an age when it was not derogatory for a younger son to enter trade (as it was after India and the agricultural revolution enriched the aristocracy), they had been country gentlemen. The fact that they have no title you may say is another aristocratic trait, especially in this case. For twenty years the husband had been a county official and had sat on the Bench, and for well over thirty years he had rendered great services to social movements. A baronetcy or peerage therefore would have followed as a matter of course. Besides, they were really rich and, if he had wanted a title, it would have been easy to arrange it, so that if his name had appeared among some pre-war Birthday or New Year Honours, nobody would have asked, "How on earth did that fellow get it?" I don't know if he ever had been approached in that tactful, non-committal, studied "unofficial" way which before the war was the way of political parties who needed money for party funds, but I do know that, in his quiet, unobtrusive way, he gave a sum to a Midland infirmary which was more than the price of a Baldwin baronetcy, not to mention the Lloyd George peerages.

Penliffe has twenty bedrooms, so that it is not what is regarded as a "large" house in England, and as I lay in the sun by the sea I wondered what is to be the fate of those really large country mansions where I spent some happy days of my young manhood. There was Palmerton's Broadlands. Princess Elizabeth spent her honeymoon there, and I wondered if my friend's eldest daughter is keeping it up. Juniper Hill, Melchet and Colworth have been sold, Shillinglee was badly damaged by fire, Dumbleton, Bletchley, and Sandon are only partly used, Kibblestone is let.

Then what about the really huge houses, castles, and private palaces, some of which are famous all over the world? Herstmonceaux Castle now houses the Greenwich Observatory. Wentworth Woodhouse, the largest house in England—if not in the world—is bare and its halls and corridors echo to the feet of physical training instructors and pupils of the Yorkshire Education Committee. The Thynnes are showing twelve rooms out of a hundred at Longleat for half a crown a head. The Pratt family are doing the same at Ashby and at Compton Wynyates, and so does the Duke of Marlborough at Blenheim.

The very largest ones, of course, were a problem as far back as 1920, but the problem has since become extremely acute. Knole, that unhappy reminder that the new rich in Tudor times were almost as ostentatious

and even vulgar as they were in Victorian or Edwardian times, is presented to the National Trust. This is a gain for the nation because it has grandeur and a magnificent sense of history, which many people erroneously identify with a sense of beauty. But talking of real beauty, what about Wilton and Petworth, and Nostell Priory and Easton Neston? What about Vanbrugh's vast masterpieces—bigger than any London hotel—which the dramatist-architect designed with the same sense of drama as went into his plays? I mean his Castle Howard and Grimsthorpe, Whitton, Audley End, Seaton Delaval and King's Weston. I have never felt these palaces were un-English or out of place in the country as many people do, but I do feel that they encourage eccentric behaviour in their owners. Well, Castle Howard was damaged by fire, but the rest, I suppose, are still standing like perfect stage settings for yet another act of the drama.

What is to be the next act? It may be a drab one. The fate of English country houses fifty years ago was still quite often romantic: there was misalliance and disinheritance, suicide, strange wills and an occasional murder. Today the ultimate fate is the National Trust or sale to pay death duties. They become schools, hotels, government departments. A few have been bought by the Roman Catholic Church and turned into monasteries. (It would be fun, of course, if the Roman Catholics were to buy a house for a new monastery which had originally been one before the Reformation, when Henry VIII threw out the monks and gave the building to one of his "managers". Here is a plot for Evelyn Waugh.

What about the homes which are still in the family's hands? From what I saw before I went to America and have heard since my return, a surprisingly large number of country mansions are kept up and lived in either partly or entirely. The reason for this is to a small extent the housing shortage, but to an overwhelming extent it is the fact that the wealth of the rich in England has not really been touched as a result of the war. I am talking about wealth, and not about income. Thus, if there is no death, there is no death-duty, and in some cases, many a rich man "gifts" away his wealth five years before his death, a concession which the American rich do not enjoy (there you have to pay "gift-tax"). Indeed, the wealth of the rich has quite often increased automatically in the last ten years. Since today only some 80 people in England have net incomes of over £6,000 a year, it is obvious that the larger country houses are kept up on capital. I know several elderly, childless couples who maintain huge country mansions from their capital. They spend £10-15,000 a year and naturally don't pay a single penny income tax. They complain that servants are difficult to get (but they get them) and that they have to rack their brains to find those loopholes in the law which

allow them to live the way they used to live before the war. It is true they cannot go abroad as often and for as long as they would like to without complicated arrangements, but most of their complaints are made because it happens to be "good form".

I know one couple in Lincolnshire who spend about £10,000 a year of their capital. They are sixty and are worth about half a million. Unless they live to be a hundred and ten or unless there is a war, they have certainly solved the problem of the "Good life". The Left-Wing intellectual may shake his fist at them, but they know that, as long as there is peace, they are more or less safe as the need for a Capital Levy in England is almost entirely a moral and not an economic issue.

The attitude of the Labour Government is that a Capital Levy is "not practicable", by which they mean that some of the rich would successfully hide their wealth from confiscation, but there is another explanation. Even if England had six hundred Labour M.P.s in the House out of six hundred and forty, public opinion would resist the idea of a Capital Levy. The Middle Class could be steam-rolled by the voting machine, but those in the working class who really influence political decisions would be somewhat chary about the liquidation of the rich. It isn't that their spending power would be gone and the luxury trades threatened, but the politically influential working class somehow surmises the secret and the intimate connection between inequality and freedom and between equality and compulsion. They guess that within a few weeks or months of the rich being liquidated, their own "hard-won" privileges would be in danger. Though, on the whole, it looks as if the British worker prefers equality to freedom, and though he would like to see far-reaching social changes, he wants them to come slowly, step by step. One might as well say that the political maturity of the English worker is quite often to be found in the fact that in the last moment he refuses to cut his own throat.

So England is about the last country in Europe where large country houses, partly or entirely maintained by private owners, are still to be found in abundance. The older Continental countries used to have houses just as big, just as attractive and as old as some of the English ones, but not in any great number. Many of them, in Western Europe at least, were made museums long ago, whereas those in Soviet-dominated countries were confiscated. A number of them still survive in Italy or Spain, where the owner—a decrepit marquis or prince—has been living for fifty years the way his English counterpart is learning to live now. Then their income tax is lower than in England. Similarly in the Western Zones of Germany some mediatized rulers of toy kingdoms and principalities still semi-starve in castles their families have inhabited since the Middle Ages. Some

of them no doubt hope some blond Siegfried from Wisconsin or Texas will come along one day and chase away the dragons with a spear issued by the Lafayette National Bank and in return receive their daughter's hand.

Talking of America, really large country houses on the English and Continental scale have always been an exception in the United States. The man who made money in the cities, to be sure, usually built or bought a country house on retirement. But American country houses are usually small in comparison with the English and in relation to the sometimes fantastic wealth of their owners. The reason for this is that, in America, there were very few houses the rich could buy (even in the semi-feudal South), and as for building a really huge mansion on the European scale, the American was always scared of ridicule or of social disapproval, which undoubtedly would have happened if he had gone out to imitate Blenheim or Knole, although he might have been able to afford it.

The American rich have gone in for the idea of the Continental rich, namely a luxury "villa" in a smart suburb in or near a big city, such as the Grunewald villa colony in pre-war Berlin or those near Auteuil in Paris. This idea of replacing the town house or flat and the country house with one single residence is not unknown in England, as St. John's Wood, Hampstead and Finchley contain a few such "villas" inhabited by millionaires, but most of these are either foreign born or first-generation English; generally Jews. I am not in the least surprised that the English upper class is not taking to the idea. For one thing, the atmosphere of these "villas" and their surroundings is artificial, unhappy and sterile.

On the second day of my visit, our hostess chartered a bus and the whole houseparty set out for a Point-to-Point meeting at Camborne. It was organized by the Four Burrow Hunt, whose ball I attended just before the war and some of whose members I vaguely remembered. The journey took some time through winding Cornish lanes and I sat next to one of my friend's tenants, a very young Colonel in a Household Cavalry regiment.

"You will find Cornwall is about the only county in England that has not changed since the war," he said, with melancholy satisfaction in his voice. He is not a Cornishman but a sympathetic outsider who was glad Cornwall still remained spared the great changes taking place elsewhere in the country. I gathered he was a Conservative, but he was a youngish man—in his late thirties—and a regular soldier. We talked about things *en route* and I noticed what I seldom noticed in pre-war England, namely that Guards Officers are not only human beings, but usually efficient and intelligent human beings at that.

At one time—in the early 'thirties—I knew a large number of young Guardees, both Foot Guards and Household Cavalry. I met them at country week-ends, at Deb Dances, at luncheon parties, abroad, and I was always taken aback by their painful adherence to the traditions of compulsory stupidity of the Guards Regiment. I had always realized that they were not naturally fools—though what was a really intelligent young man doing in the Guards or, for that matter, in the Army in peace-time, even if he was rich and came from one of the noble families?—but I disliked that particular convention, even though I always knew that they seldom sneered at culture. In the 'thirties, a Guards officer who went to a concert instead of a race meeting or bought pictures or read interesting books was not regarded by his comrades as odd. It was not even regarded as eccentricity. In those respects the Guards have been tolerant ever since the First World War, and the "best" of them was never snobbish, but they were a melancholy sight, especially *en masse*. There was a vague incoherence about their speech. They could never talk interestingly even about the things they knew—regimental life and traditions, horses, sport, women and the places they visited abroad.

The new Guardsman is a different type. If he happens to be stupid that is a natural incident and not the result of regimental conventions. As a rule he is well-mannered, quiet, sensible and apologetic. He did his job well during the war, did not sacrifice the lives of his men unnecessarily like his father's generation did, and he helped a fine old tradition to catch up with the revolution of our days. In peace-time he has a new vocation. He is like the company of the Vic-Wells Ballet, serving a very useful purpose in that national pageantry that is needed to cheer the home front of a country leading a dull, monotonous life; and, together with bombed sites, picturesque cottages and stately mansions with tours "personally conducted" by dukes and their families, is part of England's tourist industry. Parades like the Changing of the Guard and Trooping the Colour are still the best rehearsed shows in England. ("Perfect, perfect," said the Russian Grand Duke, "only they breathe.") Moreover, their regiments are still the best trained Infantry regiments in the country.

I have often noticed since the war that young Guards officers quite cheerfully flout not only regimental conventions, but also the semi-secret orders which minutely regulate their standards even when in plain clothes. If today one sees a man walking along St. James's wearing the civilian "uniform" of the Guards (bowler hat, carefully rolled umbrella, stiff collar, red carnation, watch-chain and pigskin gloves), he is, as often as not, an ex-Guards officer. The younger generation is either hatless or wears a slouch hat, travels in the forbidden bus or underground and carries parcels. A few weeks ago I saw something "much worse": a

young Guards Captain in uniform (a) in a bus, (b) carrying a parcel, and (c) wearing a pair of suede shoes with crêpe rubber soles.

The weather was glorious and we soon passed through Camborne and arrived at the old farm where the meeting was to be held. The car park was a neighbouring field and was already fairly crowded with cars of all sizes and makes. But there was also a number of traps and gigs and an Edwardian shooting brake or two, resurrected, I understand, because of the high price of petrol, but it may well be that they have survived in Cornwall.

Since it was a quarter past one, we had lunch on the lawn, then we left our mackintoshes behind and made our way to the farm. The atmosphere, I somehow felt, was not so much pre-war, as pre-1914, at least as long as one did not go deeper. There was the impromptu paddock and bookies in sponge-bag suits and brown bowlers from Penzance, Truro and Exeter; old firms with "old firm" faces. Those people who are now farming a little group by the paddock must be the Committee members; the stewards, the judges, starter, clerk of the course, scales steward and a number of horse doctors. I am using my recollections of Siegfried Sassoon's novels as a guide-book and it seems to serve me well. Again, as with the shooting brakes, it may be partly lean times that account for their pre-1914 get-up, and they seem, most of them, caricatures of the "horsey set" of the county from the nineteen-tens. One occasionally sees a few such people on nice sunny mornings at Knightsbridge Green, around Tattersalls and Tom Hill the saddle-maker. Tall, thin men, all legs, and the legginess further accentuated by the cut of their hacking coats and the shape of their gaiters.

At the bar inside the marquee I find the competitors with numbers pinned on their coats. There is something intimate and almost noble about their shabbiness, as there is something outsiderish and vulgar about horsemen in new clothes who look like fashion-drawings. Most of these people in the marquee, who all talk at the top of their voices, don't regard the meeting merely as a social event. It is also an opportunity to entertain the farmers, or to advertise a horse for sale. As they move about in the warm air of the marquee they introduce a faint air of good tweeds and an air of the stables. It seems many of them may groom their own horses, which, as my father said once, is the proper way of horsemanship.

But there is Pamela coming into the marquee, wearing a bowler which suits her handsome, haggard face. Her surprise at seeing me after ten years is far greater than mine, for I expected to see her. We discussed Pamela last night at dinner. I was good-naturedly bantered about sitting out more dances with her than was discreet at some hunt ball in 1939. She got married during the first year of the war and her husband was

killed soon after D-Day. She wears her hair in a long bob and, at thirty-five or so, is even better-looking than when we used to meet nearly every day for a fortnight at various hunt balls and dinner parties around Penliffe. It was Pamela who taught me "the Lancers" and gave me all the "dirt" about the County.

The Ladies' Race in which she is running is not until half-past two and she is a little nervous, so I suggest we look at the horses. We begin with her own, a chestnut gelding about sixteen hands. "Nailing good hunter," I say, and the Edwardian phrase becomes a joke on my lips. We both laugh. In any case, her horse is called "Capstan", but I have a suspicion she is too light for him. Then the loudspeaker announces the beginning of the first race and we troop out.

It seems that the loudspeaker announcements are the only contemporary note about the gathering. The County in the Enclosure looks very much the County and the farmers outside in leggings, tweeds and check caps look very much the farmers. I am pleased to see one or two chewing straw, but miss the square bowlers. Behind them I recognize two masters in civvies ten years older certainly, but still in the old good spirits, and a third in a pink coat and velvet cap against the vernal landscape. Later on he will take part in a little propaganda show, but now he is talking to a "sportin' journalist" of the old school, who looks the part. Everybody does, including myself. I am wearing a borrowed grey cap with my grey flannels and Gunner's tie. Pamela said all the four Cornish hunts whose names I vaguely remembered were still in existence. There was the Four Burrow, the North Cornwall, the East Cornwall and the Tetcott. I saw some of their meetings before the war and I went to their hunt balls and I liked their members, largely because they were not smart and, therefore, looked "real". They looked on hunting as a sport and not as a stepping-stone to social prominence. Near London, I remember, a hunt and its ball was always a strained affair, and an air of anxiety and studied countiness about people who hunted.

Of all the idlers of the pre-war "leisure class", hunting men were the only ones who aroused my curiosity and, in fact, my sympathy. It was partly perhaps their childlike simplicity of mind and zest for life which appealed to me; a zest which the gamblers, the afternoon men and the night butterflies of the smart set seldom shared with them. Hunting folk idled their time away in a nice, clean, healthy way and they did not come out with stupid and transparent apologies that foxes did a lot of harm and hunting was important from the point of view of improving the breed. They simply said it was exciting, and that they loved it, which I well believe.

Before the war there were in England about a dozen or so really first-rate hunts with money, tradition and fine sportsmanship. Many of their

members devoted their whole life to hunting. A very pleasant thing no doubt, if you can afford to devote your life to something you really like, and if the social-economic system allows you to do so. Hunting was still a nobler object to devote a life to than gambling, drinking, party-going and whoring. Then there were about a hundred or so "commercial" hunts, that gave hunting a bad name. Perhaps the majority of their members had not been brought up in the hunting tradition. They rode indifferently and inconsiderately and hunted more for the social prestige it conferred than for the excitement. Finally, there were poor hunts in faraway districts, with true horsemen in battered bowlers and down-at-heel riding boots, who hunted in their spare time. They usually had little trouble with farmers as they hunted over fallow land, where you could not let farms if you bribed the farmers.

Today the situation is very different. There are few fallow lands in England, horses are comparatively cheap, but everything else is fabulously expensive and this time social protest and disapproval is not restricted to the R.S.P.C.A. or to long-haired, untidy young men and bespectacled young women, but from quite a considerable section of the Conservative Party, among others.

The days of hunting are numbered in England in spite of the fact that in 1948 a bill to do away with hunting was thrown out of the House of Commons. There are two circumstances in the background of that incident. First the fact that today most of the people who hunt in England are farmers for whom hunting is not an expensive pastime (as a rule they don't even wear pink coats). Secondly it is bound up with the feudal tradition, which, let us admit it, is extremely attractive and not altogether foolish. People naturally hate to see it go, even though today they know that these attractive traditions are a serious stumbling-block towards the modernization of English agriculture, not to mention the fact that they help to peg class distinctions. Nevertheless, hunting will go and the bill to abolish it will arrive just to put on record an already accomplished fact. The reason for its doom, I think, is that hunting is a sport which other social classes cannot share with the rich. Most games and pastimes are evolved by a leisure class, granted, but most of them are adapted by the classes below the leisure class; if not, there is no social justification for the sport. Most games, like cricket, football, golf, tennis, or sports like fishing, boating, even horse-riding and motor-racing, belong to the first category; hunting doesn't, and it cannot be adapted because it cannot be made really inexpensive, no matter how exciting it can be.

The Ladies' Race follows now. Faraway by the starter I see Pamela among the eight other competitors. Two friendly young men shake

their heads as they see me placing half a crown on Pamela's horse. "He waint win," one of them says. "Not Capstan, sirr. Too heavy behind, sirr. We're backing Armoury." I see in the programme that Armoury belongs to one of the Masters, but the race is won by an outsider, Capstan being fourth.

One of the boys offers me a cigarette. There is some pre-war "loutishness" in their appearance if not in their manner. They are both farm-hands, dressed in the exaggerated fashions of the 'thirties: "bum-freezer" length tweed jackets, flannel trousers that are very wide at the bottom and uncomfortable "regatta" shoes. They wear their caps at the Beattie angle, their faces and hands are very red and they have bad teeth. I find out that they are working on dairy farms near Camborne for about a fiver a week, and that they have never been to London. I love to listen to their attractive drawl, almost an American accent but soft and easy on the ear. I stand them a drink in the marquee and they drink it quickly in order to stand me one as soon as possible. That they call me "sirr" goes without saying, but they treat me with a deference which is a little uncomfortable, and the more so because I know that they want nothing whatsoever out of me, except my company.

"Cornwall is about the only county in England that has not changed since the war," the Guards Colonel had said, and as if through some strange telepathy his name crops up a second later. He is doing a very good job with the Territorial Army and is much respected and popular. The respect, however, as I discovered, is not due to his organizing ability, which is considerable, but largely to the fact that he is such a "fine gentleman". The feudal attitude apparently still survives among Cornish agricultural labourers, but I should like to know how deep it really is and to what extent it survives elsewhere. Cornwall is on the edge of England, after all. It has always been semi-isolated. I expect I shall get nearer to the facts when I end my tour in East Anglia in a couple of months' time. I must, however, note that one of the boys—he is twenty—cannot read or write.

I met several illiterates before the war and during my Army service—I had to write love letters for one and read the replies—and the majority always struck me as bright and intelligent people; a splendid argument against education, but there are many more available if you want to make a case. This young labourer, for example, has a good memory, is probably very good at his job and generally doesn't seem to miss much of the benefits of literacy. For one thing he is "nationally conscious", he doesn't think that Londoners are foreigners, and he thinks Russia is "wicked", but then school education is not the only agency for teaching national allegiance or guiding the gregarious instinct into private channels. I ask

him how it happened that he never learnt to read and write, and the answer is precisely what I expected. There were fifty boys and girls during the war in the class at the school in the village and they couldn't "learn" him, besides he had to leave school as his father was "powrly". Now, six years after the war, overcrowded classes are still the rule in certain rural districts and I am just wondering how long it will take us to reach the literacy standards of the Scandinavian countries.

The following evening we go to Newquay for the Hunt Dance. As I observe that Pamela is as good on the floor as ever, I catch sight of a few people I saw at various parties in Cornwall ten years ago. Outwardly they have changed little, except that there is a younger generation, some of whose members I had seen in 1939 at a New Year party, carefully brushed, scrubbed and housebroken. Now they are introduced to the world; not the real "world" of course; the shock would be too great for the poor dears. Or would it? People younger than ourselves often give us a few pleasant shocks when they reveal how much they know, and sometimes a few shocks that are not so pleasant.

The ball is at a residential hotel for gentlefolk and there are ferns and potted palms in the ballroom and quite a good local band. There are a number of women, who seem to be wearing the same dresses in which I last saw them ten years ago. There is tulle and kid gloves and chest-protectors of shiny black linoleum and blushing brocade. There are also feathers of birds that seemed to have lived only during the Edwardian era and only for evening dress purposes. There is a section of the rural upper middle class all over the world which always dresses for an evening occasion as if it were attending a fancy dress party.

Pamela is wearing a simple evening dress of black chiffon which sets off her golden blonde hair and her nice healthy country colour. She leaves two young men in pink tails (one has brought a hunting horn with him) and we decide to sit out one dance under the palms. She says, "D'you remember how we used to make fun of the County at Hunt Balls, you and I? Before the war I used to hate them. I thought they were empty and old-fashioned and catty, sometimes just vulgar. I felt like living in India. But, of course, there was nothing else to do for a girl like me, who is totally uneducated, than to move about with them and get married. When Robin went into the Army I went into the Air Force, and when he was killed I came back and took up gardening with a cousin. We are living together and run a flower farm. My cousin has most of the capital, so she hunts two days a week during the winter. I have just enough money to go to London twice a year and stay at my club and buy a frock or two. Now, as I see these people again, I find I have changed my views about them. I think they too have changed quite

a lot. They are much more human and sensible. It was such a comforting feeling to come back to Cornwall after four years in the Air Force. I was really glad to see them again."

"Is the County apologetic today?" I said.

"Yes and no. They certainly were during the war and up till about 1946. Then, when the Labour Party began to "get things done" they fell into a bitter mood. They began to live better and spend money. Tell me, why is the County far more class-conscious today than before the war?"

"I suppose because, in theory at least, today it is possible to abolish privileges and the County is afraid, but there may be another reason. The County is an upper-middle-class group, and they are less apologetic and more socially reserved than they were during the war because they think the working class has won. The picture is, of course, blurred. We are going through a social-economic revolution, and while it is obvious that the upper-middle-class had lost a good deal, the working class as such is not winning, except in the case of some individuals in the working class who soon cease to be working class. How many? That we don't know, but it is certain that the working class as a group did not win and is not going to win unless you are confusing improved economic conditions with political power. It would be highly undesirable if the worker—or any other group such as the employer or even the scientist—had exclusive power to run the country, but that's beside the point. The workers are not taking over because, as a group, they have not the necessary skill, qualification and training to take over. Besides, I quite frankly doubt if they even wish to take over."

"That may be," Pamela said, looking at her cigarette. "In fact, what I saw in the Air Force rather bears out what you say. But what will be the end of it all? Our own class no longer has any leisure, and those who have it don't know how to use it."

A young man in pink tails interrupts us now and asks Pamela for a dance, so I couldn't answer her question direct, but here it is:

"Your class has less leisure than before and that is partly your own fault, because very few people in your class used their leisure intelligently. That you had a sense of responsibility towards the "Lower Orders" is all very well. Perhaps you helped to spare the country a serious political upheaval, but times have changed and needs are different from the old needs. On the other hand, the fault was not entirely yours. You have been encouraged by the "Lower Orders" to waste your leisure and income in your inimitable, graceful ways, because they always preferred—in every country—the playboy to the industrious man. And there was "something" in that; in fact more than "something". If you asked me to chose between Squire Osbaldeston and Ebenezer Scrooge, I would

unhesitatingly prefer the Squire. But then, you see, I don't have to choose, and I could have a third alternative of 19th century English types and pick on Lord Acton. But this is beside the point. Your class still has some leisure left. Would it be schoolmasterish on my part to suggest that you can still use that leisure to your advantage? In any case, don't get bitter, Pamela. Bitterness serves useful ends only in small doses, so for God's sake go careful with it. It is a habit-forming drug like some barbitones, cocaine, morphine, veronal, and the rest."

DEPTFORD REVISITED

WHILE I was on the train that brought me back to London it occurred to me that I should have interrupted my journey in Devonshire, in Somerset, in Wiltshire. I should have gone to Devizes to look up friends, to Bath to see how the repairs on the Royal Crescent, damaged during the "Baedeker" raids, were progressing. Yes, I ought to have spent a night at the Grand Pump Room, revisited Pulteney Bridge, the noble limes in Queen Square, the magnificence of Prior Park, but time passes all too quickly, and I have to be selective.

I was wondering, too, if in the course of the journey I should be able to spend a night amid the nostalgic grandeur of a large English railway hotel like the one we have at Charing Cross or Victoria. It is one of my old ambitions to give a really large party in one of them with manservants wearing sidewhiskers and serving roast beef under gas chandeliers.

In the end, as it turned out, I could have spent a whole week in Bath, or in Bournemouth for that matter, and produced a chapter on the middle-class in retirement. When I went to see Eric on my return to London he told me my car was still not ready. In the last two weeks he had been touring all the car-breakers in North-West London and had managed to get the spares with the exception of one or two. He hadn't got a battery. "I could, of course, get you some new ones from the shops anytime, but if you can stick it out I c'n knock off the best part of three quid for you, see?"

My immediate reaction was a spurt of anger. I had missed Bath and it looked as if I would have to hold up my journey still further in order to save three pounds. But a second later I was smiling. What a nice fellow Eric was! He treated me as another "working bloke" to whom "three smackers" would make a great difference. "Get the stuff from the shops and fix me up as soon as possible," I said. He said he would in less than five days. Under the circumstances there was only one thing to do, go out and gather material for the London chapters, which I had intended doing after my tour of the countryside.

As it happened the thing worked out better than I had expected. That same afternoon I received a letter which had been readdressed from Cornwall, inviting me to a dance in Brook Street. It was to be in three days' time. I decided to go, but it gave me another idea. What about going to another dance first, to a dance hall in the depths of the East End or of

South London and then contrast the two? I decided to go to the *State* at Deptford.

It was Bombardier Midwinter who took me to the *State* in '42, while we were stationed at Woolwich, and I remembered I had seen it before in the early 1930s, when the walls were not yet damp and the decorations in the bright jazz style of the 'twenties not yet shabby.

Then, after the war, I rediscovered the place. It represented one of the best standards of dancing in England, it had a good floor and first-rate band. And it was easy to get on with the patrons: they were practically all locals. Hardly any "wolves" came to the place from faraway "Manors" like Wandsworth or Kentish Town to pick up girls. The *State's* regular patrons came from Peckham, Honor Oak, and Greenwich, a few from Bermondsey and Lambeth, but mostly from Deptford and New Cross. They had gone to the same Council Schools and now went to the same pubs. They had played football in the streets, fought for the same girls and used the same local slang.

They are a provincial society. Most of London is, but the East End and the South is a friendly provincial society, helpful and closely knit but very tolerant towards strangers. The latest arrivals to the hall look to be Poles, the remnants of Anders' Army; formal, very formal, serious, reserved young men with wasp waists and stainless steel teeth. They find a job, pick up the language, marry an English girl and disappear in the urban desert. Their children—Norman Jeszensky or Kenneth Mycolayczik—will look and talk like any other child in Deptford. There is something almost American about certain London districts, especially the East End; an indifference towards race, which is not typical of the better-to-do regions of England. Perhaps people below a certain social-economic level are not yet nationalistic or intolerant, or they live in such a congested state that they cannot afford to be otherwise.

Last time I met a youth at the *State* who was a dock worker. "I'm the only Jew that works," he said. He was actually half a Jew, with an Irish mother. And in a place like this coloured men, negroes and Indians are liked quite often simply because they are coloured. But all the same—just as in America—it would be easy to stir up racial antagonism in East or South London.

When I last visited Deptford I drove round and took a very good look at it before I went to have tea with Ron McKinder, his girl and his mother. Ron is a toolmaker and, while we had tea in the kitchen, he went on pressing his trousers. I found out that not far from where the *State* stands today there used to be Sayes Court, the home of Evelyn the diarist. One day he saw a young man in a nearby cottage engaged on a piece of beautiful carving. His name was Grinling Gibbons. Henry VIII was

christened about a mile away. Deptford was a great place in Elizabethan times, a famous maritime district with Henry's Royal Dockyard by the river. Drake lived here and Howard of Effingham, Elizabeth's Lord High Admiral. It was still a fine place in the 18th century, when the now condemned, but still lovely, Georgian houses of Albury Street were inhabited by sea captains. The parish church of St. Nicholas—a lovely building, I remember, before it was destroyed by bombs—had pretty monuments to seafaring men like Pett, the inventor of the Frigate, Shelvocke, the navigator and Frobisher, the admiral.

At first sight Deptford is one of the drabbest districts in London; dirty, grey, crowded, ill-planned; a maritime quarter that has no access to the river. Together with Bermondsey, it was a section of London that grew up mushroom fashion within forty years, faster even than the corresponding sections of New York or Berlin. The industrial revolution came so quickly that nobody bothered about the worker, about planning or even about real utility. It crowded the greatest number into the smallest possible space as cheaply as possible and gave them two per cent of the total area as an "open space". But that applies to the whole neighbourhood. South London has a drab uniformity and lacks the violent contrasts between haunting Georgian beauty and utter desolation which is the case in Islington or Stoke Newington. Yet all the same, the atmosphere of Deptford, Southwark and Bermondsey is fascinating, because the past somehow still haunts them. It makes itself felt through mysterious channels, such as fogs and mists which take possession of London streets on winter mornings.

I talked on the train to a young worker with a horseshoe tattooed on the back of his hand. He gave me a Woodbine to smoke and waved to me after we had said good-bye, and I got out at the haunted railway station of St. John's where trains do not stop, and, if they do, nobody gets in or out. He lived at Southwark. Why is it that people in the drabest surroundings are often nicer to meet than people who live in comparatively attractive and comfortable districts? I had asked the same question in the urban wildernesses of the Bronx, of Chicago, Los Angeles, in pre-war Berlin, Paris, Birmingham, Jarrow, Wolverhampton. You could perhaps explain it with some self-defence or protest theory. But why are the people of South London nicer than those of North London? People who "ought to know" have never been able to answer that question. They said yes, I was correct in my impression that the South London poor were "much nicer", more homely, more friendly, more ready to help you, more amiable, softer . . . sweeter. Yes, sweet is the word you can apply to a tough-looking youth and to an elderly dockerman

who still wears a "choker" instead of a tie and collar. Under the thin veneer of uncouthness or dandyism, mixed with other less commendable traits, they have a streak of childlike sweetness which a sensitive person who ever talked to people along the Old Kent Road must feel. North London is more mature and more seasoned, more cynical and mean. If South London is childlike then North London has all the aggressiveness of adolescence. The reason, perhaps, is that Deptford, like Stepney, is inhabited exclusively by the poor, they are not rubbing shoulders with the Middle class as the poor do in Chelsea, Paddington or Marylebone. There they become pretentious, half sophisticated and sour. Wealth for Deptford is an exciting myth, for Chelsea it is an irritating reality.

Inside the *State*, standing on the balcony looking at the dancers revolving beneath, I see Roy Fenton, with his girl, gliding gracefully with professional skill and amateur enthusiasm. Could it be possible that this young electrician, who knows nothing even about his grandfather beyond the fact that the old man used to keep a pub in Greenwich, is some descendant of Lavinia Fenton? We know she lived here towards the end of her life when she retired from the stage where she had been playing Polly Peechum in *The Beggar's Opera*. That most of those who do live here have not lived long in Deptford, or in London for that matter, I can well imagine: there are hardly any fourth-generation Londoners—this is a typical note of all big cities—but there certainly are some who have been living in London for several centuries. In any case, where did Roy come from and where the others? I don't mean their immediate homes, because I have been to them. Some live in housing estates, others in council houses built before and after the war, some in small Victorian houses which are sub-divided into flats, have no bathrooms and the sanitation is outdoors.

Roy's people have lived in the same one-storey brick house off New Cross High Street for so long, in fact, that they "could have bought the whole blooming house out of the rent". But what is their family history? Who are they, historically speaking? That is what interests me. If only one could look up Roy and the others in the reference books, which are called "Blue" and are invariably red, like Burke and Debrett. They conceal a good deal, those Peerages and Baronetages and Companionages and Landed Gentry; prison, lunacy, bankruptcy, illegitimacy does not get recorded, nor the real facts behind some of the titles. "For public services" is a phrase which often conceals an exciting story, but all the same you can always get some facts from the "Stud Books". But there is no "Stud Book" for ninety-seven per cent of England: the middle classes which makes up some thirty-five per cent and the working classes which make up well over sixty.

How exciting it would be if one could "look up" the people one knows in Deptford and Bermondsey. Have their families always been poor? Were they among the "Inferior Orders" of the Middle Ages or among the "Sturdy Beggars" against whom Tudor Parliaments had to legislate. Are they descendants of the people who tried to make common cause with Charles I during the Civil War? Do they come from "the Squatters" evicted from the village commons when the Enclosures were made? Are some descendants of the impoverished middle class or related to those whose arms are recorded in the "Stud Book"? We don't know and they don't know themselves, and few of them would be interested anyway. Ancestor consciousness—apart from a few farm labourers—begins with middle-class status.

But here they all are at the *State*. There are few I don't know by sight and I exchange greetings with many of them as our eyes meet. Dennis, a bricklayer's labourer, sports a smart grey diagonal-stripe suit, but he doesn't like wearing a tie. Jim, a cabwasher, is in a brown pinhead with a tie which is a riot of colour. There is Ted, who used to be a second lieutenant in the Army; he is trying to sell plastics now; blue hopsack suits him well. And there is Tom, smarter than ever, just out of Borstal for a bit of "tealeaving". Some are tall and good-looking, in "an obviously Plebeian way", as Mr. William Plomer has put it. For that matter, social differences are slow to disappear, even though today the working-class young are almost as tall as the upper-class young, and their teeth have improved enormously. The dialect is on the wane too, yet with one look you can establish their social identity at once. It is either the briskness in their walk or that ungainliness which I have already described as "physical illiteracy", and which is so easily distinguished from the intellectual's amble and the scholar's shuffle, or the scientist's "unconcern". Class, after all, is largely a "culture" as the nation is. Ruth Benedict in one of her books suggested that "race" was "culture" too.

There is an interval between nine and half past when the band—the best in South London—packs up for a rest. Some of the customers rush out for a drink, some go to the balcony for light refreshments. As Jimmy and I are sitting together in the corner, drinking our tea from chipped cups, I am reminded of the class theme again. He is feeling very sexy. "But you can't find nothing here," he says, with resignation in his nice, deep, soft voice. "All these birds are out for a good time. They do everything except carve the joint." Jimmy is twenty, nearly six foot tall, quite handsome and a goodish boxer. For seven months he has been saving up for his suit out of his weekly wage of five pounds. It's a remarkably good suit; it should be for £28. Jim is very fed up with cabwashing; his father is trying to get him into the docks.

Where the class theme comes in is that in our time, generally speaking, it is a little more difficult for a working-class boy like Jimmy to find girls for sex than for a boy in most other classes, even if he knew where to take them. The girls he knows may have "done it", but they are very exacting, and those who are not exacting he wouldn't like. Sometimes, of course, he must accept the unexacting type: girls older than himself and not attractive. Sex for Jimmy is difficult, because working-class girls want to get married far more than any girls in any other class. Besides, in places like Deptford, extra-marital love is determined by fears different from those which girls in the middle class would feel. Working-class girls often have distasteful early childhood memories about sex. They no longer sleep under their parents' bed as many did before and during the war, but owing to overcrowding they quite often overhear their mother complain about the clumsiness and brutality of their fathers, and they grow up associating sex with pain and danger. Overcrowding, on the other hand, might give boys and girls opportunities which are sometimes the envy of those in more respectable surroundings; but still, the young worker does not quite enjoy the sexual opportunities of the young from other classes. For one thing their sexual urge is less controlled, and for another, because they don't know how to use their leisure, have to fall back on sex, and sex, if available, costs nothing in Deptford.

I am sure that a good deal of the young worker's sexual urge is as unreal as the 18th century country gentleman's enormous appetite. He would eat his way through seven-course dinners simply because he had nothing else to do. As for lack of money, it adds to their sex hunger in two ways: first, money is not available for "alternative entertainment"; secondly, it is not available for purchasing sexual pleasure. There are no prostitutes in Deptford or in any other poor district.

The class theme, of course, comes back again if we realize that class frontiers in matters of sex are as rigid in our time as national frontiers. Women from the middle class upwards would not mix with Jim, and Jim, for that matter, would find "a real lady" slightly embarrassing. Race does not include sex-aversion, class apparently still does. Lady Chatterley—an upper-middle-class woman married to a baronet who carried on with the gamekeeper—has always been an exception everywhere. That is, perhaps, why her behaviour had such great scandal value.)

For a long time I believed that the working class was more moral than the upper class, at least in sexual matters. Now I know that the root of my belief was what Bertrand Russell calls "the superior virtue of the defeated". What I believe now is roughly the following.

At times the young worker may be as sexy and as promiscuous as a spaniel on heat, but after his marriage he is usually monogamous. Though

they generally marry early, few working-class partners commit adultery, unless there is something basically wrong with the other partner. On the other hand, however, the richer classes are not as promiscuous as their economic circumstances and far greater opportunities would allow. The pursuit or maintenance of power and social position and the pursuit of other pleasures take up much of their time. The immoral streak in the upper classes manifests itself largely in popping into bed with somebody for material advantages. The worker would almost instinctively feel such a thing "wrong", even though most prostitutes are of working-class origin, and even though idle men kept by their wives are present in the working-class too.

It has been said that the two puritanical waves of the 17th and 19th centuries never deeply affected the English worker, and that their sex life was healthy. This is not as true as it would seem to be at first. The working class, in spite of Cromwell and Wesley, had always been pleasure-loving, noisy, improvident, fond of song and dancing and drink and colourful dress and, generally speaking, had far less self-control than other classes, but puritanism dealt as serious a blow to their sex technique as it did to most other classes. The effect of that dreary but useful doctrine was that they were forced to take their sexual pleasures furtively, and because of that they lost technical skill, to the same extent as other classes. This was not the case on the Continent, even though the wave of 19th-century Puritanism—to a lesser extent—had affected most of Europe. (That is the reason why the revolution in sexual morals after 1919 was far more violent and lasted longer in England than on the Continent and why the "message" of D. H. Lawrence sounded so commonplace and uninteresting to most Continentals. "We knew all the time that a healthy sex-life is important," was the general Continental comment on the "message". "Are the English only learning it now?" Nevertheless there is another side to the Continental picture: licensed brothels are disappearing all over Europe, an English influence of very questionable value.)

Lack of sexual skill in the working class is very widespread. A social worker friend of mine who has been on the staff of a Marriage Guidance organization in London told me that the average working-class man (or woman) did not know the "first thing" about sex, that women—unlike men—only gradually develop the capacity for orgasm and enjoyment, and that there was a good deal of unhappiness caused by ignorance in sex matters. Boys like Jimmy talk an enormous amount about sex, but seldom about sex technique, not so much because they think it is "dirty" as that they are ignorant of it.

Sex knowledge begins with the upper-working-class, which is a great consumer of books sold in what D. H. Lawrence called the "Rubber

Shops". It seems painful to realize that large groups of people have to learn the technique of sex from books or from marriage guidance offices. But is it really so painful? After all, millions of people don't know what to eat and how to eat, how to take care of their bodies, so what?

Dennis and Norman come up to me, followed by Ken and Colin. "Anything wrong with you? Why don't you dance?" I go around with a girl in a tailor-made grey gabardine. She wears a black patch over her left eye. ("The name's Nelson," Dennis said.) Then I sit out again. The point is, I am observing. How good the standards of dancing are. Class again: the line of class division in ballroom dancing in England is the lower middle class. Below that dancing standards deteriorate; the County and the aristocracy are the very worst dancers.

I am watching Mr. Potter with his partner, a thin man of uncertain age, with hair plastered down, and a wiry body which looks for all the world as if it were kept together by means of adhesive tape, a grey suit of pre-war cut, and a none too clean marcella dress shirt with polo collar. How good he is, how graceful.

Then here are Bob and Lily. They come from Bermondsey. He is a lorry driver for a brewery, she works in a shop. Their long engagement is used to perfect their dancing style. They dance "out of books" and take lessons every Sunday morning from professionals. They have poise and control and their dancing is a smooth, continuous slide. They know that they must inhale when they rise on their toes and exhale when they lower for a heel step.

Bob and Lily start with a Feather Step, Reverse Turn, Three Steps and Natural Turn, then Feather Step, Closed Telemark, Feather Step and Change of Direction, then Feather Step and Whisk, then Feather Step and Reverse Wave, Feather Step, Open Telemark, and go on doing about six so-called "amalgamations", then begin again, which means that they dance on the same principle as a ballet dancer whose movements are subject to the blueprint of Choreography. In their case the "choreography" has been laid down by some Society of Teachers of Ballroom Dancing after many arguments at some national conference in Southport or Hove. I have never attended such a gathering, but I am told that the atmosphere is far more rigid than at a Headmasters' Conference or Church Assembly.

I always knew that the *State's* clientele was mixed. There are some serious youths, who come here with their "steady" girls once a week. There are others who come seven nights a week. Most of them are very well behaved and give no trouble to genial ex-policeman Mr. Train, the M.C. in white tuxedo. There are, of course, rowdies, and I know several who are barred. The majority are hard-working youngsters, but there are

others who disappear from time to time from the scene: Borstal and even the "Scrubs" are not unknown to them. Tom told me tonight that Harold was in the clink. I remember Harold quite well, in his sky-blue gabardine suit and dark blue suede shoes. We had been talking about life in general one evening, when Harold suddenly broke off his story with a "You mind if I slip somefink in yer pocket, myter?" and simultaneously something fell against my fountain-pen. "I'm on probation, see?" he added. I looked towards the balcony and saw two policemen gazing round with bored expressions. "Somefink" was a razor.

By the band-stand a group of teenagers who seldom dance. "We just come to giggle," one of them says, but they usually jive when that is permitted at "the stated times". There is a fraternity of railway porters like Reg and Bill and two or three others who work at the stalls of East Lane on Sunday mornings selling linoleum and china and shirts, or radio parts.

The clientele is mixed but it does not give a complete cross-section of young Deptford, for there are others who don't come to the *State* at all, they consider it a "waste of time" and go to greyhound meetings and pubs. (Greyhound racing is the third largest industry in Britain as far as capital turnover goes. What are the alcohol trades?) Then there are others who take sports seriously or attend four evening classes a week, studying engineering, accountancy and so on, hoping eventually to rise out of Deptford and the working class.

For Deptford is an almost entirely working-class district with a mixture between better paid workers, like dockers and engineers on one hand and busmen and seamen on the other, but the largest group is semi-skilled labour. Finally there is a large group of unskilled labour.

As within the middle class, there are at least three groups within the working class, and as is the case with all classes, the divisional line between the groups is not purely economic. It is outlook more than anything else, but these subdivisions today are vanishing within the working class the same way as they vanish within the middle class. The causes on the surface are economic, but they are really connected with functional changes. The old—and enormous—differences between craftsmen and unskilled labourers are decreasing, not only because the craftsman on the whole seldom gets very much more than the labourer (he used to get far more), but because the new industrial techniques need far more machine-minders (semi-skilled) than either craftsmen or labourers. The skilled man who takes a pride in his skill, and the clerk who takes a pride in the fact that he does not use his hands for earning his living, like to separate themselves from others. But the "white collar", the symbol of the past, is being replaced today by the "spun-rayon

Spearpoint" for all, and in any case the labourer does not give much respect to skilled man and clerk. If he respects anybody it is either someone from the middle class whose friendship he purchases with flattery or another working man with high wages, like Ernie, whom I had met at a pub, a genial street bookmaker, who makes about twenty pounds a week and pays no income tax. Ernie is very popular, perhaps because "he can pick up a pound where most blokes can't earn a penny".

I did not know the *State* in the 'twenties when it was new, glamorous and its decorations up to date, but slowly its aspects of the early "thirties" come back to me. It was a late autumn evening somewhere around 1933 and the mists of the river seeped into the ballroom. The entry was a shilling, I think; the boys used to wear white chokers instead of collars and ties, blue serge suits with horizontal shoulders, Oxford bags and shoes with triangular toecaps; some of them were ill fitting and poorly. The girls were better dressed than the boys (today the only sharp difference between them is at working-class weddings: the bride is dolled up in lace finery but the groom doesn't match her in a morning coat). They looked poor and tough, but I think they were mentally younger, more primitive, at least on the surface, and somewhat happier.

That latter point is something I remember distinctly, not only about the customers of the *State*, but about every gathering of young workers all over England before the war; they looked happier. The reasons for the change would be difficult to find, if one tried to be objective and didn't look at it from party angles. There is no doubt that the young worker is materially better off today. There is very little unemployment and purchasing power, on the whole, is not worse than before the war. The young labourer gets £4-£5, semi-skilled £5-£5 10s., skilled £6-£7, highly skilled £7-£10 a week. They are also healthier, better dressed and more independent. Many of them are better housed. (The slum houses are still there all over England, but they no longer necessarily denote "submerged" state. Sometimes you see the family car in front of a slum cottage or pre-fab.) What is missing? The young English worker is not troubled by the fear of war and perhaps not too much troubled by various controls and compulsions, but I cannot help thinking that, when the change came, it was not only grinding poverty, slum housing, inadequacy of diet and unemployment that went, but something else as well, and that was a sense of excitement. I can't help feeling that life for the patrons of the *State* was more exciting before the war, in spite of inferior social-economic conditions, perhaps *because* of them. There was somehow more freedom, including the freedom to semi-starve, it is true. They could afford the cinema, the dog track or the *State* usually once a week only. Father was often unemployed and they themselves

worked as costers, barrow boys, shop boys, van boys at odd jobs with no job-security at all; the West End was magic.

It may be that there was some excitement in the fact that social-economic contrasts were sharper, squalor more exotic, and wealth more glamorous. Or are they less happy today because, on the surface at least, they were less sophisticated and therefore satisfied with less? The problem of those who grew up during the war, had war or Army experience, is easier to answer; they are obviously suffering from anti-climax. Many of them feel that they had the time of their lives during the war. Not only was there a sense of danger, which elated them as it elated the whole country, but there was a freedom that was entirely new in their lives. Social barriers were down. The English social structure during the war was almost the same as before the war, but those who ruled the country made a tacit agreement to pretend that class did not exist, and if it did, only on a functional basis. The Press, over which Left-Wing journalists had great influence, helped to keep the recalcitrant at bay. London became cosmopolitan and exciting. The blackout for the young was not irritating; it became a romantic cloak under which there was hardly any difference between liberty and licence. And licence, like power, is very attractive. There was a good deal of moral laxity. The parents were busy working, sometimes one of them was away, and in any case nobody listened to the old. If the Nonconformist began to preach against sin he was told to preach against slums and unemployment, or help the war effort. The authorities were also busy, and the police were usually indulgent towards young men in uniform if they found them at night on bombed sites or commons making love to girls—and sometimes to boys. There were exciting times to be had abroad. As a compensation for the danger, in the services or in the Merchant Navy there was glamour, licence and excellent opportunities for black marketing. Today all that is gone. The country is back to "normal", which is orderly stagnation, or at best a slow crawl while history flies. There is little glamour, and in the dance halls the boys far outnumber the girls. Hours must be kept, regular dull work must be done and unemployment today is a greater hell for the individual than it was before the war, because he is now in a small minority.

No matter how far-reaching the changes of the last ten years have been, certain very important things have not changed. Let us look at the life-story of the "typical" young man of Deptford, who I think is also typical of the whole of industrial England. At the age of five he goes to an Infant School and between seven and eleven to a Primary School; then according to his estimated ability to one of three secondary schools:

Grammar School, Secondary Technical or Secondary Modern. When the 1944 Education Act established these divisions it promised "diversity of type, but equality of status". Unfortunately, there is no equality of status and most boys go to the Secondary School Technical or Secondary Modern. They leave the overcrowded classes at fifteen and drift into the first blind-alley job which comes along and then on to semi-skilled or unskilled labour.

What about home influence? Well, the good parent will apprentice his child or have him taught some trade. There are many labourers who don't spend too much on drink or the "dogs", nevertheless they are unable to guide their children's future, and that is one of the reasons why the family in our time shows so many signs of breaking up (the other reason is that it cannot successfully compete with outside interests). Besides, there are plenty of blind-alley jobs in which boys are earning more than other boys who go for years to evening classes in order to acquire skill. And later, even a skilled man may not earn more than an unskilled. In other words, the cause of the new unhappiness of young Deptford or young working-class England may be found in the fact that they lack guidance and a philosophy. The old philosophy, partly religious, partly ethical, does not seem to be valid for the young worker.

On the whole, the working class remains as cheerfully unreliable, improvident and undisciplined as before. If they break their word it is not out of viciousness. They usually look on it as an attractive but slightly eccentric social convention which is meant to be broken when inconvenient. Discipline is a necessary evil which they hate and would never practise on their own, and thrift is a form of discipline. These three are middle-class virtues and form class frontiers, but when you talk about class, remember the vast number of "borderline cases".

It has been said that the younger generation is "effeminate" in looks as well as in behaviour and mental attitudes. While it is obvious that the males of the younger generation—in most social classes—are more conscious today of their appearance than before, I am not in the least sure whether that is a "feminine" trait, nor am I sure whether they are softer today than before. During the Victorian years the divisional line between masculine and feminine looks had been very sharp, today it is far less sharp. Young men today grow their hair long, take an enormous interest in it and comb it in public. They are more ornate and elaborate in dress, and show a preference for lively designs and vivid colours. This, I think, is just a return to pre-Victorian times. When it comes to mentality, however, I think both sexes are tougher today, and if toughness is a masculine trait, then they both are becoming masculine. The most "feminine" group among young workers—if you like paradoxes—seems

to be the group of body builders, who spend hours and hours in gymns, subscribe to health magazines and exhibit themselves on the beaches, waiting for admiring glances and news-cameras.

I have already said that the gap between parents and children has never been as wide as in our time, and one of the factors that widen the gap is that the younger generation is less conventional, less class-conscious and more egalitarian than the young of any other period.

CHAPTER IV

WEST ONE REVISITED

TONIGHT I am going to another dance. This time Mayfair, and it is eleven years since my last visit there. I am to partner a young mother, who has sold her country estate and, having been bombed out of her beautiful town house, moved into a large flat facing the American Embassy.

It is, I presume, one of the compensations of one's approaching forties to have a girl you have known since she was two, and who has since developed into a very pretty young lady, kiss you in the middle of the drawing-room in front of six shy, self-conscious lanky young men and six pretty débutantes in sequins, organdie and lace. But a cold shower suddenly comes when the young men—two in that very smart, dark blue mess dress of the Guards, the other four in dinner jackets—call one "sir". One would like to protest: "Look here, I'm only fifteen years older than you are. White hair comes early in my family, but my waistline is still as good as yours, and I bet I can still beat you swimming a hundred yards," but one says nothing. One remembers occasions in the past when it was oneself who had caused embarrassment by trying to do the "right thing".

But how much easier is the conversation with débutantes now than it was in the early nineteen-thirties. I was shy then, and "working" all the time. My eyes like the camera-shutter, recording the "landscape and figures", the Romneys on the wall (one was bogus), the furniture, the patterns of the carpet, the dresses, the graceful administrations of the footmen, the majesty of the butler, the gestures and undulations of the hostess (her fan was moulting). My ears, like the cylinders of the phonograph, recording—critically recording—bits of conversation. My nose was taking in the scent of flowers, the perfume on the hair and behind the ear, the smell of hairwash, the aroma of cigars, the hints of perspiration. In those days at a Mayfair deb dance, a Harley Street dinner, an Earl's Court cocktail party or a Bermondsey wedding, I couldn't carry on a conversation while "working". Since then, I gather, I must have learnt the technique; another compensation for the injuries of time.

But here is my friend, the mother—she *does* know how to make an entry—her own personality triumphant over her dressmaker's, and a sigh comes from one of the débutantes, "Christian Dior." As she shakes

hands with the girls and boys she displays the back of her dress better than most mannequins. Finally she comes up to me and, by way of greeting, says, "Have a drink before we go in." She separates me from the rest. We pass the Fra Angelico, the Veronese, and go into the corner where there is a fine Correggio. Her voice becomes a whisper: "I'm putting you next to the Peddie-White girl. Don't look now: the girl in pink stripes; the plainest in the whole bunch. I'm told she's got brains. You find out. She's at Oxford with Sarah. . . . How did your last book do? Winston and Clementine dined here last week and she said she had read it. She looked pretty as always; grand girl. Shall we go in?"

The small dining-room is almost overcrowded by the sixteen a table and two menservants. The silver is dull, the five pearls of the earl's coronet are fading on the edge of the white china plates (soon they won't show at all), but the cook is pre-war. Well, the girl on my left is not as plain as all that. She is one of those intelligent and ambitious people for whom keeping power and position is now becoming almost as difficult as it had till recently been to *gain* it for girls from less fortunate classes. I hope she will never resemble her father; he is dead now. A face like a bird of prey, a neck that has gone incredibly thin from constantly turning round, watching out nervously for opportunities, for yet another directorship, another step higher in politics; legs that have developed varicose veins from too much lobbying, and only gained for him a minor office, before Baldwin kicked him into the House of Lords. His daughter concentrates on her work and has few social graces. She won't be a blue-stocking but she will be a career woman. She will "struggle"; at least she will try to push over as many people as gracefully as possible. She is studying sociology and this is her last year at Oxford. I cannot see in her the effects of higher learning. I can only see a good memory and the false clarity of youth, and she echoes the commonplaces of yesterday about Sorel, Le Bon and Pareto. Three years at Oxford have not been successful to train her *not* to repeat her tutor's views but to work out her own: she has, however, certainly learnt how to pass them on as her own and how to argue a point.

We discuss Orwell's novel 1984. Quite correctly she says it has little in common with similar novels by Anatole France, H. G. Wells, or Aldous Huxley. Compared with their excursions into the future, Orwell's is an inferior work, but she does not say that the main weakness of the book is that it seems to threaten us with the *wrong* sort of nightmare. The future might well have a nightmare society in store for us, but it is unlikely to be the order of 1984. As she goes on talking, in her tidy, tiresome, precise way, dropping inverted commas round the jargon of Logical Positivism, I begin to reflect—not for the first time—on the background

of the ideas of 1984. Two years before Orwell brought out his novel I published my own book about "the private life of the sovereign state", in which I said that a class system was inherent in national independence, because national independence resulted in a permanent warlike state and war needed leaders. War was present whether the nation itself was actually fighting on the battlefield or not. (The difference is that during the so-called "peace" the weapons are not tanks and aircraft and bombs, but quotas, subsidies, tariffs and restrictions of immigration.)

Before I went to America I dined with Orwell in his flat at Canonbury Square. He was already ill, and Gentlemen's Relish on toast, with black tea, did not make him feel more cheerful. In that strange, high-pitched voice of his, that gently resembled H. G. Wells's, Orwell began to argue over my point. He agreed with me, but said it was possible for a State to provoke "actual" war and continue warfare indefinitely in order to maintain a certain class structure. I thought for a time over that and then decided that was "impossible", not because men are "too good" to do that, but because it seemed improbable for one thing to me that science would ever give men that particular opportunity. He said it would. I said—very politely—it might.

As I walked back from Orwell's flat that night through the deserted streets of Islington I thought over the conversation. Later I recorded it in my diary and have often thought about it since. I still think Orwell was wrong. I was not altogether surprised to see that he used that argument as one of the central ideas of his novel, but he never gave so much as a hint as to how science really developed in the nineteen-fifties, sixties, seventies and eighties, so that it was able to help those anxious to seize power and by maintaining war to exploit others. For a novelist to ask the public to fill in the details, which he himself doesn't know and fails to invent, is a very serious fault.

As a brief interregnum, a temporary stalemate, Orwell's 1984 is certainly conceivable. The unification of the world into two or three gigantic super-states which are grappling with each other without ever reaching a decision is unfortunately possible, but it doesn't look as if it could be continued indefinitely even if, say, the secrets or the equipment for making atomic weapons are lost. The world is far more likely one day to be united, for better or worse, than disunited. And Orwell omits this very important point from his novel, nor does he tell us how the average man really felt under "managerial" rule in 1984. I agree this would have been difficult, but then writing a novel IS a difficult job.

Some of the details of 1984 are brilliant, of course, and give it a certain sense of "reality" and thus help credibility, such as the fact that in 1984 a member of the new "middle class", a party executive, is still suffering

from a leg abscess or toothache and that the London "proles" speak Cockney. This second trick is even better than the first. Cockney, together with other dialects, is on the wane in our time. The logical effect of technical inventions and standardization, and man's yearning to "better" himself, would be that it should completely disappear by 1984 and would only be preserved on gramophone records. But it is conceivable that, amid the general destruction of wars, people might revert to an "ancestral pattern". To return to Cockney—not exactly "ancestral" but at least six hundred years old—is both a plausible thing and a good "touch of realism", especially because Orwell, whose inventive power was always weak, dwells on his hero's leg abscess a little too often.

The question has often been raised why this "gloomy" book was such a success. Part of the answer is very simple. It was a success because it was well written, interesting and topical. There is, however, another clue which is usually completely unrealized by those who read the book, and that is the prediction of what I called "the *wrong* nightmare" of the future. Orwell occasionally attacked his countrymen for being insular, but he was basically a traditionalist, and he implied that federalism will *inevitably* lead to bad results. The secret message of the book, therefore, is an endorsement and reinforcement of the attitude of the reader living in a democracy in general and in Britain in particular: sit tight, continue your life as before, don't change your most important "habit"—that is to say, don't think in supranational or international or world-terms—remain a provincial, because if federalism comes it would be *inevitably* a nightmare, apart from the fact that *not* thinking is so much easier than thinking. Cultivate your traditions, pretend that evil things don't exist, cultivate sentimentalism and, above all, a sense of humour.

The extenuating circumstance is not only that Orwell did not do this deliberately (of which I am fully convinced), but he probably hoped his book might have the very opposite effect.

At a quarter-past ten the women leave the room. I light a cigar which I extract from its aluminium shrine, a real Havana; a reminder of past seasons.

As a matter of fact there is little need to remind myself of past seasons, the seasons before and after the economic nemesis of the 'thirties. All we have to do is to ignore the gaps in the houses of the street and the bombed site round the corner. With the striped awnings over the front steps and the red carpet across the pavement, the pre-war atmosphere of the quiet Mayfair street is complete. The houses are the same trim, mid-nineteenth-century "residences", all freshly painted and clean, and we need not remember that hardly any of them in fact are residences

any longer: the new tenants are dressmakers, business firms and government departments. The curtains are drawn, but the windows of the first-floor drawing-room are open and the street seems to float on the rhythm of the jazz. A few passers-by collect round the red carpet, murmuring their approval or disapproval of the guests' dresses.

Oddly enough, the butler who greets us in the hall seems to be familiar. For a very long time he had never been anybody's butler but a kind of "collective manservant" who had been hired out for the evening by the ball furnishers together with the little gilt chairs, the striped awnings and red carpets, the anonymous *consommé*, the suspicious quails, the fussily over-decorated and improbable pastries, and, yes, the champagne. At deb dances the champagne was always "hired", which was one grade lower than the "wedding champagne", the same class as Hunting Port and Cooking Sherry.

The first visible change is that the few men who wear tails are over forty. Carnations, however, in the buttonholes of the dinner jackets are still prominent. And none of the dowagers sitting on the uncomfortable, "hired", gilt chairs by the walls is wearing a tiara even though Royalty is present tonight. Have they been sold, and, if so, to whom, because in America a tiara would still cause ridicule, no matter how rich and attractive-looking its wearer is? Perhaps the stones are sold—if they were real stones—or they are exiled to bank vaults as a concession to the doctrine of "fair shares". A deb dance with hired champagne just "passes", a tiara wouldn't.

Any change? I reflect—because I have a faint recollection that I have been to this ballroom before when I was ten to fifteen years younger, perhaps a little more unhappy than I am now. Well, the Vandykes and Canalettos over the mantelpiece and on the opposite wall are as dirty as ever. Perhaps that is just as well, as the cleaning process would at once raise doubts as to their authenticity. Lady Montfort and Lady Willesden, however, are genuine antiques of whose authenticity there couldn't be the slightest doubt. They are both professional chaperones, who launch girls in the London season. Just before the war their resources were sinking so low that they had to advertise in the Agony Column of *The Times*. ("Peerness offers hospitality to débutantes in her own house, chaperonage, presentation, etc. Write Box B.F. 1066.") I don't know much about Lady Colindale, but Lady Montfort had to keep a husband and two sons on the proceeds.

The flowers on the mantelpiece and inside the fireplace are as fresh and as lovely as the débutantes. There they are, some two hundred and fifty of them: a quarter of the vintage of the season of 1950, a little awkward in their movements as if they were far better used to riding



breeches than long gowns. They still can't dance and they never will. For an upper class girl to dance really well betrays that something is basically wrong with her upbringing. This is not Deptford, Streatham or Islington. In Mayfair one must never do things really well, because that is not "good form", whether it's dancing or anything else. A lady and a gentleman are always amateurs, "professional amateurs" in fact. Here is one reason for the doom of Mayfair; one reason only out of many. In the end the body will simply be riddled with bullets.

There are about five hundred guests including the chaperones, and the dance costs about nine hundred pounds. Before 1939 it cost about four hundred, but a *débutante* dance then did not as a rule mean a great sacrifice for the parents; today it usually does. And here we have already arrived at the most vital change in upper class ways. Before 1939 there was little incongruity between the private lives of those who presented their daughter at Court and between that public life which Veblen used to call "conspicuous waste". Today the difference is often apparent, particularly if there are sons who must be sent to a good public school or to Oxford or Cambridge. For one thing, few people can afford to give their *débutante* daughter more than one season (before the war they usually gave two, sometimes three and then sent them round the Empire on a tour which was known as "joining the Fishing Fleet"). According to conservative estimates, a season for a *débutante*, including a dance, at least four dresses (and hire of three white ostrich feathers for her presentation at Buckingham Palace), must cost at least £1500. In order to meet this obligation either jewels or pictures have to be sold, or capital must be touched and sometimes the "Season" means serious economies in the family's private life, even though mother hasn't got to take in washing to help out. Yet those who claim to belong to "Society" are still willing to make the sacrifice with the determination of a Welsh miner to make his son a schoolmaster.

People might argue that £1500 (and sometimes a girl still gets two seasons) could be better invested in the girl's future interests. The training of a doctor does not cost more than £2000 and most other professional careers far less than that. But girls in "Society", never having been intended for the professions, seldom have the necessary preliminary education. (The girl I talked to at dinner is an exception.) Even then, there are hundreds of business careers open to girls with a capital of £1500-£2000, not to mention family connections which are still valuable. But profession and business are middle-class careers, or rather intelligent middle-class careers. Here is the class frontier; only part of the middle class is infected with upper-class notions, even though feudal ideas go through all English social groups. Parents of

girls who lay claim to be accepted by "Society" are still fighting a losing battle against having their daughters trained for a career or business. They train them mainly for marriage, and the best way for the girl—they argue—to find a social equal is to give her a season or two.

Since in our civilization the ballroom still remains, at all social levels, an opportunity for matchmaking (deb dance in Mayfair, Doctors' Dance in Holborn, Clerical Association dance in Hammersmith, Regimental Dance in Tewkesbury, Labour Party dance in Bermondsey and the "Half a crown hop" anywhere), the London "Season" is only partly "foolish waste", it is largely a gamble with high stakes. It only becomes a foolish waste if the girl runs away to marry a bus conductor or an out-of-work jazz pianist. But she doesn't as a rule. She may not have an intellect and sometimes not even brains, but she is tough, poor sweet—her education saw to that—she is "seasoned", has the bravery of a para-trooper and the courage of Florence Nightingale, in order to marry money or position. She would wait ten years if necessary, or fifteen. There are exceptions, of course: "badly brought up" girls or others who could not profit by the careful training. A few debs in the 1920s or '30s went to bed with the groom, with a professional boxer or with just anybody, they fancied. Today they are less impulsive and, if they do go to bed with anybody, they look as much at his bank balance or prospects as they do his face and biceps. Only please don't say that girls in the *State* at Deptford have "higher morals": they have "lower training", that's all.

What is the difference between the débutante and the girl, say, from the vast middle class? On the whole a "deb" is far more determined and tough (although it is part of her education to hide that fact successfully). She hasn't a greater sense of responsibility, but is certainly aware of social disapproval, and her culture is less spontaneous than that of a middle class girl. How does she compare with a pre-war débutante? She is not better instructed, but looks more serious. She has fewer dresses than her predecessor and she is a little more resourceful. The Direction of Labour Order is no threat to her, but all the same she is quite seriously thinking of some job, either secretarial or commercial, to tide things over until she marries. Before the war she sometimes took up a job which was "fun" as well as an upper class alibi: dressmaking, millinery, "the gift department" of a smart store, work in an antique shop. Nowadays the talent and the rivalry of the middle or upper class pansy is too serious for her on those fields, so she is forced to duller and often even less lucrative jobs. And today she works because it is partly a necessity. Besides, "one never knows", she might contact an eligible young man in a shop or in an office, which is quite contrary to what her parents thought when they brought her out.

I went to the buffet to help myself to a drink.

"Slumming, Adam, slumming?" Somebody said.

I looked up and beheld Boleslav in a tailcoat which looked as if it had originally been made for the stage. The order round his neck on its pink ribbon looked like stage property too. I had never known whether he was an Austrian or a Pole, brought up in England. I don't think Boleslav knew himself; ex-diplomat, ex-journalist, ex-everything. Before the war he was known as the "Eighth Man", whom people invited to a dinner party two hours before it began, and he talked exactly like the less pleasant characters in Harold Nicolson's fiction. I have known him for twenty-two years and have tried to avoid him without success for twenty-one. A count or a baron, he was the greatest expert on European titles in general and on the British peerage in particular.

"I haven't seen you for ten years," he said. "I have read all your books. I liked them."

There was a "but" I was sure, but Boleslav's interest in books took me by surprise. I never thought he read anything but Court Circulars and the memoirs of his aristocratic friends. A few seconds later we were sitting in the corner under a pink Edwardian lampshade.

The "but" came soon enough. He looked at his glass for a moment, then he said: "I guess you know you gave the wrong impression with your passionate interest in social class. It's silly that they call you a snob, the same way as it would be silly to call an anatomist morbid or a gynaecologist obscene. Social science is your field and you are a qualified man, that's all. But some of your critics said you loved the aristocracy, you couldn't resist them even with your intellect and cynicism. They said you were hypnotized by them like that fellow, what's his name? . . . Evelyn Waugh. And that is not true. He is hundred per cent middle class. You are not. You know your upper class too well for that. For one thing, originally you came from the same background yourself. . . ."

"I——" I began.

"I know," Boleslav shut me up. "You had to work hard all your life, I know that, but by origin and tradition you are a member of the 'historic classes' even if your grandfather had to 'sink so low' as to become a judge. You were a young boy in London, I remember you very well. Your ambassador Zichy-Rubido launched you among his friends. They took to you because they recognized the 'common background' at once in you and because you amused them. They forgave your poverty because you were young and they forgave your intellect partly because they thought it was some pardonable Hungarian exoticism and partly because you were so well dressed. Only us Central Europeans can do

that on so little, my boy. The English are learning it slowly from us, haha. Well, it is obvious that you must have found the middle class "reserved". It takes time for them to accept people: the uppers usually decide at once. Besides, tell me what the hell you and the middle class had to offer to each other? They were hardly more cultured than the uppers, and being poorer—and possibly meaner—they would neither entertain you nor would they be generous to you. I suppose they appreciated your looks, your style, your standards, but your culture was of little attraction for them, if it wasn't suspect. And you couldn't ask them back to dinner, could you?

"Your place obviously would have been among the intellectuals, but you must have been anathema to them. For one thing you looked healthy, took a bath every day, didn't drink, swam regularly well, these—may just have passed. The fact that you dressed well was suspect, but you had two fatal and unforgivable faults in the eyes of the intelligentsia of the '30s. One: you had no guilt feeling, and why the hell should you have? You were very poor. And, two, you loved England, desperately, hopelessly, as only foreigners can. That, my friend, was unforgivable and ridiculous. So you were left in the cold and took to the upper class for shelter. You wrote most of your first book at Broadlands, staying with the Mount Temples, and most of your second staying at Colworth with the Melchett. When you finished your first flat, it was Pamela Westhampton who gave you your blankets. . . ." Boleslav looked up impatiently: "All right, all right, bed-linen. What difference does it make? And it was that steel peer, whatsisname . . . Bromsgrove, who gave you your bookcases. I don't think a bank manager's wife or a chartered accountant would have been so generous. . . ."

"That's very unfair," I said. "A Wolverhampton optician once gave me a copy of C. H. Spurgeon's collected sermons. Besides, some of the upper class are as mean as the upstart, ambitious members of the lower middle class."

"Don't I know," Boleslav said with a sigh, but he recovered at once. "But the upper class was copy for you, wasn't it? You can't deny that on the whole they talk very frankly about themselves, and that's where you, as a writer, come in. The average middle class wallah wouldn't have been so outspoken about himself on the first occasion. Nobody but a woman like Charmian Hillmorton would have told you that her daughter eloped with the chauffeur, the first time you went to dinner at King's Snelsgrove. And few women but Pamela Westhampton would have told you the story of how her grandfather got his peerage or why it was that John Westhampton could never produce a child. But that's not the whole thing," Boleslav said and gave me a sly wink.

I got up. "Sorry, but I promised this dance."

"You did nothing of the sort. Sit down. Well, who on earth would pop to bed so easily with a tolerable-looking young foreigner but an upper-class girl on the shelf? She didn't expect a 'good time' beyond the biological one and she would never sue you for breach of promise. And you did put Lady Ann Simpkin into your novel, disguised as Miss Ferrers, a Kensington Colonel's daughter. That's why she looked so false in your book. Who told me? She did. . . . All right, I am drunk, but not so drunk as not to see through you. I know all the secrets about you and the upper class. That's why you know them so well."

"You are wrong. I don't know how well I know them or how badly, but the upper class for any writer who knows them is the easiest class to describe, because they are a tiny, closely integrated group."

"Then you abandoned them, because they no longer sell."

"On the contrary, they sell enormously. Just ask Nancy Mitford's or Evelyn Waugh's publishers."

"Then why your sudden warm interest in the working class? Your American book was quite nauseating. Why do you let down the upper class? It's partly yours?"

"You are contradicting yourself," I said. "My interests in *all* social classes have always been great. That's my training, interests, inclinations, but when I was young and desperately poor I couldn't mix with the working class as much as I could with other classes. That the workers were more 'exclusive' than other classes, was obvious for very good reasons, so I gate-crashed into their homes, but only intermittently. Workers don't entertain much, they cannot ask you to week-ends, and meeting them at the dogs, in the pub, at the Palais, is not enough. The way was to lodge with a working-class family, but that cost money—I had another rent to pay and a newspaper job to do—so I could seldom lodge with them before the war. As for letting the upper class down . . . who has let them down?"

There is a lack of change in "Society" in another respect, namely, if there are any "new faces" in it after the war, they are "new" merely because their owners are young. The composition of "Society" has not changed since the war. The reason for this is partly that the Second World War produced no real "new rich", and those who had made a little money, business and professional men, had not made enough to secure admission. Most of them, in any case, don't wish to secure an admission. A decrepit marchioness on £2000 a year—plus what is left of her capital—still has nothing in common with the dentist's wife or the accountant's wife whose husbands earn far more than £2000 a year.

Class or clique had never been a purely economic category (not even in America), though the economic factor has always been a vital factor of class or clique.

The war certainly placed a few new people in seats of power, but such people have no social aspirations. For one thing, many of them have been brought up in Socialist traditions and many in traditions that either ignored or condemned "Society". For another thing, even if they are upper class people by origin or even if they have some social ambitions, they know it would be fatal for them to mix with "Society". They would risk too much if it were known that their daughter became a *débutante*. Power must not be risked unnecessarily. Fur coats, manservants, luxury flats, luxury cars just pass; social ambitions would not.

That is the reason why "Society", together with its "Season", has its years numbered. Unable to open its doors to people with real power, it cannot successfully fight against disapproval. Besides, its glamour is tarnished and it hardly receives any publicity. Today a "deb dance" in Mayfair passes almost as unnoticed as a dance given by the British Legion in Exeter or by the "Buffaloes" in Coventry. The newspapers today prefer to report *other* trivialities, such as the lives of film stars or the health of the panda and public interest is extended to other things not necessarily more intelligent or important than Society. The contemporary Bright Young Things of Mayfair are almost as obscure as their counterparts in Wimbledon or Bournemouth.

I said that Society, as such, seems to have its days numbered, but what still interests me is whether the old upper class is fusing with those who are today climbing into power. This has often happened in world history and always in English history, whenever a new class took over. Thus the Capitalist in Tudor times fused with what was left of the old feudal group. The 18th century aristocracy fused with the "Nabobs of India". And the Victorian bourgeoisie certainly fused with the old landed aristocracy. In fact the result of the Victorian "compromise" of the "gentlemen versus the rest" was that through the public schools, the purchase of land, and intermarriage, the bourgeoisie became indistinguishable from the landed aristocracy. Today we still have an hereditary aristocracy very mixed in origin, few of whom naturally have much income, but many of whom still have their wealth. On the other hand we have people—managers—with great power and perhaps the same income as the aristocrat but no wealth. Could they ever fuse? Today circumstances are different from Tudor or Victorian times. Then the aristocracy still had cards in their hands. Apart from their fine ways—beautiful houses, charm, etc., which hypnotized the new rich, the political power of the rural boroughs was still in their hands and the Public School

in many ways was a "new" institution. Today the rural borough—even if it still votes Conservative—is no longer in the hands of the landed aristocracy or gentry and the Public School gradually becomes open to talent. The answer, perhaps, is that the new revolution is not going as "fast" as all that—a generation is still thirty years—no matter how much faster the "historic rate of change" is than in earlier periods. What I suspect is happening today is that the basis of the upper class is changing. Wealth has never been a sole basis of class. In the future that basis will completely go and its place will be taken by function if not by power, and on the analogy of the past, descendants of the present rich might continue to be in the ruling class on a functional side.

I went to another party the following evening with another friend, the young widow of a manufacturer; I think I was in love with her once. The "spot" this time was two night-clubs within a stone's throw of each other. The first had been "entirely redecorated" since the war with white wrought-iron balustrades and crystal chandeliers, and quilted satin and mirror-glass. I presume what applies to Islington pubs must apply to Mayfair night-clubs, namely, the owners must provide not a "homely" atmosphere but a rich substitute for the home. The other night-club looked the same as it did before the war: a dingy place in semi-darkness, and without air, with the same old strawberry and vanilla ice cream hangings on the walls and the dance floor not larger than a postage stamp. Even the pianist and cloakroom steward were the same.

Facing us, in the company of a few young Guardsmen and their girls, sat the King's younger daughter; this was the first time I have ever seen her. I would have recognized her easily by the hundreds of photographs, rather blurred by the pointillist technique of the daily newspapers. But remembered seeing a few more accurate, posed versions on glossy paper, usually while I was waiting to have a haircut. These black and white images appealed to my "knowledge" of her, rather than to my sensitivity; they provided an idea without transmitting the really essential qualities. This was not quite the case of seeing a Rembrandt or a Juan Gris for the first time after one has seen it in colour print, because she is a living, human being. Later I saw her two feet away from me, dancing. I never realized she was so short and so attractive. Tiny hands, not so much "aristocratic" as girlish, a little helpless, more genteel than anything else. I expected she would have good teeth. All the Royal family have had good teeth and she had that nice spontaneous smile of her grandmother's, a grand old lady who once said "I live next to Gorringes."

For a moment I thought about the new conception of Royalty. The

pre-war one was that Royalty was "one of us", middle-class on most occasions, except when opening Parliament, the Wembley Exhibition, or closing the Flower Show or India. They worked hard, paid their bills punctually, laughed loud, and those who knew their male members said they had a bad temper. In any case they lived "next to Gorrings". Today they are presented as symbolic, unreal people, classless, definitely above us, hence those improbable and unlikely but attractive hats, fairytale colours, trembling feathers. How brilliantly they respond to changes in public feeling. They are "not in Society" and never go out of fashion.

The evening was uncomfortable because I had very little chance to talk to my friend, whom I haven't seen for many years, but had to talk to two women, whom I had not known before, and were of a type I have always tried to avoid. I recognized them as such the moment I was introduced to them, even before they spoke. They belong to that "outer fringe" of the upper middle class—or upper class, if you like, because the two today are slowly being forced by various circumstances into each other's arms—which one knows so much better by association than by any direct criteria. Their characteristics are perhaps more the "luxury flat" than the town house, and their country house, if any, is invariably in the Home Counties and comparatively recently purchased.

The husbands are "in business", sometimes a manufacturer, but usually connected with finance, seldom a stockbroker, doctor, lawyer or an accountant. They are invariably "nicer" than their wives. In fact they usually arouse one's sympathy. They are overworked, quiet men, at times suffering from diabetes and more often from heart trouble, who attend their wives' parties with resignation and feel uncomfortable in tails. As a rule, they are kindly people, in spite of their business efficiency, who invariably spoil their wives and children. They have no titles; an occasional C.B.E. or J.P. may stand after their name, even a knighthood is an exception. They missed the larger honours of a successful business career either because they had no ambition for it or because they were unwilling to stake so much capital for a peerage; or because at the last moment, when everything was going smoothly and they had in secret already chosen the name—the homely "Bennett of Lee" or the romantic "Kingsbury"—the Peerage Scrutiny Committee suddenly said no to the Party. There was whisper over the threadbare carpets and the sedate leather armchairs of some old-fashioned club about "there are already enough tarts in the peerage, not to speak of procuresses".

Yes, it's the wives that are poison: hard women with the wrong sort of ambition, women of obscure origin, married to successful men. They are mean, selfish and half-educated in a way a genuine upper class or

aristocratic woman very seldom is. I would almost say that they are outside the English tradition, and true enough this type has a far closer resemblance not so much to "American women" as to one type of American Society women known to us from films and novels. No English novelist who deals with the rich gives much attention to them. The nearest is a passing reference in a few Maugham novels. Though the type exists in England too. Quite often the women are genuine foreigners: Jewish, or American, sometimes both. The danger for the aristocracy is that the outsider usually lumps them with the aristocracy or upper class, though their only connection is wealth. They are mostly unsuccessful social climbers and unsuccessful mostly because they are mean. You can, within reason, always work your way into an old-established group even in times of social rigidity, but you have to offer something for it, and you have to conform to certain customs. And these ambitious women don't offer enough. They have a good income and capital but not really more than that aristocracy which still retains its capital, and though they spend more than the aristocracy (black market, etc.), they have no power, certainly not more than the aristocracy. So all they can get hold of is a *declassé* peer or peeress, lonely and unwilling at their parties. He comes because he wants some business contact with the husband, or wants to get married to someone who would keep him. Then he leaves and marries a genuine tart. He is better off that way.

These are the women who usually live not according to the highest but on the most expensive standards in England. Their flats or houses are overcrowded showrooms of anything except noble Georgian mahogany or paintings by Romney and Stubbs. There is ormolu and Boulle and Louis Quinze or overdecorated Restoration Period with François Boucher and Meissonier and the lesser Chinese epochs. Everything is fully authenticated, and one imagines that at the slightest provocation they will offer to show you the certificate, if not the bill. Unlike the aristocracy—which still doesn't know anything about their furniture and paintings—and invent and cheerfully extemporize when they show round the half-crown visitors—they know every bit about everything they possess—the price too—and their flats or houses are overdramatized and depressingly unreal. The real aristocrat as a rule—unless he is decayed and becomes seedy or a crook, sometimes both—is possessive in a childish way. He is much more hardy and austere and monosyllabic, untidy and unrehearsed. He sticks racing cards into the corners of Chippendale mirrors, and hangs photographs of Cricket XIs in the lavatory, keeps a dusty polo helmet, under the hall table, and the Morning Room is full of brown-paper parcels.

These moneyed parasitic women who live without the least sense of

responsibility, seldom read books, go to concerts or visit picture shows. They usually only go to first nights at the theatre. Their whole life is "social" in the worst sense of the word: cocktail parties, dinners, night clubs. If one found them at "luxury" hotels that would not matter, because one seldom goes to "luxury" hotels, but they have made their way into those one or two really nice traditionally English hotels which never appear in divorce cases, to which parents take their children to lunch in the holidays or their daughters to dance and rub shoulders with exiled but not *declass  * royalty. There they are every day for lunch, hideously overdressed and hard; hard and hungry. They are members of the "International Smart Set" which survived the war and the Statute Book is the only restraining influence over them, sometimes not even the Statute Book. They seldom drink or gamble or bet at races: they hate Winter Sports or yachting. The Riviera is for them or Deauville or Florida. They can't ride; their only connection with "sports" is an occasional *Concours d'Elegance* with an expensive car.

Conversation is impossible with them because, like so many people who cannot bear loneliness, they don't listen. Even if one is alone with them, they appear disconcerted, as if expecting someone to turn up. If Aneurin Bevan had said these were the people who were "lower than vermin", ninety-nine per cent of England would have applauded openly or would have laughed inside their waistcoats.

It has been said that England has no real aristocracy because the peerage for the most part is new and not of foreign origin. If we discount the handful of Jewish peers and a couple of Germans, the second statement is true, but the first is not quite true, because the old, medieval aristocracy has vanished in practically every country. Real or unreal, the British peerage—along with the landowning class—has on the whole behaved far better than the Continental aristocracies. One explanation for this is perhaps that England is a small island, where the upper class has to live in close proximity to the others, like naval officers aboard ship with their men, and it is difficult for them to be really nasty. The other is—again largely owing to geographical realities—that the English social structure, in outward details, is still feudal, and the moneyed, well-established aristocracy still retains a sense of responsibility. If it is a pose, it is a useful pose. And many of them will keep it as long as there is public respect for them. They have certain moral standards, a little old-fashioned perhaps, but still serviceable, which they maintain, and they are very critical of their social equals who fall below these standards, especially when it comes to public duty or morals. There is quite a number of rich outcasts in the British peerage with whom the majority would not mix.

Someone estimates that the titled aristocracy is about 80,000 people, the Landed Gentry about the same number, the untitled, "merely rich" about 20,000. Their future as a group is uncertain, together with that of the upper middle class (about one million people), but considering their circumstances, which are still fairly advantageous, many individuals seem sure of survival. They may not have a real aptitude for business—though many an ancestor of the elder "rural" aristocracy was originally in trade—for example, the Warwicks (a wool merchant) or the Northumberlands (a chemist)—and the competition of other groups will become increasingly strong for the plum jobs of government, but today many of them begin to show, in the younger generations at least, an interest or talent for the arts. In writing, architecture, music and play-acting they have very often excelled, except for periods like the last hundred years when, in order to maintain themselves in the saddle, they had to become almost as philistine as the new bourgeoisie. Today their energies are freer, power is irretrievably slipping from their hands and the arts are inviting.

CHAPTER V

NOTES ON SPIVS

I MUST say that my involuntary stay in London worked out far better than I expected. During the following four days I met two people who provided me with strings on which I could hang the idea of a chapter I intended to write later and an idea for a second which I did not intend to write at all. These were lucky breaks, but the point is that one cannot entirely plan a book like mine: a sociological "travel" book shall we say, and the unexpected occasionally plays an important part and provides the "non-fictional" volume with an element of the chancy, haphazard nature of life.

On the first occasion I was doing a little tour of Bloomsbury, re-visiting a few places I had not seen for several years. I was wondering what were the significant changes in the streets of Central London. I noticed that Holborn, where I had been a member of a Rover Scout troop in the late nineteen-twenties—a suitable disguise to gatecrash into the working class—had become far less residential than it used to be till the time of the Bliz. The streets where my Brother Rovers had lived were now full of offices and workshops and bombed sites, and like the rest of Central London, were becoming less residential. The members of the troop—I meet them once a year at Annual Dinners held in Soho restaurants—had moved into other districts on the Piccadilly or on the Morden-Edgware Lines and into higher income groups. They are now detective inspectors, gents' outfitters, dental technicians, commercial travellers, civil servants, pest destroyers; men in their late thirties with indefinably married and responsible looks. For me the word "Bloomsbury" first meant the Holborn Rovers and only secondarily Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, Vanessa Bell and their friendly circle.

As I passed St. Pancras Church I began to think what a pity it was that the Greek Revival of the Victorian age was briefer and less strong than the Gothic Revival, even though it has given us the supreme beauty of the Euston Arch, the Piccadilly entrance of Hyde Park and St. Pancras Church to mention only a few. It was in this mood that I reached Tottenham Court Road with the idea of having a look at Fitzroy Square and ending up in Regent's Park to see how Nash's masterpieces were taking to their new tenants, the Civil Servants. I had just crossed the roadway when I was suddenly hailed from behind with a "Hullo, Spiv". It was

Reg with his van. The word "Spiv" coming from Reg suddenly gave me an idea.

I said, "Which way are you going?"

"Back to Kentish Town. Want a lift?" he said, and I clambered into the van as the lights changed.

I had met Reg when I came out of the Army and took to driving a van. He was one of the corner boys around the Forum Cinema in Kentish Town where I used to deliver posters. I usually arrived at four o'clock or so and had a cup of tea at the caff around the corner. Reg was often there. He was a bright youngster who taught me the sign language of the tictac men. In his code the Fascist salute was "Five in cash", and to bring your right hand in line with your left shoulder was "Seven to one". He was then understudying a bookie's runner. "Bloke I know told me you've been to America," Reg said, and we talked about America for a time.

"Been in the Army?" I asked.

"Naw." There couldn't have been more contempt in a single word.

"How did you work it?"

"Easy. They are cushy now in peace-time."

"I know. But what was your line?"

"Made out I was dumb."

"Knowing you, that couldn't have been too easy. You are one of the larest individuals I know."

"You have to be lary these days," Reg said. He stopped in front of a traffic sign.

"What's the job like?"

"This one, you mean?" He pointed to the steering-wheel. "Lousy."

"Five quid a week?"

"No. Half a stretch." For a moment I was puzzled, then it gradually came back to mind: a barrow boy in Hoxton instructing me years ago in slang terms for money. Pony, flim, nicker, chip, tosheroon, kybosh, roona, roaf, stretch. A "stretch" is twelve months: half a stretch is six pounds.

"What's the stuff inside?" I enquired.

"Chemicals. Factory's in Kentish Town. Been doin' it nine months. When income tax and insurance's taken off and the two smackers I give the old woman, I'm left with two effing pounds. Daisy powder——"

"You certainly don't give the impression of poverty in that suit you're wearing." It was a light blue birdseye. "Who did it?"

"Morris Elkan in Aldgate."

"A good Scottish name," I said.

Reg grinned. "Jews are the only people who know about proper

tailoring. You ought to see my new whistle. Full drape, thumb length, blue diagonal. Cost me twenty-three smackers. You ought to see it." We moved off as the lights changed. "D'you want to buy some good woollen socks? Size eleven and a half. Same as I'm wearing." He removed one hand from the steering-wheel and pulled up a trouser-leg.

"Very nice," I said quickly, for fear he would crash into something.

"Twelve-and-six in the shops," he said. "Fancy weave."

"I could do with a pair or two," I said, "but money is tight these days."

"Yes," Reg sighed. "I wouldn't mind letting you have 'em, a roaf a pair." A roaf is four shillings.

"Who does make money these days?" I said, changing the subject, guessing at least tolerably well who was making money these days.

"Bigger spivs than us," Reg said. We reached Camden Town and passed a crumbling limestone Cobden still dreaming about Free Trade. The old Bedford Theatre came into view, and Camden High Street was bathing in the sunshine of the early afternoon. "What about a cup of tea?" I asked.

"I could do with one," Reg said. We parked the van in a side street and went into a café. It was one of those small restaurants with marble-topped wrought iron tables, chipped cups, torn linoleum on the floor, pale pastries and even paler sandwiches on the counter, which is the urban, Western European variation of sordidness. It was half empty.

Reg told me he had quite a good time in the first three years after the war. He used to work for a man who employed several barrow boys. He did duty, first as a "lookout" in the West End, keeping watch for the police in streets where barrows are forbidden. Then he became a barrow boy. He used to pick up ten to twelve pounds a week, which was, naturally, all net, as he never paid any income tax. Then the bottom fell out of the fruit business and, like ninety per cent of the boys of his age and class, he never saved a penny. He is a non-smoker and hardly drinks. Cinemas and dance halls cost very little, but he spent quite a lot on clothes and on the greyhound tracks. Then he became a railway porter at St. Pancras station. There was some money in that, but portering was hard work with long hours and so he became a bricklayers' labourer. The hours were shorter but the work was very hard again, and so he left that. After a month or so on the dole he got his present job.

"Won't you have another cup of tea?" I said.

"Lemme get them," Reg said. He got up from his chair. He had grown considerably since I had last seen him, and I must say that the blue birds-eye affair which, according to him, had "just about had it", suited him well but for the fact that he chose to wear bright lemon-coloured shoes

with a basketwork design. He wore his hair in the "D.A." style, "D" for "duck" and "A" for "behind". His appearance was feminine in spite of the swagger, the deep voice, the toughness.

"Don't you know any good rackets?" Reg asked as we drank our second cup of tea.

"I wish I did."

"I'm thinking of the Merchant Navy," Reg said, "but you can't get in. I've been to Dock Street. Of course if you slip five quid to a purser you've got the job. You really don't want a pair of them socks? I've got 'em in the back of the van. Your size too."

"All right, Reg," I said, "I'll make a deal with you." I knew I should have to give the socks away, though they were quite good socks. "I'll buy a pair if you tell me how you came by them. Don't give me any names, just the story. My racket is writing. Am I playing fair?"

"Well," Reg grinned, "I reckon you already know how the first bloke got 'em."

"Tea-leaving," I said.

"Well, a full box of them fell off the lorry. Put it that way."

"In the warehouse?"

"In the docks. Then somebody gave 'em to me to flog."

"On a commission basis?"

"Roona on each pair. He gave me thirty pairs and I've sold twenty so far." Reg shrugged his shoulders. "It's not much of a racket. A year ago there was whisky and cigarettes, nylons and fountain-pens, and watches and cloth." His eyes lit up. "Coo, you ought to 'ave seen that stuff. Real smasher it was, camel hair. Kept three yards for an overcoat. I'm saving up to have it made up. A pleaded Guards' back overcoat. Elkan charges fourteen quid for making."

"Will you use it for driving?" I said.

"Course."

"It gets dirty so easily."

"Yes, that is against it," he admitted; his face was suddenly serious. "But it looks class."

This was a fairly typical spiv touch. Reg didn't wish to look like a driver. He probably told the girls outside "the manor"—his "manor" was Camden Town—that he was a commission agent or a bookie and I couldn't really blame him. When I was driving a lorry I wore my old battledress and in winter a mackintosh, and if anyone asked me what I did I said I was a lorry-driver. In fact I boasted about it a little. But then the thing was new and exciting and I knew that the "Dianas" would not feel shocked: Diana Churchill, Diana Eyres-Monsell, Diana Betterton,

Diane Chamberlain. Cabinet ministers in Baldwin's various governments usually had a daughter called Diana.

"The black market any good?" I said.

"Naw." Reg shook his head. "Nobody has any money. Hullo!"

I looked up at that. Another boy had approached the table. He wore a light fawn gabardine suit with a striped "Basque" shirt and brown and white mocassins. As he talked to Reg he was quite obviously sizing me up. Then it would seem he came to a quick decision.

"Want a cup of tea?" he asked.

"I must slide," Reg said. "Got to get back to the works. But this bloke will tell you all about America. Well, see you some other time." And Reg rose to go, having apparently forgotten that I had agreed to buy a pair of socks.

"Wha' will you have?" the newcomer said. I noticed he was wearing large rings on the middle finger of each hand.

"Just a cup of tea," I said.

When he had brought the teas and had sat down I offered him a cigarette. "Seen you before," he almost leered.

"And I've seen you before, too," I said, "but I don't quite know where."

"The Lane on a Sunday morning."

"You must have a good memory. It's quite a while since I was at Petticoat Lane."

"I never forget a face," he boasted. He looked at his wrist-watch, or rather he displayed it to me. It was one of these flashy varieties whose manufacturer sponsors radio programmes in America. It had a green dial and a fancy raised glass. "I was in the radio business then," he said. "Worked at a stall. You came up with a bird. Thought you was American first. You had a grey sports whistle, box-drape like. Was she yer donah?"

At this point he abandoned the "school language" and dropped into the local dialect, not Cockney, but a local Cockney. We were apparently buddies. He was still a little superior, but as we walked out of the café into the sunshine of the afternoon became friendlier still. We passed the cinema and the pet shops and made our way towards Nineways. Quite a number of people knew him on the way, boys for the most part who looked at him admiringly. His walk was a combination of swagger and Cockney strut. We talked about America, and gradually he mellowed down to the point of humility.

He told me he lived in a furnished room in Camden Town. His father used to work on the railways, but he had not seen his family for many years. He broke away from them and used to live with another boy,

doing a little work here and there as a bookie's runner or an errand boy. Then his mate chummed up with a Pansy and he found himself being introduced to Pansies in Camden Town. They were quite amusing, but demanded too much from him for too little. After that he went to live with a woman in the West End.

Abruptly he broke off his narrative and began to hum, "Oh what a beautiful morning" in a way which I think is typical Cockney. It is known as the "Bow-Bell-canto", by which a tune which is full of sunshine is turned into a tragic ballad.

"Quick now," I told myself. "An injection to revive him, to get him out of this mood of self-pity, or else he will dry up." But I lacked the skill. I could think of nothing else to say but, "Would you like to come with me to the pictures?" He said "Yes" and looked at his watch; it was half past six. We decided to go to the Odeon. In a flash he became an optimist.

He told me he left school when he was fourteen and his first job was working for a milk roundsman. Then he had about four or five other jobs during the Blitz. In 1943 they called him up. "I's dead keen on the Army," he said, "but they soon cheesed you off with bulls' and orderin' you abaht for nothing. We was in Wiltshire, a bloody hole, so I got fed up and worked me ticket. It was easy, if one knew the way, and I was put wise. If a bloke makes up his mind to get his ticket, I reckon nobody could keep him in the Army. I wasn't half glad when I came out. Civvy Street in those days was smashing. Only mugs worked and only barmy kids got in trouble. You know, gasmeter experts, petty thieves." His voice showed his contempt. "Times were real good. All you had to do was to know a few merchant seamen. They could get anything into the country. Then there were Yankee soldiers and the black market. Do you know Len's Café in Compton Street? That's where I used to hang out, and other joints. . . ."

With peace things gradually changed for the worse. A year ago he began working in Petticoat Lane on Sundays selling women's dresses. That was quite good. He made enough money working on Sundays to keep him for the rest of the week. But the man for whom he was working got into trouble. Some of the stuff had been stolen property. He then went to work for another man in the Lane, selling radio gadgets, where he still was, but the money was no longer good. "If nothing turns up I shall go and work for a bricklayer when the summer is over," he said with complete resignation.

On my way to the West End by bus I thought that of the two boys the second one, whose name I never found out, was nearer the true

Spiv than Reg, who was just a "borderline case" as they would say. A Spiv doesn't like domestic life, regularity and routine. Reg may have appeared to many as a Spiv and there was no doubt that he was attracted by Spivs and would possibly have liked to be one, but something kept him back. What, exactly? A sense of decency? The Victorian catch-phrase first leapt into my mind. Perhaps. But also a sense of security. The gap between parents and children has never been so wide as it is in our time, and yet there is something very comfortable and reassuring about living at home even if you do have to give one third of your income to the old woman. And you can always turn it up.

At first I thought the Spiv had his predecessors in Victorian England. I was thinking of Bailey Junior in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and of the Artful Dodger in *Oliver Twist*, but neither was really a Spiv. Bailey Junior was a hard-working youngster with a swagger and presumably with a rich, amorous life; Dickens never dared to tell us a tenth of it. The Artful Dodger, on the other hand, was simply a young criminal in Fagin's gang. Plenty of people in Victorian times were both foppish and lived on their wits, but they did not belong to the working class. There spivvery was almost impossible; you were either a criminal or an honest man. I would suggest, therefore, that the Spiv is somewhat new, though I presume there must have been working-class Spivs in the Elizabethan London or in Restoration London.

I have met a fair number of the international spivdom in my time. First in Budapest. "Yass" was the name they used for them. Molnar's *Liliom* is the apotheosis of the Budapest Spiv of the nineteen-tens. Berlin in the last few years of the Weimar Republic was a breeding ground for Spivs. The name was *Stenz* and I met many of them. Then came my autumn vacations in Paris and my residences in Spiv neighbourhoods such as Ménilmontant, Belleville, the vicinity of the Place de la République and the Boulevard Clichy. There the name was *Zazou*, *Oisif* or *Voyou*. During my year in the Army and in my days as a lorry driver I met the English variety. Finally I met him in America, where he is known as the Flash Boy or the Wide Boy. I lived among them in Los Angeles and I sold gramophone records to them in Brooklyn.

What are the national differences? The English variety is the most delightful. The Budapest *Yass*, the Parisian *Voyou*, the Berlin *Stenz*, the *Wide Boy* are a trifle too tough to be human, and are not influenced by the phantom of a society which is still feudal or gothic. Toughness is partly a show, of course, and the Spiv's life is half showing off. He acts tough in England, too, but his toughness is not over-lifesize and the feminine streak—an essential characteristic of the Spiv's make-up—always comes to the surface. The foreign Spiv quite often ends up as a

criminal; the English Spiv seldom does. Being English, he is more subdued, more civilized, more human, more friendly, just as English cats and dogs are invariably friendlier than most foreign varieties.

The Spiv exists in Soviet Russia too. A year ago *Crocodile*, which I take to be the Communist equivalent of *Punch*, devoted an article to him. The young man dressed to kill (Soviet fashion), whose occupation "is to avoid all occupations", apparently survives even in a fully regimented, totalitarian state. That is not surprising. The Spiv uses his wits, and such a man always beats the bureaucracy, which is essentially slow. The "clever" man, be he smuggler, income-tax evader, black-marketeer or just a Spiv, has always more at stake than the bureaucrat who tries to stamp him out. For him no regimented totalitarian state is regimented or totalitarian enough, and complete totality or regimentation is technically impossible.

It has been said that the Spiv is anti-social. To my mind the more important characteristic of the Spiv is that he is the mass man on the square or, if you like, a caricature of the mass man; "a creature of the moment". I take this phrase from Hazlitt, who had an entirely different person in mind when he coined it, but the phrase fits the mass man who is a person living from day to day without attempting to make any effort towards improvement. He lives in an everlasting present and is not permanently troubled by the insecurity of the future. If he is, he soon forgets it and muscles back into his dream-world. The Spiv's dream-world is richer than the mass-man's; his whole background in fact is largely make-believe and usually his desire is to shine in his own circle, to impress, to create admiration and envy.

He is on the fringe of the crime world, his activities are dubious, illegal, but not quite criminal. He is a little less passive than the average mass man, and is neither bitter nor active enough to make a real criminal, though undoubtedly he has the skill. Just as Reg is separated from the actual Spiv by a narrow margin, so the other—whose name I couldn't find out—is separated from the criminal by another narrow margin.

Not all spivs dress flashily, of course, and all those who dress flashily are not necessarily Spivs, but the combination is frequent. At one time—before the wars—he used to be a caricature of his English betters. Today he thinks these people themselves are caricatures and so he imitates the American playboy: the spearpoint or Command collar, the Windsor knot which at one time may have been fashionable in England, but today is unmistakably "American". The same applies to the long drape-cut, which is Central European in origin and reached us twenty years later via America. He wears flashy ties, fancy socks, shoes and jewellery, and his haircut is Regency. He is, I think, the contemporary successor of the dandy

if there are any successors. A dandy is a "clothes-wearing man, whose trade, office and existence is in the wearing of clothes," said Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus*. The law of social learning seems to fit the case: there is the usual time-lag of a generation, in this case, between the Edwardian age, the last, brief period of upper class elegance and today. But that applies to the whole working class.

Today the upper-class dandy is dead and it isn't entirely income tax and death duties which have been responsible for his death (not only are there still a large number of rich people left, but quite a number of "idle rich") but social disapproval and the comparative cheapness of man's tailoring. For the past twenty years male elegance has been frowned on in upper class circles because the upper class has lost the monopoly of being well dressed. Therefore, the upper class began to look "old fashioned", if not actually shabby, quite often deliberately and challengingly so, knowing only too well how secure was their social position. Their sense of ostentation became less concentrated on clothes, but all the more evident for all that. The possession of a Rolls-Royce more than made up for the floorshy or drainpipe trousers, the racing stable for the ten-year-old overcoat and the directorships for the out-of-date hat. (The much worn, dainty, pointed shoes, however, had to be very shiny to show that one had a manservant.) Now that "Conservative" appearance has become fused with apology, an upper-class dandy today would be slightly ridiculous in his own circle, the Spiv, however, is admired in *his* circle.

There is, of course, another elegance arbiter in that world—the Jewish boy, who is as keen on sartorial matters as the Spiv, but the Jew usually gives nothing but an *impression* of the Spiv. There are some Jewish Spivs, but not too many. The atmosphere in which the young East End Jew grows up is not congenial to Spivdom. Besides, when he becomes an adolescent, he becomes aware of the hostility of the Gentile, but he seldom runs away into a dream-world; he gets busy trying to purchase respect even if he cannot purchase his full acceptance by the Gentile.

People on the whole prefer the Spiv to the Jew, because the Jew irritates them with his achievements, his restless glitter, his intellect, his elasticity, and, above all, his duality, which is worse than "foreign". His humour is wit, pointed, elaborate, grown up. The Spiv is far more "human" and childish.

Many people—and many more than care to admit—have a warm corner in their hearts for the Spiv. The general run of the working class in England is tolerant, passive, good-natured. It perhaps has a slightly Puritan streak, but on the whole does not like regimentation. The Spiv

amuses them, and by watching him and listening to him they live his life at second hand. Furthermore, the Spiv in his own unintelligent, unconscious, unorganized way, represents a protest against regimentation and they wish him good luck. They don't envy him as a rule. Working-class men, on the whole, are not envious: once they do become envious then they usually soon cease to be working class. Envy, like snobbishness, is often a stepping-stone towards the lower middle class. And that group hates the Spiv. Though they also hate regimentation—when it doesn't serve their own interests—the Spiv does not represent a protest to them. They watch him with distrust and, when the chance comes, get the better of him.

As a general rule the upper class does not dislike Spivs, perhaps because they seldom come into contact. To them, from the distance, the Spiv represents "vitality", "raciness" and "popular humour". But even from the distance they are aware of the Spiv's charm, for he is often charming, or has an attractive personality; that is part of his capital.

"Are Spivs born or are they made?" I asked Norman later, at the café off the Edgware Road. He is a barrow boy operating on and off Oxford Street.

"It's all according," he said. "I'm one meself."

I smiled "socially", and I hope convincingly. I have known Norman for a few years and I have met two or three of his mates. He is a shrewd youngster who admires and imitates Spivs without being one himself. For an unenlightened observer—most of his customers are that—Norman might give the impression that he is a Spiv, with his Tarzan haircut ending somewhat unexpectedly in a dead straight line across the shaven nape, and with his get-up. Norman rises early, goes to Covent Garden market, buys discriminately, bargains skilfully, then works busily till sunset seven days a week. He already has a motor-bike and is saving up for a house.

"We're all Spivs these days," he said, and grinned. Perhaps that "social" smile of mine was not altogether convincing, then. "Some are born Spivs, others are made. Sometimes his father's a Spiv, or was; sometimes the old people get him browned off and he runs away as soon as he leaves school. There's no fun and games livin' in a slum. Maybe that's why a good flute matters so much. Cheers you up, it does. Life gets you young and you feel you're young only once."

"You never meet old Spivs," I said.

"Seldom," Norman said. "And if you do, they are seldom dressers. They neglect themselves, go low, become market porters, go on the dole, live on the old woman." His face changed so tragically, that I swiftly abandoned the subject.

"Have you ever seen any Pearlies?" I said.

"My uncle has a pearly suit, or had one. Lives in Camberwell. But I only saw him once in it before the war. I's a kid then. He was collectin' money for some 'ospital. Pretty daft he looked."

"What was he?"

"Costermonger. Logs and firewood."

The Pearly has never been a Spiv. I was merely reminded of them because of their exhibitionism. The majority of Pearlies have been hard-working men in all sorts of trades and are usually extremely friendly. I remember meeting one at the Derby in the early 'thirties. The small white buttons on the back of his jacket announced that he was "Pearly King of Stockwell". I was with a party and we stood him a drink. He gave me a large, white, pearl button as a souvenir. Where are the Pearlies today? Many of them, no doubt, are alive, and somewhere in an old fumed-oak wardrobe they still keep the Pearly suit that took months and months of love's labour to decorate, with large and small pearl buttons; a strange survival of the "native dress". Sometimes there was some savage, unself-consciousness in the Pearlies' appearance in the middle of an over-civilized metropolis subdued under a ritualistic conception of life. Perhaps that's exactly what produced Pearlies. But where are the other working-class eccentrics? The London of my youth was still full of them: Pearlies, their women with ostrich feathers, old sailors with ear-rings, white bodies completely covered with tattoo, you saw them at swimming pools, back and chest and arms and legs, and sometimes even the buttocks; batteries of gold teeth. It seems working-class eccentricity is on the wane. Their appearance today is clean and respectable, fashionable and drab. There was something of the charm of delightful animals about working-class exhibitionists, something vital and full blooded yet affectionate and house-trained. They were friendly pets which many people preferred to human beings. Did socialist legislation put an end to Pearlies? I wonder. Apparently eccentricity has become incompatible with national health, family allowances, school-leaving age at fifteen and with that self-conscious respectability which comes from job security and full employment. But it seems something is going out of English life with the passing of the eccentrics—aristocratic or working class. The half of me which is the novelist regrets. Maybe individualism is receding too, and that would give the other half of me an even greater cause for regret.

CHAPTER VI

WHO LOST THE CAUSE?

MY Oxford friends did not expect me to arrive before Friday, but nearly on the Thursday morning Eric delivered the car. "As good as new," he grinned. His bill was less than I had expected and the weather was lovely. I had an inspiration: "Don't think, do your packing, don't answer the telephone and leave at once. Otherwise you never will." I did. It was only as I was nearing Oxford that I began to wonder what I should do. I decided I would not embarrass my friends by bursting on them, but would spend the day in "speculative meditation".

I had visited Oxford three times previously. My first visit was in the autumn of 1927 when I was very young and a friend decided to take me there in his sidecar. I did not realize that it was his first journey on a brand new motor-bike and that he had never been to Oxford before. But we did eventually reach Oxford, and he showed me round in the fine October afternoon. "That is a very famous law court," he said, pointing to what I later recognized as the Radcliffe Camera. We stopped in front of Keble College. "English History, the heritage of centuries," he said with a break in his voice. I was duly impressed.

During the nineteen-thirties I was taken by two girls to attend Eights Week and Commemoration Week respectively. The weather was fine and we went boating on the river, dined at various colleges, visited "the" Club, I don't remember its name, but it was "the" Club, and attended two college balls. But one morning I was shown round by an architectural student, who pointed out the genuine and the bogus among the "heritage of centuries". And I spent another morning with a student who represented the ascetic, politically minded, generation. He had a guilt feeling on account of being Middle Class. Today he sits in the front bench of the House of Commons, with no guilt feeling whatsoever.

And so on the first day of this trip after lunch I revisited the Oxford of those previous occasions. I saw a tortoise, painted to resemble a rowing cap, in the very centre of the quad at Oriel. I recalled that it had been on exactly the same spot fifteen years earlier. I remembered the bicycle menace. Today there are more bicycles in Oxford than ever. I found that the "Scouts"—the college menservants—now belong to a trade union. I looked at Keble and Balliol. They no longer looked bogus as they did on my second visit when I made the following notes in my diary: "*In any case they photograph well. Who was the idiot who said 'You can't cheat the*

camera?" *The camera is about the most gullible instrument ever invented. Keble on glossy paper really looks like 'The Heritage of Centuries', just as false teeth usually look more real than real teeth; especially in photogravure newspaper advertisements.*" Today I feel the bogus, the original and the "touched up", blend beautifully in Oxford.

Later in the afternoon, when I was admiring the baroque magnificence of Queen's, Peter came out of the gate and I asked him whether it was permissible to look round the college. He said it wasn't, but he was a member and he would show me round if I didn't ask too many questions. With certain reservations I accepted the offer. Half an hour later we agreed that apparently both of us had been waiting for each other's company the whole afternoon. He had to face an examination in biology the following day and wanted to clear his mind, and I had time on my hands. We had tea together next to a shop that specialized in fancy waistcoats, and were already on Christian name terms.

"You said that I reminded you of someone you knew, but you suddenly dropped the subject. Why?" Peter asked.

"Because I was afraid you would become like him later. At twenty he was exactly like you, chestnut and pink, precocious, with a restless brilliance and all your irresponsible, anarchist charm. Today, at thirty-five, he's already an 'Elder Statesman' in the Lords, pompous, weighty, with a mixture of considered courtesy and sarcasm."

"Who is he?"

"Enfield."

Peter smiled. "Michael Leopold Morgenstern, second Baron Enfield," he added quickly. "That's our fate, you see; the ancestors come out towards middle-age. By the way, when did you realize I was Jewish? I don't wish to be deprecatory about your mental equipment, but it wasn't a flash of intuition, was it? You built it up little by little. I watched you do it."

"And I watched you watching me," I said. "The point is that everything about you is Jewish except your face, and when I say Jewish I mean the young Jewish type I like best. The Mediterranean heritage: that amazing maturity, that attractive metaphysical unrest, that restless intellectual glitter. And I like it tempered with the traditions of a quiet English Public School like . . . er . . . er . . . Charterhouse. Am I right about your school, by the way?"

"Almost. It's St. Paul's. But you can't say my name is Jewish."

"It is very," I said. "Nobody but a discriminating Jew would pick on a name like Allport. It has the tang of the sea in it. It's much too English as your looks are almost too English."

After tea we went to his rooms in the college. The colour scheme and

furniture of the sitting-room was more or less as it had been in the 'thirties. There was a Renoir reproduction over the fireplace and a large number of drink bottles on the small table. I looked at some of the books on the shelf: Auden and Day Lewis and McNeice and Rilke, Novalis and Kirkegaard, Hölderlin. "Those are my room mate's," Peter said. "Look at mine." I went over to the other bookshelf. I smiled. "Say it," Peter said, "I won't get angry. What do they look like?"

"School prizes and presents from maiden aunts."

There was a pair of high-heeled brocade shoes by the fireplace; size six. "A girl Tony met last night," Peter said. "She wants an excuse to come back later." A dove-grey waistcoat lay on the back of an arm-chair, decorated with rich Victorian embroidery.

Peter said: "Don't be misled by people who say to you that Oxford is a dull place today. Gay parties are still going on. There are plenty of young men, like Evelyn Waugh's heroes, except——" he left this sentence unfinished. For a moment he looked at the carpet. "Except what?" he said.

"I presume that the tradition of gay parties has gone underground at Oxford as all that feverish social activity and attractive waste all over England has gone underground," I said.

"I am wondering if Oxford has changed so much in every other respect," Peter said. "Take sex. Tony and I and a few other friends guess that sixty per cent of the students are completely sexless, play rugger or go to church and study; they look like boys one would expect to meet at Youth Hostels. Big feet and hair on the chest. Twenty-five per cent have intimacy with girls and the other fifteen are homosexual. I am wondering if it was in the same proportion before the war. And I am wondering if love—normal or abnormal—was as simple in Oxford before the war. Today all you want for it is a loaf of bread and a gramophone."

"You mean sex, don't you?" I said.

"Isn't it the same?"

"I thought it was when I was your age."

Peter smiled; he gave me a cigarette. "You sound like a don, but I suppose I asked for it." I said:

"You talked about students who looked like boys you expect to see at Youth Hostels. Is that the predominant type at Oxford these days?"

"Unfortunately, yes. They are the New Philistines. The old type of Philistine was upper class and elegant; the new one is neither. The old one lived for his pleasures, the new one lives entirely for his career. They get nothing out of Oxford."

"I wonder," I said. "One of my criteria of a university is what you take away from it and retain; a kind of residue. With past generations I

thought I could always recognize an 'Oxford manner', not the mannerisms and accent, outward habits, but mental habits, something in which some Englishmen always remained European. I am wondering how much those people you call the New Philistines retain of it, and whether they are as philistine as all that."

In my lifetime there have always been three Oxfords: the University, the attractive market town and a modern industrial periphery. The first has changed most in the past ten years. I came to this conclusion a day later. My visit to Oxford coincided with Eights Week, which before the war used to be a glamorous social occasion. Now it is almost timid. A few hundred visitors, parents and sisters and girl friends staying at the *Mitre* and at the *Randolph*, a few dinner parties which end fairly early. Normally one sees hardly any evening suits during the week in Oxford: in most colleges they change for dinner at week-ends only. I did see one young man in a dinner jacket with crimson facing on the lapels, and I asked half a dozen people what it represented. They didn't know. I found it out later from a college Scout. It was a club. I was sure they genuinely didn't know, but you will remember that before the war there was a kind of unwritten law among the serious, politically minded undergraduates that one must pretend that one didn't know such things even if one did know. Today they *genuinely* don't know.

There is a small group of young socialites in Oxford—a few are rich and the rest sponge on them—but their activities are ignored by the rest. That is all very well, I thought, the Bloods, the Barbarians and dandies are nearly gone. Peter might regret it and I might have done so at twenty. But I have the suspicion that the intellectual dandy is on the wane too, and that would be a sad loss, and so would be the young man who goes to Oxford for no other purpose than the acquisition of culture. I also noticed that much fewer people seem to browse at the bookshops than before the war.

Another change is that dress in Oxford is far more uniform today. Before the war there was the traditional, the dandy, the eccentric and the shabby. All four dressed in studied manner, even the shabby. There were, to be sure, a few genuinely shabby students, but one always had the feeling that the average took special care to look shabby. There was an element of conceit and boastfulness in it. Some tried to imitate the working class in the very field where it has always been so easy to imitate them, and then in pre-war England one could quite easily gain an intellectual reputation on dirty fingernails, long untidy hair and generally unkempt appearance. Today when labour politicians go birdseye and pinstripe, unkempt appearance alone buys much less. On the other hand, today a

well-dressed man does not automatically mean a fool, a dilettante, or a Philistine. If an Oxford student is shabby today, his is a genuine case. But the majority of the students at Oxford are becoming more and more indistinguishable from other students elsewhere or from young Englishmen anywhere. The same, I think, applies to their speech and outlook. Before the war the Oxford accent was perhaps more typical of people who had never been to Oxford; today it is almost gone; and as for the "university manner" in outlook and intellectual approach, today it isn't easy to recognize an Oxford and Cambridge graduate as it was, say, ten years ago.

These are the superficial changes in Oxford, and now I should like to go a little more deeply.

"Today eighty-five per cent of our undergraduates receive some form of help: scholarships, and so on," the don said as we walked up and down the quad. He is a man in his late thirties, a brilliant historian, whom I had met before. "The number of those who pay the full fee, which is about £300 a year, is only some one thousand of the seven thousand undergraduates."

"What is the social background of those who are here on scholarship?" I said.

"More or less middle class. In this college there are a few men whose parents are working class people. One of my pupils is the son of a coal-miner, another a son of a smalltown butcher, but the majority come from the middle class. And in this respect our college is a true representative of Oxford. Trinity, Christ Church, Pembroke and one or two others whose students are still predominantly upper middle class, are the exceptions.

"We made a brief analysis of the undergraduates at the college, and the result was that the majority of them are what the sociologist would call lower middle class, that is, sons of the lower paid salariate and of shopkeepers, etc. Much less than half of them came from Public Schools. But even the bulk of those who had been to Public Schools is middle class proper only by tradition, namely the fathers *did* go to Oxford or Cambridge, but the sons could not have done so if they had not obtained a scholarship." I nodded. So here was the point where the lower middle class, which in our time is slowly finding its way into the administrative and governing group of England, is merging with members of the former governing group. That is if Oxford (and Cambridge) still continued to be the recruiting ground for the administrative group of England.

"Do you think," I asked the don, "that this predominance of the lower middle class in Oxford is an additional reason why there is far less pro-working class feeling here than before the war? What I mean is this: I agree that the main reason for the changed outlook is obviously

the social economic change between 1939-1950, as a result of which the working class today is far better off. I have met many members of the pre-war generation who had guilt feelings for not being manual workers, but those days are gone. But I feel sure that the social background of the new undergraduate is an additional reason for the fact that the new Oxford is far less socially conscious than pre-war Oxford. Am I right?"

"I don't know. An undergraduate whose father is a bank clerk or a member of the impoverished professional class may be less likely to be pro-working class than a rich boy safe in the saddle. But the overwhelming reason for the change is, I think, the thing you mentioned first: the worker's improved economic position."

A bell chimed at Oriel or Merton and we changed the subject. I had always considered that one of the most unique and valuable features of Oxford and Cambridge was the tutorial system. Once, or perhaps twice, a week a student saw one or two tutors for an hour or so throughout term. The student was given books to read and an essay to write and during the tutorial they discussed the essay. This "discussion" I considered most important. Knowledge, after all, can be gained from books and lectures, but the tutorial aims to teach the student to acquire a respect for care and accuracy, a caution in generalization, the principle to take nothing for granted, and finally to think independently if he can, or at least clearly. The tutorials, in short, mean that a good deal of personal attention is given to each student and this makes the system an expensive but a uniquely successful one.

"There are some changes," the don said. "In the first place the tutorial idea is infiltrating other universities. They usually call it seminars. The only difference is that elsewhere there are fewer tutors and many more students, so a tutorial is attended by half a dozen or more undergraduates and that's not quite the same thing. By the way, even at Oxford it is somewhat rare for a don to see only one undergraduate during a tutorial. There are usually two and occasionally even three students. On the other hand, because of the great influx of students, a number of the Oxford tutors are very young men: in fact, in some colleges young graduates of twenty-three or twenty-four are tutoring. Some of them, of course, are not experienced. Well, they have to start somehow. . . ."

"Is it true that dons are badly paid?"

"Yes. The teaching profession, apparently, is the last to benefit from universal social welfare, especially the younger men. They have financial worries which dons seldom had fifteen years ago. To mention only one worry: before the war hospitality was a very important feature of a don's life. He asked his students to dinner and they asked him back. These dinners were not a purely social activity: they were part of the personal

relations of student and teacher, part of the process of education. Today there is far less of that."

I said: "I have met a few dons who have given me the impression of bitter disappointment. Is it that they feel they are not getting on in the world, that they have not got enough influence in proportion to their knowledge and that they are becoming sterile because they are not allowed near the seat of power?"

"Some of them, no doubt, are bitter, but the consultative power of the Universities was enormous during the war and it is still great. Certain dons are intimate friends of Labour cabinet ministers, and it is thought they exert great influence over them. Some former dons, in fact, are in the cabinet. Again, many dons are successful journalists and broadcasters. But there are several who feel frustrated. Perhaps because Oxford (or Cambridge) no longer quite enjoy the respect they did. Some dons become arrogant, cynical and irresponsible. There is a good deal of intrigue going on in Oxford, a good deal of jealousy and backbiting, not to speak of terror. The calm and dignity of Oxford is often a façade."

Another bell chimed. It reminded me of the great bell of the Sorbonne.

"How do you select your students now that they are simply besieging Oxford?" I asked.

"They are besieging *every* English university," the don smiled. "Well, before the war there was the College Entrance Exam which was not really a stiff academic test. In many cases it was just an opportunity for the college to select their students on an overwhelmingly "social background" basis. If you knew the "right people", if you were rich or if your father had been a member of the college you were usually accepted, unless you were a total imbecile. Today, with the General Certificate, special considerations only operate at a few colleges. The General Certificate is stiff: you must have some mental capacity to pass it, and there are several undergraduates after having passed it who have tried half a dozen colleges before they got into one."

The don had been munching a daisy as we walked, and the conversation lasted far longer than was expected. Although there is always a bell chiming somewhere in Oxford to denote the passing of every five minutes, time still has no dictatorial powers there. It was 1.15 and I was expected to lunch at one o'clock. So was the don.

There are several Continental notes I must add about post-war Oxford. The first is the increasing financial help given by the State to Oxford as to all universities. Before the war the university grant was only a tiny fraction of what it is today, now that the State has been forced to

change its mind about education. On one hand, the State recognizes the need for trained men in certain fields such as science, economics, sociology or medicine, whose steady supply otherwise cannot be kept up. On the other hand, war reinforced the principle that the higher learning should not be the preserve of wealth but that of ability. Today about half of the cost of university education is borne by the State—even at Oxford and Cambridge, some of whose colleges are immensely wealthy—and the State in turn so far does not interfere with the universities. I personally think that sooner or later it might interfere.

Another thing I noticed is the large number of poor students in Oxford, but this applies to the whole of England. The poor student was very typical of the Continent before the war and very *untypical* of England, if we ignore Scotland and Wales. The reason, I think, was that in the past neither education nor degrees and diplomas as such had very much prestige in England. A poor Englishman thought he had far less chance of getting on in the world if he had struggled his way through university than his Continental or Scottish or Welsh equal. Moreover, before the war there was still a tremendous difference between the two older universities and the other universities. If one could not get into Oxford or Cambridge, then it was felt not worth while going to any other university. Today that attitude does not exist.

And yet this conception was not entirely social or snobbish as neither an Oxford or a Cambridge education increased one's social prestige much. It was considered a "good thing" for a rich or well born to go to "the" university, but his social position had already been decided by his Public School. If he wanted to go into business, it was generally considered to be a waste of time to go to Oxford. I have met scores of rich Englishmen whose education came to an end with Eton or with some other "good" Public School. On the Continent the same group to a man would have gone to a university.

On the other hand fewer and fewer people today enter the "family" business for the simple reason that the "family business" has disappeared. Consequently more and more people are looking for jobs, and degrees and diplomas apparently are becoming more and more helpful and important. For the first time for centuries the poor—new and old—feel they will get on if they continue their studies. There are nearly twice as many university students as before the war.

A third change is that a certain number of students look for jobs during the vacations and many find them. Generally speaking they work harder at Oxford than ever before and are far more full of purpose and tougher than the previous generation, but then that again applies to the whole of England, and I think to the whole world. World War II left no "lost

generation" in England, unless all of us, young and old, are collectively regarded as a lost generation, born in the wrong period of history.

The other don, T. L. Hodgkin, I went to see wasn't doing any actual teaching, but was in charge of the extramural delegacy through which working men and women can make their entry into Oxford. I had met his wife too. She is a science don at Somerville and one of the best crystallographers in England. There is something beautifully humane and European about this couple, all that is of lasting value in our civilization. They are modest and good, Christians without the dogma and Socialist without the dogma, and both have a wonderful sense of humour. Hodgkin had asked me to dine at his college: a famous one but disappointing to look at perhaps because it is famous. Most of its castellated walls are Victorian Gothic; I think Waterhouse. We sat at High Table, but with our backs to the hall, so that I could not see the students nor the better pictures.

During dinner he said: "Perhaps the most important thing about living in college is the diversity. If you are a student here, or in any college, you are always in touch with others who are studying something else, so that you have a diversity of view all the time. The other factor is the harmonious surroundings. In spite of the fact that Oxford today is a big city—three times as big as Cambridge—here you still can have a peaceful atmosphere, conducive to learning. And you will slowly, unconsciously, learn a sense of proportion, a sense of order and some values that ought to survive. If only Oxford and Cambridge could be made available to as many as deserve it!"

Then a few minutes later: "I hope you realize that, out of the seven thousand odd students here, there are only eight hundred women. Until quite recently in Cambridge women could not even get degrees. Quite shocking."

After dinner in the small, dark Common Room, we started a conversation on the change that has overtaken the English Universities in general. We appreciated that the gap between Oxford and Cambridge and the newer Universities is no longer as wide as it was even before the war. In fact, whether there is a gap at all is debatable. One thing, however, is certain; Oxford and Cambridge today are no longer behind the newer Universities (especially London) either in science or economics as they were before the war.

I asked whether it was still true that a graduate of the older Universities was less likely to become a narrow specialist than someone from the newer Universities. They thought that was the case. Then I added that I had often noticed in England that there was a wider gap between the culture of an arts graduate and a science graduate than in most European

countries (though a split did exist everywhere). They said the gap was narrowing. With special reference to this gap I asked whether University education in England was not too brief: three years against the usual four at Continental Universities. That issue was to be considered by experts.

Then the subject was changed. A younger don began to talk about the increase in the prestige of natural sciences, and I became a little gloomy. I said what I had been feeling for the past ten years, namely, that the root of the trouble, or one of the roots of the trouble, was that we can infer so much about nature, and guess so little about man.

Having listened for five minutes to a Fascist meeting, it brought to mind another problem: the problem of the Intellectual Proletariate, which was such a tragic feature of Central Europe after World War I. The problem of the man who had received a University education and could not find a job, or only an inferior one, existed in England too, but such a thing in the past was camouflaged. On one hand it was shameful to admit it (usually there was one or two hundred pounds of unearned income a year). On the other hand, such a man could always find some job—even if it were not satisfactory—which paid better and was less arduous than manual labour. At worst there was tutoring, conducting tourists, work in bookshops and at picture dealers, etc. In central Europe neither of these conditions prevailed. So pride, snobbishness or a sense of shame vanished, and from the nineteen-twenties onwards the intellectual proletariat admitted its condition, tried to enrol into pressure groups or joined parties of political extremism. In various countries, the governments themselves created national organizations to deal with the problem.

Intellectual Proletariate is beginning to be a significant feature of post-war England too. There is a growing number of young, and not so young, men and women for whom the nation cannot provide suitable employment. Oxford and Cambridge graduates are now a penny a dozen. There are thousands of young barristers and other qualified men (except doctors and dentists) who today point blank admit that they are without jobs, and there is considerable bitterness over the fact that the National Boards have filled their vacancies with their own "boys" even at the lower levels. Favouritism and nepotism have, for a long time, been features of the older European countries, and England was in this respect "typically European". The expansionist period being over for two generations at least there had always been far more "successful" candidates than available jobs for them. The Government so far has done little to solve the problem beyond establishing during the war an "Appointments Register", for unemployed graduates and qualified men, as part of the Ministry of Labour. Various unions, such as the National

Union of Journalists or the unions of cine technicians, do the same, but their usefulness is limited because they cannot create jobs. A friend of mine, who has been on the "Appointments Register" for several years, is being asked by them every three months whether he has found a job or not. He said that the shortage of qualified jobs is such that a few public bodies apparently follow "quite an interesting" technique. If there are vacancies they first find the man from their "short lists", then they insert advertisements inviting candidates, so as to pay lip service to democratic principles, and even keep up the comedy of interviewing those who apply days after the man from the "short list" has been decided upon.

A sense of grievance such as my friend's seldom finds an outlet in England by joining parties of political extremism. If they do join a party the choice is usually the Communist Party, not the Fascist. The reason for that is partly that the intellectual proletariat is smaller in England, and partly that the Communist movement has not lost its prestige to the same extent as the Fascist movement. But even before the war there were hardly any university graduates in Mosley's or in Joyce's movement. In Central Europe the embittered intellectual proletariat became a strength of the Fascist movement.

But then political extremism in England has no chance. All their real thunder—political radicalism and reform—had been stolen from them by the Labour Party, and so the Fascist is left with Jew-baiting plus an antipathy (which he shares with Communist) towards parliamentarism and trade unions. These antipathies are not saleable to the English masses. If you wish to find a "nice" reason as to why not, you can say that they are "too mature", if you wish to be "nasty" you can say they are too negative and ignorant.

Many people talk about the "Communist danger" inside England. It is agreed that party membership in England is not increasing, which the Communist party may not mind. They may feel they only want people who are a hundred per cent enthusiasts; they need dedicated men, above all. In any case, the political careerist would not be happy in that party. Too much is expected of him for too little, too much secret police and too much centralized direction as a result of which good jobs and positions are not safe. But people maintain that quality counts for more than quantity, and besides the legal work and open activity there is a good deal of illegal work and underground activity going on.

My argument is that the real "Communist Danger" is far more outside England than inside it. Lenin knew what he was talking about when he said "The road to revolution in Britain is not via the Thames. It is via the Yangtse River and Calcutta." I would add a few more rivers and cities.

It is said that a scientist, especially the biologist, turns to Communism easily. This I don't know, but I do know that it is extremely difficult for him to turn to Capitalist Democracy. And some people must turn to something. Well, what else is there besides Communism and Roman Catholicism? You can't expect a mathematician, a crystallographer, a vital statistician, or a biochemist to turn to Yoga, or have a portrait of Attlee or Churchill above his mantelpiece.

The following morning it was pouring with rain. Slowly I drove along Cornmarket Street, past the Oxford Union and Exeter College and Balliol, the Martyr's Memorial and the Greek magnificence of the Ashmolean. I gave a last look at Keble and smiled as I remembered again "The Heritage of Centuries". Then I took the Banbury Road. I was on my way to another England. Somewhere—who knows the exact location?—there is a frontier across which there is that "other England" with a landscape, culture, language, manners, habits totally different from the South. For a time I thought the one north of the Midlands was the "real" England, and the other down south, where I live, was only an attractive façade even though it was older. Was this because I thought the country across the invisible "frontier" more human? Perhaps. Superficially, it always looked more similar to the Continent than the south. People always talked to strangers in trains, raised their voices, overstated. Lord Chesterfield with his stiff upper lip lived in vain for them. They were more intense, less polished, readier to be friendly and, on the surface, more democratic. I hadn't been to this part of England since the war, and I was wondering what it was looking like now.

CHAPTER VII

CUPS AND SAUCERS

THE first thing I noticed driving into Hanley was that it is a much cleaner place than it was ten years ago. As I recognized the familiar sights one by one, the railway bridges, the canal, the Parish Church and those large bottles of sooty brick which are the symbols of Stoke, I recalled my very first visit to the city. It was in the early nineteen-thirties when I saw "Industrial England" for the first time. The impression was one of sinister fascination. There was a smoke pall hanging low above the small houses, totally obliterating the sun and the sky; there was soot, blackness and grime everywhere: over the sham Gothic churches, over the streets, the factories, over the canal whose still waters looked like shiny green linoleum. A miner would walk along the pavement with a face as black as those of the more remote tribes of Africa, his clogs thumping on the cobblestones. There were mists in the early summer afternoons and the atmosphere was bracing and bewildering, a little unreal. Dickens, the word leapt into my mind; perhaps the later Dickens of *Hard Times*. But I was too fascinated with the novelty of the atmosphere to think of what lay beneath the soot or what message Dickens tried to convey.

It was during a second visit, when I spent several weeks in Staffordshire and many days in Stoke, that I began to be analytical. That was four years later, and the smoke pall over the city was a little thinner. And no wonder, for it was during the worst period of the slump when two men out of three were unemployed. I was shocked by the dirt, the dereliction and the helplessness, the long queues outside the Labour Exchanges, the empty shops.

Against these shadows the stunted houses of the city looked like a condemnation of Victorianism. It was the autumn of the General Election and I had joined the team of helpers who were canvassing for a friend standing again for Stoke City (which she had wrenched from Lady Cynthia Mosley in 1931). The campaign continued for a fortnight, during which time I learnt a good deal about local politics and about the personal problems of the worker. We were given printed lists of the electors' names, street by street, and we were told to knock on each door. When somebody (it was usually the wife) opened it, we had to say that we had called on behalf of the candidate and could we hope for their kind support? On the first day I went out with a girl cousin to the back-to-back houses where the miners lived, but the next day she asked

to be sent to a "better" street. I was not surprised. On two occasions, as we were ushered into the kitchen, we were faced with the sight of a naked man taking his bath in the middle of the room in the washing tub. "You don't mind, love, do you?" the wife asked. "It's only the master having his bath. He's a miner, see."

After this I went canvassing alone from door to door in all the mean streets in the Stoke division of Stoke-on-Trent, my pockets filled with election literature, and in my hands the printed electoral lists to be marked "for", "against", and "doubtful". Quite often the housewives offered me a cup of tea, usually the Lipton brand or the Co-op and very strong, which I had to accept, not so much in the interests of the party as because it was so kindly offered.

As often as not the husband was in too: without a collar and tie, a stocky, toothless man, at first hostile then suddenly becoming friendly and inviting you inside. Some of them listened patiently to the sales talk without saying a word. I didn't know if it were courtesy, tongue-tiedness or cunning. Then they took my leaflets and thanked me. Others became argumentative and displayed a good knowledge of politics. The older ones were a little sententious, perhaps; the younger ones sharper, more bitter. It happened on several occasions that men or women—chiefly women—said outright in that flat accent of the Midlands: "We all luvve your friend. We know she is a good, kind woman, does a lot of good work for poor people. It's only her party we are against. Why moost she be a Conservative?"

I saw a lot of squalor. Sometimes it was useless to knock on the front door because the family usually sat at tea in the back room. Then I would go to the back door and apologize for my intrusion. They said it was all right, "Coomme in luvve." They showed me the ceiling that was falling down, the fantastic flower shapes of the dampness on the walls, the flooded outdoor lavatory. Quietly they began to protest against the Means Test, and against Ramsay MacDonald's "treachery". It was there, in those mean streets of Stoke, that I saw the actual, the living aspects of social facts I had only known from books: the difference between primary poverty (where poverty was not the worker's fault; his means of livelihood were simply inadequate to cover the means of subsistence) and secondary poverty (which was often the worker's fault). There was a good deal of primary poverty in those days at Stoke. But the people still preserved their sense of decency and independence, perhaps even a sense of shame. "Aye," they said, "others are mooch worse off than us."

There was quite a fight at the election even though Conservative voters displayed a notable "electoral apathy". Neville Chamberlain, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer, came to speak on behalf of my

friend, and spent a night with us. That was the first time I met him. At dinner he told us the background story of his quarrels with Lloyd George.

These memories flooded back to me as I drove into the city. The leaden sky was a familiar feature and so was the bracing air. Apart from the smoke it is a healthy air and, as I have said, there is much less smoke in it than there used to be. In a village twenty miles from the Potteries the dirt is still noticeable on the tree trunks, but the dirty faces of the miners have gone. The mines here, apparently have pithead baths. Then as I went further I noticed a square planted with large flower-beds: gladioli, petunias and geraniums. Apart from that the scene has changed very little. At half past ten in the morning the hooter sounded for the morning break in the factories. It still has the same old sound: a nautical sound, like the shrill cry of a cormorant.

The uniformed commissionaire opened the gates for me. I parked the car and walked up the narrow, familiar stairs to the office. My friends were greatly relieved when I asked to be left to my own resources. I had been "personally conducted" here fifteen years ago and had seen the private museum several times.

I walked down the stairs on to the cobblestones of the yards between the squat, sagging, contorted buildings, and I could not help feeling that with the nippy air that contains the smoke of a few hundred chimneys I was also breathing in a little history. I walked among walls blackened with a century of smoke, a curious maze of buildings of chancy, irregular shapes, and was reminded of a fortress—not a beautiful fortress, but one full of character and history. I passed through narrow passages, warrens and burrows, a bouquet of steam coming through at the end and the darkness illuminated only by a naked yellow electric bulb. Yes, I had been here before, I had remembered the way. I came to a narrow building on the extreme right which I wanted to see again. And I was apparently only just in time, for in a few weeks they were to pull it down to make room for an electric oven: the last word in mechanized firing. This narrow building, with its tottering walls, its outside staircase, the wooden steps of which are warped and worn with the footsteps of five generations of potters, was historic relic. It was not beautiful but nostalgic and evocative. Not as old as St. Paul's, but certainly older than Nash's Carlton House Terrace, Adams' Park Crescent, not to speak of the elder Wood's Royal Crescent at Bath. It dated from about 1780. The family knows little about it, but it was probably the workshop where Josiah Spode originally worked with his apprentices. It was not too far from the other place where his contemporary and rival, the other Josiah (Wedgwood) set up his own business.

I walked up the staircase and entered the two rooms. The glass had

gone from the windows and the ceiling was arched and low. Men were short of stature in those days, and Stoke men still seem to be on the shortish side if one is to judge by the national average. The person who had built it in those days between the American War of Independence and the French Revolution did not know how to build a factory. That was not surprising, since this factory was one of the first ever to be built. I looked round with strong emotions, because I knew that this historic stage property would not be here when I came again. In its way it was really a "historic monument" that ought to have been preserved and shown to visitors, for it was in buildings such as this that the Industrial Revolution was born and the revolution of our time launched. How many of them are still left standing in England, I wonder. But I doubt if there are many.

Stephenson's "Rocket" is a famous feature of Stockton Station, but what of the workshop where the "Rocket" was built? Does the place still stand where Cartwright's first mechanical loom was in operation? We know that the loom itself was destroyed by the workers, but was the workshop burnt down too? Where did Hargreaves' "Spinning Jenny", Kay's "Flying Shuttle", Crompton's "Mule" or Bessemer's "Converter" first operate? The buildings, the sheds, the workshops, the first original "factories" are hardly likely to have survived, except one or two here and there. But where are they? If I could have my way I would preserve them.

As I looked round the low, narrow room, I tried to visualize that period when it had been new and possibly quite famous and wonderful. Pottery was made in England from the very earliest days; it has been made by Man, in fact, ever since some genius of the Neolithic Age discovered the effects of fire on clay. Josiah Spode merely improved on the product, and in eighteen years of heartbreak and triumph rediscovered the secrets of the Chinese and made porcelain: bone-ash china. The point is that, with Wedgwood, he was one of the first people in England to build a factory or something larger than a workshop: the first whisper in the wind of the Industrial Revolution. It is a pity we know so much about his life and achievements and so little about his first factory. He was born in 1733. At the age of sixteen he was apprenticed to Thomas Whieldon, a master potter at Stoke. I saw Whieldon's diary with the entry for April 9th, 1749: "*Hired Siah Spode to give him from this time to Martelmas next—2/3 or 2/6 if he deserves it.*" This was his weekly salary and it wasn't bad for those days. The workshop then was in a range of low thatched cottages. At the age of twenty-nine he became manager of Turner, Banks and Bailey, whose workshops were on this very site. Eight years later he acquired the place for himself and the name "Spode" began

to appear on his goods. He could have gone on potting on the lines of his master, Whieldon, or Turner, Banks and Bailey, but he wanted to do bigger and better things. There was his namesake and former fellow apprentice of Whieldon's, Josiah Wedgwood, who was already famous.

Spode knew that thirty years earlier people at Bow had already experimented with bone-ash mixed with clay to make it more translucent. He went on experimenting furiously and eighteen years later produced the first piece of bone-ash porcelain. It was a great day, but the years of ambition and jealousy, endless days and nights spent at the kiln, affected his health and three years later, in 1797, he died. He left a partner, William Copeland, a London tea merchant, who had been with him all through those eighteen years.

This is roughly, then, the period of the room in which I stood. It was painted white inside, the windows were small, the floor rickety. Electric light was introduced later and the walls were strengthened with iron rods that end up outside in an octagonal metal star as if some order had been conferred on the house. This place was built before Peel's Factories Act of 1801, and a few years before, in New Lanark, Robert Owen with a quill pen wrote down the new word he had coined: the word "Socialism".

But what did the early Industrial Man look like? The Hammonds tell us so little about his looks. Possibly he did not yet look very different from the village craftsman and his apprentices. As likely as not he wore knee-breeches, stockings and buckled shoes, the apron was his "overall" and he wore a three-cornered hat when he was dressed up. At least that is how the very few English paintings of the period depict him. "Narrative Pictures" were a fashion just then, but there are hardly any recording the early days of the Industrial Revolution and hardly any landscapes of the first factories. Reynolds and Gainsborough must have heard about them towards the end of their lives, but they were portrait painters. To a Narrative Painter the first factories of England must have been as curious or romantic as a ruin and as exciting as a village scene.

Wright of Derby's "Experiment with the Air Pump" (about 1790) is a "scientific" picture. I can think of only one by an unknown artist depicting a pithead somewhere in the Midland fields when Manchester and Sheffield and Birmingham were green and pleasant villages, a good deal of them belonging to Sir Oswald Mosley's great-grandfather. On it the new machines rear up their fantastic and ridiculous shapes: the chimney is short and square, and next to the chimney there is a tree that could have been painted by Constable and a patch of green grass on which the horses and donkeys graze while the labourer, in knee-breeches, fills the cart

with coal. His waistcoat is angry red or bottle green. The picture is naïve and friendly with an air of hopefulness. There is toil but not yet too much; there is smoke but the grass is still emerald. There is no industrial squalor as such. The enemy is not yet the factory owner but the duke who enclosed the land, drove the villagers away, and made the yeoman a pauper. If there is a revolution going on in England, it is an agricultural revolution which has changed the English landscape beyond recognition with high farming and hedges. The landless English villager looked towards the factory with hope for a livelihood, and the factory owner was not yet isolated. He was teaching his workers himself, treating them like a father (fathers, of course, vary), and he ate with them at the same table.

I left the historic monument to continue my tour of the cobble-stoned yard between the misshapen buildings of sooty red brick. Here hefty young men, just like the porters at Billingsgate fish market, carry on their heads those oval boxes of clay known as saggars which contain the porcelain already fired out. In another room elderly men keep looking at the cups and saucers and pots and flower vases for faults. Then I found my way to the hub of the "conducted tour"—the "throwers". Last time there had been half a dozen at work here; now there is only a couple. They are being supplanted by the machine. There is a young man sitting at the revolving wheel as if he were playing the 'cello, but he knows that I am a visitor who has come to admire him. He is used to it; a showpiece of the works: a miracle man. He has been written up, photographed, and the movie camera may be no surprise for him. The young man is performing now partly for my benefit, with skill, deftness, pride and obvious enjoyment. He places a piece of "slip" (wet clay) on the revolving wheel and the white and damp clay mixture comes up a second later like a little column. He squeezes it, then makes a dent on the top and its shape is changed to a tube which is narrow in the middle. It is placed into the form, then he begins to turn it into a tea-cup. A delicate touch of his right foot on one of the gears, a slight precise gesture with a little wooden knife and the centrifugal force is already sending a piece of "slip" from the wheel across the room. He hands the girl the mould. A tea-cup is finished. It takes about sixty seconds and the cup is exactly as thin, as tall, as wide as the two dozen others which the girl is placing into the saggars. There is a marvellous co-ordination of hand, foot and eyes: a skill inherited from his father and grandfather.

I watch his hands. Artistic? I don't quite know what that cliché means, but his hands are exciting and beautiful. They are not the hands of the pianist, the surgeon, the painter, the sculptor—all people "who work with their hands". They are the hands of the potter. Aristocratic hands. A long

pedigree must have gone into the length and strength and the functional beauty of the fingers. True, I see them at an advantage, fully displayed with the pink texture of the young skin showing up very attractively against the wet white "slip" which rims the long almond-shaped fingernails. The owner of the hands is about twenty-two and earns seven pounds for a forty-hour week. He will never earn more money, and the firm cannot reward him more adequately; in fact, they could almost do without him. A machine with fingers of steel could do this magnificent work almost as well for years and years.

I lingered about a little longer, looking at this live, museum-piece, in "mint condition", because it is not only in the Potteries that the craftsmen are disappearing; it is a world-wide phenomenon. At one time we had many workers like this young man. They were not only part of our national heritage but part of our capital. But today there is less and less need for craftsmen. Their status is decaying. At one time they were at the top of the working class, today they are hardly above the labourer's status. In our time the gap between the skilled and the unskilled is narrowing. Jobs are easier to learn, and the more rationalized the organization the easier it is to train "skilled" men to take up a job on the assembly line. And, conversely, today there are new tasks which require very great training and skill, but that skill is not manual. It is the skill of organizers, who have always been with the factory, the workshop, but who are only emerging in our own time as claimants of the governing group and here begins the Managerial Revolution of our time.

It was drizzling slightly as I walked down the stairs and made my way through miles of store-rooms full of the most beautiful tableware, which England will never see as it all goes to America or Canada. I am now among the "jollyers", who work on moulding machines called the jolly, a type of work that some years ago was done by hand: such as plate-making. In a few seconds the "slip" is turned into a meat plate and a young boy stamps the bottom of the plates with a crown and the date. Good china, like silver and gold, is always dated.

In another building girls in coloured overalls do the hand-painting, surrounded by photographs of film stars and working to the tunes of the Midland Regional programme. The atmosphere is cheerful and the air heavy with the smell of paint. The cup and saucer which they paint now is in the dull coloured "biscuit" stage. It will be fired later again.

A little further on they are busy pulling down one of the bottle-shaped ovens. Little by little these landmarks of Stoke will all disappear, as the Potteries are changing over to the electric tunnel with its better regulated heat. I am watching one now. The saggars with their contents crawl on

their rails very slowly. It takes twenty-four hours to complete the firing, and a chart outside the oven shows the exact degree of heat for every few minutes. There is hardly a variation. Two workmen take a few saggars and open them. There are teapots inside and lids which culminate in a delicately coloured apricot with green leaves at the base. This is the "Luneville" pattern and the "Marlborough" shape which I know very well, since I myself am the possessor of a set of them. The disappearance of the Bottle Ovens explains one of the reasons why today there is less dirt in Stoke, though it still remains one of the dirtiest cities in England. There are two hundred potbanks in the six towns.

The whole town of Stoke is a Victorian relic. There is very little that pre-dates the eighteen-forties, and little that looks as if it were built since, perhaps because the soot soon made everything old-looking. There are a few public buildings whose crumbling façades suggest that our children are already looking on Victorian buildings as antiques. Here and there is a new cinema, but the rest is dirty red brick. The landscape has changed very little since my canvassing days there. The pubs look the same. I felt I ought to go to *The Lump Of Coal* at Brown Edge, near Burslem, where old potters, who still wear the waistcoat with sleeves, like the "boots" at friendly country hotels, talk about old times. But I wanted to hear the new story.

Outwardly the scene has not changed much, except that very few people wear caps. Young folk go bareheaded as all over England: a democratic note. In a street in Tunstall a bell rings and two men push the gates of an old fashioned level crossing across a busy street, a Victorian note.

"Stoke is an extremely conservative city," said the director of the Art Gallery whom I visited in the afternoon. "Conservative socialist I mean—Owenite. It sticks to its old traditions, and change, in any case, is very difficult. There are very few adventurous potters, because there is a great uncertainty about the future, so habits change very slowly. The greatest change since the war has been the arrival of some Jewish emigrants, some in pottery, some in other lines of business." He told me this in the old Mechanics' Institute which houses his gallery of modern art. It was built in 1850 and Dickens used to come here to give Penny Readings of his works. He laughed and cried as he read, and both author and audience enjoyed themselves.

I had tea with a young worker at one of the cafés. He had been on holiday and was due to start work again on the Saturday morning. He was employed as a designer by one of the better firms, making the stencils which are printed on the edge of cups and plates and saucers and vases which are later painted by hand. It is interesting work, he admitted,

and he liked it, but the trouble was that Stoke is a gloomy place to live in. "It's all right for work," he said. "It has been built for it, and it forces you to work because you want to forget all this." He made a gesture with his right hand, indicating the street, the houses, the smoke pall over the city. "There are hardly any amenities for recreation except the cinemas and an occasional concert. We no longer have a theatre at Stoke. There are thousands and thousands of young men and women who have never seen a living actor on the stage."

I nodded: "That's precisely what I heard in industrial cities in America. Though they are newer, they still look like Pioneer cities of Industry, the same as Stoke does."

"The trouble is," he went on, "that those who built this city never thought that the worker must have recreation, and that he would like to live as well as work in a nice place. And nothing has been done since to change it. It still looks like a dump. It is a dump. The trouble, I think, is that we in the Midlands don't travel much and accept things as they are. You said you liked the people of Stoke." He suddenly smiled. "Well, everybody according to his taste. I think they are full of rough edges. Provincials. They don't notice how these ugly bricks and dirty chimneys get at them. After a time they accept it. They don't want things changed. There you are." We had left the café by now and were walking through a place called "Dresden". The name conjured up dainty porcelain figures and the rococo city of August the Strong of Saxony. The Dresden of England is a derelict area, something that looks as if it had been destroyed by greed and thoughtlessness. That is where my chance acquaintance lived, and that is the background from which his delicate designs emerge.

We said good-bye to each other, and as I walked back from Dresden I reflected that, while I still think Stoke is dreadfully ugly and that "something ought to be done" about it, I had changed my views on Victorianism. For one thing, today Stoke is prosperous and some of its ugliness as likely as not will soon disappear. But there are more important things than town planning and even the workers' sensibility, no matter how important those are. It was the 19th century that landed not only England, but the whole world, in a mess, yes, but looking back on it, it seems it would have been impossible to have avoided it. I am not referring to the squalor and ugliness and brutality. With a little thought the workers could have been treated better, towns could have been made tidier and more pleasant to work in. But there are more important things than the workers' bodily welfare and prosperity, as the more intelligent Socialist today freely admits—especially if he doesn't happen to be a politician.

It is vital that the worker should be decently housed and fed, and that the Good Things of Life should be extended to him, but it is far more vital that the worker should not be atom-bombed to death. And the revolution of our time is a direct consequence of Industrialization. Once the world started to industrialize, the course of the future could not be altered, all the more so because Man was spending nearly all his energy and imagination on finding out things about nature and neglected finding out things about his own self. The intelligent Socialist today—as well as the intelligent Conservative—knows full well that it was not “capitalism” that was at fault. Capitalism, in any case, is disappearing today. What was at fault, among other things, was that industry was incompatible with national frontiers, or rather with that unbending and full-fledged national sovereignty that still insisted on being the supreme arbiter of his own destiny and rendered the law between nations into a law of the jungle. The more advanced of us see this point and the less advanced are forced by fear to see it, yet there is very little we are doing about it. I for one will attempt to outline what is likely to happen when my journey is nearing its end.

PATTERNS ON A LANCASHIRE LOOM

OF Manchester I had very few recollections. I was first taken there by a friend while I was staying in Staffordshire. We drove over and spent exactly two hours in the city. That was in 1934, by no means the worst year for Lancashire cotton. That is to say, the cotton slump in 1921 was so tragic that the World Slump in the early 'thirties, though it made things still worse, did not shake people in Lancashire so much as it did others. At least, so people told me. A fair number of mills had then been bought up by the Lancashire Cotton Corporation and their machinery was scrapped. The principle was about the same as burning wheat and coffee and throwing fish back into the sea. It was a wet day and the unemployed were standing in raincoats or without coats at all in little groups in the main square which now I recognized as Piccadilly and Portland Street. Then my friend and I had lunch at a huge railway hotel with a former millionaire: one of the many former Lancashire millionaires, a grey-haired, careworn, but still smiling and energetic man. I should have liked to have seen more of Manchester—rain or no rain—and to have visited a cotton mill, but there was no time. We were going to the garden-party of a local colliery owner, who I hoped would arrange for me to see one of his coalmines.

My second visit was even shorter. It was towards the end of the war. I went to Manchester in order to find a job on a newspaper. I didn't find it in Manchester, but the editor said he had heard there was a job going in Liverpool. "You're the very man for them," he said, as he waited for a telephone call to be put through. Ten minutes later I was on my way to catch the first train to Liverpool.

To my mind Manchester always figured as an "historic" city, and during both of my brief visits I was as conscious of the past as I had been at Hastings and Winchester, Bannockburn or Hampton Court. Everybody has historical preferences. Mine are the 19th century and, on the quiet, the 17th. The first because I try to find out where we went wrong, and the second because the history of our times seems to play variations of 17th-century themes. Well, in the early 19th century the place which is Manchester today must still have been pleasant to look at, with damp green grass around the manor which a certain Sir Oswald Mosley in 1846 sold to the Corporation for £200,000. After that it ceased to be a place of sleepy and hidden bucolic charm. In fact it became a place famous all

over the world, though not yet famous for its ugliness. There came an unequalled prosperity and the philosophical school known as the "Manchester School", followed by an unequalled squalor and poverty, then the dreadful revelations in Dickens and other Victorian novelists, and the even more dreadful revelations in the Hammonds.

On this occasion I was about to look at the "historic" city properly for the first time, and I wondered whether my opportunity was really as first-rate as it seemed or whether I was seeing Manchester in an uncustomary and unreal light. The weather was marvellous. The air was warm and the black sooty houses bathed in the rich golden sunshine of the June day. The streets were full and the flowers in the civic gardens round Piccadilly looked most attractive. I had just had a few minutes' talk with the director of a cotton mill in his office and was on my way to lunch at the serve-yourself counter of a department store.

The director was a pleasant, middle-aged, grey-haired man, who looked very much like Edgar Wallace without the long cigarette-holder. "The cotton indoostry is still in a mess," he said, after he had arranged for me to see one of the mills in the city. "People who hude the money hude not the foresight. Mind you, this is thinking buck and it doesn't do mooch good to think buck. Nowthen . . ." (I noticed that business men up North are very fond of saying "Nowthen".) "Nowthen, the long and short of it is thut today while we are doing well in Luncashire, the cotton indoostry is ill equipped to meet competition, and competition is growing while you and I are sitting in this room. For one thing, Japan today makes cotton goods every bit as good as our own. Print thut if you like. There will be a row about it if you do, but print it because a noomber of people want waking oop. I'm not sure whether it isn't too late."

When I asked several people in the streets about a possible place to lunch I had noticed that there was a Lancashire accent in Manchester as there was no Lancashire accent in Liverpool. There the poor merely speak bad English with an accent that may be described as "more Northern than Southern" with some Irish brogue in it. In Manchester, however, there is a pure Lancashire accent which is shared by many people: poor, well-to-do and some rich. On the basis of dialect you could say that Manchester is a more "democratic" place than Liverpool. That the cotton director I saw had it didn't surprise me in the least. The second man I stopped in the street had a far more pronounced Lancashire accent—it had a cold-in-the-head quality. I suppose it is classed as "ugly" speech; at least that is what I am always told, but I am fascinated by dialects.

In an amateur way I am a collector of them, and I often think there is something warm, friendly, uninhibited, unashamed and down-

right about people who speak dialects. The question of dialects, however, is more important than my personal preferences. In a country whose national unity is the oldest, or one of the oldest, in Europe, and possibly the strongest the survival of these regional dialects which had once been "foreign" languages is a vital pointer to the future, no matter how undesirable that future may be. For the Lancashire accent was once a "foreign" language to other Englishmen in general and to Yorkshiremen in particular. No matter what the background of the Wars of the Roses was, they were as much "national" wars of the Lancashire "nation" against the Yorkshire "nation" as any other war, and the fact that many of the combatants did not understand each other's speech was a useful vehicle for such propaganda as that Lancashire men had tails and Yorkshiremen ate babies alive. It is true, of course, that there was no radio nor cinema nor much printing or literacy as yet and the propaganda organizations during the Wars of the Roses never had the organizing ability of Lord Reith or Goebbels, Robert E. Sherwood or Molotoff, but they worked well just the same.

I am still thinking about this subject and about the impossibility of finding out the date—even roughly—when the Englishman, among other people, first really became conscious that he was "English" while being at the same time "Berkshireman" or "Devonian". He had been told so for a long time—since the Conquest in fact—but when did he really begin to *feel* it? When did members of the oldest nation in Europe—or one of them—begin to feel that the "nation" was bigger than his village? Idle speculation? Few speculations in 1950 could be less "idle" than this.

In the light of this beautiful summer afternoon the suburbs of Miles Platting may have looked a little grim, but not in the least depressing. On the left side of the narrow street which is paved with cobblestones there is a Gothic building with turrets and castellations and an ornate stonework, so sooty and black that even its chimneys look mediaeval. It is a cotton mill in what I always call "Industrial Gothic", a style which was succeeded in our own time by "Insurance Tudor" and "Midland Bank Georgian". It was built around 1850 and its fortress character was not entirely a result of the Victorian love for solidity and Gothic incognito, as in those days factories were still being stormed and looted and burnt by the angry mob. Facing the Fortress there is a newer building. It is still Victorian and solid, but no longer tries to look like anything but a factory. The little dark hall with the porter behind frosted glass partition looks like a sedate saloon bar, with polished wooden benches around the walls and a spittoon resting discreetly in the corner.

The guide was already waiting for me and rushed out at once, a stocky, middle-aged man in a white overall, humorous, knowledgeable, with a rich twinkle in his eye and an unspoilt Lancashire accent. He asked me whether I had seen a cotton mill before, and when I said no, he said he would show me the whole business from start to finish, that is to say every operation of turning raw cotton into yarn. The rest I was to see elsewhere in the district.

First we marched into a dark room full of bales of cotton where cotton is broken up by a machine and separated from the stuff known as cotton waste. Above our heads the grey stuff travels in huge pipes to another room, in the same way as flour pours through pipes in flour mills, but that isn't the reason why the place is called a "mill". Then he showed me the card machine which forces the cotton fibre to run one way in unending thick white ribbons and flow into twenty cylindrical tins. Here I saw the women of the mill minding these noisy machines—eighty of them. The radio had no chance against their roar. In the next room the cotton is "combed"; the last process to take the dirt out, then spinning starts. More women appeared in coloured overalls, their hair tied up with neat little turbans; the Lancashire cotton girls. I had seen them before while on holiday in Blackpool. Now I saw them at work. Gone are the fine dresses and the make-up and without it they look pale in the damp heat, which is quite often seventy degrees. Gone also are the high-heeled shoes. They are barefooted, true to the Lancashire cotton girl tradition. The only modern note is that the younger ones usually varnish their toenails crimson. I had often noticed on the Blackpool sands how good their feet were, how well shaped the toes, how delicate the arch and how well sculptured the instep.

These millgirls who do the "slubbing" and the combing and who look after the spindles (four hundred to a frame) are perhaps the fourth or the fifth generation of women to work in the cotton mills. They are perhaps the ancestors of "Industrial Women". You must know this in order to understand their attitude to life, and you must also know that for several generations they have often received equal pay with men. These smallish, pale girls are tough on the outside and quite ready to fight with their men or for them, but soft, gloriously soft, inside, and tender and affectionate. They are not pretty like Yorkshire girls, but there is character in their faces, good nature, humour and kindness in spite of the uniform make-up, the uniform dresses, the uniform hair-do—and, quite often, the uniform dentures.

We went upstairs to watch mule spinning. The noise here was less intensive. The radio could be heard clearly and distinctly. It played a slow fox-trot, and one thousand and eighty-six mules slowly repeated the

pas de deux of the minuet. Gently, rhythmically, the mules advanced, the whole row of them, met half-way in the middle, made a bow and returned to the original position. The tune: "I am always chasing rainbows" was not quite a suitable accompaniment even though it was originally composed by Chopin. Mozart or Bocherini would have been far more appropriate. The mule spinner, like a patient dancing master, entered between the two rows of mules and corrected the "mistakes": a broken thread which he fixed up quickly with a routine movement. In the last loom the thread is "gassed" over a little gas flame which burns off the fluff and is placed on spools ready for the weaver.

But that's another story, several miles away from Manchester. I am now on the Cheshire border visiting a mill which, to my mind, quite clearly demonstrates the whole history of the cotton trade. The founder of this firm was born in 1718, and in 1745 was already a weaver. . . . In 1810 his two grandsons built the first place on the site on which the factory now stands. Parts of the old building are still standing: the ceilings are low and arched and are supported by wooden crossbeams, the floors are flagstones. Outside there runs a stream which was used for driving the engines of the first factory. (This is perhaps the likely explanation of cotton "mill".)

We pass through some more flagstoned passages and doors which are closed "automatically" by a weight suspended on a rope. Then we are in the weaving room. The room itself is some thirty years old, but the machines are labelled 1949 and represent the last word in weaving. The noise is deafening here. My guide tries to explain something, but I can't hear. I see the machines winding into strange contortions and the immediate impression they give is that of the orchestra, as if sound were their proper function instead of yards of cotton. It is now, when I have been listening to them for a few minutes, that I realize how shallow is Shostakovich's *Machine Symphony*. It is true, of course, that I can see the engines as they are producing the sound, but I cannot help feeling that the *Symphony* is tricky, technically skilful, and sensational, but is not quite a work of art.

Art is a translation, a reflection of life seen through the mind of an artist, and the *Symphony* is life seen through the mind of a brilliant reporter. Its relation to real art is that of a journalist's description of a factory compared with the description by a writer-artist. I admire Shostakovich's technical skill; it's very considerable. But skill is not enough.

We pass a window. The sunshine is still golden and the view is inspiring, challenging, not beautiful perhaps in the accepted sense, but

extremely attractive and exciting. The colours are cobalt blue and dove grey, the sky looks like pearl-grey art silk, shot through with strands of copper. In the background there is a square Victorian Gothic church spire, chimneys, a railway viaduct black with age, two rotund gasometers and rows of stunted houses. It has been said such a landscape is only tolerable when surrounded by fog and mist. What nonsense! Look at it in golden sunshine as I am seeing it now, and it becomes incredibly romantic. It isn't a despoliation of nature, simply because nature is not seen at all. I do not prefer it to famous English views like Reigate, but I think it is *as good* from a different aspect, and as much part of the English landscape. It is full of life, and inspiring. It is challenging and stimulating. My only criticism is not an aesthetic one: its air is bad for the health, that's all.

We move to another room where they apply boiling paste to the yarn, known as the sizing process, and in another—an enormous weaving shed—one thousand engines are turning out fine English poplin. Here again the noise is deafening. I should like to know the effect of the noise on the workers who tend these looms. They are not wearing ear-plugs—as we did in the Artillery—and their movements are calm, but I am sure it must have a harmful effect on their nerves, to say nothing of sense of hearing.

“Can anything be done to reduce this noise?” I roar. The manager shrugs his shoulders. “Some blokes are experimenting with new machinery, but they are not quite satisfactory. . . .”

But I am not paying proper attention to him. My interest now is completely absorbed by something else; by something else of which I have often heard, and now recognize it with the thrill with which people recognize a celebrity by his photograph. It *is* a celebrity in fact. I am watching a metal object like a silver eel which, in a mad attempt to escape, hurls itself right and left two hundred times a minute. “So you are the one,” I hear my own voice through the roar of engines, and I watch with excitement and emotion through the curtain of tears in my eyes. It is Kay's “Flying Shuttle”, an unimportant-looking little thing—a gadget which, however, was one of the inventions directly responsible for the Industrial Revolution. How fast it flies! Two hundred times a minute. In the days Kay's genius gave it to us it was much slower: perhaps twenty times a minute, yet it meant a revolution, a violent change after centuries of weaving and an enormous change in the ways of England and the world. Today its flight is ten times as fast, but then the historic rate of change is also ten times as fast as a hundred years ago; if not faster.

I wish I knew as much about Kay as I cannot help knowing about

some of his contemporaries: Johnson, Goldsmith, Reynolds, Garrick, Audubon, Thoreau and Benjamin West. And I wish I knew as much about Ampère, Volta and Faraday as I cannot help knowing about Molière, Carducci or Dickens. It is obvious that these great inventors and scientists did as much—perhaps more—to make our world than those particular artists, but then, you see, I received a “classical” education and am learning the rest “privately” as part of my own “adult education”.

The war of our century, the strife, the change, contemporary man, the contemporary human condition started with things like this “Flying Shuttle”. We have advanced with breathtaking rapidity in our conquest of nature, but how very slow the pace has been in finding out about ourselves. There has been no “human” revolution, only an Industrial one and the strife is directly caused by that discrepancy. The workers tried to destroy these gadgets for an entirely different reason, of course, but it was too late. Cartwright’s destroyed loom was replaced and the Luddites were told to swim or sink. At the moment we are swimming, but we are only just keeping our heads above the water.

“A fine Sea Island Poplin,” my guide says, and I make an attempt at what he would call “getting back to business”. Which business? But I am attentive. He points to a loom, a very up-to-date, very intricate streamlined instrument, the last word in looms, which is turning out a fine shirt material on its own, free of human interference, as if for its own pleasure. Engines, of course, have their youth and old age like human beings and, like us, at times “go wrong”, but this one is proud and efficient with the occasional inhumanity and callousness of youth.

We walk down the stairs and my guide tells me a few facts about the firm. He says: “The founders, like so many people in the 18th century, came from yeoman stock—possibly squeezed out by the Enclosures because they were Unitarians. They raised a red brick church by the entrance for their workers. A village craftsman or linendraper origin is more likely. Or they may have been yeomen first and converted to Unitarianism later. The family went on developing the place for four generations. Then one of them became an M.P. and later a peer. His son, the second baron, is a country gentleman and a Master of Fox Hounds, and the firm is no longer in the family hands.

This mill is experimenting with the idea of day nurseries. Since 1942 they have provided facilities for sixty children between the ages of nine months to five years. There is a senior nurse and trained staff, the manager says, and he is impatient to take me to the nursery. A door is opened. We walk in and six children at once run up to me and hug me by the legs and call me “daddy”. The scene is most embarrassing and

I am overcome with nostalgia for the might-have-been, bachelor as I am. I presume I could take these six dear kids away quite easily and claim to be their father. All things being equal none of them would notice the difference. In another room there is a row of tiny lavatory pans, tooth brushes on the wall, tiny mugs and combs, identified by various symbols painted on the wall: a camel, a giraffe, a ship.

"Constructive play," says the manager, "regular rest periods, hygienic habits, scientifically planned meals. I believe these things play no small part in influencing the ultimate character of the man or woman."

This sounds like part of a stone-laying speech which the Mayor's wife has learnt by heart, but I agree with the manager. This day nursery idea, which is to care for the child while the mother and/or father are at work, is very important. I am sure these children here get as much attention as if their parents were rich. No wonder all of them look healthy and happy. Is this a portent for the future? I have no children and I don't know, but it is an idea that can turn out to be very good.

I use the evening to go out to Belle Vue. The transport system of Manchester is hopeless, even worse than London's and New York's, but people are not impatient. They wait in long regimented queues at the traffic stops without complaining. Perhaps that's one of the reasons the service is so shocking. Perhaps the English do voluntarily what others do in response to orders. Perhaps the way to establish a dictatorship in England is through humour, courtesy and persuasion. Eventually I get on the car and slowly trundle through half of Manchester. The architecture of the town centre is Greek and Victorian Gothic turned almost noble by soot. Here and there there is a good modern building or two such as the circular temple of the Public Library or the angular "Bauhaus" shapes of the Municipal Building, but they are lonely and alien. The streets we are passing through should, I suppose, be described as an ugly sight, these drab thoroughfares of sooty brick, but they have character and still some vitality. Shop after shop, and chapel after chapel, grocer, draper, tobacconist, relieved by Horseflesh for Human Consumption and by another shop sign which shakes me for a moment. It says, "Private Wigs". I laugh, but the next moment I realize the man is right because there are "public" wigs, too: those of the lawyers, clerks of Parliament and royal outriders, not to speak of actors.

Belle Vue is a kind of pocket Blackpool or Coney Island for the private use of Manchester and District. It has a Zoo, for people today still like to use some of their free time looking at animals in captivity. The first exhibit is a parrot, dressed in shabby grey and very talkative. It repeats a few phrases like a seedy electioneering agent with misfit

dentures, but the amazing thing is that the parrot has a Lancashire accent. Is that an example of full naturalization?

The star of the Zoo, however, is the Gerenuk from East Africa, a very rare animal. It is a miniature deer, with thin, nervous legs like those of a camera tripod, and eyes like those of a housemaid's. He looks as if he had run away from supporting some nobleman's coat-of-arms and is now without a job, waiting till the newly-formed National Boards engage him to support theirs. Opposite are his poorer, more familiar cousins: English red deer in their usual Harris tweed "overcoats".

Just as in Blackpool, the space is too small. The male lion (born in Manchester during the reign of George VI) already looks middle-aged as he walks impatiently up and down his cage like a stockbroker. Then he remembers that he is the British lion after all and he roars once or twice—out of habit and without conviction—showing his own teeth. (Who was the American "wise guy" who said that the teeth of the British lion are all bridgework?) The roar sounds faked and Metro-Goldwynish. You must do better, Leo.

I walk over to the next house and see the ant-eater. He looks like the caricature of somebody one vaguely recalls but can't place: a professor of Comparative Legislation in Vienna, the man who won the Diamond Sculls in 1887, or the President of the Board of Trade in some forgotten Liberal cabinet. The ant-eater waits till the maximum number of spectators clot together in front of his cage, then he lifts up his bushy tail, looks at his audience with a now-watch-me expression and begins to urinate, slowly, deliberately and with great relish. Farther on, a seedy polar bear is performing like a tired "busker" ten minutes before the pit entrance is open. There are two giraffes, desperately overcrowded in width as well as height. Full employment and security in a society where freedom is problematical.

I approach the miniature cars and go round. A young man in a brown hopsack suit and navy blue suede shoes volunteers to share the expense. I let him drive. He is still young, but he fully shares that exuberant friendliness which is perhaps the most attractive feature of the England that begins with the Midlands. Manchester is a typical example of it. Just as in the American Middle West, if you go up to the man of the Manchester Street and ask the way, he takes you by the arm as if he has been waiting for you for fifteen years. Again and again this is the feature that strikes me about life and people in the Midlands and in the North. I would call it a delightful provincialism, for one notes it elsewhere in England as well, in East Anglia, in the poorer suburbs of London as well as in the South, but not to the same extent. Compared with the Midlands and the North many Southerners don't always seem to me to

be quite alive, and from this fact probably springs every criticism that has been levelled at the South: their alleged snobbishness, their alleged lack of gusto and enthusiasm, lack of friendliness and lack of interest. Is it the climate? Well, climate, all in all, is certainly better in the South of England; at least it is less harsh, while the scenery is often more beautiful and always more civilized. But all the same the climate is more relaxing, and Southerners—outwardly anyway—look more lethargic and resigned.

Belle Vue on this afternoon is full of men in the gay uniforms of a Ruritanian Army: the chorus of a Viennese operette. Today is the semi-final of the brass band competitions. Against the pearl-grey afternoon the colours are very striking. There is a Cambridge blue, cherry-red, scarlet, bottle-green and orange. The style is inspired by the Guards' uniform, but far more heavily decorated with gold braid and buttons, belts, frightening and luxuriant lanyards ending in little brass firing-pins, frogging, backside "pocketings" traced by eight gold buttons, gold on the cuffs, on the epaulettes and burnishes around the collars and the wide red stripes of pre-First War Austro-Hungarian generals on their black trousers. Here is an example of the unvarnished love of the English—not perhaps for uniforms and certainly not for regimentation—but for fancy dress and associations. There are very good reasons for it since there is seldom very much bright sunshine in the country, and the industry has made the surroundings drab and life monotonous and repetitive. And Industrial Man is gregarious: afraid of being alone. These lads come from all parts of the country; from Scotland and Wales, from the Tyneside, from Yorkshire as well as from places in Lancashire. A good many of them are miners and the company pays for the uniforms.

The first time I went to Oldham, sometime in 1929, I distinctly remembered a very typical sound of the town: the clogs of the cotton-workers against the cobblestones. Today there are fewer clogs in Oldham or anywhere in Lancashire for that matter. Although it is a sensible fashion in view of the climate, clogs are going out of fashion, like caps, because there is a social stigma attached to them today. The cotton-worker wears "sports" shoes for the working day.

It was raining in 1929 and it is raining today. I am sitting in the office of a government centre which tried to train workers for the cotton industry. The industry is short of fifty thousand workers and of those it actually employs ten thousand are displaced persons. "The change in employment is quite dramatic," says the director, an undramatic man. "In 1929 unemployment was heavy. Today the industry is losing on the average one thousand workers a week through old-age retirement and

other factors. Most cotton workers are women, and during the war a very large number of them found alternative employment: in day nurseries, in canteens, in the hairdressing, electrical and radio trades, in plastics and rayon. With higher male wages and children to look after, many women stay at home. Besides, there are always past memories. Conditions have frequently been so bad that parents have made a vow not to send their children to cotton mills." He blows his nose.

"Well now, in this centre we start with "green" labour, and with the right treatment we can make a good cotton operative in six months. If you don't know the cotton trade, you won't believe it when I tell you this is a revolution, but it *is* a revolution. We started in '46. Before then there had never been a healthy link-up between school and industry or even good vocational guidance from schools. Young people, therefore, drifted where wages were the highest. Now then, the cotton trade didn't believe it was possible to train anybody who wasn't fourteen or fifteen and didn't go through the traditional method. We managed to surprise them." The director gives me a sly wink and goes on:

"We only resort to European Volunteer Workers because we haven't the sufficient number of female workers in England."

"How are they taking to it?"

"You can see for yourself." And then the director speaks a few words into the telephone. A few minutes later I am presented to a young woman who at first sight looks indistinguishable from a Lancashire cotton-girl. But she is a German; a Sudetan German from Marienbad.

"We were deported by the Czechs in 1946," she says, in a cultivated *Hochdeutsch*, "though my family had lived in Bohemia for two hundred years. Father had a bakery and a café, and I studied to be an accountant. Then when we were thrown out; we went to Hessen-Nassau in Germany, and finally to England as Displaced Persons. I was first sent to a camp at Inskip, then here. We live at a hostel and as soon as we qualify we shall go to work at a mill."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-six."

"How do you feel about England?"

"I don't know the place at all. One always hears a good deal about England, but you can't judge on the basis of Oldham and Inskip, can you?"

No, you cannot. But I make a note to meet later some more E.V.W.s and other refugees to find out about the problem.

It is still raining; proper Lancashire weather. I am on my way to

Shaw (population 10,000) to see a typical Lancashire cotton village. Everybody is thinking of holidays, which are starting soon: Morecambe, Isle of Man, Blackpool. I walk through the main street, then the rain spoils my appetite for sightseeing. A few clogs hurry through the deserted streets. So in Shaw there are still some clogs when it rains. And one woman—quite an old one—wears a woollen kerchief over her head. I make my way immediately to the mill, whose head foreman has already been advised of my coming. He is a tall, jumpy man, about fifty, in a blue serge suit, friendly and aggressive. It isn't so much his mill which I want to see as to hear his views about cotton and industry. But the board room where we sit arouses my curiosity. We sit by a large oak table with red plush carved thrones for the directors and an angry red turkey carpet. The atmosphere is distinctly 1890. By the fireplace which is ornamented by a carved overmantel there is a spade that cut the first sod of earth when the factory was built.

We talk about old days.

"There used to be a saying that Yorkshiremen make the money and Lancashire people borrow it. That was certainly true in the past. At one time there was almost a rush in cotton. There were also some brilliant crooks and adventurers. Well, the Yorkshire custom was to put the money into building societies: the Lancashire custom was to put it into cotton mills. It gave you a five per cent interest. This boom started round about 1906 and went on till the Depression. In those days it was quite common to see advertisements in local papers 'such and such mill welcomes loans'. You understand, of course, that these loans were unsecured capital. The creditors were given no shares, nor did they obtain any form of collateral, either. They were just loans. Shaw, at the time of the cotton boom of 1918-19, was the wealthiest place in England. Practically everybody was gambling in cotton. Local shopkeepers, grocers, hosiers, and undertakers, even some clergymen, put their savings into mills. Then came the slump and knocked it for six.

"There were a few interesting characters here in those days," he goes on, and lights a cigarette on the stub of another. "Take Bill Parrassin, for example. He came from a poor home and started his life as a 'half-timer'. That is, between the age of ten to twelve he spent half time at school and half time at the mill. Well, he was quite young when he became mill foreman, then manager. Parrassin saw the possibilities and built up his wealth. Mind you, it was all paper wealth: share values. He was known as the 'shirt-sleeve millionaire'. In 1921 he got himself a knighthood and a few weeks later came the slump. He managed to ruin a large number of small people." The head foreman is in his true element as he tells this story. His voice is excited and his gestures eloquent. The

histrionic talent must be present in many a Lancashire man. "Nowthen, do you think they were angry with him?" he asks, then immediately answers the question himself: "Not at all. His portrait along with the portrait of his good lady are hanging in the Town Hall and they still think of him with a lump in their throats. For that matter, I do, too, though he ruined many people I know. But you couldn't help it. He was a rough, hearty Lancashire lad. He stood them pints at the local. He was friendly with everybody, see?"

Yes, I see. The man had the "common touch". How little it takes to fool people, to swindle people completely with a little "common touch". Or perhaps it isn't so simple. Some people haven't got the "common touch", the right type of face, the right type of accent, the right type of jokes. There were other genial crooks in Lancashire who operated on charm, got on in the same way and ended the same way. But is the type gone completely? Does it only exist today in the Middle West of America? I don't know. The new confidence trickster, in England at least, is vastly different in style even though the basic principles remain the same. The Common Touch is brought up to date.

The manager puts a hand on my arm. "But I want to show you over the place."

My surprise is great. After that sedate board room one couldn't be more surprised than at the sight of the sheds of the mill upstairs. In one room they are spinning rayon. The machinery is the last word in spinning and is all painted Cambridge blue. Colour experts and psychologists were consulted and it was found that Cambridge blue produced a friendly atmosphere. The place is beautifully clean and there is air-conditioning. It is not surprising, therefore, to hear the mill has a waiting list for workers, especially for ring-spinning. There is less noise than elsewhere and the room looks exciting.

We now adjourn for a cup of tea. The executives' dining-room looks like the dining-room of an Anglo-American society hostess around 1930. The dining table is white, wrought iron with a top of green glass. There is a mirror-backed cocktail cabinet in the corner and the walls are of glass bricks intersected by green plaster. The wall brackets are also of white, wrought iron. The effect is markedly feminine. I should like to attend a lunch here and see hearty, masculine, Lancastrian cotton men in blue serge suits, with their pleasant, aggressive manners, at meat in these *vieux-jeu* surroundings.

Gingerly I ask the man, "Who are the managers?"

"Well," he says, "we have two executives; they are in the mid-forties. Both started from the bottom, that is at forty-five shillings a week. Then for ten years they spent three to four nights a week in technical

colleges. Take me. I am the head foreman. I left school at thirteen and worked my way up. My father was a spinning master. Or the head of our sales department. *He* started as an office boy. There are no old school ties in this mill. And there are very few old school ties in the cotton industry in general, because there are no short cuts to cotton spinning. You have to start from the bottom no matter what anybody says to the contrary."

I am a little early on purpose. Jack told me to come at about "half six", but I wanted to see Trafford Park before I went to the party. I met Jack two days ago in Manchester through his brother-in-law, who is a foreman in one of the mills I visited. The two invited me to a pub; one of those nice, full-blooded Manchester pubs where there is a pianist and a sing-song, and we had a talk about the outlook for the country, about the ways of the world and about my tour, and finally Jack invited me to his house. They were giving a small party for the twenty-first birthday of a lad called Ron who was walking out with his wife's youngest sister.

I am now standing on the small canal bridge which leads to Trafford Park, the biggest industrial suburb in England; perhaps in the whole world. Facing the roadway slantwise there is the soot-black Gothic church of St. Thomas, to which, on one side, they have added Henshaw's Institute for the Blind and on the other the Royal Residential School for the Deaf. From here where I am standing the place looks like a grim Gothic abbey, probably built by one of Baldwin's pupils in the eighteenth-fifties. But since it is surrounded by factory chimneys, roadside cafés, secondhand motor-shops and gigantic hoardings, it looks a little like a film set which has already been "shot".

You turn to the left, cross the bridge over the canal and you are in Trafford Park. Like so many industrial suburbs in England, it was once a country estate. There is this difference, however; its transformation is comparatively recent. The estate—four miles by three—round Trafford Hall had its stables, an ornamental lake, gardens, a long drive, the usual trappings. Most of that went, little by little, and the place today is a huge industrial centre where over a hundred thousand people work and nearly twenty thousand live. The Hall was pulled down after World War I and bits of it are still visible; parts of a carriageway, iron railings, a marble statue. The soap factory where Jack works is on the site of the original golf course.

Next to a café which immediately brings back memories of similar shacks I used to see on the byways of the Southern States of America there is a hollow which used to be the boating lake. It had been dug, no doubt, at great expense and it must have looked pretty. Now it is partly

filled up with gravel and rubbish and rusty iron barrels, but on the banks there are still some stunted rhododendron bushes which have somehow survived the atmosphere of industry, smoke and coal-dust. With some difficulty, but with the excitement of the archaeologist, I track down the remains of what must have been the gardens. Some of the original flowers still survive. Now I fully understand what the words "hardy perennials" really mean. But in order to survive they adapt themselves to changed times, or rather revert to their ancestral patterns. Between two rusty barrels there is a rose bush, and farther on stunted laurels. And this strange thing is what the hydrangea must have looked like before gardeners began to play with it.

Then I walk on. The place must have looked desolate between 1931 and 1936 when bits of the mansion still stood, and rabbits were still numerous between the factory buildings (some of them had been closed). "Where there is mook there's brass," they used to say in the North of England after the landscape had been spoilt. But during the slump there was too much "muck" and too little "brass". Today the old saying is true again. There is muck and there is brass and a good deal of both of them, too.

There is no cinema in Trafford Park and only one pub: *The Trafford Arms*. "People usually go to their clobbs on Saturdays," Jack says while he is putting on his tie. "Before t'war every Saturday and Sunday afternoon there was a bit of a boostoop in Trafford Park, reeling droonken men and women in the streets and fighting. Now hardly anything." He added the last comment with relish.

I am introduced to Ron, who is sitting in the armchair as if posing for his photograph. He is a stocky young man with broad shoulders, dressed in a brown, double-breasted hopsack suit, yellow socks, square-toed orange shoes with a seam down the middle. He is just out of the Army and he is a steel erector. Ron is courting Jack's niece, a pretty girl who helps to run the boarding-house in Manchester belonging to another sister.

The room is small and is used as a dining-room and nursery. Some washing hangs from the ceiling above the table that is almost groaning under the weight of food. There is spam and cold beef, tomatoes and onions and chutney, bread and butter and cakes, trifle and fruit, and the best china and paper serviettes.

Jack has three children: a son and two daughters. They are all small and all look like him. I express the hope that Steve will get into Manchester Grammar School, that famous establishment. "He'd better," Jack says, and Steve smiles. "I want to give him a better chance than I had myself," Jack says. Another young man enters. He doesn't know Jack well. He is really being brought along by someone—a mutual friend—who has

not yet arrived. He works the ferry for the Company. The young man also wears brown: serge for a change, and a nice brown "playboy" hat with a wide brim, which is in his lap now. He is playing with it in great embarrassment. He feels let down. Jack is doing his best to make him feel at home, but the visitor is suffering agony. I remember the same agonies, the same shyness, at a children's party, but when I grew up I grew out of it along with most people in the group. Yes, group. In this respect many people from the working class are still at that adolescent stage: there is no *savoir faire*, because there has been little opportunity for acquiring *savoir faire*. He is a sturdy young man, and his shoulders must be naturally broad under the padding, his wrists wide and his hands are large. He could acquit himself well in many difficult situations. He would be all right if it came to blows, but now he is baffled. I think it is the food on the table that gives him inhibitions; the well-piled plates, which suggest to him that they might think he has tried to gate-crash in order to fill his belly.

Neither Ron nor Gladys help him, because they don't know how to. Jack, in his heavy, friendly way almost succeeds in taming the newcomer, and all would have been well if only Elsie had not come in. Elsie is our hostess, has a nice smile, and fills the room. ("I am thirty-six, luvie," she says a little later, "and almost as many stones.") Elsie is a grand girl and she shakes hands with the newcomer as warmly as she shook my own hand, but the effect is to drive him further back into his shyness. Why? Perhaps because Elsie is a woman. He would have been happier in male company. His thick fingers play nervously with the silk edging of his hat.

Then there comes Tom with his wife. He is Elsie's brother and his wife, Jessie, seems a little out of the family. She is a young woman who has made up her mind to be smart and has succeeded. She is as well dressed as a dance hostess, slim, tall, and has the manners of a woman from a "refeened" London suburb. Then more people arrive. Our hostess has six brothers and three sisters. I only see three of them, but they are certainly downright, cheerful and self-reliant. Tom tells me that their eldest brother used to be a haulage contractor with six Diesel engines, which were taken away from him by the Government. "He was on holiday, too, at the time," Tom adds indignantly. That brother is now a conservative borough councillor. It is a pity he isn't here because I should like to hear his views. He is part of what is known as the "Floating Vote". Tom used to drive for that brother and used to net ten to fifteen pounds a week. Recently they offered him four pounds ten a week. "I told them what to do with their offer," he said.

Then we sit down to tea but the unknown visitor refuses to come to the table with us. At the same time he is too shy to go away. Finally,

Elsie forces a cup of tea on him. His throat is tight and he drinks with difficulty, then, a few minutes later, he leaves. He said he would go to the British Legion Club for a beer and wait for us there.

After the meal we go into the parlour. It has a piano which Jack bought a few years ago in the hope that his children would play it, but so far they are violently against piano lessons. We are sitting on the settee and Ron is in the corner in the armchair under the photograph commemorating a party the factory gave to its foremen.

Ron talks very little, though it would be interesting to know what it feels like to be twenty-one in 1950, when one is a steel erector in Manchester earning eight pounds a week. As we are alone for two minutes I ask him, and he tells me that he is not planning to be married till he is at least twenty-six. Then Jack comes in with a glass of port, and so I shall never know what it feels like to be twenty-one when one is a steel erector in Manchester in A.D. 1950. I propose a little private toast to Ron's birthday, then we sit down.

Ann comes in with a basketful of comic hats and false moustaches. I pick on a miniature straw boater, but I never would have thought Jack would don one of the false moustaches over his own slight ginger one. He is a serious man. An operation has cured his gastric ulcers, but he is the "ulcer" type; he worries quite a lot, is ambitious, conscientious, looks you straight in the eye and has a loud foreman's voice. I am watching the rising working class at home, the class that so far has triumphantly belied Marxian prophecies of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. Not only is the middle class—in Western Europe at least—not doomed, but it is getting larger; many people fall out of it, of course, and are replaced by others. Jack and his family are still working class but only by origin. They are more than half-way in the middle class, in outlook and in some of the habits and traditions they have adopted, not to mention income. Jack is forty-two, earns twelve pounds ten a week and now that all their children go to school Elsie works at a canteen at one of the neighbouring factories and gets about five pounds a week. They want a bigger house and would move the moment one were available. Jack's father is seventy-five. The old boy used to be a riveter, a specialist on six-inch rivets that went into the keel of large ships. He worked on the *Mauretania* and used to earn the enormous sum of sixteen pounds a week, not so much in "peace-time" but around 1910. He had six sons and Jack is one of the youngest. All of them—except Jack—joined the Army or the Navy around the time when practically the whole Tyneside was on the dole and quite often without the dole. One day in 1926 the eldest boy walked out of the family. He said, "I'll see you when I have a bed," and they haven't heard of him

since. He apparently went to America. Another of his brothers works in the boiler-house and a third is a riveter.

Will little Steve make good use of his opportunities and acquire full membership of the Middle Class? Will "all things be equal"? Jack and his family are the people who are usually patronized and respected by the Middle Class and usually disliked and respected by the rest of the working class. It is not perhaps the difference between Jack's income and theirs that the worker resents, but the difference in outlook: the ambition, the thrift, the seriousness, the devotion to duty. You will never see Jack going in for betting. A few pints of beer once a week, with his wife and friends, an occasional visit to the cinema, a fortnight's holiday at Morecambe.

He reads little. He is not political nor is he religious, but he accepts all the ethical principles of Christianity the same way the Victorian agnostic usually accepted them. In the South of England, at least, the "ordinary" worker would call Jack a "snob". If the desire to better himself is snobbish, then his critics are right. It is this "snobbishness", coupled with the fact that the "ruins" of England's wealth are still very valuable "ruins", which are responsible for that other fact, that the Marxian theory of Impoverishment is not true in England. We must not, however, forget that the English—in common with Western Europe—have swindled the old, gloomy optimist; had the better of him. A sharp Englishman (Harcourt) towards the '90s pulled an ace out of his sleeve: it was called "Death Duties". Two other sharpsters (Asquith and Lloyd George) pulled two more "fast ones", namely "Unearned Incomes" and "Social Insurance". Nevertheless, let us admit that Marx was amazingly correct in his prophecies concerning those countries where they would not or *could* not swindle him and where people were not "snobs".

CORMORANTS ON THE END OF THE STRING

THE temptation to make a detour and revisit Wigan or to stop and have a peep at St. Helens was strong, but I resisted it. One is limited to a certain number of words, one cannot do justice to more than a certain number of places; besides, the weather was good and the road fairly empty, so I gave the car a chance to show how fast its twelve-year-old engine could go. I did the journey to Liverpool in just under an hour. Then I parked the car in the hotel car park and walked along the familiar streets.

Jostling and vibrating, scraping and screaming, the traffic swerves round the grim majesty of St. George's Hall. The Iron Duke still stands in the giddy heights, but times have changed, and he is no longer surrounded by a summons to Lend To Defend The Right To Be Free. The statues of George V and Queen Mary are now out of their war-time packing by the entrance to the Mersey Tunnel and further on, above the waterfront, and two bronze cormorants, the liver birds of Liverpool, still stand on their pinnacles carefully tied down with rope lest they fly away.

I have been to Liverpool fairly often in the past twenty years, and spent several months there at a newspaper office. I had been invalided out of the Army, and I came to Liverpool chiefly to learn the elements of journalism, to serve an apprenticeship which most journalists had served between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five. For some of my colleagues it may have seemed strange that somebody should start at thirty-three. It wasn't to me. I had to report petty theft, tram accidents and food prices and cover the suburban music halls. I was congratulated on my "pluck". They did not realize that I loved doing it, that I was "gate-crashing" into what had hitherto been a closed society. They didn't know that for the fifteen years I had then spent in England I was dreaming about such a chance, such an experience, such raw material. (The chance was denied me, of course. I could not leave my correspondent's job in London, and in those years of peace a provincial editor—so to speak—would not have been forced by circumstances to take me on.)

I spent seven or eight months in the Liverpool newspaper office, and by and large my time spent there was not useless even from a strictly technical point of view. I learnt a certain amount of compression and economy—that was due far more to the newsprint shortage than anything

else—a sharper news sense. I also learnt some of the real differences between English and Continental journalism: a rigid discipline—almost a Flaubertian one—not so much for the “right” word, the right opening, the right paragraph, the right punch, as for the right spoon with which to feed the public which had been spoon-fed with the same instrument so long that it would have been confused and mystified if the spoon had turned out to be one of unfamiliar shape, size or material. (In Hungary *any* spoon did as long as it was a spoon.)

I liked the paper. I liked its atmosphere, though I have been told by the very man who got me the job that “it was not what it had once been”. The fact that it was a Conservative paper had little to do with it. (So are the *Yorkshire Post* and *The Scotsman*, which are vigorous and influential.) My paper was languid and uninteresting. Because certain “lines” had once been successful they were continued and departures from them were not encouraged. During my last week on the staff one of my colleagues said, “What keeps us going is the loyalty of the staff and the fact that the proprietor has a monopoly.” Apart from the fact that morning papers in the provinces generally fight a losing battle against national papers, my friend’s summary was about correct.

During the war the reporters’ room, with its twelve writing-desks, was already overcrowded, but the situation must have been agonizing in peace-time with nearly twice as many on the staff. In the centre of the wall there was a small square window with frosted glass through which occasionally one could see the back of the news editor’s head. He looked like Mr. Pickwick in Cruikshank’s drawing and had been at one time one of the high hopes of English journalism. From time to time the window would open and the news editor would call someone to his room. Sometimes it was me, and I always went with a throbbing heart, expecting immediate dismissal. But it was usually some such assignment as this:

“Now look, some coloured American soldiers are giving a party for children at Maghull. You’d better go and do half a column, if it’s worth it. Shouldn’t think you ought to do more. The camp is at Deyes Lane and you have to ask for Colonel Bonar. You can charge for the tram fare. Now, there’s one other thing for you. The Port Director will present Humane Society awards to two Liverpool dockers for saving life. Here is the cutting. Five-fifteen at the Cunard Building. How was the Juvenile Court today? Oh yes, you did that story *Telegrams Under Bed, Liverpool Boy Failed to Deliver Them*. Not bad. It’s in the *Echo*. We could use it again for the *Post*.”

I would go out after these stories in the afternoon and sit in the Juvenile Court in the morning. It was an interesting place. Juvenile delinquency as well as crime was rampant in Liverpool during the war

as in other big cities, but in Liverpool everything—including crime—was within easy reach. The town is comparatively small. You didn't have to go a long way to find the harbour, the slums, the university, the smart shops, the residences of the old families, or the streets where the coloured population lived in exotic squalor. In Liverpool it was a little difficult for one half of the world not to know how the other half lived, but both overcame the difficulty.

There was the story of the fifteen-year-old boy who ran away from an approved home and stole his grandmother's Old Age Pension. This is not an exercise of the imagination; I have my own cutting in front of me. *"On December 7th at midnight he stole from the locker of a fellow-patient an attaché-case containing £7, an ear-trumpet, two pipes, a set of artificial teeth and several packets of contraceptives of the total value of £23 7s. 6d. He then climbed out of the window, took the money from the case and left the rest of the property in the street. It was not recovered."*

"Six days later he broke into his mother's house and stole his grandmother's Old Age Pension. He was arrested at a billiards hall. He had spent most of the money."

Occasionally I was sent to the County Court and the Assizes. *"Chinese and Negro in Liverpool Street Fracas."* I remember writing *"Street Fight"*, but the night editor corrected it to *"Street Fracas"*, saying that few of my headings were really *"dignified"*. The night editor was a Roman Catholic and held the view that onions were very good for the health. He kept some in his drawers in case there should be a shortage of them. *"The trooble with you—the younger generation—is that you're always in a hoorry and go in for sensationalism."*

At intervals in the afternoon small boys would come into the reporters' room with syringes and spray the room with a violet-scented disinfectant. The telephone booths were also sprayed. It was obvious that the kindly proprietor spared neither trouble nor expense when it came to his reporters' wellbeing.

In those days Liverpool was, and still remains, a strange mixture of craftiness, toughness and traditional fine manners. Like most ports, it is cosmopolitan and yet somehow provincial and reactionary. During my first week in New York I was often reminded of Liverpool. And it wasn't the Overhead Railway solely that brought it back. In Liverpool, behind the waterfront and the rough-and-tumble of industry, commerce, tough pubs with sawdust strewn on the floors, and none too secret brothels, there was a landed aristocracy and old patrician families who had been connected with business for over a century, some eccentric, and their influence is still discernible. Manchester is totally different. The social contrasts were, and still are, far less violent. There is far less toughness and craftiness and

far less refinement. For these reasons Manchester is perhaps a less "exciting" place but more civilized and generally far more hospitable and friendly. I have always felt Manchester was well within Lancashire and Liverpool outside it.

The editor is gone and so is the *Pickwickian* news editor. All that remains is the peephole in the middle of the wall. Otherwise the whole place is changed. There are striplights on the ceiling in place of the green porcelain lampshades, the lights in the telephone booths are no longer so chancy of contact. (You had to stand at a certain angle, and if you moved your foot slightly the light went out and you were plunged in total darkness in the middle of writing down a message.)

The canteen is streamlined, cleaner and brighter, and the food more appetizing—and they serve ice cream as well. Henry, the assistant news editor, is now editor. He is about my own age, but his hair has turned completely grey. There are two large radios and three telephones in his office. He is an energetic, intelligent person with good ideas about journalism, but when I saw him he looked unhappy. I didn't ask him why: it was not necessary. It was enough to see the paper.

There were a number of younger people in the reporters' room and most of the elders. One or two reporters who had been middle-aged when I was there had died, but the old ones went on as virulent and brisk as ever. My successor in the Juvenile Court is Mr. Bemrose: "One-stick Bemrose", as he was called in Liverpool journalist circles round about 1890. The "stick" is a paragraph about the size of the sonnet and Mr. Bemrose was a master hand at putting everything into it. His back is still as straight as a pole, and he has never worn an overcoat even on the coldest winter day. Then there is Mr. Huxley, a fine-looking old boy with pretty white hair and beautiful manners. No wonder. He has been ecclesiastical correspondent for many years. He is now eighty-four and as vigorous and as alive as ever. Mr. Caleb Llewellyn, too, must be nearly eighty. During the war he was deaf and looked tired. Now he hears much better and looks younger. He, too, is a first-rate reporter.

In the late afternoon I drove Leigh Atcherley round the town. Liverpool suffered enormously during the blitz. There are still big gaps all over the centre of the city, and the destruction that was wrought in the docks and in the suburb of Bootle has not been remedied. But they are building all over Liverpool and the new houses look attractive. The work, though, is going slowly—desperately slowly for most people who have been on various waiting lists for years. Housing all over England is about the worst immediate problem of the working class. Today the slums of the big cities are full of people who eat well, dress well and

would generally live well if it were not for the desperate overcrowding and discomfort.

"Would you still like to live here?" Leigh asked, as we were driving back from Sefton Park.

"I don't know," I said. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I'm thinking of leaving the place. If you ask me, Liverpool is so dead that it stinks. Can't you smell it?"

I could only smell roasted coffee, which still remains the most predominant smell of Dale Street, and we were heading in that direction.

"Liverpool is sedate and pontifical," he went on. "Nothing whatsoever happens and a good deal ought to happen. There is no orderly progress, there is only orderly stagnation. Liverpool is a typical example of a big city that is no longer as important as it was when it first became big. You said it had some architectural grandeur. I grant you that. You said it had violent and exciting contrasts. I grant you that, too. I shall probably miss them when I leave, but there is nothing one can do against the 'change' which is too bloody 'gradual.'" He shrugged a shoulder. "You may not have noticed it?"

"Of course I had. I notice it all the time in London, too. All over England. And not only in England. But that orderly stagnation—or the appearance of it—is the price we have to pay for democracy. The democratic way is always apparently inefficiency or inefficiency in the short run, if you like, because efficiency and 'progress' would mean forcing people, regimenting people, into doing things. This is not happening in England because we don't have to have regimentation, because we can still *afford* to be democratic. Not to speak of traditions. And we don't have to have regimentation, partly"—I winked at Leigh—"partly because there are comparatively few young, embittered, ambitious people in England.

"But, quite frankly, I would give a good deal to know how 'interesting' life is in a totalitarian country. The truth is not known. You read biased reports either violently pro or con and you guess that the truth is not between the pro and con, but somewhere else. Nevertheless, I can guess that life in Russia, for example, or in the Satellite States, can be very 'exciting'. It must be uplifting to your morale to have the State always showing you a carrot. Moreover, for a man like you the chances may be better, since you are an assistant lecturer in science. Such highly trained professional men are somewhat rare in Russia. The life of your opposite number in, say, Leningrad is likely to be more exciting and your position more important. I imagine either his purchasing power would be greater than yours or the gap between his salary and the workers' salary would be greater—and so would his privileges—and that may give him some

sense of importance. And he wouldn't come to a loose end as you have because he has little free time. In the evenings he would have to attend courses on indoctrination in Marx-Leninism or give such courses for younger people. Then he would have to think of his extra effort for Stalin's birthday."

We both laughed, but during dinner I reached several conclusions. First of all a large number of professional middle-class people in England—especially the younger ones like my friend (who is thirty)—are becoming very bitter, because they feel they are not doing well, either for themselves or for the country. If they are public-spirited they don't grudge the working class for doing better than it did before the war, but they feel that they themselves are not doing well. The gap between the worker and the professional is not so wide as it used to be. For many people that is irritating. Doctors and dentists, of course, are today generally walking on velvet, especially dentists. Solicitors get along well enough, but young barristers are in a plight, and so is the whole teaching profession and the scientists. The Civil Servants, again, may be better placed; they have security and promotion.

Atcherley said that it is a very depressing thought that more and more young men are looking for "safe" jobs and wanting to avoid taking risks. I said it was indeed depressing that young people are being FORCED to do so. The younger generation is not more namby-pamby than their fathers were, but more security-conscious than their fathers and far less willing to take risks, because the chances of getting somewhere by taking risks seem fewer. This attitude today is about world wide. To me the biggest surprise in America was that younger people talked all the time about "security" and "safe jobs", and it took me several months to realize that the old "frontier spirit", the readiness to stake the present for the future, was very nearly gone.

When my friend said that today many people he knew had what he called "negative desires"—they wanted to avoid things more than achieve things—I thought again, "This is where I came in." That was the mental pattern of my youth in Central Europe. And that is another similarity between those days and those countries and these days and England, but the analogy did not depress me. It won't lead to the same results because it CANNOT lead to the same results. Those countries lost the wars far more tragically than England thinks she has "lost" the wars.

Atcherley said he had already tried to get a job in London and would go on trying. If he failed he would try to emigrate, either to the Dominions or to America. "That I am very badly paid is not the worst of it. I get about eight pounds a week, which is generally what a young bricklayer earns. I have no grudge against the bricklayer. As a rule he is

a fool and doesn't know how to live on eight pounds a week: doesn't know what to buy, how to buy, how to spend, how to save, whom to marry, when to marry. He follows his instincts and his instincts are not always healthy. Education may not be a help to you, but lack of education is no blessing either." He shrugged a shoulder. "And, of course, there is corruption in Liverpool—as everywhere in England—the most annoying, carefully camouflaged, deep-seated corruption, which is the family affair of a small group of people. Those who indulge in it are very discreet, obtain permits, keep up a show of legality and enjoy the full benefit of our law of libel—about the finest vested interest of all but the seediest of crooks. Just imagine what would happen if our law of libel should be suddenly altered so that it would become the same as it is in America or France, namely that a true fact cannot be the subject of a libel suit! How readable and exciting our newspapers would become, for one thing.

"But corruption is not a cause, it is a symptom, and what really irritates me is that Liverpool is so dead. There is neither room for advancement nor a pleasant and congenial atmosphere to work in. I doubt if conditions were the same in Liverpool thirty years ago, or if middle-class professional men were forced to think like me thirty years ago."

I wondered if his was an isolated case, but during the three days I spent in Liverpool I quite often heard his views confirmed, especially by the younger people. True, not many of them were members of the middle class, but we know that for the first time in English history many members of the middle class are thinking of emigration. Most of the people with whom I discussed the problem were young workers I had met at a Working Men's Club, at the dog races, and one evening at the Grafton Dance Hall. It did not surprise me that the "Get Out Of Here" attitude among the younger workers is higher in a city which is a port than in an inland city like Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent or Manchester. A port has a floating population that has been round the world, and a fair number of people in places like Liverpool quite often get news and information about foreign countries direct from sea-going friends. On my last afternoon, for example, I went to revisit the five miles of Liverpool's Dockland and came across two young men on the Overhead Railway which rumbles along the waterfront just as New York's last "Elevated" trundles above Third Avenue. Even if I had not seen *Lloyd's Shipping List* in their hands I would have known they were merchant seamen; I know the type almost too well, and the tweed jacket-flannel trousers combination, which in our time is becoming a uniform for all classes, was not enough to disguise them. I even guessed that they were actually younger than they looked: seafaring men invariably are.

"How are jobs?" I asked.

"Not too good," one of them said with a little smile, then his face suddenly turned serious. "Me and my mate are thinking of going to Australia."

"You have already been there, of course?"

"Yes. It's a far better country to live in, Australia is. Except for the housing shortage. That's very bad over there. But we're not married."

"I always thought that a sailor never wants to settle down."

"I don't know about that," said the one who had first spoken. His mate decided he could delegate the talking to him. "We wasn't always sailors, see. We were both plumbers. Then we got fed up like and joined the Merchant Navy."

"I suppose plumbers earn more in Australia?"

"Not only that. There is more freedom in Australia."

"In what way?"

"Everyway. You are allowed to change your job any time you like, you can move about in the country and always find work, earn more, and you spend less. Income tax is not heavy. And there is no class distinction."

"Do you find that England has altered a good deal since the war?"

"It's only on paper. In the old days it was the rich man who was your boss; today it's the trade union leader or somebody in the Labour Exchange. It's the same old story."

"When do you think of leaving?"

"As soon as we get a good ship."

"How much does the actual passage cost to Australia?"

They smiled. "That doesn't worry us too much."

"I see," I said. "You sign on a ship that goes to Australia, then you jump the ship on arrival. I get you. But what about the shipping company?"

"That doesn't worry us. We have been to Sydney twice already. Once you're there, you're all right."

"You must feel very fed up with the old country?"

"If you don't get out while you are young you never will."

They got to their feet as the railway approached Toxteth Dock. They got out. I reflected, as I had so often before, on the fact that nationality—like so many things—is a habit, that is easily broken when you are young, before age, experience, ties and memories have made it too strong. These two young men are typical of a group, the size of which fluctuates. At times it may increase, at other times it shrinks. Today, I think, the group is fairly large. Two cormorants, who were trying to disentangle them-

selves from a pinnacle of the Cunard Building, disturbed my train of thought.

All I can say is that the outlook for England would be gloomy if the younger generation had a *real chance* of leaving the country and establishing itself abroad. Real chances exist only for a handful. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to attribute too much importance to the bitterness of the young.

In certain districts, in certain occupations, certain age groups, eight out of ten people would say "England has had it" or "England is finished." Millions of young men and women say so all over the country. In the last chapters of this book I shall enlarge on the reasons *why* this sentiment is not true, but here I will simply note that a good deal of it is partly a natural reaction to inflated war-time nationalist propaganda. Half the people who say "England has had it" say so in a spirit of defiance and relief. After all, for six long years they were not exactly encouraged to depart from the line of Britain's "mighty hour", "armed might", and "Hope and Glory", all no doubt very serviceable phrases, but now they are having a few years of seasonable and compulsory rest.

The problem of young England, however, has a far more real side. I have already written about the young worker and touched on the university graduate. I should now like to say a few words on the young of the middle class. The problem, of course, involves anybody young, middle-aged, old, aristocratic, the rich, the upper middle class, middle middle, lower middle, upper working, lower working, but it has a special significance for the two middle-class groups: those who have no capital or connections. Briefly it is this: While England today is transforming her economy and streamlining her industry, the process is slow and sporadic, and many factors obscure it. In England for the last thirty years or so it had been difficult to get a "better type" of job; there have been few vacancies for too many suitable candidates. Nepotism was more a symptom than a cause, no matter how widespread and nasty at times it became.

Conditions apparently have not changed much since. Today in the underpaid occupations (junior clerkships, domestic service of all forms, cotton industry, etc.) there is actually a shortage of labour, but there is a large army of young men and women, between the upper working class and the upper middle class—some with talent, qualifications and experience—who are unable to find suitable jobs. A small number of these are actually unemployed, and a large number "under-employed" or "mis-employed". Their situation is not "tragic"; tragedy is sharp and cruel; it is just dull and depressing, it "browns them off". From the nation's point of view this is a wastage of talent, and England—except

for brief intervals—has become quite a specialist in the wastage of her native talent during the past fifty years.

You could, of course, blame the social system. Undoubtedly England would be far better off today if her industry—for example—were governed exclusively by the talented, enterprising and efficient members of all social classes. There is a tendency, in fact an actual development, towards this today, but the transformation is "too bloody gradual", as my friend said. I agree, but how could that process be speeded up in such a way as not to damage the country and not inflict a cruel penalty on individuals? It is obvious to everyone that a too abrupt change towards efficiency might damage England badly. It is obvious, too, that there is inefficiency in "high places", but there is also inefficiency at "low places", in fact everywhere. If we take industry as only one example, it is quite obvious that British industry ought to be more efficient, but most unfortunately it has to work out its own solutions. It can borrow a few tricks from America, but not more than that. I realized that a few months after I had toured the American factories, and long before I discussed it with responsible and intelligent English industrialists, workers and trade union leaders.

British industry, most unfortunately, cannot learn much from America, not only because the former is more self-supporting, larger and richer, but because the American worker is vastly different from the British. American industrial conditions today are not basically different from those which existed in England during the Industrial Revolution, but a few factors hide the similarity: first the phenomenal wages which encourage the American worker to believe he is "middle class"—for eight out of ten think they are—judging by his car, his half-paid-for home and furniture, washing machine and gold filling in his teeth. He is perhaps economically middle class. Then comes the sack and he is at once out of the "middle class". Secondly, there is that half-true, half-bogus American democracy which enables the shirt-sleeved worker to slap the shirt-sleeved millionaire-factory-owner on the back with a "Hi, Charlie!" (which may quite easily end up in the employment of strike-breakers, or tear gas, if not machine-guns).

I do not know whether the American worker's mentality today is more primitive than the English worker's was in 1850, but it seems that at least the lowest level in England is higher than the lowest in America. For the lowest in America is not "American", or, if so, only just. If he is not foreign-born, Puerto Rican or Negro, he is "first generation" American, usually from the sweepings of Central European gutters. If he is paid high wages, or alternatively if he is threatened with the sack, he would not question working hours, speed in operations, the cruelties of

time-motion principles, he would not mind repetitive jobs, dull and dangerous work or becoming a cog in the wheel as most (except the subnormal) English workers would. In any case we cannot bribe the latter with really high wages, nor can we use unemployment as a threat. Besides, there is the historical difference. Not only is the American worker not hindered by a century of Trade Unionism but he doesn't think—as the British worker does—that no matter how hard he works and how long, he will never rise out of his class and enter the land of his secret dreams—often unrealized—of becoming a country gentleman.

Similar conditions apply on higher levels; that is to say, in the foreman and the lesser managerial levels (which brings us back to the middle class) the average British business man is more afraid of giving chances to intelligent, enterprising and efficient "outsiders" than his American opposite number. He is not a fool; he needs the intelligent, efficient, enterprising "outsider" in his business, but he is anxious that the latter "know his place", namely, that he does not ask for promotion, higher rewards, or a partnership at the expense of the "insider"—his own son, son-in-law, his nephew, his cousin, the son of the school-friend, etc. This is a situation which often poisons the atmosphere of British business as it seldom does in America. And it is not only because American business is still expanding, but because the "outsider" there is quite often a man from the same background and of the same culture as the "insider". In England he usually isn't.

This situation poisons the atmosphere, because it creates frustration in the "outsider". He knows he will never get to the top no matter how enterprising he is or how hard he works. And the latest trend—which will be more predominant in the future—does not offer much comfort to the outsider. The outsider, an efficient man from a lesser social background, a secondary school and a newer university, is today often confronted with a new type of "insider", a Public School man with the right contacts, who is every bit as enterprising and efficient and skilful as the "outsider" is. What happens then? Here is a third act for a play which J. B. Priestley has not yet written, but it seems obvious that few things can decide the issue, and even fewer plays can be put on the stage with such plots as the Public School man developing diabetes or being run over by a car.

These thoughts occupied my mind as I walked back to the hotel garage and took out my car to drive over to Blackpool.

CHAPTER X

THE BARNSELEY FEAST AT BLACKPOOL

THERE are a hundred trains arriving in Blackpool every day during the summer week-ends and as I drove past the Central Station I saw the arrival of two of them. They deposited two large groups of people, but neither was nearly as crowded as the train which took me there in 1944. My first visit had been a war-time one. I had to go on business and spent a week there altogether. After war-time London and Liverpool it was the most complete change of atmosphere and a complete change of air. Ah, the Blackpool air: rich and bracing, full of ozone and iodine. It takes ten years off your age if you are fifty and adds ten if you are seventeen.

During the war, and in the first two years of peace, Blackpool was bursting at the seams. There were queues at the station, at the tram stops, in front of the cafés, and double queues by the public lavatories. It was a crowded, dirty, cheerful place. Today it is a little less dirty, less crowded, but every bit as cheerful as before.

I had booked a room with Jessie Wilkinson, where I had stayed before, but it seemed to have been unnecessary. The dining-room window on the ground floor displayed a large notice—"Vacancies", and Mrs. Wilkinson said later that the house had had two rooms empty during one of the busiest weeks of the season. I noticed that the hanging lamp with its pink art-silk shade had been replaced by strip lights. Otherwise it was the same dining-room with its small tables occupied by Yorkshire miners and Lancashire weavers eating their midday dinner in shirt-sleeves as they do back home. Mrs. Wilkinson rushed out of the kitchen and offered me two wet hands.

"Joost in time, luv'," she said. "We joost started dinner. There's salmon salad. Hope you'll like it. I put you next to Mrs. Ormerod."

The Ormerods were a young married couple from Barnsley. He was a beltman in a coalmine and we began at once to talk about Barnsley, which I knew quite well from my Army days. On Saturday nights there was a dance at the *Three Cranes* and one could sleep on Sunday afternoons in the armchairs at the Y.M.C.A. opposite, till it was time to go to the cinema.

"You're in your old room, luv'," Mrs. Wilkinson told me after dinner. We went upstairs. I didn't remember "my old room" till we entered. It was small and the pegs on the wall served as a wardrobe. Then

when I saw the two beds under the pink coverlet I remembered a joke she had cracked about them. It was a very obvious one, but a joke just the same.

"Where's Lilian?" I said, just to show her that I, too, had a fairly good memory.

"Fancy you remembering Lilian! She's gone. She was a nice girl, very homely and friendly to you, boot she didn't like men to pet her," Mrs. Wilkinson went on in her friendly way. The Blackpool landlady is not only an improvement on English seaside landladies, she is an institution by her own rights. She is efficient and obliging and her interest in her lodgers is sheer friendliness. She is Blackpool. The English landlady in the South is as often as not suspicious, unfriendly and inquisitive. She usually has less to do and she invariably sees the same people week in, week out. Her opportunities for seeing various aspects of life may be the envy of certain novelists, and she has the novelist's curiosity, but she has neither the right style of communication, which in itself would not matter, but her gossip is usually uninteresting. Nor has she a really rich inventive power. She colours and embroiders, but her story merely becomes unreal and irritating.

"Vacancy" notices were displayed all along the street. I remember the next door neighbours' dining-room, where miners on holiday sat in shirtsleeves against an expensive oak panelling under two Louis XV crystal chandeliers. This was a typical note of Blackpool. There are paintings in the passages of the Wellington pub, dirty but attractive Knellerish, royal portraits, and there are Rolls-Royce taxis in front of the railway stations. And of course there are the landaus on the Promenade, offering rides everywhere between Fleetwood and Lytham. As a means of communication they are used only by Royalty on semi-state occasions, but the lower social strata adopted the landau, as is usual, thirty years after the upper strata gave it up. They are old fashioned, but certainly delightful apart from the nostalgic feelings they evoke.

I saw five boys bargaining with a driver in front of an oyster stall on the Promenade. The landau was meant to hold six, so I offered to go with them to Squires Gate and back, for three shillings. Three were colliers from Dudworth, another was a donkeyman from the same mine, and his friend was a mechanic repairing mining engines from Barnsley. They were all around twenty to twenty-two. All had been to Blackpool before, and all shared a zest that I am always inclined to feel belongs to the North of England. We became friends in the first minute, and I knew that all through the week they would claim acquaintanceship with me, hail me in the Promenade, invite me to be photographed with them and arrange to meet me at the dances, on the piers, at the Pleasure Beach.

Because they came from small places in the wilds of Yorkshire and had only been once to Leeds and never to London, they had not adopted the cowboy shirts which under the influence of Hollywood are usually worn outside the pants, nor moccasins, casuals and loafers, surrealist ties and pullovers with stylized animals on them. They wore open-necked white summer shirts or sleeveless art silk shirts. And they did their hair in the old-fashioned quiff. But I was the only one in the landau who was hatless. The other five wore cute naval caps of white linen with green cellophane eyeshields at the Edward VIII angle or an imitation of the matelot's hat with *H.M.S. Good Time* on the ribbon. One always used to wear a fancy hat at the seaside, and the hat with the green eyeshield is again a working-class imitation of the upper class headgear of the nineteen-tens at Homburg, Ostend and Budleigh Salterton. I noticed that the "funny hats", the diminutive policemen's helmets, Tyrolean hats, and coloured homburgs seem to be going out of fashion.

Slowly, in true landau style, we rolled along the promenade. We passed the shows, cafés and amusement stalls between the Central Station and the Wellington Hotel, opposite which is the South Pier; the elderly man was still selling his health-giving herbs at the entrance. Some of the houses had apparently been repainted, but the majority of them were still as cheerfully dirty as they were five years ago. We passed the windmill, which is illuminated by coloured bulbs at night, a structure which somewhat unexpectedly conceals a public lavatory. The big red Manchester Hotel came into sight and then we arrived at the Lido, a beautiful open-air bath, every inch as good as those built in Germany during the boom of the 'twenties, and we saw the South Pier and the clean, white alarming shapes of the Pleasure Beach.

The Promenade is seven miles long, and once on a cool morning I walked the whole length of it. It took me about two hours. This time I thought I would not repeat the performance as the weather looked likely to remain warm all the week. We retraced our steps slowly, and I was reminded of my first impression of Blackpool. Though it is a holiday resort, it somehow differs from all other holiday resorts which I have seen, rich or poor, before and since. There was Cannes, Juan les Pins, and Monte Carlo, Deauville, Trouville, San Sebastian and Ostend, Abazzia and the Lido, Palm Beach and Miami, Coney Island, Redondo Beach and Atlantic City. All these places look impermanent and slightly unreal. There is a delightful but flimsy and feminine look about them, even about Brighton, though with Brighton it is less so than with the others. But Blackpool is solid, heavy, permanent, masculine and downright. It takes its pleasures seriously. The people who come here work hard for fifty weeks in a year and play hard during the remaining two.

They don't relax, partly because they are young and partly because it is impossible to relax in the Blackpool air; here you can easily do with only six hours of sleep. A Blackpool holiday—the true one—is continuous activity between Pier and Pleasure Beach, the Sands and the Tower, the Winter Gardens and the Promenade for eighteen hours a day, including mealtimes.

The great feature of Blackpool, of course, is the collective holiday, the "Wake", which usually means that enormous groups of workers from the northern industrial towns rush to Blackpool for an annual burst. The first "wake" in the year is around mid-June: Oldham's. The following weeks it is Bolton and Nelson and Wigan and Halifax, Blackburn and Clitheroe, Accrington and Skipton, Bacup and Pendlebury, Huddersfield and Preston, Bradford and Stockport and hundreds of small places in Lancashire and Yorkshire and Derby and Stafford and the Tyneside. I have never visited those places during Wakes Week, though it would be interesting to see them almost devoid of their populations. The public works, gas, electricity, water and railways carry on, but the mills and factories mostly close down. Some of these "Wakes" are famous. I missed the "Bowling Tide Holiday" of Bradford by one week. During my stay it was the "Barnsley Feast". Roughly half of the inhabitants of Barnsley were here (eight actually in the same house where I stayed), but of course this week happened to be also the holiday week of some other towns: Ashton-under-Lyne and Crompton, Droylesden and Dukinfield, Littleborough and Rochdale, Shaw, and places in Nottingham and Derby.

Sure enough my friendship was claimed, and the following afternoon George the mechanic and his friend Norman, the donkeyman, and I went out to investigate Central Pier, the liveliest of the three piers, and the Pleasure Beach. I guessed that I should be photographed along with them before I had spent an hour in their company, and I was right. Later on, when the picture was ready, I had the impish idea that, after a time, cameras, like a painter who always paints the same social group, may for all we know develop a "routine" and all its victims will look alike. With Norman and George at my sides I look like a Yorkshire worker on holiday at Blackpool, in spite of the trousers I bought in Los Angeles and the sports shirt I bought at Saks in New York, to mention just two items.

We then went on the Pier and the three of us were surrounded by the milling crowd. There were close on half a million people in Blackpool that week-end and nearly five thousand on the Central Pier. We walked past the theatre which offered a show called *The Orchid Room*, past the Dodgems and the retired comedian selling conjuring tricks in a rich

Lancashire accent, and came to the slot machines. There were pintables, mechanical theatres showing executions and nightmares, and football and baseball machines and Corinthian Bagatelle; then a live fortune-teller and next to her booth a cheaper contemporary substitute: a fortune-telling machine that returns the oracle in exchange for a penny in the slot. I pushed in my penny and the machine promptly ejected the following statement:

"Success is waiting just round the corner for you. You will soon be the recipient of an offer entailing much financial gain, but consider the proposal deeply before deciding. Someone close to you will share in your success. All will go well with you if you avoid dealings in stocks and shares. You will make many new friends soon." How easy it is to find a common denominator for people's problems and desires in our time.

Surrounded by the benches in the foreground of the green lace of ironwork we passed a milk bar and a pub, then immediately behind we heard the orchestra playing a waltz. The open-air dance floor this year was a little less crowded than I had seen it before, but still well attended.

"Want to dance?" I asked.

"Norman does," George said. "I can't dance."

We seated ourselves on one of the benches which surrounded the dance floor and the boys were at once hailed by a friend, a young collier from the Barnsley Main. His name was Ron. He had a sallow skin and romantic side-whiskers. Ron told us that he came on his motor-bike, doing seventy to the gallon.

"You ought to see it," Norman said. "A brand new Barton it is."

Ron earned about fifteen pounds a week, but he was very dissatisfied with being a miner and wanted to rejoin the Navy. I had met many people like him recently.

"He's daft," Norman said. "There's a bloke next door to us in Barnsley that rejoined the Navy, and whenever he cooms buck, on leave like, he curses the Navy bluck and blue."

Ron said nothing. I changed the subject quickly and asked him about his tattoos. His eyes lit up and he became reminiscent like an old sea dog. "I had thut tiger doon in Malaya and this, the *Crucifixation*, in Gib." He pulled the neck of his sports shirt wide away from his chest. "A beauty," George said. The picture was certainly very large, almost as big as one a boy stationed with me in Nottingham had on his chest. He took me with him to the tattooist, somewhere behind *The Salutation*, and I had to hold his head while the electric needle worked under his skin. It cost him a pound and he stood me a pint of bitter for assisting.

Ron had twenty-three tattoos in all, including two horseshoes on the backs of his hands. This old barbaric custom still persists in the

North, except that today it enjoys a greater vogue among the teen-agers and is less popular among men in the twenties than it used to be. And there is a change in the design, too. Animals and birds and butterflies, tombstones for mother and father, and hearts and crucifixions are still as popular as ever, but the old thick contours that were at their best slightly reminiscent of the technique of certain Japanese painters are changing to thinner, shallower lines of a deeper blue. George had a dancing girl on his left forearm in the "new style".

"We went to Skegness last year, Norman and I," George said. "Bootlin's Holiday Cump, boot you can't beat Blackpool." He jerked his head.

"What was wrong with it?" I asked.

"Oh, it was all right, boot we didn't mooch like being told how to huv' foon, everything laid out for you like; when to eat and when to laugh. It was all right to go and see it and cheaper than Blackpool, too. We'd try everything once."

He was silent then, and I reflected on the phrase "everything laid out for you" at Butlin's. Was it his disapproval of a hint of regimentation at the Butlin camps? It may very well have been, as I had heard similar observations all over England in the course of my tour. It was certainly not against the "collective" character of the holiday camps, because for that matter Blackpool was quite as collective as Butlin's, and it was this very collective character which had an irresistible appeal to George and Norman and half a million others at Blackpool. There are millions and millions of the thirty million people belonging to the wage-earning class of England who can be described as "collective men" (not necessarily "the masses", though one of the most vital criteria of the masses is that they are collective); men who are never alone and who are not happy alone. Their typical article of faith is the first person plural: the "us". How often have I heard the word "us" from the working man when he meant "me" or "I", in the Army, in my Boy Scouting days and elsewhere. How often have I heard a solitary worker entering a tobacconist's saying "Can you give us ten fags?" *Us. Us*, the first person plural. Because his mate is always with him in spirit. He is Collective Man not so much by nature as by upbringing and environment. For centuries he has been grouped together with others and has learnt the wisdom of strength in unity, the necessity of collective action. This is the root of the peculiar character of working-class friendships, the dependence on the mate—philologists say that the word might at one time have meant the same as "meat"—the inseparableness, the tyranny of friendships. Walt Whitman, from his pardonable wishful thinking, may have exaggerated the homoerotic character of working-class friendships; they are certainly present

under the surface, but he somehow did not guess it was often nothing but self-defence.

This first person plural, I think, is a class frontier between the working class and the middle class, and I somehow feel that this emotional difference is more important than the difference in income. Collective feeling is far less strong in the middle and in the upper working class than in the lower. This, I feel, is either the strongest or the most important line that divides the working class from others.

What George did not like about Butlin's was its regimented character, the regular hours, the cheer-leaders, the idea that one must pretend to be happy even if one is not, the discreet compulsion to submit to organization in order to have "fun". And that is precisely what alarms me about Butlin's. I have a fear that Butlin's might easily become typical of the future, and it is a very undesirable future: our pleasures are already standardized and are to an extent compulsory; all that would be needed would be a Government to take over and Butlinize. With Butlin, the man, there is nothing wrong. He is merely a shrewd business man who saw an excellent opportunity in regimented holidays. What was wrong was that there was that *opportunity*, that *need* for a regimented holiday. What is wrong is that there are thousands and thousands of young people who crave for it. I, frankly, prefer Blackpool to Butlin's even though I know that Butlin's is cleaner, cheaper and far healthier for the body.

A little later two girls joined us, also from Barnsley, who were staying in the same boarding-house as George and Norman. They were both young, about eighteen, and neither could dance. Nearing tea-time the musicians packed up their instruments and the audience began to wander off for High Tea. George and the girls said we must meet after tea and go to the Pleasure Beach. I said I would call for them at their boarding-house at seven.

We parted by the merry-go-round and almost alone I walked along the long planks, thinking about piers. With gas jets and leg-of-mutton sleeves they belong to the late Victorian period and are a delight to look at. How pretty is the forest of green iron pillars and how attractive the rich cast-iron lacework of the balustrades along the sides. I could look at it for hours, watching the tide till the emerald waters reach the pillars whose feet are covered with barnacles, seaweed and mussels. Piers are, perhaps, not so beautiful as evocative, evocative of our childhood, whose background everywhere in our "civilization" was graceful wrought iron. The age of piers is nearly gone, but the new age of seaside architecture has not yet arrived.

How attractive the Tower looks from the pier! It was obviously inspired by the *Tour d'Eiffel*, in the same way as Blackpool's

famous Big Wheel—which has gone now—was inspired by *La Grande Roue* of the Paris Exhibition of 1900. Some people might think this iron tower of five hundred feet on top of a public building an atrocity, but Blackpool would not be Blackpool without the Tower. Like the Eiffel Tower and the taller of the Manhattan skyscrapers, it is a monument to an age of optimism and vertical aspirations, an age which is still with us, but only just.

As I arrived at their lodgings I saw George in the window; he shouted down to me.

"Coom oop. We'll be ready in a minit. Noomber six our noomber is."

I walked up. It was a fairly large room with four large double beds in it, one of which was shared between George and Norman, the second between Sam and another George, the third between Colin and Jim, all from Barnsley. The fourth double bed belonged to two other boys who had been complete strangers till midday. Full board cost £4 10s. a week. The meals were good, though the accommodation was discreetly verging between civilian overcrowding and Army conditions. But they didn't mind in the least. There were six boys in the room and they apparently only asked me up to make the room a little more crowded.

Then they drummed on the girls' door and a few minutes later five of us started for the Pleasure Beach. The fast streamlined tramcars soon took us to the clean, white, cubist shapes of the Pleasure Beach, the only aspect of Blackpool which is somehow un-English, world-wide and contemporary. Like the buildings of an exhibition, it has an impermanent and unreal air. We entered the Haunted House, had a race in the miniature cars and another on diminutive motor-boats, then we made a tour of the booths.

How tame our organized pleasures are if we compare them with those of the ancient world, the Romans, or even with the early 19th century. How few of our professional gladiators ever get killed as bare-knuckle boxers still occasionally got killed in Regency times. How few of our lion-tamers ever get mauled. How perfectly our low passions are sublimated when it is merely wooden heads of suitable scapegoats (Hitler) that we aim at with coconuts or slowly-moving clay figures with miniature rifles. Are these Pleasure Beaches of our time, all over the world, a civilized substitute, an *Ersatz*, for our perennial desire for an orgy?

"See that lud?" George whispered into my ear as we passed a small pin-table booth. "Talking to t'attendant in t'white coat."

"Yes," I said. "The one in green trousers. Does he come from Barnsley?"

"Ah don't know where he coomes from, but he's on the roon. A deserter. Bloke that lives next door told me lust night."

I was not surprised, as someone in the War Office had told me that more than half of the deserters drift to places like Blackpool during the holiday season, because they believe it will be easy to find work there and employers are generally too hard-pressed to ask "awkward questions". There must be hundreds of them in Blackpool and Margate, at Brighton and at many other seaside towns, working in hotels and cafés, playing hide-and-seek with the authorities.

The other half hide in the big cities; some settle down to "an honest life" with forged identity card—its price varies between £10 and £20—others constantly change their address. There are several thousand British deserters on the Continent and I came across two in Los Angeles.

"George'd better be careful," Ron said, when we got behind the party. "He spent eight quid lust night and it lewks tonight he might roon away with anuther eight or more." He added: "I wouldn't mooch mind spending brass, only this year I huven't got it. Lust year I brought thirty quid and spent it t' first four days. So we stayed in the digs in the evenings and played cards. George's all right. His mother keeps a poob buck home."

Later, while we were sitting in the café eating a snack that cost almost as much as a snack at the Berkeley in London, I asked the girls how much money they had brought with them. They said it was twenty-five pounds this year, because "times was bad". I found out that the average Lancashire millgirl spends a little more: thirty or thirty-five pounds for a week's holiday, a sum on which they could have a ten-day trip to Switzerland, Italy, the Riviera or Austria, with five or eight pounds left over for extras.

It was now half past ten, and while the others were busy playing on pin-tables I was suddenly accosted by a young man who was also staying with Mrs. Wilkinson. Could I help him punch out a few words on the machine which made small aluminium name-plates; twelve letters for a penny? "Only it isn't me name," he said. "I want it as a soovenir for a girl buck home in Wakefield. Made a mistake with this one." He handed me an aluminium strip with the words "*I will allus love you no matter what Ken.*" He shoved in a penny. "Now will you give me that again letter by letter." I did.

Later, my party said they would go home by car and Ken and I decided to walk back to Mrs. Wilkinson's. It was a warm and beautiful night.

"Trust them to go home," Ken said, with a wink. "Bet you ten to one they're going on the sands. That's what I'd do if my girl hudn't gone buck the day before yesterday. I'm staying on for anuther two days. I don't huve to go buck by rights till next Tuesday, boot I'm going buck

to get me teeth in. Huve you seen Jimmy's teeth? He is t'big fellow who sits opposite you at breakfast. Only he's feeling queer tonight. Well, I'm huving the same teeth as him, plastic. They are real smart, with a pink goom, except that I'm huving a gold tooth put in. We went to t' same dentist. I don't know if you know Foster in Wakefield. We went together, but Jim's gooms healed better than mine. Mr. Foster said did we want gas or the needle. We said needle. Well, Jim went in first and in ten minutes he came boock with all his teeth out like. I only felt the needle, then I felt nothing except his finger pressing and I heard'em falling into the tray, twenty-eight of them. They were all brown through not cleaning them. I reckon most blokes never clean their teeth before they start coorting. Me dad had all false teeth when he was twenty-five. Me and Jim are joost twenty-one. I couldn't eat the first three days. Now I can eat anything, a steak and all."

We reached Central Pier and the sands. "I bet," Ken said, "that's where those four are now. If only some people turned the searchlights on these sands now." He laughed, a toothless baby laugh. On warm nights during the Wakes the sands at Blackpool are full of couples: thousands and thousands so close to each other that they could touch. Blackpool is an industrial Venusberg, one of the many, and Lancashire factory girls who have been independent for generations don't think twice about giving way to their natural impulses, especially now when birth control is made so easy. They are returning to earlier days. The Elizabethans—the phrase leaps to my mind. Why the Elizabethans? The lower orders of England were not too strongly affected by the waves of Puritanism. Their passions were driven underground during Cromwell and during Wesley—especially during Wesley—but under the surface they lived more or less the same way as before. Dickens knew it but refused to admit it, but Mayhew wrote quite openly of the licence of the London proletariat, at least.

In fact today, when the old type of Puritanism is tottering under the weight of two wars, two revolutions, a slump, the popularization of science and under that contemporary myth, "health"—the greatest god of 20th-century man—the "Lower Orders" may today perhaps have, all in all, higher morals all round than in the Victorian years. There is much less drunkenness and less violence in the home, and the young get married for different reasons than that the girl is heavy with child.

The Blackpool tradition is still going strong, I thought, as I left the town early the following morning and drove along the Promenade. They still run out of their factories as if they were blown out by steam-engines. They still invade Blackpool as provincial football fans invade

London during the Cup Finals. They eat and drink and sing and dance and blow the year's savings on a week or fortnight of uproarious fun and make love as often as they can; then, when the time is over, back they go to the factories with flat pockets, eyes yellow from too much sex, but they have had a glorious time and they feel it was worth it. The tradition is still strong, even though the people among whom it is strong represent a lower level of imagination and intelligence, and sometimes—but not necessarily—a lower income, than those who used to flood Blackpool twenty years ago. I should imagine it is the lowest layer of the northern working class who go to Blackpool now, in the same way as it is the lowest social strata of New York that today goes to Coney Island.

It is not only that Blackpool is not as unique today as she once was, but that the higher strata of the working class are more discriminating. They may prefer Butlin's or Morecambe or the Isle of Man. I met two cotton girls in Oldham who were going on a motor tour to Italy for their holiday. Again, there are millions who go on a cycling tour, a hike, sleep under canvas. And hundreds of thousands go abroad. My common sense, my intellect, disapproves of the people who go on "Wakes" in Blackpool, but deep inside me there is something that accepts and approves. There is a rich flavour and a beautiful zest about them which I think has a peculiar English quality in it. I may be wrong, but it did me good to see them on their annual burst.

CHAPTER XI

NOTES ON YORKSHIRE

AS I left Blackburn I saw a nun waiting in the rain for the bus, so I stopped and told her I was on my way to Leeds. "If taking me to Hebden Bridge is not too much trouble to you . . ." she said in a voice which was a mixture of Catholic humility and Protestant determination. I assured her it wasn't, and she slipped in the car almost ludicrously quickly in view of her large starched crown and a heavy zip-bag. She was about forty, quite small, with an earthenware skin and a discreet moustache, like a Plantagenet prince.

"It is amazing," I said as we were on the way to Accrington, "how Catholicism in Yorkshire survived the Reformation. Not only among eccentric noblemen and quixotic gentry, but among people in all social classes."

"Yes, it is," the nun said, "but I'm not a Roman Catholic." And I remembered vaguely something which has always struck me, a Protestant—as strange (it strikes the Catholics too): that, apart from the fact that the Established Church had an Anglo-Catholic branch, there are Anglican orders and monasteries with abbots and monks and nuns within a Protestant Church vowed to chastity, poverty and obedience.

"Do you know," the nun said, "that today there are more Anglican nuns in England than there were Roman Catholic nuns at the time of the Reformation?"

"No," I said, "but the population of England today is about nine to ten times bigger than in Henry VIII's time. . . ."

For a time we discussed the problem of Faith, then I somehow felt sure that the moment the Pope abandoned his secular power—that is, sovereignty, pomp, Swiss Guards, postage stamps and so on—and reduced the number of Italian Cardinals to the relative proportion of Italy among Catholic countries, a great obstacle to the unification of Christendom would be removed. I am the great-grandson of a Protestant bishop, but against what would I be really "protesting" today, if I were not the "bad" Protestant I am? Against the memory of past corruption or the contemporary fact of incredible wealth in the inefficient hands of prelates (as if Protestant bodies all over the world were much poorer and more efficient)? I dare say nationalism is still too strong not to recognize the fact that the head and the governing body of the Roman Church are Italians: foreigners. I dare say it is true that in

certain regions of various countries the priest keeps the people in ignorance (as if the parson and the minister wouldn't, in similar ways), but we know that in other regions the work of Catholics and Protestants alike in teaching and guidance is as heroic and as progressive as it was in the early centuries of Christianity.

"And today we are living in a period of increasing assaults against Christianity: Anglican, Nonconformist, Catholic, Lutheran, or what you will," the nun said, and as we came to a temporary road-block I saw that she had a little beard as well, discreet but visible. I nodded and thought: What is to be the future of the churches in England and elsewhere? What about the Church of England? Will it become a branch of the Civil Service—employee of the State—or an opponent of the State: on Christian grounds? This problem may arise sooner than most people think. The poverty of the clergy in some parts of England has to be seen to be believed, and many bishops, perhaps under the weight of tradition, are painfully out of touch with the needs of contemporary England, spiritual as well as social.

As I was thinking about these things, driving through the Yorkshire scenery, I suddenly had an idea. I remembered there was a place called Harrod St. Peter, somewhere near Hebden Bridge, where in a "superb" Georgian rectory, there lived Patricia, a girl I knew, married to a youngish parson. Perhaps he would give me the answer. I decided to drive over, once the nun had left me.

As it happened, Patricia was away staying with her own people, but her husband gave me a cup of tea. I had my doubts when I saw him wearing a grey *soutane*, and when I found that his first name was Waldo, then I reflected that one must not be frivolous.

The house was really "superb": a building of the transitory period between Queen Anne and the early Georges, made from noble stone which the Yorkshire climate had turned black. It stood next to a pre-Reformation parish church. The huge house, however, was almost completely bare of furniture.

"We are turning it into a preparatory school," the parson said: a youngish man with a timid, Anglican voice, a schoolmasterly diction and a semi-starved intensity. "We had very few pupils last term and there are only twelve for next term." I was not surprised: he charged forty-five pounds a term. Nevertheless I appreciated his courage. Here he was, a man from the South, in the wilds of Yorkshire with a stipend under four hundred a year and a "superb" house with twenty bedrooms in it. And Patricia never had a "sausage". He told me that the living had been in the hands of one single family for two hundred and fifty years, till the last one's death three years ago, when the bishop began to look round desperately for an incumbent.

Later he showed me the church. "The reredos are superb," he said with two fingers raised high in the air as if trying to bless them or me. "But look at the sedilia," his voice suddenly climbed into a higher key; he pronounced the word in the Italian fashion. I vaguely knew that it was a nest of seats by the altar. Impatiently, he explained that it was for the three officers of the church: priest, deacon and sub-deacon.

He sighed as he said that his congregation was small, but in the same breath he told me he was High Church—as if I didn't realize. I almost smiled. I may not know my Yorkshire as well as I should like to know it, but I do know that the only way to fill a church there is either by outright Roman Catholic pomp or downright and outspoken Protestant common-sense and realism, but not by genteel High Church, grey soutane and two fingers in the air, sedilia . . . sedilia . . . I remembered the white-haired lady in the church canteen who served me with a bun and a cup of tea and who when we complained of too many guard duties and square-bashing, said, "Aye, lud, life's a boogger, huve anoother coop of tea. . . ." That, I thought, was more like Yorkshire Christianity. What the church—all churches—needs today is Saints—who are in short supply in our time—or men of the great courage, determination and virility of the late Archbishop Temple. These are available, if the Church would only wake up.

The war-time shabbiness is gone, or almost gone, from Leeds and so is the war-time "looseness". In those years of the blackout Leeds had "quite a reputation", and while I was stationed nearby the town was banned to Allied troops. It was certainly a strange place during the war: the shabby hotels around the Briggate, the dance halls in the City, in Roundhay, Meanwood and Horseforth, the sinister pubs, the parties in seedy flats: some of these had a faint touch of pre-Hitler Berlin. There were stories about Leeds, one heard them in various Army canteens: rich, spicy stories, "It's as easy as that," was the refrain. And some of the stories were quite true. Leeds was never really bombed, and its war-time population was very large: there were important munition works in and around the town, some of the ministries had evacuated to Leeds, allied troops were stationed all over the neighbourhood. All this brought an enormous number of loose men and women to Leeds, or rather men and women who became loose in Leeds.

All that, or most of that, has gone today. Leeds—on the surface at least—looks a serious place again. It goes to bed early, its pubs close at ten and there are hardly any cafés or restaurants open at night after seven or eight.

"Leeds is big enough to be unpleasant, but not big enough to have

the amenities which would make life pleasant," said the young social scientist whom I met at lunch at a club. "That at least is how the young think about it. I presume their attitude has a good deal to do with the war. They saw foreign countries and they wish for the same amenities. . . ."

This is a new note about present-day England. After wars—whether in the Middle Ages, in the 18th century, or after 1918, the young always returned with "changed views", or "without blinkers", and these usually included at least a sneaking admiration for other countries. After 1945, however, "changed views" were not restricted to the young and—perhaps for the first time in English history—really large groups of people of all ages returning to England felt—and still feel—that things were ordered better abroad. The notions in many instances are wrong, but they show unmistakably a change in the mental outlook. On the whole they are still glad to be back in England—a very universal human trait—but they no longer thank God for it even if they believe in God. There's an unmistakable change in English patriotism, it is far more searching, far more questioning—in many cases far more doubting—than in the thirties, but it is far more intelligent. Jingo patriotism—among the young, at least—is dead and so is the other extreme: the sneering at everything faintly smacking of patriotism.

"Then what do young people in Leeds do about it?" I said finally.

"Those who have no capital or family connections or future prospects try to run away from the place. You said that in the course of your journey you found that this escapism was quite a post-war note in the provinces. It may perhaps be a trifle less true of Leeds than of Liverpool, but it is true enough. Provincial cities, while they may go on growing in size, are declining in importance, because England is getting more and more centralized. This may also be true of other Western European countries. You said it was not true of America, which I can understand. Well, in the Victorian years cities like Leeds and Manchester and so on were busy making England's wealth; in fact they came into being as places for people to work in. They are still places to work in for they don't seem to provide much for the periods of leisure which, in our time, are almost as long as the working hours. This is one factor."

"The other is that chances of advancement in Leeds are not what they used to be, and the chances of making money are more limited than before, but a keen young man who wants to go in for business can still make something out of it. If you are not that type, then you begin to think. If you are bent on intellectual pursuits on five hundred a year, you begin toying with the idea of leaving Leeds. For many young people poverty is easier to endure in a big city like London than in Leeds. There are, of course, thousands of people who cannot go, but you find that they

are trying to run away in the spirit. I am sure this must be the reason for the large number of amateur dramatic societies in places like Leeds. But that's only one form of escapism. There are hundreds of other forms as well." Yes, there are. I reflected on this point as I walked back from lunch towards Briggate. I thought about two people in particular.

I spoke to the first in front of a bookshop on the previous evening when I asked my way to the Headrow. Being a typical Northcountryman, he was not content with giving me the directions, but said he would take me there.

"But I don't want you to go out of your way," I protested.

"They haven't got the bewk I'm lewking for, anyhow," he said.

"What were you looking for?"

"Numismatics. Coins, you know. I collect them."

It transpired that he was an electrician, thirty-five years old, and had a collection of 1,500 coins, "all different". He said his wife wasn't against numismatics so long as he didn't spend his money on drink. Suddenly he stopped in his stride. "Are you interested in cacti?" he asked.

I hesitated for a moment, then I remembered that cacti was the plural of cactus, and I said no, except that I had seen a few strange specimens in the American West.

"It's joost because I'm going to a lecture on cacti. With lantern slides," he added. "Would you like to coome?"

I was sorry I had to refuse because I had to keep an appointment. I should have liked to have known a little more about his life, his world, his problems, particularly because he seemed to be such a nice, open-hearted person. There must be many like him all over England; men of thirty-five of the upper working class who collect coins and attend lectures on cacti. The escape motive—into unnecessary and apparently useless knowledge—seems to me to be clear, but I believe such people are more frequently to be found in the larger industrial cities of the North, than in the South.

Immediately afterwards I heard the story of the girl with the snakes. I met two young men in the Y.M.C.A. who showed me their girl friends' photographs. To my surprise one of the snaps displayed a pretty young girl with a boa constrictor.

"Who's this?"

"That's Ellen, a friend of mine."

"But the snake. . . ."

"That's Steve, one of her pets. The other ones are much bigger."

Ellen was a girl of nineteen: she was either very good-looking or she photographed well. She was employed as a shorthand typist in the office of a woollen manufacturing firm. In the kitchen at home she kept

her snakes, a python and two boa constrictors (one of them twenty-two feet long) in large boxes. Occasionally she appeared in Wild Western shows as a snake-charmer, and her greatest feat was the Kiss of Death.

"But what do her parents think about it?"

"What should they think? They are intelligent people."

I was delighted with the story. To me it was a little more North of England than England in general. I may be wrong. There may be a few girls, for all we know, in Bristol and Southampton, Devizes and Exeter, who keep snakes in the kitchen and pet them after office hours, but I don't think so. I like to believe that there are several in Leeds or in Heckmondwike, that such people are more frequent in the North and that, generally speaking, there one may still find a few of the English eccentrics. At one time, during the 19th century, the whole country was full of them, but perhaps more in the upper and middle classes. What eccentricity is left in the country today is apparently practised in lower social scales.

I have long known that with Yorkshire people one "never knows" and one repeatedly finds out that they have most unusual recreations. There must be something, I suppose, in the air, in the mists and fogs, and above all, in the drab surroundings. They look "normal" enough, often "quite dull" (not to me), or they have a deceptive, innocent air. They may have a link with the Scandinavian countries where one quite often finds the same streak of eccentricity. Or are things surprising merely because Yorkshire people look so downright?

In any case, they are people after my own heart, they have bite and gusto and originality and enterprise. Amy Johnson, the aviator, came from Yorkshire. Her performance was in a different sphere, certainly, but the roots must be the same. I always like to feel that she was typically Yorkshire.

At the bottom of the Headrow is Quarry Hill, which, after the Karl Marx Hof in Vienna, must be one of the largest housing estates in Europe. It has many interesting features. First, it is practically in the centre of the city: a huge block of flats occupying some 23 acres. Quarry Hill is the work of the 'thirties: it began during the greatest slump in history and opened a few days after Hitler marched into Austria. Hundreds of old cellared buildings had to be demolished and hundreds of bodies from two old burial grounds had to be removed. There was also a brewery on the site, large factory buildings, gasometers, not to mention coal workings begun in the 14th century, and three miles of disused sewers. It was intended to devote as much of the area to open space as possible, so they made the building six stories high, leaving about eighty per cent of the

area open space. This, of course, for the time being, is only true on paper as the "open space" even in golden summer days looks like a huge waste ground surrounded by an up-to-date prison of suicide-grey concrete walls. The grass is thin and patchy, there is not one single tree, not a flower: it looks like a carefully planned modern slum without the saving grace of most slums which have become so through historical changes and are usually full of a sordid warmth and friendliness. Quarry Hill is bleak and soul-killing. It is meant to be a self-contained community. It has its own shopping centre, community halls, nursery schools, laundry, seven playgrounds for children, two tennis courts, a bowling green, etc., and yet it gives the impression of a place which people only wish to use for sleeping purposes and to do cooking and then run away from the rest of the day.

There are close on one thousand flats here; some are small, some have five bedrooms. In certain blocks there are passenger lifts and each flat has a balcony that faces sunwards. There are tiled floors in the scullery and bathroom, there is a unique refuse disposal system and a hot-water system. The scullery has been planned as a working-room and includes a sink combination with five cupboards and five drawers. There are also a linen cupboard, a food store and a coal store.

The tenants who came here were obviously from slums or semi-slums and the place has undoubted advantages. The question is, will the enormous advantages compensate for the handicaps, which are almost entirely psychological? Slums are warmer, more intimate, more friendly, almost more satisfactory for the mind. There is, of course, a good deal to be said in the defence of Quarry Hill: the principal problem was the shortage of money. I suppose it was part of the plan to embellish the open space, but the war prevented it. But wasn't there any other colour or treatment available for the façade except suicide-grey concrete?

"We are a forthright, serious people," said the manager of the *Yorkshire Post* whom I went to see. Certain trends and habits I suppose are still the same. I well remember the difference between the Yorkshire and the Lancashire attitude in the anecdote of the Lancashire woman saying to her husband on a Saturday on the way back from Blackpool: "I allus said we ought ter have sold t'clock und we could huve stayed another week in Bluckpool." The Yorkshire woman, on the other hand, always left some money under the tea-caddy on the mantelpiece before the family left for the annual burst at the seaside. This, I suppose, is still true. And there is still a noticeable difference between Yorkshire and Lancashire manners, especially in the middle class or lower middle class. Contact with this class in Yorkshire is quite as easy as in Lancashire, but

Yorkshire people are a little more reserved, especially those in the textile trade. I was told that a number of the smaller manufacturers whose fathers used to go round the world in search of business travel very little today. They are quite often rude and conceited, and those are very dangerous qualities. The rude person, after a time, is quite easily forced to become a crook. (People won't like him and so he will take his revenge. His rudeness also quite often acts as an inspiring and successful camouflage because a number of idiots go on thinking that rude people are automatically honest and always tell the truth.) My own experience is that many "outspoken" people quite violently resent outspokenness in others. And a number of "outspoken" people are mean and spiteful. The Yorkshire crook is charmless, part of his capital is rudeness, which he makes appear to be fearless, incorruptible integrity.

Driving to Huddersfield, I gave a lift to an old man: a worker retired from topmaking in Bradford: a nice, friendly soul with the typical confusion of the British worker about the middle class and the upper class. He dismissed the first as "moneygroob" and the second as "pity they've gone". Thirty to forty years ago his observations would have been largely true. He got out at Heckmondwike and I was left alone on the road. The country here is hilly. Heckmondwike itself is perhaps typical of the district. It is built of solid grey stone, to match the grey sky perhaps, and the grey twilightish air of the morning.

Huddersfield is the centre of the fine cloth industry in Yorkshire. It is a smallish town built partly of grey Yorkshire stone and bricks that have been changed to the colour of burnt sienna by the weather. Here are the factories, which are usually family concerns and usually quite small. I was astounded to hear two facts: (a) the U.S. manufactures ninety-seven per cent of her own needs in cloth (of the three per cent of her imported foreign cloth only 1.78 comes from Britain); (b) Britain exports a certain amount of cheaper cloth as well to America. As I noticed while I was there, America produced some fine cloth during the war, while some of the best English materials are unsuitable for America, because they are too heavy for steam-heated American rooms. The protective tariff is about 30-40 per cent, which is not much, for in England there is 67 per cent Purchase Tax on the finer materials, which the American doesn't have to pay. The best market today for Britain is the Argentine.

I don't know why it was so very difficult to arrange a visit to a cloth factory. My friends tried about three without success. In Lancashire it was sufficient only to make a telephone call ten minutes before the visit; in Yorkshire it meant a long correspondence and in three instances a refusal. I began to wonder why. Suspicion? Were they afraid that I might

steal important industrial secrets that fathers only whisper to their favourite sons on their deathbed, or are there other things they wished to hide from a writer? Maybe I approached the "wrong" firms, it may well be that Yorkshire wool spinners, generally speaking, love writers and simply burn to show their factories off, but my own attempt to get into factories in Huddersfield was something like trying to visit an atomic plant.

At last a visit was arranged and the director who showed me round was a charming person. Again, as in the case of the birthplace of some of England's finest products, the factory was a relic. It was surrounded by gloomy old warehouses which looked as if work went on in them even on Christmas Day. I spent a few minutes waiting in the office. It had Victorian standing desks and huge old-fashioned safes with embellishments, tiled tiny fireplaces, steel engravings of bearded founders with Christian names like Joshua, Jeremiah and Isaac; in the corner a bronze bust of the founder in his winter overcoat with a Persian lamb collar. Then we passed the counting-house, furnished with tall desks and tall chairs and the "great novelty" of electric light under green lampshades, with seedy clerks in sombre blue serge. I pondered on how the place must have looked in 1890; probably not very different.

The director took me first to the combing room, where the wool fibres are straightened out in order to get worsted. (Woollen is produced by "carding" and the wool fibres are not straight.) The procedure is the same as with fine cotton. This firm does not start right from the beginning of the business; they obtain the wool in "tops" (usually from Bradford), large spools of shiny, fine wool, not yet spun but already a continuous yarn. These tops are "dyed in the wool" before combing, which takes out waste and the short fibres which are sold and are used in the manufacture of things like the cheaper tweeds. (There is a Yorkshire town that has the reputation of making cloth out of anything that has two ends. Let it be nameless.) The combing machine has about ten rows of pins and the wool circulates among them as in a merry-go-round.

Then the wool is spun into fine yarn, and in another room it is woven into cloth on large looms. The procedure is roughly the same as weaving cotton, but the material being thicker, the loom is slightly larger and the shuttle jumps across much more slowly. There is the paper pattern with pegs and holes to regulate the pattern, the same way as the pianola scroll produces music.

There is no radio, but on the walls there is a large collection of comic postcards. On large looms they weave some of the finest materials in the world. Here is a beautiful herringbone cashmere with an overstripe, next to a birdseye that has to be seen to be believed, even in its present state.

On the loom it looks incredibly wide and quite insipid. Later it will be scoured to get rid of the grease, dried in a hydro extractor, tented, to be pulled to the right width in a hot chamber, then re-examined for small faults, then the pieces are steamed to raise surface fibre, which is then cut off on machines, then "London shrunk" in the shrinking room, then ironed out.

I watched one of the most exciting processes: the mending. In a long room about a dozen women sat with needle and yarn in hand going through bales of beautiful cloth practically inch by inch, looking for faults. Here a knot had to be taken out, there a piece of yarn missing had to be replaced. It is very delicate and difficult work. In the case of cheaper cloth only the large faults are mended, in the case of the finer cloth everything humanly possible is done. The more complicated the design, the more faults appear. On an average there are at least six knots in a yard of fine cloth alone, not to speak of other faults. They get six to seven pounds a week, which is not bad, yet this is the type of labour which is difficult to get.

We ended in the power-house. From a coloured engraving Gladstone looked on to a horizontal piston engine which was built in 1888, and on the manometers and other dials which had attractive rococo designs on their facings. They were made in an age when function was apologetically concealed under a heavy decorative element. Twenty years later typewriters, phonographs, sewing machines, gramophones still had gold embellishments on their black surfaces so as to suggest that if the machine had no mind, the man who made it certainly had. But all this does not seem to matter and one should not take the antique surroundings as a pointer to the fact that such firms are necessarily out of date. They still turn out some of the finest cloths in the world; in a way they are industrial artists, not a mean function by a long chalk. The question is, does the rest of the world still want the finest—cloth or anything else—and does it want it in increasing quantities? There are many countries that cannot afford it and there are many countries which say: "We know that the English stuff is the best in the world, but we don't want it. We want our own stuff, knowing it to be inferior to the English." The answer, therefore, seems to be No, in the "long run". We need not accept that answer, and if we do, we must always ask: how long is the "run"?

I am turning back now. I am having to miss the Tyneside, whose inhabitants I love and whose homes I have never seen. I should have liked to have been able to record that they were doing well now. There would be room for it in the book and perhaps I could spare the time, but I could not afford the expense.

On my way back to Nottingham I had been invited by a war-time acquaintance to spend a night with his family in his home outside Leeds. His name is John, and we had met while we were both stationed at Woolwich. "*We are typically English Middle Class*," he wrote, "*we live in a suburb*." I reflected that, according to E. M. Forster, they were "typically English", as the contemporary Englishman, according to that gentle novelist-philosopher, is suburban.

The suburb in question is outside Leeds and it is a well-to-do place full of "desirable residences": Tudor and Swiss chalet type, country cottages and Edwardian redbrick, with one or two "functional" houses thrown in. There are bay windows, Elizabethan chimneys, Mansard roofs, stained glass, oversized porches, not much logic about them nor much taste or much originality, but there is solidity, individuality and a desire to impress. In the centre is what is left of the original village which has been engulfed by the new suburb: a parish church and rectory in early 19th century Anglican style and a few old houses on the edge of the common which has been turned into a golf course.

The house in which John and his wife and child live had been built around 1925. It is redbrick with Tudor half-beams: a four-bedroom, two-reception-room type of house with a largish garden at the back. It was a joint wedding present from their parents in 1938. John and his wife are now in the late thirties with a son of seven.

"Typical English Middle Class," John wrote, and I began to think what was Middle Class and what was Social Class? For the sake of those who need definitions I sum up here what will be found scattered throughout the pages of this book. Social Class is a group of people who are conscious of certain traits in each other which distinguish them from other groups. In "the brightly coloured" civilizations of the past these distinctions were easy to observe, because then a man's income, appearance and status more or less strictly corresponded with each other. Today they do not: they overlap, which is a revolutionary symptom, and class is full of "borderline cases". Nowadays the only way to observe class is to use a system of "points awards" for a wide range of things: income, occupation, education, dress, culture, habits—social and moral—and tradition, to mention only the chief criteria of class.

John went to a "good" Public School, then he started at the bottom of the family firm—now a public limited company. They are "topmakers" in Leeds. He has travelled a certain amount and spent four years in the Army. His income is about fifteen hundred pounds a year. Later, when his parents die, he may have a little more. He is what a social scientist would describe as a member of the "middle-middle" class: a group which, all in all, in England might contain about ten million people (but naturally

includes "dependent relatives" as well as people who never have had fifteen hundred a year and never will).

After dinner we sat in the sitting-room, which like the whole house—and contemporary class status—is mixed and transitory; the small things are so much better than the large ones. There are a few 18th-century engravings on the walls, a bracket clock on the mantelpiece, a Sheraton desk, a Georgian thermometer, but the bigger pieces, like the three-piece suite covered with moquette, the carpets, the curtains, the tables are comfortable without being distinctive. We finished our coffee, and Jean, the wife, took up some embroidery.

"You asked me about the changes in the life of our group," John said. "I should say they are largely connected with those margins that separate us from the class above and the class below. Well," he snorted, "that margin between us and the workers is narrower today than it has ever been. We have less money to spend on inessentials" (his smile puts inverted commas round the word inessentials). "Well, things that make life pleasant: hospitality, sports, travel, holidays, better living. These, we find, are increasingly difficult to satisfy. Take hospitality first. Well, we like asking people here, and apart from liking it we must entertain a certain amount from the strictly business point of view. This is difficult, not only because we only have a daily woman instead of a servant but because of food rationing. You can entertain almost entirely on unrationed foodstuffs and the black market today is more or less open, but both are expensive. So we cannot entertain the way we were brought up to and the way we should like to. Our other pleasures are similarly restricted. Petrol is free today but how expensive it is. I play golf once a week, Jean plays tennis twice a week and bridge once. We go to the cinema once and occasionally to the theatre. We are not musical."

The lack of interest in art and literature is a somewhat significant feature of John and his wife, and I hear it is typical of a fairly large section of their group and generation. They have hardly any books, and Jean, when she reads, only reads "commodity" novels. Apart from the fact that they have to entertain more than is usual among the working class, they use their leisure almost the same way as the working class, though they could afford a more satisfactory culture, and she at least has almost as much free time. Their taste is near working-class taste in films, books, dress, newspapers, though John does read *The Times*, when he can manage a little freedom for it. I always knew it was modern technology which was partly responsible for this levelling and standardization of taste, but now I see an additional factor: though they have a higher income they have to work harder for it than the worker, and they too have a sense of insecurity. They have to toil not so much to improve their position as

to defend it. Apart from the greater insecurity of our times, which is the problem of personal survival.

"What would you do with the three hundred pounds a year you are paying as income tax?" I said.

He laughs. "I suppose Jean would have the carpets and curtains renewed and would have one or two more dresses per year, and we would entertain more. . . . I would change the Rover for a Jaguar, we would go regularly to the South of France for our holidays, then we would perhaps save a little more. Pat's education is going to cost us a good deal. He is down for Lancing and I want to send him to Oxford."

"A good start in life," I said, a little in jest, for before the war that used to be the phrase a parent would use who sent his son to a boarding-school. But John did not notice.

It was Jean who corrected me. "To learn discipline," she said.

The remark was "true to type", I concluded. She is a doctor's daughter. Jean is a "nice" girl, perhaps just a trifle heavier than fashionable, with a sense of humour and good temper, but her culture is little more than gentility and good form. "Heaven" and "the End" are her favourite adjectives. I had the impression that she drank a trifle too much.

We go to another point: the future of the Middle Class. John is not desparate. He said: "It must survive if the nation survives, because, as you yourself put it, 'the Middle Class expresses the nation's purpose'. It is, of course, going through a very difficult patch: a revolution, in fact, in the course of which the Middle Class will be changed and renewed. The rentier, as such, is doomed together with those who cannot adapt themselves to the coming shape of society. But the Middle Class as such will go on. For one thing, because there are certain middle-class functions, apart from professions, without which the community cannot do: the management of industrial production is one of them. In any case, you must have noticed that the Middle Class in the last ten years has grown in size, on the income basis at least. There are three times as many people in England today with our income than there were before the war (and the cost of living all in all has not gone up much more than a hundred and fifty per cent). This increase of the Middle Class happened in spite of the fact that the working class today is doing better than ever, and is doing better very largely at our expense. At our expense because the rich is a very small group, whereas we are a fairly large group. Out of my income tax alone a typical working-class family of three can live—and does—not to speak of our rates, purchase tax and excise."

"All that was due to Communist propaganda during the war," Jean put in. She dropped the embroidery frame. "John, of course, would say no." John began to smile.

"I think he is right," I said. "Communist, or at least radical, propaganda was strong during the war. It said, among other things, that the war was the result of social-economic inequality *within* countries, which is rubbish; but the point is that the condition of the worker had to be improved in order to keep the nation together. Promises had to be made during the war to keep up morale and some promises had to be kept. There were many reasons for this, but one important reason always escaped notice: it was German propaganda. German propaganda was very strong and efficient, and it had to be counteracted because it was feared that there were many gullible people in England who *may* have believed Hitler's promises (not realizing that Hitler would have been *forced* to reduce a defeated England to semi-servitude, for a time at least, in order to satisfy his own people). Many an English worker would not have believed that English social conditions in 1939—low wages and still heavy unemployment—would have been *better* than Hitler's New Deal. This was one of the reasons why the authorities could not take chances and had to promise that conditions for the worker would be better after the war than before.

"It was these promises which were partly responsible for the British workers' attitude in 1940 or '41, an attitude which a number of foreign intellectuals like Koestler, along with some Englishmen, too, could not understand. They expected the British worker might hold the ruling class to ransom and were very surprised that he didn't. The 'great political maturity' of the British worker consisted of accepting the promises and of going to the poll in 1945 to see that they were kept. The middle class paid, and it will continue to pay, because of the phantom of the next war. National unity must be maintained, and national unity—as John said—so far largely came out of middle-class pockets. This is why I think that your economic margin, the margin that separates you from the worker, is in danger. The traditional English way, of course, would be to raise the worker to your economic level, but that is technically impossible, so the likelihood is that you may have to come down further economically. I said economically, and I mean your spending power, your car, your servant, your way of life. Nevertheless, while you may come down in economical power you may go up in terms of other power over people who are not much worse off economically than you."

"I don't understand you," John said.

"It is very simple," I said. "Go back to our Army days. Think of the difference between the N.C.O. and the private in the Army. Say, a sergeant." We both smiled for a second because we remembered Sergeant Knowles at Woolwich. "Well," I said, "the sergeant's pay is only some thirty to forty per cent higher than the private's—let's say fifty—and he

has very little more comfort than the private, but think of the sergeant's power over the private."

"I get you," John said. He smiled, and I could not interpret the smile. "You must think, then, that England is going more totalitarian?"

"Why use that strong word?" I asked. "But I suppose there is no other word in current use. Well, in a way England IS going totalitarian or rather the State will have greater power because there is *need* for a greater power. Nationalism is bound to increase because the State *must* be a welfare State in order to keep the nation together, and the welfare State cannot help producing a certain amount of——"

"State worship," John interrupted.

"Why 'worship'? Just affection for our dependence on the State."

"Because," Jean said, "we both agree with you and because I think England might turn into a country like Russia . . . Why do you laugh?"

"Because that would be impossible even if England tried very hard, but England is not trying. Why should she? There is no need for it. What I think is happening today, in fact, is that England is succeeding where Russia has failed, namely, England is, all in all, a more socialist country than Russia."

"What is Socialism?" John said.

"A classless, democratic and international society. Well, the English class system may be more rigid than the Russian as far as the selection of leaders is concerned, but the English 'mixed economy' is more efficient than the Russian nationalized economy. British material standards and the treatment of the citizen are far more democratic, and as far as internationalism goes, England is not forced to do what Russia is forced to do in order to defend herself. She has natural allies—or in that respect we had better say that England and America have natural allies—who may regard them with suspicion or even with a little dislike, yet they are rallying round England and America in spite of suspicion or dislike because (a) they are frightened of Russia and (b) because the U.S. and England are encouraging them in a democratic way to form a united front. The democratic way was in loans and promises. Perhaps a few bribes, too, to political leaders who are recalcitrant. Bribery is much nicer than murder, isn't it?"

"But you still didn't explain how England can escape becoming really totalitarian," John said.

"That is much more simple than you think. The answer is because of you, the English Middle Class: upper-middle, middle-middle, lower-middle. You are the answer, John, and the nineteen or twenty million other middle-class people in this country. You are threatened, but you will fight back and win, at least your group will. They may cut into your

margin. You may come to resemble more and more the working class in inessentials—yes, inessentials—but you are not likely to fuse with the working class because you will always be different in *essentials*. Let's forget your function: you are an industrial producer, an organizer, a key man, a minor manager and all that, that's your status, but you are also different, and vitally different, because beyond your status you are an 'educated' man. I wish your 'education' were a little more complete, but that's neither here nor there. You are 'educated, in morality, ethics and the higher values of life: that's where your leadership partly is.

"Besides, collectively speaking, you in the middle class have a good 'memory'. Indeed, I would be inclined to call you Middle Class people the 'nation's memory': yours is clearer, sharper and less confused than the working-class 'memory'. Some of it is conscious, some you feel in your bones. And please remember that democracy is, in part, nothing but a good collective memory; you call it tradition (the other part is cash). Because of your 'education' as I defined it and because of your 'memory' as I defined it, you will always challenge the power of those other people—mostly from your own class, the Middle Class—who are known as 'the State'."

I was very glad to hear John's views, among other reasons for one thing, because he reinforced one of my beliefs, namely that the present alarm felt by many a middle-class person in England is partly nothing but wishful thinking. By this I certainly don't mean that middle-class people wish to see their own class destroyed, but I do mean that many of them feel the following: "I am sinking. I am middle class, therefore the middle class is sinking or ought to be sinking, because collective sinking is less tragic to bear than 'private sinking' while all my friends (and enemies) are floating." This is a false argument—even if it gives relief—and the truth is as likely as not the very opposite. Middle-class people are *not* in "the same boat". Owing to revolutionary social and economic factors the Middle Class is changing, but the change is not structural, but personal. Many people would fall out of the Middle Class through ill luck, lack of elasticity or just sheer stupidity, and many would enter it through good luck, ambition and intelligence.

CHAPTER XII

THE KINGS DEPART

IT was raining as I left Leeds and the rain remained with me practically all the way to Nottingham. I didn't mind it much as the road was almost completely empty. Besides, I knew the highway through Wakefield, Hemsworth, Chapeltown, Barnsley and Sheffield. During the war I used to drive Army trucks between these towns in broad daylight and in the depths of the blackout. But now the rain made the landscape monotonous. I saw the slagheaps, the stone walls and the moors, then stone walls again and a few more slagheaps. Then I remembered that the road ran along a ridge, and under the sheet of rain I suddenly saw the gleaming slate roofs of Sheffield. It is one of the ugliest towns in England, but its situation is one of the prettiest: like Rome, Paris or San Francisco, it is built almost entirely on hills.

I had a cup of tea in Sheffield in a café near the Cutlers' Hall, but since it was still raining I decided I would not explore the town this time, and that I would not look at Chesterfield either, except at its crooked spire. The road was still empty except for a little commercial traffic, and without variety. I may have been driving too fast. Then I came to Eastwood, a mining town a few miles out of Nottingham where D. H. Lawrence's father had worked in the pit, and twenty minutes later I drove into the city.

The rain continued and I felt annoyed. I should have liked to have gone out to look at the place again: the house in Waterloo Crescent where we had been billeted during the war, the Forest where we used to do gun-drill, the Arboretum where we used to walk out on summer afternoons, the pubs, the dance halls. As it was, I booked a room at a hotel, took a bath, had dinner, went to a cinema, then went to bed. I decided to contact Jim Tinsley the following morning.

I had met Jim in Blackpool on a Sunday morning a fortnight earlier. We got into conversation as we were watching the children playing cricket on the sands. As I looked at him I began to wonder how many people would have "spotted" his profession as quickly as I did. A youngish man in grey flannel trousers, white open-necked shirt, suede shoes, his skin clear, his fingernails well trimmed. If anything his appearance suggested an undergraduate of the nineteen-twenties: his trousers were almost "bellbottom", his pullover of the design first popularized by Edward, Prince of Wales, and his haircut culminated in a quiff. But

I spotted him at once by his slight forward bend, by his legs that were a trifle bandy, by the tautness of his body and by the tiny lines of bright blue under the skin of his naked forearms: he was a miner.

We talked about his job, and like most miners I had met he was friendly and glad to talk. He told me he came from Nottingham and that he was going back the same afternoon. When I said I would have to be spending a day in Nottingham on my way back he wanted me to look him up. I said I would certainly keep him to his word, I wanted to know a good deal about his problems.

The following morning I took the bus to where Jim lived. It was a colliery suburb just outside the city. I called at his house and his wife told me he was not working that day and that I would find him either in the tobacconist's shop next to the Ritz picture palace or at Joe's café opposite. As it happened I found Jim standing against the entrance to a pub round the corner. It was eleven in the morning, so I asked him to have a cup of tea with me in Joe's. It was then that he told me the story.

He was born at Wollaton in 1915. Both his father and his maternal grandfather were miners and had large families. His father was one of sixteen, his mother one of fourteen. At school he was "quite good". He failed to win a scholarship, but he won a prize of fifty pounds offered by a newspaper. His mother said, "Let's sell our home and give the lad the chance," but his father stubbornly refused. So his education ended at fourteen and he had to look for a job.

"That was in 1929," Jim said, "and mother threatened me with everything if I went down the pit. Times were bad. So I went to work in a bakery, but I was soon pushed out because the baker refused to pay unemployment insurance for me. I found another job in a pottery. A placer. You know, the bloke that puts the stuff in the ovens. Well, I was earning three pounds, eight shillings a week for fifty hours a week. It was hard work and those were hard times in 1930. Then I lost the job. It happened this way. The works manager used to be an officer in the Territorial Army and he brought in the unemployed men who were in his army company. They accepted forty-five shillings a week for the same work as I was doing. Well, there I was, no job and nearly twenty. I was on the dole for a time, then I got fed up and told Dad I shall give the pit a chance." Jim suddenly smiled, as many people do when they talk about their past.

"Mind you, those were about the worst days for miners in England. Father used to earn eight shillings for a day's work all through during the slump. Sometimes he worked five days a week, but that was rare. Usually he only worked three and sometimes only one. He spent the rest of his time on the Labour Exchange.

"Well, anyhow, I started in the pit. I was pit-boy first, on twenty-four shillings a week of six shifts. When I was nineteen I became a coal-heaver and finally a ripper. I am still a ripper."

When he was about twenty his pay rose to fifty-four shillings and fourpence a week, so he got married. His father-in-law had been a collier who was killed in the pit. Jim and his wife spent the first nine months of their married life with his mother-in-law, for want of accommodation, then they moved into the house where they are living now. The house has two bedrooms, a sitting-room, scullery and kitchen. The rent is seven and six a week, but there is no bathroom. Jim has three children: two girls of thirteen and eight and a boy of five. The eldest child had cerebral meningitis, and now can't walk or speak and has to be fed.

For their holidays Jim and his wife invariably go to Blackpool, usually the last week in August. He has been there eighteen times. This year they spent forty pounds for a week for the five of them.

Jim said he was not interested in pigeon racing—a sport very popular among North Country miners; his main interests were racing and football. He said he relied on newspaper information for both of these, but he never took tips given by the newspapers. He read the *Herald* and the *Express*, as he wanted to see "both sides of the question". Occasionally, he said, he read a thriller. Being a married man, he is no dancer and goes to the cinema once a week. He only drinks at week-ends, and then six to eight pints of bitter. His wife usually has a few glasses of Guinness. He talked about his sex life in the same tone of voice as a man might talk about his digestion. They sleep in a double bed and he makes love to his wife about once a fortnight. He said he had never had any other woman since they married.

Jim is on contract work and the pay varies a good deal. Some weeks he earns as little as eight pounds, other weeks as much as fifteen. The average works out at ten pounds a week net. For the past week he had not been working owing to a touch of lumbar fibrositis.

"I've never been on strike and never wish to be," Jim said, when the waitress brought another cup of tea. "We in the Midlands are sober-minded. Don't go off the deep end like Yorkshire miners. Well, you just look at what happened in Grimethorpe. A lad of seventeen was suspended for incivility and the men struck. Now we in Nottingham would have given the lad a good scuff in the ear to settle it, but we wouldn't have gone on strike. They change with the weather, those people." He shook his head.

Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps—I thought. It may be that Grimethorpe miners are naturally hot-headed, it may be special circumstances make them bitter. Mines vary a good deal and so do miners. To judge by my

own experience with miners I should say that Jim is fairly typical of his age group and of the miner who lives in a city. A miner who lives in a village would be more disciplined, less independent, more loyal to others in a wayward way and more bitter. In a mining village there is no alternative employment and life is less full and varied than in the city. That happy-go-lucky air about Jim I associate with the miner who lives in a city. His politics are more Liberal than anything else, and being younger he does not share the older miner's settled scepticism and fears. Taken as a whole, the British miner is a man who "lives in the past", like the "Stranded Gentry", the exiled Royalty and the retired Army officer or operatic singer, except that in the miner's case the "past" does not mean any comfort. On the contrary, it weighs him down.

"Now you know," Jim shouted. There was a little sarcasm in the voice, but then I know he would be an entirely different man from the one I met on the beach at Blackpool and in Joe's café. I gave him a thumb-up sign. The noise was too much to carry on a conversation, but it was amazing how easily I got used to the "miner's crouch", and crouching was the only position to take up, except sitting on the floor. Like Jim, I was half naked and my face must have looked as black as his by this time. In the office they had given me some denim overalls, ex-army stuff kept for distinguished visitors, to wear over my suit, but I knew better. This was my third visit to a coalmine and I had heard it was a deep pit, so I left my suit in the office and changed into the denims.

Later, during the one-mile journey to the coal-face, I took off the blouse and, about ten minutes later, my singlet as well. I still felt the heat. The mine was about sixty years old. For a time it was owned by a local peer, then it was sold to a company. It had not been neglected during the slump, but the coal-seam where we were now crouching was very narrow and difficult and dangerous to get at. The dust was incredible. So was the noise and the vibration. My nostrils were full of the smell of coal, the smell of the heat, body sweats and ponies' urine. Jim was three feet ahead of me, leaning over his pneumatic drill, ripping the coal out. His back was shiny with sweat and black with coaldust, but apparently he was not making too great an effort. He has been a ripper for thirteen years and he works with great skill. Two men on the other side of us shovelled coal into a conveyor, which tipped it into the tubs. Their movements were apparently slow, but very steady and rhythmical. They, too, had been doing this for years and had acquired the knack, and if their bodies were perspiring it was due to the heat. I was feeling quite thirsty and so were they. This permanent sweating makes miners want to drink much liquid: water, minerals or beer.

This was the darkest pit of the three I had visited; the only illuminations were the little lamps on the three men's helmets, the little pilot light above the conveyor and my own Davy lamp—I saw one in the lamp-room and asked for it. It was cumbersome to carry and it did not give much light, but I was glad to have it, perhaps because it was a period piece and perhaps because it was a symbol of my profession. (At one time writers carried a torch, but that was before my time. My generation of writers use Davy lamps.)

What psychological effect does the darkness have on the miner's mind, this incessant digging in the entrails of the earth in a sinister twilight in which the coal-seam glitters with an evil brilliance? It makes him imaginative and suspicious, no doubt, but there must be something more to it, more important, more significant and more interesting. The miner-authors have so far given no answer, though they must know. It is no use pretending that their books are unsatisfactory. They are usually either preoccupied with self-pity or—more often—trying to suppress self-pity; but this is the worst, they reveal so little about the miner's inner world. There is a gap between the industrial worker's sensitivity and that of the intellectual which is not yet bridged. Today, however, the budding intellectual may already be in the pit, suitably disguised as a Bevin Boy. If isolation and hard work will not stunt him perhaps the gap may be bridged one day.

The coal-seam glitters with an evil brilliance between the two layers of stone. It is a tomb; the resting-place of a forest which died as the result of a strange, tragic accident thousands of years ago. What did that forest look like, what were the shapes and colours of the trees and what were the living beings in it? Sometimes miners find the imprint of a fish in the coal, sometimes the arm or leg of a prehistoric animal, but hardly ever any intimation that we humans were present on the earth when the accident occurred. Some people think we were there then. What was Man really like then? Had he the same passions as we have, those strangely mixed impulses to destroy and to create, to love and to hate? His roof brain, no doubt, was even less developed than ours, but he was already walking on his hind legs, bending forward as he walked, like miners, scholars and democratic politicians. "There is always tomorrow." He presumably knew that: the great, human, eternal Article of Faith. Was he still food for the larger mammals, sword-toothed tigers and pterodactyls, or did he turn the tables and with a piece of wood begin to hunt the tiger? I am biased towards him and I have to admit his record always fascinates me. He has been living on this earth for hundreds of thousands of years; is possibly older than coal and to date he has learnt to adapt his weak, awkward and complicated body and his split mind to his environment,

in fact he has changed that environment. Has any other living being gone through so much? I frankly doubt it. Individually, of course, he is inferior in strength and endurance, but collectively, by gum, collectively he excels, he outlives everything, including his own inventions (we hope); stubbornly, persistently, with the pretended clumsiness of the circus clown. His gods perish, but he survives. Are you then surprised that I am so "biased" towards him, indeed that I love him? It's certainly true that we may now be fast approaching the time when my speculations will be even more topical and appropriate than they are now; that may be, but I have always had the same sentiments. His "past record" is phenomenal and there is a stage when it is extremely easy for admiration to become love.

The funny thing is that I am not uneasy about the roof falling down and burying me, as, in theory, it might do at any moment. The roof is partly supplied by Nature, and Nature is unreliable. There are also a few props above me—I would bump into them if I stood up—but they are no real guarantee either; I should say almost as psychological as real, all the more as they are metal props and they don't creak to give any warning as timber does. But then nobody could hear creaks in this noise. And I don't in the least feel claustrophobic. My main concern is dust and heat, and I am certain that five men feel the same.

Suddenly a tiny lamp begins to glitter behind the conveyor, then the foreman comes up to me, "Had enough?"

I nod and we start "travelling" back. I had told Jim I should see him later. There is nearly a mile to walk and it isn't pleasant. I forgot to borrow a walking-stick, which would have made "travelling" considerably easier. As it is, Davy lamp in hand, I am hurrying after the foreman, who seems to run ahead of me with his almost natural stoop, knowing full well how to avoid bumping his head on props or to stumble.

This mine has a pithead bath, quite a comfortable and clean one. As I took a shower, an old miner next to me began to talk. It seems I was being taken for a Bevin Boy, or at any rate for a "new boy".

"Do you know, lud," he said, "that in them olden days we used to stund in t'bottom of the pit, waiting for the foremun to give oos a chance. We joost came dahn everyday like, waiting for the mun to give oos a chance. Joost to do half a shift like, or joost a quarter shift. In case someone was took ill on the seam. . . ." He suddenly smiled. "Well, the job was diff'rent those days. Needed a lot of knowing, it did. Took you years to learn, if you ever learnt it. Not like it is today." He looked at me a little defiantly. "When I started theer was no machinery. It was better. Less dangerous like. . . ."

I looked up. I had always heard that mechanization did away with a

good deal of danger in the pits. "Less dangerous?" I asked. I turned on the hot-water tap.

"Aye. Mines are more dangerous today with them machines. In t'olden days the roof fell in or there was a blow-ooop; well, thut still cun happen, them machines won't stop it. Boot they cause a lot of accidents on their own. They won't kill you like, no, boot you get caught in them coal-cooting machines, f'rinstance. Then you are laid oop for a month. Besides, there's more doost. There never used to be so mooch doost in them old days neither. Or take them pneumatic picks. I work one of 'em meself. Took me months to get used to. Works too fast, it shakes your hand and your whole body with it. And it makes too much noise. You would never hear the cracks on the roof. . . . Boot that's not the worst of t'machines my opinion. They do away with skill. In t'olden days it took skill to be a miner, now anybody cun learn it that cun stick it." He couldn't have been more defiant and I expected him to become more personal later, but he didn't. He turned his eyes away from me, took out his dentures and began to rub them with his fingers, a little too violently, I thought.

I heard another aspect of mechanization later from the manager. In common with other industries, mechanization brought monotony to the mines. Work is still dirty and dangerous, but now it is duller than ever. The miner can no longer take the same pride in his work as he used to. There are fewer problems, fewer opportunities to be ingenious.

"My feeling is," the manager said, "and I have often discussed this with other people, that the miner today is less original than he was, say, only twenty years ago. When I was a young engineer miners used to go in for debating societies, study groups, handicrafts, music, painting, gardening, to mention only a few. They used to read good books: history, philosophy, poetry, economics. All that is in the decline now. Those who read at all read crime stories and pulp magazines, and instead of their old activities today they go in for precisely the same things as any other worker: the cinema, betting, racing, football pools. I don't know exactly what has caused the change, but I am sure one of the reasons must be mechanization. The miner is certainly less bright today than he used to be. . . ."

"Isn't that because the bright type doesn't work in the mines today?" I said.

"Well, that certainly is *one* of the reasons. The best educated, the most enterprising boys from mining families as a rule try to avoid the mines and quite often succeed. Today there are plenty of other jobs, less hard, less dangerous, almost as well paid. Not taking into account the bitter memory of the Depression Years. Then, the miner knows that other

people look down on him, just because he is a miner. This is a stronger factor where the mines are in the towns than when the mines are in villages, where everybody, so to speak, is a miner."

This was new to me: the fact that some people looked down on the miner. I have never mixed with those people, but I am certain there must be many. I myself was brought up in surroundings where, if anything, a distant respect was paid to the miner. He was regarded as the prototype of Industrial Man, vitally important for the community and badly treated. That's what my own generation and circle of acquaintances felt about the miner. Later, when I met him in the flesh, I was much taken by his romanticism, his charm, his friendliness, his respect for culture and learning, and by the strange contrast of a man doing perhaps the dirtiest and heaviest work on earth, work which is roughly three times as dangerous in the short run, and in the long run, than other industrial work, and yet to find him so sophisticated—even on the surface—as the miner. Some of the intellectuals I knew felt, in fact, that the miner was a "better" man than themselves (though they only met one miner all their lives). Some had a conscious or unconscious sexual attachment to the miner's body and the dirt. The upper class either praised the miners or were a little afraid of them. But looking down on them was something new. I suppose it is an attitude which you find in people who are in contact with the miners and yet don't really know them; the lower middle class of mining towns, who used to see them going home dirty, who used to see them getting drunk, and found their various demands exaggerated.

On second thoughts there may be something about the miners' morals. I am quite ready to believe that many miners are not "respectable" in the lower-middle-class sense. They work hard and play hard. One had always heard that some young miners were "hot stuff", especially when on holiday. I guess this was because their youth was brief and therefore intensive: a short period of fire, flowering and beauty and wildness, before the inevitable settling down to a life which is drab when it isn't dangerous, but I dare say the element of danger quite often makes for crude hedonism.

There is another aspect of lower-middle-class resentment towards the miner—I thought—and that must be bound up with the miner's stubborn, conservative, traditionalism which he cannot help, but which prevents him from rising into the Middle Class. Some miners are already on the threshold of the Middle Class by virtue of their income, but not by virtue of attitude and behaviour.

The talk inevitably strayed to absenteeism. I asked the manager if there was much absenteeism in his mine.

"It is seasonal," he said. "When the weather is good there is more

of it. In winter there is less, but there is a fact about absenteeism in the mines that nobody outside seems to understand. And it is a fact that is likely to make absenteeism go on for quite a long time. It isn't quite the monotony, the higher wages, bitterness about income tax, though all these play their part. Most people who talk about absenteeism in the mines ignore one historical point, which is this: absenteeism has been a tradition, a feature, of coal-mining. It always has existed, and in the past it has not been a problem. The fact is that since coal-mining began no miner ever has worked continuously in the same way as a clerk, a shop assistant or a factory worker: five to six days a week, fifty weeks a year. For one thing the mine is not like a shop, an office, a factory which opens at, say, eight or nine in the morning and closes at five or six. It goes on in three shifts twenty-four hours a day. Besides, mining has been largely "piecework", so the miner could be absent because he was not paid by the hour.

"For another thing, with miners 'indisposition' matters more than with any other worker. If a miner doesn't feel a hundred per cent up to work, then he would not go down the pit. If he has a headache, for example, he is likely to throw away a day's wages. And we don't really blame him for such a thing, for I can assure you the real reason for his absence isn't because his own output will suffer, but that the output of the whole gang might suffer. Mining is essentially teamwork and a giddy miner may be a danger for the rest.

"But there are other reasons for absenteeism more general than these. The miner, you see, is an industrial worker, who feels like a tiny cog in a vast machine and doesn't know where he fits in. They have tried to bring to his notice that he is taking part in something that is the vital concern of all of us, including himself, but it is difficult to do."

"Especially in peace-time?"

"Yes," the manager said, then he suddenly lifted his eyes from the bunch of papers in front of him and our eyes met. He smiled. "War was an incentive," he murmured, "and peace is not."

"Not in England," I said, "because the people of England don't yet, can't yet, needn't yet see the agonizing similarity between war and peace in our time. In England most people regard the expression 'cold war' as a piece of cynicism, a piece of bitter exaggeration, whereas it is the naked truth. Clausewitz said that 'war was the continuation of peace by other means'. What he ought to have said is 'war and peace are continuations of each other by various means', and he ought to have added that there are various complicated but by no means mysterious reasons as to why it should be so."

The manager's whole tone changed. He asked question after question

and we discussed politics for half an hour. Then I asked him what was the miner's reaction to nationalization.

"Well, the miner doesn't quite know what happened," the manager said, "and that may apply to other people inside or outside nationalized industries. But let's talk about the miner. You said earlier that you were struck by the miner's intelligence. Are you sure you used the correct word? Are you sure you don't mean 'brightness' or some vitality plus seriousness? Because my experience is that, taken as a whole, the miners are not really intelligent, especially not today. Their horizon is limited, they are unable to see far ahead and the so-called 'wider issues' usually escape their notice. On the whole the man is hot-headed and emotional. You may call him childish. He is not intelligent and his attitude to nationalization is not intelligent either. He was expecting miracles: he hoped for high wages, improved conditions and a share in management and he felt very disappointed when he didn't get them. As a matter of fact some of us managers got very alarmed when the new inscriptions began to appear on colliery gates: *'This colliery is now under the management of the National Coal Board'*, for we knew that it would boost production for a short time, after which there would come inevitable slackness.

"And that is precisely what happened. The miner vaguely expected that he would run the industry, or at least have a direct say in it, which is as it should be; but he would be incapable of doing so, because he has not sufficient knowledge and is not very willing to acquire it, either. Only a fool would think that suffering is a substitute for understanding, and many miners think it is. Then, the miner doesn't see the implications of the great change. He has only noticed that the kings departed and the generals remained: the owners had been turned out, but the managers are still managing. The miner vaguely knows that the owners have been replaced by the Coal Board, but they don't quite understand how the Board works. Nor do *we*, always," he smiled, "but let that pass. The Coal Board is remote and impersonal. Instead of the former owner whom they sometimes had seen in the past: a real living human being, good or bad, there is today an abstract body ruling the mines. I dare say there are a number of unscrupulous managers who give the Coal Board a bad name, either because they don't take responsibility or because they blame all their own failures on the Board. There is no doubt that there is far more bureaucracy now in the mines than ever before. Some of it, of course, is essential, but the miners only see it in terms of a larger number of bosses and they resent the salaries paid to these bosses. They don't understand that a good N.C.B. official deserves every penny of what is left to him of his yearly thousand or two thousand pounds. Today there

is a definite need for a larger body of administrators, but we also know that there are a fair number of people on the Coal Board—as on all national Boards—with high salaries who have been appointed only because they are ‘one of the boys’. We know that there are a number of people whom the Labour Party pensioned off by giving them a job on various Boards and these people give a bad name to the Boards.”

“What about the employment of Displaced Persons in the mines?” I said.

“It is a tricky question. In our colliery it works. We have a number of Poles—a small number—and they are mostly employed on the surface, but I know that in Yorkshire, for example, the miners won’t stand for them. In the first place there is the language difficulty, and they are afraid that the Poles will let them down, without meaning to do so, when it comes to teamwork, and work on the seam is teamwork. That is why a miner is so particularly attached to his mate, who in many cases is as important to him as his wife. They get used to each other, and after a time they know instinctively how the other person will react. I believe that a miner is more co-operative and more dependent on his mate than a sailor is. But there is another reason why they don’t wish to ‘entertain them Poles’—as they say in Yorkshire—and that is that the miner on the whole is not yet used to full employment and shortage of labour, and he thinks the bad old days of unemployment might come back, and then the Pole would become a rival. Indeed, he already regards the Pole as a rival. The miner today has a seller’s market and he wants to keep it a seller’s market. He wants to feel himself irreplaceable.

“To sum up the whole situation,” the manager said slowly, “there is a revolution in the coal industry. A revolution on one hand in institutions—by which I mean Nationalization—and in Technology—by which I mean the introduction of machinery—and the outlook of the miner is not yet adjusted to this revolution. That is the crux of the matter.” The manager brought his hand down on the desk.

The following morning I went to visit Jim in his home. It is one of the row of houses of mid-Victorian brick. They have no hall: the front door opens into the living-room. There is a green, imitation leather settee with two chairs, and a fumed oak dresser with the statuette of a ballerina in the centre. It is not a comfortable place, because the rooms are small, there is no bathroom and the lavatory is outdoors. But it is very cheap: seven and sixpence a week, so Jim actually spends less than five per cent of his wages on rent, which is more than an ideal condition as far as rent goes.

We talked about his spending power for a time and I came to the conclusion that he could not find anything better to spend his surplus

than on drink, smokes and betting. He already has a radio, but a labour-saving gadget like a vacuum cleaner or a washing machine would not really save much work in a small house like this. He would like to go into a more comfortable house and is quite willing to pay higher rent, but such houses are not yet available. They have all the clothing they need and travel abroad would be difficult with three children and currency regulations. Jim in a way is exceptional among miners—I heard this later confirmed—as he has saved a certain amount of money, not for holidays, but for the “rainy day”.

Then I asked him a few questions about his union. Apparently his local lodge no longer goes in for those various social services that to my mind were characteristics of miners’ unions. Miners’ unions have a very distinguished past right back into the 19th century when they had been so very rightly called “Friendly” Societies and members called each other “Brother” at the meetings. With the increasing social services and other activities of the “Positive State” these are now things of the past. Miners’ unions today—along with other trade unions—are chiefly concerned with wages and working conditions.

“Are you satisfied with your union leaders?”

“The pay is not really enough.” Jim smiled.

“Well,” I laughed, “as you know, I don’t represent the Coal Board or the Government, but I have heard from unbiased sources that the coal industry does not yet pay its way. And it does not pay its way very largely because wages are too high. I wouldn’t say that the miner is overpaid. For the first time after many years he is paid a fair, just wage, but the question is how long the country can really afford these fair, just wages. I dare say those who earn more than you can still be taxed a little further and death duties still be raised by another ten per cent, but if they did that it would be suicidal to spend the money on anything like higher wages.”

There was a knock on the door and Jim opened it to Bill, a friend of his, who came to give him a betting slip. Afterwards, Jim turned to his friend with a wink, “Tell him what you think of our union.”

Bill is a younger man, less calm and philosophical than Jim and not so well-spoken, and for my benefit he rehearsed a speech, that apparently had not been used yet, and I felt a little like Queen Victoria in the presence of Mr. Gladstone.

“The point is that our union leaders regard themselves as our bosses, which is not right. They are by rights our elected representatives who are paid to defend our hard-won privileges and obtain benefits for us. They take too much power into their hands and very often go above our heads and involve us in the loss of our rights. We are never consulted,

and in the end we have to carry the baby. They say they must have all the power we can give them, otherwise they are not taken seriously by the bosses, but what really happens in the end is that they join forces with the bosses. The bosses, of course, say that some of the union leaders are fighting to the last ditch, but that's all balls'. Look at our union leaders today. They started in little houses like this one. They were miners like us and now they are gentlemen. They moved from the neighbourhood, they have cars and they look down on us poor stupid common miners, who don't speak the King's English. From time to time, of course, the anger of the miners bursts out in lightning strikes."

This, I think, is a fairly typical attitude of one section of the miners—I should say the younger generation—and it shows clearly the vicious-circle nature of the miner's grievance: the trade union leader becomes remote because the miner does not understand his position in the community. Nevertheless, the situation is not quite so bad as that, because even if there are some union leaders who are hardly distinguishable from the bosses, there are some who, in order to court popularity, and frightened of lightning strikes, become a pawn of some of the miners' extremist claims. What I think might save the miners' unions as democratic bodies is the fact that coal-mining, in spite of nationalization and mechanization, is still not so much a "local" as a decentralized industry, simply because of the enormous differences between coal-mine and coal-mine. One is older, the other is newer; one is deeper, the other is shallower, which makes it, so far, impossible to centralize them—and thus a centralized administration for the unions is, for the time being, impossible. Power is fragmented between the local unions and thus there is democracy at the expense of efficiency. This is the best hope for democracy, coupled with the fact that the three managerial types—the rulers of the Coal Board, the managers of the mines and the trade union leaders—cannot at present find a way to a common platform. This today, luckily, is technically impossible. If it becomes possible efficiency will be greater, but democracy for the miner might be in danger, because he is ignorant, and he is ignorant because he does not use his leisure intelligently, and he does not use his leisure intelligently because he has never been taught to use it intelligently.

Some people say the miner—along with other workers—has been deliberately kept in ignorance. This is not true. There has never been any need to keep him so deliberately; he did it beautifully on his own.

THE GENTLE READER FROM SUFFOLK

IT is a long way from Nottingham to East Anglia and a good deal of it leads through some of the most attractive scenery in the kingdom. It is largely flat country with a gentle beauty of its own. I drove through Melton Mowbray, the capital of the foxhunting industry; the Belvoir, the Cottesmore, the Quorn are a few miles away. Then came Oakham and Stamford, but I drove fast through all that intimate beauty. One day I shall return to write about all this "beauty of England". But as the thought flashed through my mind I remembered that I had said, or at least murmured, that before: within my lifetime there were always other priorities to beauty. Soon enough I reached Huntingdon and it began to rain, then a few miles further it cleared up and the sun began to shine, almost angrily, as if nothing had happened. Then, as I approached Cambridge, the wind suddenly began to blow; so furiously that it almost blew the car off the road. It seems that whenever I arrive in Cambridge there is always a hostile wind greeting me. But the town looked very attractive in the silver morning, far more attractive than Oxford. Cambridge, as everybody knows, is not industrial and is only one third the size of its rival. I drove on, through a pretty English sporting print which was Newmarket, then the road suddenly became congested and it took me half an hour to arrive at Bury St. Edmunds, where I decided to have lunch and spend the afternoon before driving on to Needham Market.

I had been to Suffolk once before, in 1942, and, as now, I came from Nottingham, but it was a train journey. I was escorting two Army prisoners to the Felixstowe "glasshouse". One, I remember, was charged with desertion, the other with forgery, but it may have been embezzling or bigamy, I don't remember. What I do remember is that both of my charges were tall, heavily built, unshaven and dangerous to look at, and that the rifle the sergeant-major gave me seemed far more of a symbol of authority than a means of protection. But they were nice boys. They asked me to allow them to remove their boots in the compartment. I said "Yes," and opened the window. I stood them a cup of tea and cakes at the station where we had to change trains, and they shook my hand warmly when I handed them over to the authorities.

It was on the way back from the "glasshouse" that I saw Bury. Like all English agricultural towns it is full of beautiful houses both

private and public. I remembered from my last visit only the old Town Hall, which was a superb building of the Adam period. Now I saw the rest: there is genuine Tudor half-timbered and several of the Stuart century. After lunch I went round the town. Cyclists are a menace here as they are in every small town in Western Europe, even though the twin wheels give boys and girls nice legs.

Daniel Defoe, who lived here after he wrote *Robinson Crusoe*, liked Bury and called it "the Montpelier of England", meaning that it was a fashionable place and full of good conversation. Those two things, unfortunately, seldom go together nowadays. And much to our grief, we don't know what "Ouida" called Bury; probably never called it anything, for she never lived here. She was born in Bury in 1839, Marie Louise Ramée, daughter of a French father and an English mother. At that time Bury, along with most provincial towns, was still vigorous and important.

I spent an hour looking at the ruins of the Abbey founded to commemorate the heroism of St. Edmund, the martyred Saxon king of East Anglia. They must be about the most extensive ruins in England. You go through a 15th-century archway magnificently preserved, and find yourself in a beautiful public park where grass grows round grey bits of broken masonry. With ground-plan in hand you work out that this bit, which looks like the remains of an elephant's molar, had been the abbot's residence, or at least part of it, then two hundred yards away you find the walls of the monastery, and further on the remains of about three churches. Over the river were the monks' fishpond and the orchard; the monastery was a self-contained economic unit.

The Abbey church, which was promoted to be the cathedral of the diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich as recently as 1914, is a cheerful place. For one thing it is small, for another, just about a year ago the walls and columns of the nave were lime-washed, the windows thoroughly cleaned and the wooden angels which terminate the hammer beams of the roof painted in colours which are almost gaudy. There is a heavily gilt cherub with a trumpet above the West Door; it looks exactly like a farmer's baby girl with a delightful pot-belly, and there are rich baroque tombs all over the place. Were other cathedrals as gay and cheerful when they were new?

As everyone knows, there are an immense number of fair-haired people in Bury and all over East Anglia. We know that the region had been repeatedly invaded by the Danes, but that was about a thousand years ago, and I am wondering how these variations of flax, gold, dusty blond, corn, brass, "English blond" and light green, could have survived; it must have been inbreeding. And I am wondering—as I did

once before—why people insist that East Anglians are especially good-looking. Apart from their frequency of fair hair they look almost exactly like people in other agricultural areas in the south-east and west, if not the north. And why do they call the county “Silly Suffolk” when most of its inhabitants are shrewd and have far fewer idiosyncrasies than, say, Yorkshire?

I talked to an agricultural labourer and his girl as I had a cup of tea. He was employed at a fruit farm in the neighbourhood on the usual wages of about five pounds a week for forty-eight hours, but he was well dressed; a new note. The agricultural labourer, about the worst-paid occupation in England, joins the ranks of the well-dressed proletariat. The only difference is that, unlike the urban proletariat, he doesn't invariably imitate the American playboy, but the English “gentry”. He goes in for tweed jackets of a conservative cut, sober “Oxford” shirts and “feudal” brogue shoes.

Just before I decided to drive to Needham I saw a board over a stone wall, with its faded letters: *Friends' Meeting House, built 1750*. Beyond the gate a little churchyard came into view with identical tombstones, omitting, in Quaker fashion, the “pagan” names of our calendar months. *Thos Marriage died 2 Mo 18. 1857; Saml Duval died 4 Month 21st 1849*. The church is beautifully simple, and as I entered the smell of good scrubbing-soap touched my nostrils. I would have liked to have seen it on a bright Sunday morning in, say, the summer of 1825, when Thos Marriage was but forty-one and Saml Duval thirty-eight and they were dressed in Quaker fashion, no doubt, and sat here in well-trained silence till the spirit moved one of the congregation and he spoke.

“Men used to meet separate in this room,” the caretaker said. “The women went to the other room at the back, but it was all changed when I was a boy.” The caretaker was a nice-looking old man with curly hair which must have been golden once, and large blue eyes. He said that only about ten people would turn up nowadays on Sundays. “It was different in my time.” He shook his head. “Look at people today. The clergyman, even Methodists, lights a cigarette immediately after the service is over. Well, that's not following the Bible, not in my opinion. I am a ‘Sons of Temperance’ man; always have been.”

He introduced me to a diminutive lady who looked like a small size in missionaries. She was the only Quaker living in the flats adjoining the Meeting House. “I can't see you, dear,” the lady said, “for I'm nearly blind, but I want to show you my pictures.” She led me briskly to a small, tidy flat, full of books and late Victorian furniture. The pictures were daguerreotypes in the faded sepia tints of the 'sixties; and a number of engravings and water-colours. Elizabeth Fry looked at me with

determination and courage, next to her an attractive Gurney: a Norwich banker, then there was a Barclay or two, a Buxton, a Hoare; all East Anglian Quakers. Above the mantelpiece there was a print of Haydon's *Silent Hour*. Her own name, she told me, was Dubois; the ancestors were Huguenots. She was seventy-five and a retired nurse. She changed her glasses to see me better. A bumble-bee flew over the delphiniums and hollyhocks in the Stafford vase. "Will you sign my visitors' book, dear, and come and see me again soon?"

It was nearly seven. In the golden afternoon I walked back to the *Athenaeum*, where I had parked my car, and drove over to Needham Market. About three years ago I received a letter from a certain George Jellicoe, who said that his wife and he liked one of my books and would I come and spend a few days with them? I thought this was an ideal author-reader relationship, but I could not spare the time for three years. Then when I planned my journey in connection with this book I wrote to him again and he said the invitation still stood. The farm was some three miles out of Needham and I was greeted by a flock of Muscovy ducks that looked like Audubon prints. As I had guessed, George Jellicoe had a homely Scottish intonation, or at least he didn't swallow his vowels and consonants like the Sassenach does, and did not adopt that dreary dialect better known as "Standard English". When he introduced me to his wife she suddenly said with a laugh, "We thought you would look older. . . ."

"I had a haircut and spent one morning in the sun in Nottingham," I said. "Don't be misled. I am much older than I look."

There were hollyhocks and snapdragons and sweetwilliam, marigold, catmint and larkspur in the small flower garden in front of the pink cottage which has a thatched roof. The date on the porch reads 1745. "But the sitting-room is a later addition," Mrs. Jellicoe said. "Mind the beam." The ceiling in the hall was certainly low, and as soon as I was shown my room and told the location of the lavatory ("That little hut you see at the end of the paved way") we sat down to supper. The food was excellent, the individual flavour of the vegetables fully brought out. There was boiled beef with dumplings—a Suffolk dish—but how tender the meat was and how delicious its juices! A fruit tart followed, crisp and light, the delicious tang of the apple and Mediterranean flavour of the currants alike exquisite. This is English cooking at its best. English cooking! A regional variation, a part of European cooking and at its best as good as the mainstream, but it has been stunted by the second wave of Puritanism, by the isolation of the various social classes in towns, by the speed of town life and its increased opportunities for leisure, and finally by the fact that bad cooking is ever so much easier than good

cooking. The Public School system did its bit, too, with housemasters pocketing the difference between good food and bad and investing their act with ethical significance. They would say, in an Anglican voice, "*Plenus venter not student libenter*,"¹ or something to the effect that the Battle of Balaclava or the Marne or the Battle of Britain was won on the Public School tradition of cold mutton and prunes and custard.

Today, of course, there are few housemasters who are allowed to profit on the boys' food, but that in itself would not easily destroy a nice tradition which is at least a hundred years old (certainly not centuries old. Bad cooking in England at the earliest dates from the period of the "stiff upper lip" and the "unhealthiness" of too much thinking unless it is directed towards monetary or social success). Cooking today is slowly improving all over England (food rationing has as much to do with it as the growing standardization of diet, official propaganda, the influx of refugees and the great improvement in canning methods), but it is discreetly declining all over the world.

As so often happens when I visit smaller farms, I cannot help noticing the difference between the state of the house and garden and the state of the farm or the dairy. The Jellicoe farm is of a hundred acres, which George manages with the aid of one farmhand and a dairymaid, and it is extremely efficient and tidy. It is obvious that the flower garden is going to seed and that the house is cheerfully untidy. The dairy looked like a hairdresser's parlour into which the cows ambled in, one by one, with an air of resignation like romantic but exhausted housewives. They took up their regular places and began to peck at the oilcake in the way women peck at the *Tatler*. Then the copper-haired dairy maid, like a skilful hairdresser's assistant, sprinkled insect powder round their rumps, washed their udders with disinfectant, took a small sample of the milk for "clots", then adjusted the shiny chromium gadgets on to her customers. The shape of the thing itself is not too different from a "perm" machine, and the framed certificates on the dairy walls looked, for a moment, like those issued by M. Eugène or the Hairdressers' Association. George in his white coat made an inspection, looked at the flow of milk under the small glass window and patted the customers on the back. "Drying nicely, modom," I thought.

George is selling tuberculin tested milk; one could only wish that all the milk in England were produced under these ideal, if exacting, conditions. He has a herd of two dozen Ayrshire cows, which are good milkers. After milking I helped him drive them into a safe field where the

¹ For the benefit of those of my readers who have not received a classical education: "A full stomach does not learn with ease."

ley is not too fresh so as to make them "blow". I asked him whether one of the cows, which looked very big, was expecting.

"No," he said, a little angrily. "That's Daisy, she's a nymphomaniac. She's always on heat. I go out and get the expensive artificial insemination stuff and there's no result. No, we don't use bulls for serving. . . . The vet saw Daisy and said she needed a course of injections, but it's too expensive. Next year I'm going to sell her for meat."

"Are you still guided by the old method in finding out if a cow is on heat, namely that other cows begin to jump her?"

"Yes. It's the simplest, isn't it? At times all cows are Lesbian."

Half of George's hundred acres is used in connection with his dairy for grazing and winter food. We inspected the other half where his farm-hand was doing some ploughing. The machine was noisy as hell. As it passed George picked up a piece of clod and showed it to me. "This is very good soil, rich—in 'good heart', as they say in Suffolk. Worth about £70 an acre. All we do is eight-inch ploughing." (The national average I guess is about sixteen.) Is it necessity for draining which makes farming so expensive in England? Continental countries usually suffer from droughts.

Who are the "typical" farmers in England? I wondered. My friends in Devon who have been farming there for three generations, the Yorkshire farmers I had met who had been doing it for fifteen years, or George and the innumerable other farmers who went "back to the land" after the first or the second war? Or when it comes to efficiency, who is the "typical" farmer—the lazy or the incompetent, whose fields are full of attractive wild flowers; the intellectual, who has a Braque or Juan Gris print in his dining-room and novels by Sartre and Camus under the current issue of the *Farmer and Stockbreeder*; the efficiency maniac who insists that eggs must be collected with *both* hands and that bicycles must not be left in the barns but must be ridden to the field so as not to waste time; or is it George, who is the golden medium? He runs his farm efficiently, reads good books in his spare time—which is not much—and he has to read by the light of oil lamps—and yet he uses a pair of pliers to pull the choke out each time he wants to start his 1934 Morris twelve. The "typical" farmer probably does not exist, and George confirms my views, but he adds, "All farmers are brothers, except that they don't always get on with each other."

As in other rural areas I visited, there is no "country squire" living in George's neighbourhood. The nearest, perhaps, is Lord Iveagh at Elveden, twenty-five miles away. George's farm labourer—whose father was a farmer—tells me that the lord of the manor sold his farms separately

and left the place before the first war. He has no real successor in local government, on the Bench, on the county and parish councils towards whom the rest would turn with the old respect or admiration. There is no "Squire's lady" busy with the Mothers' Meetings and other country organizations as some of my friends still are in Cornwall, Stafford or Warwickshire. I am just wondering in how many rural communities does the "Squire" still survive as an essential working part of agriculture, social or political life, regardless of whether his family have been living there for "centuries" or for only two generations?

George's neighbour, a small farmer on thirty-five acres, said their village was perhaps representative of more than half of England, and if agriculture were reorganized many more "Squires" might disappear. He added that practically all the farmers in the area are new people, and those who sit on the County Agricultural Committees and give unpaid service are mostly efficient farmers and not "squires". "The funny thing," he said, "is that here in Suffolk, at least, the farmworker tradition is older than the farm-owning tradition. There are thousands of farm labourers whose families have worked on the same farm for three or four generations, whereas the owner of the farm usually belongs to the first generation, if he is not an entirely new man to the job."

We began to talk about labourers, and he confirms what I had heard all over England, namely, that one of the greatest problems of getting labourers is the housing shortage. He himself was formerly a schoolmaster and he bought his farm ten years ago. His experience of the labour question is as follows: the older and the middle-aged labourers are the best, but almost impossible to get. They know their jobs, quite often put the farm above their own interest and love it as if it were their own. The only trouble with them is that they are not mechanically minded and are often afraid of machinery. The younger labourer is comparatively easy to find but he is usually all out to get as much as he can for as little work as possible. Farm work for him is just one "job" out of the many alternatives, and he would be pleased if working hours on farms could be regulated by hooters, as factory work is.

Then we talked about farm prices and farmers' incomes, which today in many cases are four times as large as before 1939. "Yes," he said, "it's true, but the reason is that farmers were practically starving before 1939. Besides, they are afraid that the bad old days might return and they need their profits for reinvestment."

"Isn't farm investment the case of diminishing returns?" I said.

He laughed: "I've heard that one. It may be true of inefficient farmers, and their number is large. They give us a bad name and they survive on the fact which is known as the 'World Situation', the fact that even

though imported food today is again cheaper than home grown, England is frightened of the political uncertainty and is forced to keep the inefficient farmer alive, in fact keep him prosperous."

On my way back the next morning I gave the ex-schoolmaster a lift to Needham Market. We passed the common, the village pond, the thatched houses, the school, the Women's Institute. As practically everywhere else in rural England, the inhabitants of these cottages belong to two groups. The first group is connected with agricultural life: farm-workers, thatchers, roadworkers, small builders, etc. The second is a group of retired people, usually from the towns. As we approached Needham we passed two rows of semi-detached houses. They are unmistakably English but completely anonymous, or shall we say "un-regional". They could be found in any English suburb, in London or anywhere north, south, east and west, inland or by the sea. These universal semi-detacheds were one of the reasons during my early years in England for my being unaware of the gap between town and country (the other being the townsman's nostalgia for the country, symbolized by aspidistra and geranium, hacking coat, "sporting" tie, and a secret day-dream to end up as a country gentleman).

Finally the schoolmaster-farmer and I talked about the new, and the greatest of all, agricultural revolutions, which is going on today in laboratories all over the world: it centres round the growing of plants without soil and independent of the weather. It is the greatest and the most exciting struggle there is to extract from Nature one of her final secrets and render her at least as harmless as possible.

"I saw the experiments at a research station," he said, "and have read a few articles on the subject, and I'm pretty certain it is quite serious, but I don't think anything will come of it for a long time. In fact the experiments might well sink into oblivion and be rediscovered again later. Why? Well," he smiled the way embittered intellectuals have. "Well, experiments and research need money and energy and the Government . . ." here he made an impatient movement with his hand—"any government in the world—cannot spare the necessary cash or the necessary men for such things. We have little money to spare after we have paid for the last war and the next one. And few men to spare from atomic and other warlike research. Sorry, but we are living in the wrong period. . . ."

THE HOLY SHADE

ONCE again I found myself driving through a tidy bit of England, a stretch of some eighty miles or so, and again I was not looking at the landscape behind the curtain of rain. My eyes were on the road ahead, but I was thinking about two points: both are appropriate for I was heading for Eton. The first is that the most important single factor which has maintained England's peculiar social structure has been her educational system. How is it adapting itself to changed times? The second is a subsidiary of the first: the English Public School has helped to put the national ideal of the gentleman on the map: what is the future of the gentleman?

Let's skip the history and development of the English gentleman. By the time of Waterloo the gentleman, characterized by his courage, devotion to the public good, truthfulness and pleasant manners was already a nation-wide hero, and it was obvious that he should have been the man over whom the democratic compromise was to be made. The compromise—which saved England from a revolution—in the first half of the 19th century consisted of many things, and among these perhaps the most important was the acceptance of the principle that there were only two groups of people in England: the gentlemen and the rest. The gentleman according to this social contract was a man of means, who accepted certain rules of conduct and obligations. Noblemen were in theory no more; they had to behave like the gentility in every way, including dress. Gone were the brutal privileged manners of the Regency and gone were the colourful silk suits, for the street at least, on which noblemen only a few years earlier proudly displayed their stars and ribands. They all had to dress in the subdued, sober fashion of the country squire.

The compromise was not entirely successful, and in any case there soon appeared a man on the scene who gave the game away: the snob. The word snob is about the most useful thought-saving gadget that had ever been added to the English language, but laughter and contempt over the snob so often camouflaged pain. The snob quite often told the truth in its full brutality (he was a Marxist without knowing it): people of noble birth are often better men than the rest because it is *easier* for them to be better. If we challenge this principle then the whole conception of aristocracy—and privilege—collapses. If we insist that the peer is no

better than a commoner, then the peer would sooner or later accept our verdict and behave accordingly. Officially, however, this principle was accepted, an aristocracy was maintained and it has always been respected by a sufficiently large body to encourage them to behave at least as well as "gentlemen".

When their position was challenged, a large number of the aristocracy began to misbehave. But it had to be challenged: good behaviour, style, nice manners in themselves were not enough, because the aristocracy was enjoying more than respect, it also enjoyed privilege. Besides, a number of them had misbehaved *long before* their position was challenged: here the snob undoubtedly helped. But the hereditary principle in any case seemed incompatible with democracy, as did the wealth principle: practically anybody whom the Scrutiny Committee passed could purchase a peerage. If titles were given to people as a reward for public services, then the titles are justified, because provided the community respects titles, it is then a useful and innocent incentive for a man to work unselfishly for the community. But if titles are the result of the accident of birth, are given to royal bastards or are purchasable by any rich man who has never yet been in jail and whose wife is not a professional whore, then they are not justified. (It was strange that while they did not sell titles—though their Party Funds needed money badly—the Labour Government did not try to act on the former principle. With the exceptions of Beveridge, Lindsay and Boyd-Orr—schoolbook examples of the man who ought to be made a peer, if any—they have largely created peerages to put Labour spokesmen in the Lords or to vacate a safe seat in the House of Commons.)

But let us return to the Victorian compromise between the aristocrat, the country gentleman and the business man. Easily or uneasily, it was accepted, and the chief instrument which from the three ingredients turned out the standard product—the English gentleman—was the Public School. His most important qualification was that he was a moral being as well as a "gentle" one. He was superior because he was morally superior. That was his chief claim to privileges as well as a price which even a duke had to pay (if he didn't, then he was forced to live abroad). Since then the gentleman has undergone a series of sad changes. At the time of the compromise he was still intelligent, enterprising and enthusiastic. Later, however, intellect was discouraged together with serious interests. To be a bore became socially unforgivable, and to be a specialist made one a bore, and enthusiasm—except for sports—became "provincial". In other words, the gentleman became genteel.

It is true that he had great virtues. He was brave and impossible to corrupt, chivalrous, tolerant, to an extent adaptable and seldom a gross

materialist, but he insisted on being an amateur in everything, and he succeeded more often than was good for him or for his country. His knowledge was qualitative, he could not organize, could not plan, he developed a passion for privilege and a dependence on inherited advantage and all the time he was nepotistic.

The two wars and the social revolution never knocked the gentleman as an institution off his pedestal; nevertheless he is badly shaken. Individually, of course, he has often been defeated and discarded, and it has become obvious that even as an institution, as a group, he cannot survive on the old terms. On one hand his material basis is disappearing, on the other his prestige is being questioned. The gentleman of "the old school" is already a museum piece, but his clever nephew, who tries to avoid "the old codger", still retains some power and prestige. On one hand he—and many like him—still has some money left, or acquired a skill, on the other he continues to win respect or at least is regarded as attractive. People still like his sense of humour, his refinement, his tact, taste, charm, culture, ease of manner, courage, and tolerance. Moreover he has been governing the country for so long that many people still believe leadership should quasi-automatically belong to him. In one respect this belief—which the working class still shares to an extent—seems a justified one: the gentleman seldom becomes a political extremist.

The country is still being largely governed and influenced by people who were brought up in the Public Schools as gentlemen: about half of the Government, almost the whole of the administrative grade of the Civil Service, the governing groups of the National Boards and of Big Business. He is still with us. What I, however, think is definitely on its way out is gentility, which cannot survive our arid military climate. And the gentleman, it seems, is likely to survive with a few changes perhaps behind the original conception. The young worker today may not display the slightest respect towards him, and in dress and behaviour imitate the American playboy, but the young lower-middle-class clerk who politically may be quite hostile to the gentleman, in every other respect such as the cultural, still likes to look upon himself as a gentleman.

The other point I have been thinking about is the characteristic structure of the English educational system.

It is immensely complicated. For quite a time I had thought it was the Public School, or one particular feature of the Public School, that was entirely unique—especially from the 1860s onwards when England remodelled and retained an educational system which she had always shared with the Continent but which the Continent from the 1860s onwards tended to give up. That feature was "living in". There are plenty of residential schools on the Continent, but they are only attended by boys

whose parents live where there are no schools. The idea of sending boys "away from home", even if there were good local schools, has been an English tradition from long before Elizabethan days. Here was one of the characteristics: the English boy of the better-to-do parents spends at least nine and a half months of the year away from home. Some schoolmasters say that the Public School "merely continues what the home does", which today is just an extremely polite and extremely tactful lie, for no home, no matter how devoted and highly skilled the parents, could ever do what even a mediocre school does to the boy: to educate his intellect as much as his body and character and keep him practically under constant supervision.

Then I had thought there was another feature of English education which was unique. Not the Secondary School or Grammar School—for something like these exist on the Continent—but the fact that, in England, the Public School and the Secondary School exist side by side. (A further unique and complicating feature is the "Private" School, which is really the third vehicle of secondary education.)

Since the Act of 1944 the Secondary School has become, in theory at least, a free alternative to the Public School and many Public Schools are compelled to take a quarter of their annual intake free. This is a very fine piece of democratic legislation, especially in regard to free entry to Public Schools, which means that the boy is not only educated and instructed free—as in the Secondary School—but *kept* free for nine or ten months in a year. All the boy has to do is to pass an entrance examination. But here the system does seem a little unjust, for it is obvious that children of better-to-do parents—who can afford extra coaching—have a far greater chance of passing. The situation is exactly the same when the boy wishes to obtain free education at a university; boys from Public Schools have a far greater chance of gaining scholarships. I wonder if the absolute rule of some Continental countries ought not to be adapted in England: free education is given only to those children who can prove that their parents cannot afford to pay for their education even if they pass out on top of all other competitors. In England this principle is not absolutely accepted; some rich parents voluntarily repay the scholarship their brilliant boys win and certain schools maintain a "means test".

I made my way towards Eton on a warm and beautiful September day, and yet most of the boys who walked the streets hatless in seedy morning coats and soiled white ties, or in tweed jackets and striped caps, looked a little depressed. Term had begun only a few days previously. I had been there about three or four times, during the 'thirties. A friend of mine took me down for the Fourth of June celebrations; another friend brought me to see her son (who was killed a few days after D-Day). Yet

another friend, Julian Hall, who had been "Captain of the Oppidans" in his time, showed me round one beautiful summer afternoon. We went round the School Yard in the centre of which stood a monument in greenish 18th-century bronze: Henry VI, the Lancaster king, who was defeated by the Maid of Orleans. Henry founded Eton in 1440 and soon afterwards went mad (George III, who took a great interest in Eton three hundred years later, also went mad; pure coincidence, I'm sure).

We saw the Upper School with its beautiful marble busts, and the name "P. B. Shelley" among a few thousand others, carved in the oak panelling. We saw the Chapel, and then we walked along the Playing Fields wondering who it was who had coined the phrase about the Battle of Waterloo being won there and put it into Wellington's mouth, after the death of the Iron Duke—one of the most successful advertising slogans of the 19th century. I asked Julian about the famous quotation referring to "Henry's Holy Shade", but he didn't know the author, and we decided it could be Swinburne. Our outing ended on the river.

The first thing you notice at Eton today is the complete absence of top hats. They were relinquished during the war and the boys are not taking them up again, though they are not forbidden. The other is the somewhat scruffy look of the morning coats and the striped trousers the boys wear. Their shoes, I remember, were always unclean—after all, they were schoolboys—and they seldom ever before the war wore the correct dark socks with striped trousers, but today the "tails" are shabby. Most boys buy them secondhand and sometimes even thirdhand. Most Eton boys still think that their uniform is a mourning dress for George III, but this is not true. (I'm sure the story was invented either by unforgiving Americans or by an Englishman to irritate unforgiving Americans.) The fact is that, long after the death of George III (whose birthday they still celebrate on June 4th), Eton boys wore the colourful tailcoats of early 19th-century England. If their dress mourns anything, it is the 1900s, when an English gentleman still regularly wore a morning coat during the day. The Eton uniform therefore has only been distinct from other school uniforms for about fifty years.

Among the general seediness, I noticed a member of the famous "Pop" Society, with his long, measured steps, hands in his pockets, a yellow carnation in the buttonhole of his silk-edged coat and sporting a double-breasted grey waistcoat; a junior dandy in times of austerity. Then conspicuous in the mediaeval black gown a scholar passed, one of the seventy boys who are educated on the original scholarship of the founder. Today there is a means test, and if the boy's parents are really poor even his clothes are paid for by the College. I'm sure the thousand odd "Oppidans" who do pay for their education no longer look down on

the seventy "Tugs" as they once did. The spirit of the times is against it, and also the boys are poorer now. The average Eton boy has no more than £4 pocket money a term; at least his parents are not encouraged to give him more than this.

I walked along the School Yard and noticed that the corner which had been bombed during the war had been rebuilt. In twenty years' time the new bricks will completely tone with the rest. Henry still stands in his "Holy Shade", but the Memorial Building was closed so I could not see Sargent's portrait of the last Eton "Dame", who died in 1907. The "house system" of Eton has developed from boarding-houses kept by landladies called "Dames", in the same way as most of the famous old clubs of London were coffee-houses in the 18th century.

I stopped a boy in tweed coat and flannel trousers to ask for "Ramillies", the house presided over by a housemaster I was about to visit. Like lightning he took off his blue and white cap and told me how to get there, addressing me as "Sir" and thanking me when I asked him to replace his cap; a nice piece of European good manners.

The housemaster, another "European", who came to Eton from Winchester, gave me tea in his beautiful panelled dining-room. I saw his lupins in the garden, flowering rather late in the season, and the portraits on the walls, the best of them a Hayter which was beautifully cleaned.

"All the houses are full at Eton till 1962," he said, "so if someone has a son aged two days, now in 1950, and puts him down for Eton, he might stand a chance, but only just, to have him educated here in twelve and a half years' time." A year at Eton today costs about £350. I am not thinking of how *few* parents can afford that today, but how *many*. There must be at least a million families in England who can easily invest that £1,600 into a son's education and another million who can do it at a pinch.

I asked the master about the boys who are being sent to Eton on various County Council scholarships to receive free education.

"As you know, Eton—along with some fifty or so other Public Schools—is entirely self-supporting, so the State or local authorities cannot force scholarship boys here on the strength of the State aid they give to other schools. Every year we are, however, taking a number of boys—above the seventy Collegers whom we have been taking ever since 1440—on various County Council scholarships. At present we have about ten at Eton. They have all attended elementary schools. Some of them had strong local accents, but at that early age it soon disappears and the other boys took to them quite easily."

Eton inside is democratic, or tries to be, I think, which ought not to be difficult, since the number of boys from poorer homes is about a

hundred against a thousand "rich" boys (seventy scholars, ten Council School boys and about twenty who are Eton masters' sons on reduced fees).

"What, in your opinion, makes the Eton system absolutely unique, and why is Eton claimed to be the 'best' school in England?" I asked.

"Various factors. The fact that conditions at Eton closely resemble a university. It gives the greatest freedom to the boys' development and the general scheme of education is closely controlled by a special tutorial system. To begin with, every boy has a room of his own. You have seen the rooms, they are not luxurious, in fact they are a little austere, but I think it is vital for a boy to have privacy when he wants it."

"How many boys are there per class?"

"About twenty-three on an average."

"Would it be true to say that you have the choice of the best available teachers in the country?"

"We ought to. But don't have fanciful ideas about our salaries. The average Junior Master has only some £50 more a year than the average master in a Secondary School (£450 against £400). A housemaster, of course, gets about £1,500 a year (in a Secondary School there are no real housemasters and the top salary for masters in London is £700), but since 1946 no housemaster is allowed to make a profit from the boys' food; a good thing. The master's pension is about £450 a year and retirement is fairly early."

He confirmed what I guessed, namely, that interest in games today is not as fervid as it used to be, intellect is respected and there is very little bullying. Boys today are on far better, more friendly, terms with masters than they ever were.

Then we talked about the emergence of Eton as the premier school of England. My impression was that after a dreadful reputation for drinking, smoking, sadistic floggings by Keate, and bullyings and rowdyism, in which sometimes boys got killed, Eton only emerged as the best of the seven old Public Schools after the Reform Bill. I was about thirty years out. By the turn of the century the school was already on its way to the top. The brilliant advertising slogan about the Battle of Waterloo helped quite a lot, so did close proximity to a royal residence. It was believed that kings, since George III, kept an eye on Eton, which gave the place a cachet, like the royal arms above the door of a Bond Street hatter.

The fact that at that time there were only seven Public Schools in England was useful, but what helped most was a succession of efficient and up-to-date headmasters, with good business acumen, who encouraged the sons of the aristocracy back to Eton and aroused the interest of the

new rich. After 1890 there was no longer much doubt which was the "best" school in England, or, after 1920, what was the best way to buy your children social privileges, and social privileges which are not easy to lose. Old Harrovians like Baldwin and Churchill did know what they were doing when they sent their offspring to Eton.

Eton, therefore, is one of those strange mixtures of fact and myth. You would have to be an expert to work out how much is fact and how much myth, but the myth is extremely valuable like most myths. It helps to form a splendid piece of "goodwill", as in the case of those old-established firms where, while you have to pay for the "name and address", you are assured of the best available goods without real overcharging, because the firm has to think of its reputation. But unlike many an old firm in the seedy tributaries of Bond Street, under the faded royal arms, Eton is unlikely to degenerate, because the "management" doesn't pass from father to son but from ability to ability. Eton has a lot of money and a reputation to keep up, part fact, part myth, and that is why they are so liberal. They have their unorganized "research department" which knows what's going on in education, and in the world, what's new and what's good, and they adopt it if they think it means an improvement. They get some of the best teachers, not because they pay large salaries, but because it is an honour to teach at Eton and because masters can make as valuable "contacts" as pupils. (Some of the masters were dreadful snobs and social climbers before the war, now the snob is driven underground.) Today they are not taking more boys from poorer homes than one in ten (and only ten of these are on County Council scholarships), because there is not yet any need for it. The Labour Government—some of its members are Old Etonians—is not putting any pressure on Eton. For one thing, "democratic education" is of little platform appeal. But later pressure might come and Eton, along with other schools, will have to accept their quota of Council School boys and turn some into potential rulers.

Before 1939 two boys out of every hundred went to Public Schools and fourteen to Secondary Schools, the rest (84) ended their education at the age of fourteen at elementary schools. The figures today are 3, 30, and 67, and the school-leaving age is fifteen.

The opening of Public Schools to a number of poor boys was not only a democratic step but an extremely skilful piece of legislation: it is likely to drain off some of the most talented individuals from the working class. While some of these may use the education they have gained to further the interests of their own class, the majority are very unlikely to do so.

The fact that the Secondary School has been made free to merit, nevertheless is unlikely to make very much difference, and the gap between it and the Public School will remain as wide, or almost as wide, as before. Today the better Secondary Schools are desperately trying to rival the Public Schools. They teach the same subjects, they adopt the "house" system (in theory, of course), the monitorial system, they try to keep boys inside the school for as long as possible. They have their school caps, crests, Latin school mottos, but they cannot imitate the most important features of the Public School—those which, unfortunately, only money can buy—the small classes, the tutorial system and the fact that most boys live in. These three are the "secrets" of the Public School system. At their best they are admirable features and provide the finest, most efficient form of education. This point may not be clear as the success of the Public School product in life is so often due to the fact that he came from the ruling group, anyway, and already had the right contacts, the inherited advantages. It will be clearer when a large number of poor boys enjoy its benefits.

For a time it was thought that the Secondary School had certain advantages over the Public School. It turned out good scientists, for example. This may have been true for a short time, but it is no longer true. The "good" Public Schools at once saw the danger, with the result that today they turn out boys who are every bit as good at science as those from Secondary Schools.

The future of the "good" Public Schools seems quite certainly to be as follows: they will continue to turn out the bulk of England's ruling group (later maybe even some trade union leaders). At present a small proportion of their intake comes from the "poorer" classes, though, as I have said, all boys who gain scholarships do not necessarily come from poor homes (all through history there have been free places through scholarships accorded to a few people). Later this proportion will increase. And this will not happen because taxation will have killed off some of the rich (there are plenty of people, and there always will be a fair number who possess that one or two thousand pounds to see a boy or two through the Public Schools), but because governments will be forced to grant further political concessions (and educational concessions, though they cost money, certainly don't cost dollars—though it is true that educational concessions are of very poor electioneering appeal). At present there is a Public School boom, which is due to various factors. Many parents think that a Public School education is still a very good investment for one or two thousand pounds (at worst, if it doesn't benefit the boy, it is unlikely to harm him much). It may still be a greater practical asset—

apart from its snob value—than that tiny shop, tiny suburban house, or the few shares that sum of money would purchase. On the other hand, the abolition of fees at Secondary Schools is destroying their social status and in many of them the parent cannot buy a place for a son who has failed in the entrance examination. So he will sigh, tighten his belt and send his son to a Public School, to “any” Public School which will take him and which is not too expensive.

With the word “any” we have arrived at the lesser Public Schools, or rather at the “bad” schools which from the ’twenties onwards have so often been decried. There are at least a hundred of them in England, obscure inferior places understaffed with overworked masters on low salaries: parodies of the Public School tradition. That some of their pupils end up as decent, efficient, successful men is not to their credit, in many cases they did so *in spite* of the school. These schools grew up like mushrooms from the 1890s onwards, to cater for a class which either disappeared in one generation or never really came into being in sufficient numbers. A parallel to these schools can be found in certain districts of London like Pimlico—which the upper-middle class never really accepted—or in those clubs which were born seedy and middle aged in the era of the club boom. The parallel—at least between the lesser school and the lesser club—seems a good one as both institutions have shared the same fortunes.

Before the war both were on their last legs, and today they both flourish. The seedy club has been saved by food rationing plus the fact that some people—after all—did make a little money during the war, and a number of these try to consolidate their social position by joining a club which will have them. Today the seediest, most cobwebby club which before the war did everything to get members—except advertise in the Press—has a waiting list. But let’s leave the seedy club and talk about the seedy Public School, which also has a waiting list today. Will they make good use of the present boom and turn out better men than the Secondary Schools? Within fifteen years we are sure to have the answer.

In any case, all Public Schools still try to turn out “gentlemen” even though today that is not their most important aim. Today a good deal of English snobbishness has been forced underground, and the word “gentleman” is under a stricter taboo than it was even in the ’thirties (above a certain social level its use is strictly confined to public lavatories). Before 1914 a man could proudly proclaim that he was a gentleman, in 1920 he would have been frowned upon, today the only impression he would create is that he is nothing of the sort. Nevertheless, some still can—and do—claim to be gentlemen, but the job is somewhat arduous.

They are forced to perform a few tricks, dramatize certain obvious and accepted "gentlemanly characteristics"—more in mannerisms perhaps than in manners—and are permitted to make claims through oblique references ("the way one was brought up", "there are certain elementary rules of conduct", "I may be a little old-fashioned, but . . ."), and they can still impress ticket-collectors, commissioners, non-Public School policemen, and, once in a blue moon, a would-be employer. The pity, of course, is that there are thousands of genuine gentlemen today who are feeling compelled to make such claims.

Edmund Wilson in his *Europe Without Baedeker* hurls a few brickbats at the English gentleman who takes the innocent outsider for a ride without losing his status. If he had said that such people—if not an exception—only make up a certain proportion of the group, and that the type is present in every older European country, he would have been near the mark. For a hard-bitten, highly trained, cynical athlete, like myself, such Englishmen have never been unusual. The gentleman who knows almost by instinct how to make use of a loophole in the law, how to give an outrageous act a show of legality, is not an exclusive English peculiarity. Nor is the gentleman who knows how to make a demand in such a way that his opponent would appear to be a cad if he did not consent. I have watched the type in many a Continental country, and the only conclusion I have reached so far is that the English variety is a little more subtle than the rest. Not having been brought up at an English Public School I cannot say whether this subtlety is due to them or just a part of the "Public School Myth". It may not be. The Old Etonian, Harrovian, Wykehamist, who was sent to jail for theft, confidence tricks, burglary, was quite as clumsy in his method as the boy whose education ended at fourteen. We must draw the line somewhere.

What, however, Wilson did not mention is this: under the "Holy Shade" of the Public School in 1950 the old class stratification of England is still successfully maintained. Not only do the Public Schools today still train most of the future rulers of England, but they also train them to defend their monopoly in a period when the economic basis of that monopoly is vanishing. And this is done—I should say quite unintentionally—through the teaching of "team spirit". The Public School-boy is trained hard for years to support his own "side", his own "house" against the other "house", his own "school" against the other "school". He soon learns the value of teamwork and can apply it later in life when the rival is not the rival house, the rival school, but the rival social class. He will do his best to favour others from his class, not only because they share his culture and interests, but because he has—by implication—been

brought up to see the obvious advantages of teamwork. This principle originally was established to fuse the old order and the new order: the bourgeois with the aristocrat. Today, while it may still fuse the old order and the new order, the capitalist and the manager, it also teaches, by implication, how to preserve power.

School friendships are valuable contacts all over the world and so is their cash value, but Public School friendships are especially important, because the boys spend more time in each other's company than in other countries and because they are encouraged to form cliques through teamwork. If the worst comes to the worst, it is far easier for a Public School man to use social or moral blackmail on his former schoolmate than for the man who has been educated elsewhere.

By insisting on certain moral standards, etc., the Public Schoolboy develops ambition as a reward, and consciously or unconsciously regards himself as one of the chosen few to whom the running of the country by right belongs; and again by implication, the Public School teaches him how to come forward without appearing pushing ("It is my moral obligation" is still a serviceable standard formula), and how to advertise himself subtly and successfully. Whereas the working-class boy may develop a "sharp" eye for the immediate advantage, the Public Schoolboy generously lets him take the poor, little, obvious fruit, then he reaches out for the hidden, larger, riper fruit of the long-term advantage.

As I drove back to London, through some of the new suburbs of the Great West Road, I was suddenly reminded of yet another factor in English education: a group of people which I ought to have mentioned earlier. They are people who are sometimes vaguely included in the middle class but they are not really so, partly because they themselves have never made such a claim. They are new people on the English scene, and are as little affected by notions of gentility as Americans or Continentals. Talking to them sometimes, you feel they are not quite "English". They are usually known as "the technicians", people who have appeared on the scene to answer the needs of modern industry since about 1920. The new industries such as radio, television, films, plastics, are full of them. They live in anonymous suburbs, in anonymous flats or housing estates and the interior of their homes could belong to any country, especially America. They don't dress and behave in the traditional manner and they usually speak a language in which it is difficult to detect the class undertone.

I thought of them because this is a group of people which would certainly not send its offspring to Public Schools, but that is merely part of the fact that they do not share the tradition, culture, or even snobberies

of the Middle Class. Today they seem to be a race apart in everything including political allegiance, but what is their future status? Will they join the Middle Class or will the Middle Class resemble them later? The answer depends largely on whether they continue to grow in size and function.

CHAPTER XV

IN OUR MIDST

ON my return to London the first thing I did was to contact a Displaced Person: the idea to write about them and about the foreigner in England in general came to me while I was talking to the German girl in the cotton mill at Shaw. I picked on a Hungarian, because I know something of his background and of the traditions that went into his making. He was a young man of twenty-five with a slight touch of Budapest, not so much in his intonation as in his slang. The son of a civil servant, he went to a *Gymnasium*, and as soon as he left school he found himself in the Army. After the collapse of the Army he escaped to the British Zone of Austria. He spent a few months there in various transit camps, then during the middle of 1947 he heard that the British were recruiting voluntary workers. There were some formalities to go through, like medical examinations, and a few weeks later he arrived in England. A day in London, then he was sent to a camp in Havant. There was hard work, not too much food, miserable wages and few recreational facilities. Along with three other Hungarians he worked in a canteen and at night they collected fag-ends, made cigarettes out of the tobacco and sold them at a penny each.

Eventually they got very fed up, asked for a transfer and were sent to a brick factory in Bicester. There the pay was better and they made quite a good deal of money, stacking up twelve thousand bricks a day between seven in the morning and four in the afternoon. Then he had an accident. He fractured his left foot, was taken to hospital and later told to do light work only. He came to London and the Labour Exchange sent him to hospital, not as a patient this time, but a cleaner. His wages were two pounds ten a week and food. He soon left the job and got another at a South Kensington hotel where he peeled potatoes, illegally, for two pounds eighteen a week plus food. He hopes soon to leave that.

"What would you like to do?" I said.

"I'm hoping to get a job as a business manager with an Austrian lady who is making children's clothes. After that I shall see. There is no chance to go to America or to the Dominions. That's what most of the D.P.s I meet would like to do. England, I think, is impossible for us. I am in an easy position because I have no qualifications. I never had any training for business or anything else, but among the D.P.s there are many people, older than myself, who are qualified men: doctors,

engineers, lawyers, not to speak of civil servants, teachers and Army officers. They are doing menial work. I know an ear, nose and throat specialist who is washing up dishes in a hospital near London. Another, a surgeon, is now a porter in a hotel in Essex earning three pounds a week with board. A third one, a psychiatrist, is a medical orderly in a hospital, together with a staff colonel of the Hungarian Army.

"In the brick factory at Bicester I worked next to the mayor of a provincial town and to a historian, stacking bricks. And there are hundreds of others. Altogether there are about a hundred thousand European Voluntary Workers in England, of which five thousand are Hungarians. I should say about twenty per cent of us had university educations.

"Many of them are resigned, they simply don't care; but the majority are disappointed in spite of the fact that they knew what they were in for when they applied. 'I wouldn't mind sweeping streets in England,' they said when they were in the camp in Austria or Germany and were told by the British authorities that the only job they would be allowed to take up was unskilled labour, and that they would risk deportation if they tried anything else. Yet a few weeks after they arrived in England they began to feel very sorry for themselves. At this moment I myself am feeling very wise and am trying to be objective, but this mood may easily pass, and it may pass because I don't understand the real situation in England. Of course I don't know enough English to read the newspapers or to talk to people, nor do I know anybody who is in the "know". Can't the British authorities really allow us to do any other kind of work, except the lowest, such as scrubbing floors and cleaning up? A Hungarian surgeon I know, who is working as a porter in a hospital, asked them if they could allow him to work in the laboratory as an assistant and they said no."

The young man shrugged his shoulders. "The situation of the Jewish refugees, of course, is very different. Most of them came to England earlier, either before, during or immediately after the war, and even if they had no money or special qualifications they found good jobs easily enough. For a time I used to think the Jew was more wide awake than we are, with an eye on the main chance. That, I suppose, is true, but they are also being helped by their enormous racial solidarity. I had heard a good deal about that, but it is only now that I see how strong it is and how widespread. I know there are English Jews who refuse to help foreign Jews, who would cross to the other side of the street when they see one coming, but how very large is the number of those others who would help them at once. Not to mention the official Jewish institutions with money and influence. And English people like Jews. . . ."

"Some Englishmen certainly do," I said.

"Why?"

"For many reasons, but I will give you two," I smiled. "Just to please you: because they don't know he is a Jew and because the Jew flatters them, reassures them, gives them a feeling of self-importance."

"How?"

"In various ways. There are thousands of Englishmen who feel stunted by the social structure, who feel they are being looked down upon by other Englishmen. Then the Jewish refugee comes along, makes an enormous fuss of them, sucks up to them as no Englishman would do. The result, of course, is friendship and the Jew gains many advantages."

"And doesn't the Englishman notice?"

"No. When one is in need of self-assurance one usually does not try to see where it comes from and why it comes. Now, I have already said that the Englishman usually doesn't know the man is a Jew. The Englishman very seldom has had that particular experience of Jews that most Central Europeans have had. If you came from the Hungarian, Austrian, German, Polish, Czech, etc., middle class, you can usually spot a Jew in a split second, for the very simple reason that one third of your middle class consisted of Jews: one out of every three. In England the proportion is about five per cent: one out of twenty in the middle class. So if the Jew happens to be a Central European refugee the English regard him as "just a foreigner", not knowing that he is a "particular" foreigner, belonging to a "particular" sub-culture. The Englishman is flattered by the fact that the man makes such a fuss of him. And I must say that a good deal of the Jew's respect towards the Englishman is genuine, the Central European Jew genuinely feels that the Englishman is *superior* to him, not in intellect, not in business ability, perhaps not even in style of life, but racially, by the mere fact that the Englishman is not a Jew."

A few minutes later the refugee said: "I'm now going to see a Hungarian girl who is working in a place called Onslow Gardens. Would you like to meet her?"

I said I would, and we took the Underground to South Kensington. At various periods I have spent nearly ten years in South Kensington, but I had not seen it since the beginning of the war. I had heard that Onslow Gardens, where I once spent a couple of years, had changed enormously in the last few years. In the years before the war the Royal Borough of Kensington suggested gentlefolk in uneasy retirement, a kind of Bath or Cheltenham once removed and without their architectural grandeur. It was not seedy; on the contrary, it was a trifle aggressive and unbending. Seediessness suggests resignation, sometimes even a little warmth, and the decay you see in Bayswater is pleasing; it somehow has the mellowness of graceful old age. Kensington at its worst looked like a middle-aged man on

the verge of a stroke. The explanation, I think, was partly town-planning and partly its architecture. Bayswater had fewer windy, reserved squares and avenues than Kensington, the houses were smaller, more intimate and seedy. In Kensington seediness was camouflaged: all its energy seemed to have been expended on scrubbing front steps and polishing brass knobs.

Both districts had come down in the world, but there was something warm and attractive in Bayswater's resignation and something aggressive in Kensington's apoplectic fight to the last ditch. I thought the most forbidding thing about Kensington was that it was full of people, neither really old nor young, just middle-aged. There were miles and miles of streets without colour or personality, without interest, Imperial glory which was scrubbed once a week with Gospo and White Man's Burden polished every morning with Silvo. This was South Kensington on rainy, cloudy days; at her worst. At her best, on a sunny day, it was almost the country, though not so much, and not so delightfully, as the little backwaters behind Knightsbridge with their country pubs, their saddlers' shops, their smell of manure mixing with the smells of petrol with an occasional bit of straw on the pavement and red-faced men in sponge-bag tweed suits, who kept pigs in the country and drove Bentleys. Nevertheless, at her best South Kensington had manners, a provincial air mixed with retired Indian Civil Service, Army, the land, the City. It was genteel, with genteel antique shops, florists, estate agents, clockmakers and self-conscious restaurants with impersonal food. I ran away from it because it was too quiet for me and too middle-aged.

The first thing I noticed now in South Kensington was that the house where Lavery, the academic painter, used to live had been turned into a Citizens' Meal Service Restaurant. It was now called *Studio Restaurant*, a touch of the bureaucrat in a poetic mood. Then I saw the maze or labyrinth which is the Onslow Estate. It had always taken some time to sort out which was Onslow Square and which Onslow Gardens, but now the muddle is more complete. The railings are gone from the squares and the gardens are derelict and full of Army type Nissen huts. The houses are given sectional block numbers as in an Army camp. Most of the estate has been turned into a hostel for building workers, mostly Irish and Polish. The Nissen huts in the gardens house kitchens, dining-halls, stores and recreation-rooms. Through the windows of the latter I saw two young men playing ping-pong. Then I passed the house in which I used to live, opposite Bonar Law's former residence. This block apparently had not been taken over and it was freshly painted.

The place where the Hungarian was working looked derelict. As far as I can remember it was formerly the home of a tea merchant. We took

the girl to a café near by. As she began to talk I noticed she had a slight Transylvanian accent. She told me she hailed from Kolozsvár, where her father had been a professor at the Agricultural Academy. When the Russian Army entered Hungary she and her brother fled to Germany. For a time she studied philosophy at Heidelberg University, but starvation was so serious in Germany in '46-'47 that she volunteered for work in England. She was sent to Inskip in Lancashire to be trained as a cotton worker. After a time she wanted to change her occupation and they allowed her to work as kitchenmaid at a lunatic asylum in Kent. She stuck it for six months, then, in tears, she asked for a transfer and got her present job at Onslow Gardens. She is a domestic servant, cleaning up the rooms in the hostel.

"You have no idea how dirty these Irish and Polish workers are," she said. Then she smiled. "I suppose Hungarians from the same class would be quite as dirty. I think they are peasants not used to living in cities, but they are worse than that. . . . They very seldom take a bath and throw everything on the floor, having no consideration for the people who have to clean up."

The talk with the two Displaced Persons opens up several vistas. For the time being I am only concerned with one: "displacement"—if that is the correct word to use—is not entirely a private affair between England and the Displaced persons. It is an affair which is intimately connected with the fact that our age—among other things—is a new "Age of Migrations", or it is steadily becoming one. I came across the phrase some years ago in a magazine article and I saw at once that it was a translation from the German term: *Voelkerwaenderung*. For that matter it is about the most unsatisfactory translation. The German word—which is sometimes used in the original by embittered English historians for want of a better term—means those early centuries following the breaking up of the Roman Empire when whole nations (*Voelker*) left their native land and took up residence elsewhere. England has been as greatly affected by that Migration as the rest of Eurasia: the conquest of the British Isles by various Nordic tribes was part of it, but English school history books never mention it.

The difference between the old Age of Migration and the present one is that ours is only the beginning of the process, but it looks as if it will be even larger than the old one. The scale so far is certainly wider: the *Voelkerwaenderung* only affected Eurasia and Northern Africa; ours affects and involves the whole world. On the other hand, though, so far whole nations certainly have not migrated away from their native land, even if many of them within ten years have twice lost their virtual

independence (I am referring to "virtual" independence of countries like Poland or Hungary, etc., not to "formal" independence, which consists of postage stamps, banknotes, diplomatic representation, the use of the national language, flag or national anthem, etc., etc., features which are almost entirely without significance). In any case today even the migration of individuals is made extremely difficult by the fact that most countries are forced to put up "No Admittance" notices. The time may not be far off when these notices may disappear on an entirely involuntary basis.

It has been said that the problem so far has only indirectly affected England (through the establishment of Israel, Pakistan, etc.), apart from the refugees, *émigrées*, Displaced Persons, whose number, in any case, is not large in England. This is not true. Even though we are only witnessing the beginning of a new Age of Migration, the problem is already greater than an indirect one. On one hand today there are millions of English people who would like to leave the country—and for the first time in English history a significantly large number of them are middle-class people—on the other, many millions of people would like to come to England to replace them.

The result of a sudden lifting of all national barriers would certainly be interesting to watch (but please remember that the "No Admittance" notice is not the only bar today to migration, as emigration from the Soviet orbit, for example, is forbidden, and the exportation of capital from the "free" countries of Europe—including England—is almost impossible). What would be the results in England of the end of such restrictions? Who would leave and who would come in? The situation, of course, is purely hypothetical, but it might happen that fewer would leave and fewer would come in than one might anticipate. Psychological and emotional factors in emigration are quite as important as social economic ones. I have already said that talking to members of the younger generation one often hears the most misleading statements. There is the young man who says: "I'm waiting for my chance to leave this effing country, because there is no room for me here. England's had it."

Then there is the other young man who says, "No matter what happens I shall stick it out here, because there's no country like England." The real sentiment is often quite the reverse of these outbursts and so are the acts that follow. The first young man finds a good job and a wife, and forgets all about his bitterness, whereas the second quietly leaves for Australia or Panama. The first was letting off steam; the second had been under the impression that chances abroad were very restricted, therefore he had to remain in England, and if he had to remain in England he might as well think there is no country like England. Then he changed his mind.

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The Englishman's reaction to foreigners has basically always been the same as the reaction of any other human being anywhere under the sun. Superficially, however, this reaction has varied. And changes in England have been as swift—and nearly as hysterical—as elsewhere.

It is generally believed that, before 1914, tolerance for foreigners in England was greater than elsewhere in Europe. With the outbreak of the First World War, however, there came an outburst of hysterical xenophobia. It subsided fairly quickly, but the tolerance of the nineteen-tens has never returned to England as it never has returned anywhere. Discrimination towards foreigners was partly due to the steady increase in unemployment and partly to the extreme cost of that something which in the 'twenties was still called "victory".

It has been said that the peculiarity of English nationalism is that the foreigner in England "always remains a foreigner". As a student of nationalism I fail to detect anything peculiarly "English" in that attitude. It is a kind of "provincialism" which, in varying degrees, has always been typical of mankind.

We might get a little nearer to the "peculiar" brand of English nationalism if we accept the suggestion that many Englishmen at various periods have looked down on foreigners. The explanation is that for several generations the English—in England—largely came across "inferior" foreigners (namely poor foreign immigrants seeking work in Britain). This situation changed considerably in the 'thirties when a fair number of "better class" refugees—largely Jews—arrived in the country.

The sociologist would say that xenophobia is a class affair, and the English working class has always been suspicious of foreigners largely because of unemployment. This is not true, in spite of Trade Union discriminations against foreign workers. The attitude of the working class towards foreigners—as towards anything else under the sun—is extremely complicated, as well as being extremely muddled. It includes an almost delirious love for foreigners (curiosity value, etc.), total indifference or a hysterical dislike of them.

My own view is that the real dislike of foreigners—I think all over the world—is indeed a "class" affair: it is quite often typical of the in-betweens of all social classes, of people who are unsure of their social-economic position, either because they have not yet consolidated it or because their social-economic position is threatened. If dislike of foreigners is a form of patriotism, then patriotism is not merely "the last refuge of the scoundrel", but a *permanent refuge of the socially unsure*.

The real peculiarity of English nationalism, however—if it has any "real" peculiarity—is a feeling of moral superiority towards foreigners in general. There are very good historical reasons for this attitude. For

almost a century (1815-1890) England's position in the world was undoubted and unrivalled. The 19th century, indeed, was an "English" century, when England was not only "fashionable" all over the world, but greatly respected. Envy and dislike came later, and even then it was only sporadic until the South African War. During these seventy-five years of the "English" century, not only did the majority of Englishmen feel England was the finest country on earth but this belief was shared by practically the whole world. The liking for France during the "French" century—the 18th—was less general: it was more or less an upper-class affair. And when the tables were turned and England took over the leadership from France, practically all social groups in practically all countries began to copy English ways and fashions and institutions and wanted to be English.

That glorious period ended between Omdurman and the Somme, but since understandably it was more glorious for England than for the rest of the world its memory has lingered on in England far longer than it has abroad. In certain sections of the population it still lives. These Englishmen who like to live in the past in this respect—and for old people the past is not the worst place of refuge—can be comforted by the fact that no other nation has taken England's place, and they can—if they like—add that this is most unfortunate. With nationalism rampant and liberalism passing into an attractive twilight, people don't wish to be "English" or "French" or anything else; they just wish to be themselves, and even that is becoming difficult. The young in many a European country—in England exactly as much as elsewhere—are busy imitating all the commonplaceness and the banality of America: they dress American, they talk American, they chew gum, they would like to visit the United States, but they do not particularly wish to be American.

Of those foreigners who came here before 1914 few survive. Their children are "English" in the most important respects: speech and habits, sometimes even in name, and it is very difficult to regard someone as a foreigner, even if his name is foreign, if he speaks with a Cockney or with a B.B.C. accent. There is another group, those who came here before the 'thirties: a small group who have settled down, married and have "English" children. The refugee group which came to England from Central Europe during the mid-thirties as a result of Hitler's coming to power are mainly Jewish. Now most of them are British citizens. A few of them live in somewhat reduced circumstances, many are doing tolerably well, and many are doing far better here than they had ever hoped to do in their own country even before Hitler. Finally, there is the group which came to England during the war as Allied soldiers. They are chiefly

Poles, a few German former War Prisoners, and Displaced Persons or European Voluntary Workers. The Poles—150,000 of them—are allowed to take up most occupations, and are encouraged to take up British citizenship (many of them refuse), the situation differing with the individual. There are Polish ex-clerks and N.C.O.s who married into money in England and are doing well, a few are doing splendid jobs, others are doing well for themselves—fewer of them are being kept by women than unemployed English gigolos generally seem to believe. Finally there are Polish colonels who scrub floors in hospitals.

Such a fate, however, is more typical of the D.P.s. Somebody suggested that the number of Central European aristocrats in menial jobs recalled the days after 1917, when the refugee aristocracy of Russia invaded the Western European and American scene. The suggestion is correct, but our generation has lost much of its sense of surprise. Our fathers were shocked when they found Russian princes driving taxis in Paris, answering the front door bell of the rich in New York or working as shop assistants in London (even though some of them were bogus). But we are not shocked when we come across former Hungarian diplomats in poorly paid desk jobs or Polish noblemen working as chauffeurs. We are losing our sense of pity, too, because we are growing uncertain about our own future.

That same evening I met another Hungarian D.P. He was just under thirty, had been a journalist in Budapest, served in the Army, fled to Germany after the war and is now working as a manservant to an English doctor. For a time we discussed the psychology of the displaced, then he began to talk about England. Since he had only been here a year or so I was looking forward to "fresh" impressions: a few amusing mistakes, a few exciting discoveries which only the innocent eye could see. I had neither, but I did hear some views on contemporary England which may be typical, not necessarily of the displaced, but of a foreigner of thirty with intellectual leanings.

"What was your biggest surprise in England?" I asked.

"As you might expect, it was that the 'English legend', the myth about England was shattered. Well, the myth which most foreigners above a certain level believed was that the English were grimly efficient, clean, honest, reliable, morose, quiet, reserved, polite and inhuman. Now, after thirteen months in England I find that only two items of the myth are true: the English, in fact, are very quiet and very polite. Otherwise not only is the myth untrue, but the English to me appear to represent the very antithesis of the myth. I find them amiably inefficient, dirty, lazy, dishonest, unreliable, extremely friendly, unreserved to the

point of verbose indecency and deeply, attractively human. I naturally wouldn't find them so if I hadn't been brought up on the myth. And one more point. For some reason I expected them to be a very downright, rational nation, and found them to be extremely irrational. I had a few exciting shocks, perhaps because they were so unexpected. The veneer of England is grey, drab, noncommittal, uninteresting, and under the veneer there are the most exciting streaks of irrationality, if not glints of lunacy. I give you an extreme example. A charwoman comes to the house where I work three or four times a week. She is an old maid of sixty. It may not surprise you that she brings her cat with her all the way to the house and talks to the cat while she is scrubbing. The real fun begins when you find that she "*knows*" that the cat fully understands what she says to it (she usually talks about the weather or about her neighbours in Battersea), and having finished her work she goes to the servants' lavatory and puts the cat on the seat.

"You don't mean she expects the cat to use the lavatory . . .?" I said.

"Not only does she expect it, but the cat fulfils her expectation, sometimes at any rate. Now she may be the only charwoman or the only human being on earth who behaves that way, but I feel she is a type, and a type which could only exist in England. I may be wrong, of course; maybe the whole thing is just a trick of contrasts. The irrational person abroad *looks* irrational; in England he doesn't. Not to me at least."

Then the conversation inevitably passed on to women. "What do you think of Englishwomen?"

"Years ago somebody told me that Englishwomen were very keen to hop into bed with you. I don't know how true that is. The point is that women in the devastated countries of the Continent were so easy to get that we D.P.s lost our standard of comparison. I dare say that before the war women in Latin or Eastern European countries were far less easy-going than they were in England, and if that was true it indicated not the immorality but the independence of Englishwomen. There is one thing, however, I have noticed already and have discussed with other D.P.s, that is that I don't think there is another country in Europe where women are so keen to get married as in England, and I don't know why this should be so. It's so very surprising and contradictory. Englishwomen are more independent than most women I know, and they don't always want to get married in order to be kept, because they are perfectly willing even to marry a D.P. on £5 a week, which means that they have to go on working as hard as before. They are not more keen on having children than elsewhere. So why this yearning for marriage? Is it that family life is so awful in England that they want to run away from it, which I don't

believe, or unsatisfactory—which I do believe. But, after all, it is unsatisfactory all over the world. Or is it that Englishwomen want company more than other women, because I have noticed that sometimes the husband in England is just an alternative to the old maid's canary or pet dog. People say that in England there are more women than men. That's true of every European country, so why the desire for marriage in England?"

"I don't know," I said. "I cannot give you a final answer, the family as an institution tends to disintegrate in England as much as it does everywhere because of the increasing competition of more collective activities. But marriage does not. How do other D.P.s get on with Englishwomen?"

"Extremely well. What surprises me is the love affairs between those who can't speak even as much English as I can. There are a few who only know a few dozen words of English, but that apparently is more than enough."

"Love," I said, "is quite often based on mutual misunderstanding. Mystery is a basic quality of romance."

Later he said: "Quite a number of English fellows are angry because the D.P.s snap up the girls. I have often been told that Englishmen are rotten lovers. Is it true?"

"I couldn't possibly tell you, but in that connection two facts are important. One, that geography is an important aphrodisiac, which applies to every country. The foreigner is automatically "romantic" in any country, simply because he is foreign. Secondly, in England foreigners since the 19th century have acquired a nation-wide reputation of being blackguards but good in bed. To what extent this belief is justified nobody but the Secretary of the National Council for Women or the Minister of Health can tell you, but I am sure the English belief is not older than the 19th century, when, on the one hand, England began to isolate herself from the Continent, and, on the other, began to attach a particular importance to sexual abstinence. . . ."

"Is England the only country in the world where women . . . how shall we put it?" He smiled. "Well, shall we say 'after the act' whisper 'Thank you, darling,' into your ear?"

I smiled for many reasons, and because of my own particular memories, I said, "I may be wrong, but I like to believe she is the only one." Then we changed the subject.

"I cannot see why middle-class people in England don't speak foreign languages," he said.

"There are historic reasons for that," I said. "But an interesting change is taking place. There is a growing number of middle-class English

people, especially among the younger generation, who are learning various foreign languages. In fact, I know there are thousands of young men in the (upper) working class who are busy learning French, German or Spanish. It is a new thing, because they come from a group who never learned languages in the past: it was not part of the culture of their group as it was the case on the Continent. In fact, not being able to speak foreign languages was such a tradition in England that the aristocracy quite often made a sport of how badly they spoke French."

"Why?"

"Vote-catching. Concessions to democracy or rather demonstrating the fact that 'we are all alike' in England, that there are no real class differences. Attitudes like these are one of the many reasons why the upper class in England was not only tolerated but admired and respected. If an upper-class Englishman on a public platform pronounced a French word as it should be pronounced there was a titter. It was regarded as a form of intellectual arrogance, and that particular form of arrogance is never forgiven in England. And so he took care to pretend that he spoke French badly. Sometimes, of course, he genuinely did speak it badly. But it goes deeper than that. To the uneducated mind the aristocrat in every country is somehow always a 'foreigner'. There are good reasons for that, because aristocracies in *every* country (including royal families almost everywhere) are or have been of foreign origin, or if not so they are intermarried with foreigners and have foreign connections, generally travel more, etc. This belief must be counteracted, otherwise class hatred becomes fused with racial hatred. By overacting their 'Englishness' or 'localness', by dramatizing certain ways of behaviour which is popular with the plebs, the British aristocrat managed to counteract much of the class hatred. They learnt that the main thing was not to go against popular sentiment, even if they knew that popular sentiment was wholly false.

"One of the latest examples of it is the replacement of the word 'Continent' by 'Europe'. Twenty years ago—I remember it distinctly—the Englishman whose education ended at an early age had called the Continent 'Europe'. It was wrong geographically, culturally, politically, in every way. I would not say it was a Fascist sentiment of the lesser Englishman; it was perhaps that 'Con-ti-nent' was a longer word than 'U-ROP'. But today, when 'Europe' is less justified than ever, the word Europe is creeping into newspapers and is generally used by the educated."

"Maybe just because England is becoming more and more a European country and she hates the idea, she thinks she is coming down in the world," the D.P. said.

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The Displaced Person is not the only newcomer on the post-war English scene. London and the bigger cities today have a far larger population from the Colonies than before the war: Negroes, Indians, Maltese, Cypriots, to mention only the largest groups. Most of these are doing menial work and are attracted to England by the fact that for the first time for many years today there is a shortage of labour in the lowest paid occupations. They seem to invade certain streets of the metropolis, such as Charing Cross Road or Tottenham Court Road and their tributaries, giving the impression to the casual passers-by that they are a much larger group than in effect they are.

Even though the number has greatly increased in the last fifteen years, the number of aliens in England is still small. It is not more than just over 400,000—of which 150,000 are Poles—which means that one single person out of 120 is a foreigner in England. They may be “abnormally” divided in certain districts or streets, and may be abnormally divided between social classes. From the psychological point of view—and that is the most important one, because it is largely the problem of sharing, and sharing is far more a psychological problem than an economic one, strange as it may sound—the foreigner in England collectively speaking is therefore not a problem. Large groups are unlikely to come later, and in a comparatively short time the nation will be able to digest those who are here. I am speaking from the collective point of view. Individually, of course, the problem may be different.

Finally, I should like to make a few observations on English nationalism. As I have said, the quality of English nationalism is far more of a moral superiority over foreigners than in any other country, including Switzerland. Many Englishmen feel that foreigners, though outwardly “clever” and more successful than English, are yet morally inferior to them. The trouble with this attitude is not that it is a mistaken one, because there are several rare qualities and traditions in England which still survive, like decency, community feeling, public spirit, a respect for the law, on which public opinion in other countries today may not insist quite so much. No, the trouble, I feel, is that the Englishman who is conscious of this superiority does not usually attribute it to social, economic or geographical circumstances, or to nauseating but extremely useful national Couéism (“We are decent. . . . We are decent. . . .”), but almost entirely to the workings of some mysterious forces which are always under the surface of English history and which only members of the tribe, or the “right thinking” members of the tribe, can understand, and foreigners never. This is not so much an “English myth” as an English variation of a basic myth about “one’s own nation”.

The myth is important because if you give it up you damage

your faith, and if on the other hand you believe in a myth, you might help to turn it into a reality. It is important, furthermore, because there is no doubt that the materialist in the past somewhat over-emphasized the importance of "material"—social-economic, climatic and geographical—factors in trying to explain the "national mind and character". And furthermore, man cannot live without myth even if the myth happens to be wholly false, and he can at times derive great strength from the stupidest myths. This insistence on moral superiority in England—which incidentally has received a number of salutary shocks during the war from various foreigners, especially Americans, and from the changes that have occurred in England—could become a very serious handicap for England. The shocks were useful, not because England needed "taking down a peg or two" but because England must play an important part as a leader of Western Europe. She has many qualities that still predestine her for that leadership, but if she goes on insisting on an *automatic* moral superiority over other European democracies, that leadership will not be easy to accept. England was at one time the leader of Europe, and that leadership has been partly (I repeat) partly, lost because other European nations began to feel that England was in danger of becoming too governessy.

NEURITIS AND DAYLIGHT

I BUMPED into Terry casually one evening in London. He looked as shabby as when I saw him last, and not a day older. He asked me to have a drink with him, then we went to a small restaurant in Soho. I met him many years ago when I was translating a play and needed a certain amount of help. In those days he used to do some semi-menial work for publishers: index-maker, proof-reader, ghost, "vetter"; occasionally they gave him manuscripts to read and report on. I remember him as a surly, intensely bitter young man; a little lame. He was tall and would have been tolerably good-looking with his dark, curly hair except for a permanently insulted expression on his face, which I am told some women find irresistible. In those days he used to live in Kennington with a woman older than himself, the quiet, illiterate wife of a furniture dealer whom she had left—according to Terry—because the husband was useless in bed. Although she kept the flat quite comfortable, it somehow had the same atmosphere of semi-squalor as the one which Terry carried like a passport everywhere he went: a softness, helplessness, lazy untidiness, sudden outbursts of rage and an inferiority complex. "Well, what is it you like about England?" he used to ask me when he was in a good mood. "They're illiterate bastards who don't appreciate your talent. I live here because I was born here, but it's a bloody country to live in."

I lost sight of him during the war, but I heard that he had published a novel, which sold some five thousand copies. I borrowed it from the library, but was repulsed by its lack of skill and monotonous and depressive obscenity.

"Have you written anything since?" I now asked.

"Another novel. It isn't published yet," he leered. Suddenly a flash of anger crossed his face: "Do you think I care? I shall be writing another one later, and if that isn't taken either I shall look for a permanent job somewhere. I couldn't care less." He then told me that he was doing a part-time job for five pounds a week, and the woman he was living with was also earning some money.

I said something about the contemporary restrictions which keep many people down, but Terry almost triumphantly brushed my argument aside. "They don't keep me down. Not your Government restrictions. The greatest restriction for me is that I am poor. I was poor when I first

met you and I am still poor. If anything, those restrictions you and other people are mouthing about are helping me. So there." He put down his knife and fork and looked at me with impotent rage. "What are the restrictions? You can't take more than fifty pounds out of the country. I haven't got fifty pounds to take out. You have to fill up a number of forms if you want to start business and must get permits for this or that. Well, I don't want to start any business, do I? Income tax is very high. So what? I don't pay any income tax to speak of. You can't raise rents if you own a house. Thank God for that, I say. During the Blitz, when people were running away from London like rabbits, I took an unfurnished flat in Camden Town, bought my furniture on the cheap and now the landlord cannot turn me out or raise my rent. I pay seventeen bob a week." His tone was triumphant, but again a burst of anger flashed across his features.

"Now, don't tell me that the war was hell, because I was having the time of my life. I was exempt on account of my leg and my friends put me wise so I held out for the best and cushiest jobs I could get. I knew it wouldn't last and so I made the most of it. I landed myself a Government job at four hundred a year and plenty of free time. I rewrote a novel which had been rejected before the war by nine publishers. A good thing I didn't throw it away. It was taken by one of those who kicked it back in 'thirty-seven. Only he didn't remember me. He even helped me to wangle part of my income tax by delaying royalties. After the war they eased me out of the job, but I got another one. Part time. So I write in my free time when I am not too disgusted."

I nodded. I said nothing because any comment would have provoked fresh outbursts of rage from him as to the crookedness of publishers and the illiteracy of the public. But I couldn't avoid walking on dangerous ground—one never can with Terry, when later I said it was a pity that *Horizon*, *Leader* and the *Strand Magazine* had ceased publication.

"I couldn't be more pleased," Terry said, helping himself to coffee. "The day I heard they stopped I went out to have a good dinner and got boozed up afterwards. Neither *Horizon* nor *Strand* would publish anything by me. I never even tried them, because I knew I would get nothing but a rejection slip. But, believe me, their stopping publication is significant. It just shows that the class they were writing for is rotting to pieces. Thank God. I always hated the middle class, the pansified pretentious ones who went in for *Horizon* and the illiterate shopkeeper who read the *Strand*."

Long experience with Terry has taught me that it was completely useless for me to point out that both of these magazines went out of circulation partly because they could not compete with the weeklies, and

partly because the fare they offered was uninteresting, unimportant and monotonous.

"No," Terry said, "the change suits me. Those bastards whose plays and books and articles were swallowed by the shopkeeping class are still here, but they are taxed to the hilt. Thank God for that. Of course they saved some money, but sooner or later things will be so bad that the Government must impose a capital levy and that will kick the nice little nest egg out of their hands. I am not a Socialist or a Communist, because they are all crooks just like the Tories, but I am pleased to see 'successful' writers wince. They made a lot of money before the war, they got into cushy jobs during the war—the ministries were full of them. . . . You think I'm jealous, don't you? All right, I *am* jealous. I would have been willing to prostitute myself as they did, but I never had the skill and the confidence, and I am lazy. *Of course* I am lazy. Lack of opportunity makes one lazy."

"I suppose it would be rather late in the day to try the film studios! They are passing through difficult times, too, but what about the B.B.C. or the new Boards?"

"I haven't the connections. During the war it was easy, but even then they preferred you to be a Communist. Now that racket is over. Today you must have semi-fascist, trade union connections. Well, I never knew anybody, except a few unsuccessful writers." He looked at me with reproach in his eyes; his look seemed to suggest that I was a successful writer in the worst sense of the word. He had quite openly, in fact, said so once, choosing the day of all days when I received a rejection slip from the fifteenth publisher.

"What's your new book about?" I said.

"About my father."

"When do you think you will finish?"

"I don't know." He added with a spurt of hatred, "A good book takes time, you know."

"*Of course* it does," I said with as deep a conviction as I could muster.

"How is your American book doing?" he said, with an almost unbearable resignation.

"A complete flop," I said. Apparently the way I dramatized the phrase was convincing, for his bitter mood left Terry at once. His face seemed to suggest that there was, after all, Divine Justice, and it was a good life if you could stick it. "Why, it had some good reviews," he said with sympathy; the sympathy was almost genuine.

"You know as well as I do that reviews mean nothing," I said. Then I suddenly realized that Terry's sudden change of mood for optimism was something that ought to be further encouraged. Why not cheer him

up for a week, or for the rest of the evening at least? I continued, "It's all my fault. My books are going to pieces because I am a heavy drinker. . . ."

Terry almost dropped his cigarette, "But you are a teetotaler . . ." he screamed.

"Shsh," I said. "I am telling you this in strict confidence because I have known you so long, and because as a . . . fellow . . . artist you will understand and won't condemn me. I am a very heavy drinker, but I only drink at home. The fact is that I am mortally ashamed of it."

"How long have you been drinking?"

"Since my wife left me."

"I never realized you were married."

(Nor did I till thirty seconds ago.) "Oh, yes, during the war, but it all went to pieces. But I don't want to talk about it." I stubbed out my cigarette and rose.

"The funny thing is that you were in a good mood when we met tonight," he said. "And you . . . you still look very prosperous. You must have paid at least fifteen pounds for that suit."

"It was given to me by a friend."

"It suits you very well."

(So it should, considering I paid thirty-five guineas for it.)

"Just my good luck," I said. "I must go now."

"Home?" he queried with sympathetic understanding.

"Yes," and I said it with resignation.

"May I come back with you?"

(Like Hell, you may. I have a bottle of good whisky at home and two bottles of brandy, which were given to me by a diplomat friend nine months ago. You think I am going to waste them on you after having paid for your dinner and cheered you up for at least a week.) I said, "No, Terry." My voice went suddenly weak. "You have always been a kind friend, but no. I'm going to face my hell alone." I held out my hand and sauntered off.

I resumed my normal stride at the corner of the street, then I took a bus home. I was very glad to have bumped into Terry, because he reminded me of a few important facts about contemporary English writers.

He himself is not over-typical of the present-day English writer, but he is very typical of the writer with some talent, some imagination, some skill in putting pen to paper, who has been paralysed by failure and an inferiority complex and embittered by jealousy. From time to time, for short periods, nearly every writer talks, behaves and thinks like Terry; but this "fleeting mood" of most writers is semi-permanent with Terry. Terry does not read the books of his contemporaries from sheer bitter

envy. Many other writers don't read because they feel they would write better if they didn't. Terry does not meet other writers because his failure, poverty and bitterness make contact difficult for him; many other writers don't because they feel they have nothing to gain by contacts or because they would hate to see themselves in a distorting mirror. He has his outbursts of rage, but the rage is directed against symptoms, not only because he does not know (he doesn't even try to find out), but because he does not even guess at the deeper issues.

Terry, who was born in 1915, might one day become a pulp-magazine novelist if he pulls himself together or somebody helps him; nothing else. And that is not entirely his fault, for the fact is—I am about to make a statement which might sound very sweeping, but I am fully convinced it is correct—that Terry is practically out of the *class* of the contemporary English writer, and for practically the first time in history, class—or if you like, background—is a vital issue for the English writer.

Let us look at Terry's past and his background. His father, a clerk, died when Terry was about sixteen and left four children and some debts. Terry's education stopped with that inexpensive Grammar School he had been attending. He was helped into a commercial job by one of his mother's relatives, then his mother died and Terry, who frankly hated his job, left it. Since then he has been doing odd jobs connected with publishing. Well, forty years ago Terry's social and cultural background was the standard—almost the exclusive—background of most of the famous and most successful writers of England's yesterday: Wells, Shaw, Bennett, Barrie, Masfield, Hardy. With the exception of Chesterton and Kipling, no important writer of the Edwardian age went to a Public School, still less to a University. (I omitted Conrad and George Moore on purpose. Conrad was a foreigner, and the fact that Moore—a well-to-do semi-aristocrat—did *not* attend Public School had absolutely no social-economic connections.)

After World War I, the change in the English writer's social-educational background underwent a significant change. Some of the writers of the 'twenties still came from the same "poor" background as Terry did (D. H. Lawrence, Coppard, Tomlinson, Drinkwater, Thomas Burke, W. W. Jacobs), but compare their fame and significance with the young writers who almost to a man came from the "good" middle class with Public School and major University education: Aldous Huxley, Richard Aldington, Robert Graves, Hugh Walpole, Osbert Sitwell, Firbank, Lytton Strachey, Harold Nicolson, T. S. Eliot, Richard Hughes, to name only a few. (And it was in the 'twenties that three elder novelists: Galsworthy, E. M. Forster and Somerset Maugham, first became famous, all three Public School-cum-University products.)

By the 'thirties and 'forties all new writers, whether considered by the public "highbrow" or "middle-brow", were men (and sometimes women) of "good" middle-class background. They had been educated at Public Schools and invariably went to either of the older universities. Here is a very abbreviated list: Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Powell, William Plomer, George Orwell, C. Day Lewis, W. H. Auden, Graham Greene, Nigel Balchin, Henry Green, L. P. Hartley, Joyce Carey, Rex Warner.

Today, now that Shaw is dead, there is no English writer, with a few exceptions, of what is known as the "front rank" who is other than middle-middle class, Public School and major University. H. M. Tomlinson is still alive: a fine writer who is badly neglected. V. S. Pritchett and Walter Allen—perhaps our best literary critics—are not well known as novelists, and the names of present-day writers who come from the working—or even from the lower-middle class—are hardly known to the reading public. In the last ten years I have become familiar with the novels and reportages of Jim Phelan, Rhys Davies, James Hanley, Herbert Hodge, Mark Benny, Coombes, to mention only a few. By turning to these I thought I should find out a good deal about the environment in which they grew up. They were my "compulsory" reading, or so I thought when I opened their books, not quite realizing how appropriate the word "compulsory" had been and how little compensation I would receive for my pains. Then I realized that the middle class Public School writer was not only more enjoyable to read, but revealed far more about the working or lower middle class than the man who came from that very class.

The general view today is, I presume, that the Public School University writer is more entertaining or amusing than the others, but there is far more to it than that. For one thing his outlook is more universal, because his culture is wider. He is also more subtle, his sense of construction is better and so is his discipline, which in plain English means that he is a better "artist". To illustrate this point, let us look at the novels of the "hybrids", who are writers of lower-middle class origin, who did not go to Public Schools, but through luck or merit completed their education at one of the older Universities. There are Louis Golding and J. B. Priestley. Both are labelled "popular best-sellers" in a rather disparaging sense, because today Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene probably sell more copies, therefore must be more "popular" than Golding and Priestley. I would also include Cronin in this category. The explanation for this is perhaps that there is a perceptible heaviness about their work (which some people might mistake for strength), some indescribable, magic quality is lacking (which Dickens certainly had) and their charm, their culture, their technical skill, their divine joy in telling

a story is not quite adequate compensation for the lack of magic. (Elsewhere it is not easy to label writers according to social backgrounds; in England the class origin of the writer today hits you in the eye.)

The explanation, perhaps, is that England, unlike countries like France and America, never quite had a democratic culture, and when it comes to writing the semi-aristocratic culture of England is finer, and more attractive, than the—shall we call it—non-aristocratic English culture. The working-class writer lacks lustre, glow, wit and polish, and as a compensation he has not got the strength, the force, the vitality that his background would suggest. What has caused the most painful surprise to me personally, in connection with the working-class writer, is that his imagery and metaphors almost completely lack the imprint of daily contact with physical reality which one might expect from a man of toil. When he writes about physical reality he copies the imagery and metaphor of middle-class writers *and uses it badly*.

But let us reconsider the lower-middle class which, between Dickens and Masfield, produced the majority of England's writers, genius and mediocrity alike. I think it is safe to say that class is today losing ground in English writing. Even those authors who are labelled "frankly popular" come from the middle-middle class and have the same academic background as the "front rank". Dornford Yates went to Harrow and Oxford, P. G. Wodehouse to Dulwich, Gilbert Frankau to Eton, Michael Arlen to Malvern, "Sapper" to Cheltenham. Let us look at the detective story. The mantle of Edgar Wallace—a foundling, brought up by a Billingsgate fish porter—certainly did not fall on the lower-middle class, council school or Secondary School boy, but on Dorothy M. Sayers who went to Somerville College, Oxford, on Agatha Christie who came from a well-to-do American family, on Margery Allingham who went to Cambridge, on fine poets of impeccable academic background like C. Day Lewis (Nicholas Blake), if not on Oxford and Cambridge dons or on semi-aristocrats.

What about the theatre? Up to 1939 there reigned the lower-middle class, "privately" educated Noel Coward, but how lonely he is today. His successors are Terence Rattigan (Harrow) and William Douglas Home (Eton and the son of an earl). The highbrow drama has always been in Public School-cum-older-University hands (Ashley Dukes, T. S. Eliot, James Bridie, Christopher Fry), but members of the same class have for some time been invading the field of light entertainment (A. P. Herbert, etc.).

Edmund Wilson, commenting on the sudden and paradoxical change in the English authors' social background, asks the following question, "Must we conclude that that articulate middle class that thought it was

working for democracy and freedom is now almost completely dead, having failed in the time of its prosperity to create a lasting civilization so that there is nothing today left but a labouring and shopkeeping people . . . over whom hangs a fading phantom of the England of the Public School?"

What is wrong with this question? Basically the fact that Edmund Wilson, one of the finest living literary critics, has a very insufficient knowledge of the English scene—the English chapters of his *Journey Without Badeker* are ill-tempered attacks on us, for the wrong reasons. Wilson does not seem to be aware of the fact that the "articulate middle class" he mentions was really the "articulate lower-middle class" or at best the "middle-middle" class. And he doesn't seem to be aware of the fact that the same class—though it no longer produces writers—is very much alive, indeed some of its members are on their way to invading the governing group of England.

After this, I think the reader can guess for himself where those people are today, who, forty years ago, gave us the best of English literature: sons of small shopkeepers and domestic servants like H. G. Wells, of small-town solicitors like Arnold Bennett and Masfield, of tailors like Coppard, of poor clerks like Bernard Shaw, stonemasons like Thomas Hardy, estate agents like Chesterton, a painter-cum-civil servant like Kipling, a coachmaker like Drinkwater, or a miner like D. H. Lawrence. Where are they indeed? The answer is that they are everywhere where power lies and those fields in our own time *exclude* literature and the arts. Members of the lower-middle class who today venture into the field of literature or the arts are as a rule people who have far more enthusiasm than anything else, including talent, perseverance and even common sense.

What do I mean by "everywhere where power lies"? I mean politics, government, production, planning. The talented man from the lower-middle class today is not dreaming about literary success, but political ("real") success, etc. If he is not actually sitting in the House of Commons he is trying to get in. It is my guess that talent is "expandable" and so is ambition. A man with literary or histrionic talent might, for example, transform himself into a politician, a man with painting talent into a scientist and with musical talent into a mathematician, to mention only the most likely cases. But it seems obvious that the lower-middle class man of talent and ambition today has other avenues open to him (which were often closed forty years ago).

On the other hand, the prestige of the arts in general has very greatly declined in the last forty years. The man of the lower-middle class who would have developed literary ambitions, today, it seems, is trying to get

into the managerial groups of the country, into the scientific world among the dons of Oxford and Cambridge, into the Civil Service and into the Defence Services. If an ex-council schoolboy is famous in the literary world today, he is not a novelist or a playwright, but an essayist or literary critic like V. S. Pritchett, Walter Allen, A. L. Rowse, Herbert Read. The Foreign Office still puts up a fight to remain the indoor relief department for a few of the more intelligent and competent members of the impoverished upper class, but in the person of Sir Charles Peake we already have a former Grammar School boy who is now one of H.M. Ambassadors. (The fact that Peake is a tall man and has the same engaging shyness, hesitation, absentmindedness and other mannerisms of the "traditional" diplomat may be a mere coincidence, but it may also be a case of unconscious imitation.)

Conversely there are more and more people entering the literary field whose social background is even higher than the middle-middle class. The aristocracy or the titled upper-middle class in England has thrown up one or two brilliant writers in every generation since their class gave up the foothold it held in the literary world through the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Thus, in the 19th century there were Byron and Shelley and Swinburne; even Algernon Blackwood. But Maurice Baring, Norman Douglas, Lord Berners, Shane Leslie or Lord Dunsany who followed them in the first quarter of our century were only the forerunners of the rest of the competent, highly skilled, professional writers, like the Sitwells, Vita and Edward Sackville-West, Lord David Cecil, William Douglas Home, who all come from the aristocracy. Betty Askwith or Nancy Mitford come from titled upper-middle class families.

All things being equal, it would not be surprising if, in twenty years' time, there were an even stronger influx of the upper classes into writing. Our serious fiction might come from dukes, and our entertainment from earls, our detective stories from viscounts and our film scenarios from younger sons of Trade Union peers, whereas the essay and literary criticism might become a field for baronets. But, joking apart, the upper classes may retain a small, regular unearned income and they may regain that interest in literature which they always have had except during the last eighty years. Writing usually confers a sense of independence which the aristocrat especially cherishes. Their wealth is subject to death duties, their social position is threatened and they are facing fierce competition in most other fields. Their talk is often brutally amusing, and equally often they have literary talent, which in the past petered out into dilettantism. This was not because their families or equals disapproved of writing, but because their social position and wealth was still a piece of reality, which conferred power and pleasure and had to be defended. Defence is

becoming impossible today and, as I said earlier, the new managerial class of England is too new to show any signs of desire to intermarry with the old order and so save some of them.

The aristocrat and the upper-middle class person (the two will mean the same thing, anyway, in ten years' time), apart from culture and talent, will also have a tidy slice of grievance (a most useful piece of capital for the writer). Furthermore, he likes to speak his own mind and is as often as not unconventional and intemperate. Nor need he limit his social field to his own class. If he wishes to explore groups other than his own he will be paralysed neither by his own snobbishness nor by his shyness, and he will use his charm to crash the gate.

It is a pity that today few of the aristocrats as yet write about their own *milieu* on a higher than entertainment level, for the dramatic change which our days are witnessing would be splendid material for them to write about from the "inside". Thus an aristocratic writer with Evelyn Waugh's talent and equipment might have made a masterpiece out of *Brideshead Revisited*, in addition to best-sellership. Waugh's skill triumphantly hides how little he really knows his aristocracy—even that tiny group: the Roman Catholics—in spite of the fact that at first sight everything looks and sounds so authentic. But what is that "everything"? Mostly externals: mannerisms, vocabulary, gestures, clothes and, above all, the furniture. When it comes to deeper things, Waugh reverts to "reticence": he leaves it to the reader to fill in the "boring details". But the details are not "boring", in fact they are vital and would be supremely interesting. Waugh leaves them out because he doesn't know them. And even fifty years spent at the Cavalry Club wouldn't help to make up for the deficiency.

It has been said Waugh is critical of the aristocracy. Yes, from the conservative angle, just like the Western Brothers, Michael Arlen and Osbert Lancaster: we are amused. The aristocracy treat Adam in *Decline and Fall* as contemptibly as they treat Ryder in *Brideshead* (and Waugh doesn't hide that they are him) and he magnanimously forgives, not because he is a good Catholic, but because he cannot resist their charm. (A beautiful piece of honesty, I admit, but honesty is no substitute for deeper knowledge.)

Other people have said that he defends them. Well, woe to the peerage that Waugh defends. In *Brideshead* we are confronted with the choice of Lord Sebastian and Hooper: the decayed, perverted aristocrat and the middle-middle or lower-middle class nincompoop. "This is the Age of Hooper," Waugh says, hoping we accept his criticism, but we don't. We reject both. This is not the "Age of Hooper" except in literary taste. This is an age in which, among other things, there is a clash between

Lord Sebastian's second cousin—who is not mentioned in the novel and who hardly knows Sebastian and holds him in contempt—a former Cambridge don, today in the Labour Cabinet. His opponent is Hooper's second cousin—who hardly knows Hooper and holds him in contempt—a graduate of Birmingham University, who is now second in command in one of the National Boards. Ours is their age, and it is also the "Age of Waugh", an age which is apparently satisfied with entertainment and either does not or cannot insist on deeper values in its entertainment as the Elizabethans could and did.

So people like Terry—to revert to him—belong today to the literary proletariat. They can produce novels that appear in the windows of birth-control shops, in company with *Wise Parenthood* (85th edition) and *Sexual Frigidity in Women* (23rd thousand), or write paper-back novels or short stories for pulp magazines, in other words that type of lowbrow stuff which is so very poorly paid. (I have already said that the successful "lowbrow" today is a Public School man.)

If Terry had serious literary talent he would have been welcomed with open arms by several literary magazines during the war and would still be by many publishers today. I admit that the fact that his father was a clerk and that he himself went to a Grammar School is not as good a recommendation as if his father had been a dustman or a bricklayer and his education had been "elementary". In the latter case the doors of certain publishers would be flung wide open, there would be invitations for week-ends, typewriters and money lent. For working-class writers are still being welcomed and encouraged in England by many a publisher. The trouble is that there are hardly any that sell. The sellers are the exceptions, just as an aristocrat was in 1910.

We have seen that one of the characteristics of the contemporary English writer is that he came from a "higher" social class and represented the culture of that class. We have also seen that this was a rule which allowed very few exceptions. There is another characteristic—perhaps better known than the first one—but opinions differ as to how typical it is. It is the preponderance of homosexuality among many of the best known and most successful of contemporary English writers. A friend of mine, who is a well-known psychiatrist as well as an endocrinologist, told me about a survey on which he was engaged. If his figures are correct—and he gave me reasons for his confidence in them—then about fifty per cent of all British writers whose names are today known to the public are homosexuals.

Now in former times a writer's sexual habits were not part of serious literary history. They were "gossip"—amusing or shocking—but today,

when psychiatry and biology are becoming more and more prominent among the Sciences of Man, such things may have a significance and are certainly material for important scientific speculation.

"The trouble is that we know so little about Man, whether he is a writer or a street-sweeper," the psychiatrist said, as we sat together in his consulting-room. According to the reference books he was born early in the century; a man who has very nearly reached the top of his profession. He looks more like an athletic and worldly clergyman than a doctor, and I reflect that for a very, very long time those two vocations, doctor and priest, had been one.

"Well," he said, "first of all let's decide who is a homosexual and who is not. We all know that all of us are partly homosexual to varying degrees and that it is difficult to draw the line, but medical science can draw that line, and for the purposes of my study I drew the line where homosexuality becomes somebody's more or less exclusive, 'natural' sexual habit. In connection with this study, therefore, I am neglecting people who . . ." he began to smile, "may have been termed as 'casual indulgers', or people who lend themselves for homosexual purposes. I know of a well-known Englishman who is very much married and as *normal* as they make them, but while he was an undergraduate at Oxford he would go to bed with any man for five pounds. I also have to omit those people with whom homosexuality is exclusively mental. An example of this is Tennyson, who was in love with Arthur Hallam, but as likely as not he did not even realize he was in love, at least not while Hallam was alive. Of statesmen, Balfour, Haldane and Kitchener were possibly of that class, but it is not suggested that they ever indulged in homosexual practices. But we are talking about writers. Take Henry James. With him homosexuality was more than mental, but he was so full of inhibitions and remorse that one evening—apparently after years of inward struggle and debate—when he decided to go to bed with a young officer, he suddenly changed his mind, jumped out of the bed, ran into the bathroom, locked the door and began to sob. Later he sent the officer home and said, 'Thank God I took a grip on myself.' The people I am dealing with, as I have said, are those for whom homosexuality is a more or less exclusive, 'natural' sexual habit, like these. . . ."

The notebooks my friend uses for the purposes of his study are very large and in shape are reminiscent of business ledgers, with four or five columns for the name, age, social and school backgrounds, antecedents, anthropological characteristics, past history and two thick columns for "observations". In many cases I noticed the letters "As" or "Hf" in red ink in the margins. "They stand for 'asthma' and 'hay fever'," he said. "Now, don't you jump to conclusions. Those two ailments, we find, are

often connected with homosexuality, but we don't know why and for heaven's sake don't begin to suspect all your friends who suffer from any so-called 'allergic' disease such as asthma or hay fever. These complaints are more common than homosexuality."

One naturally could not resist looking up the living writers of whom one had heard "rumours", to find that the rumours apparently were largely correct. What conclusions can one reach? Where does the thing "connect"? But my friend talked of something more important. It is this. In former times (apart from a short period under Elizabeth and James I) homosexuality among English writers was sporadic if not exceptional. Today it is fairly widespread.

"How do we know?" I said.

"Well, it cannot be kept completely in secret. There may be a scandal or rumours, besides, even if 'people' didn't talk, the writer in question would. It's amazing how accurately we can find things out about people who have been dead four hundred years."

Then he continued: "The change, I think, came with the twentieth century and with the First War. In the 19th century homosexuality was exceptional among English writers. In his own period, Oscar Wilde was more or less alone, except for a tiny handful of lesser known authors. . . . Well, you can say that the thing came like an epidemic with the post World War I generation."

"Is it because today's writers are Public School men to an overwhelming extent?" I asked.

"I have seen your notes. The Public School system with its isolation from women might encourage homosexuality among those who have congenital leanings towards it, but I am not sure." He mentioned four living English writers who had not been educated at Public Schools and were homosexuals just the same. "Mind you, there was hardly any homosexuality among English writers in the Edwardian age when writers were not Public School men. That would back your theory, but I haven't enough evidence to make such a statement."

"What is your explanation then?" I said.

"I'm not at all sure. My guess is that it is intimately connected with the revolutionary changes of our time. It may be a symptom of it. It may be a protest of the hypersensitive person (and the writer I think must be hypersensitive, otherwise he could not write) against his surroundings, a protest which in another period may have found another outlet. But there is no doubt about it that the mental climate today is drab and uninteresting and dull, in spite of the fact that we are going through a revolution. It may have something to do with the breaking up of the old rules of morality. It may just be a violent swing of the pendulum, but I

doubt if it is merely a fashion, even though the timid might find great reassurance in the fact that there are so many people indulging in that thing in which so far he has not dared indulge. It may be a substitute—an *Ersatz*—for that 'dangerous life' for which so many writers crave, those who would not like the 'real thing', such as fighting in a war or revolution, or taking part in such escapades where their whole life would be risked. So maybe they accept the substitute: the lesser, tamer, more subdued dangers such as being beaten up, robbed, prosecuted, blackmailed, arrested. The risk gives him a 'kick', a stimulus.

"It may have something to do with the change in the status, in the *persona* of women. I am certain that homosexuality has increased among all intellectual males (including the writer) through the emancipation of women. Well, romance for the sensitive is gone and he is trying to find it in abnormal ways. I have, of course, investigated other occupations, and I think the connection between writing and homosexual make-up is obvious. The homosexual is a man who does not like heavy or 'dirty' manual work, is not very practical in the everyday sense, has not got that particular form of ruthlessness which is essential for success in big business and in our time he is not leaning towards science. . . ."

"Why in our time?"

"Because, in our time, science is becoming more and more mathematically based and the homo is usually a poor mathematician."

"Why do you suggest that half of our writers are homosexuals today?"

"I am not suggesting that. We don't know how many writers there are in England. There may be three thousand, there may be five. I have only investigated five hundred and I find that about half of those are homos. Most of those I studied are well-known writers in varying degrees; in any case all are 'professional' writers. You may say that I found out their emotional bias *because* they were well-known. This is largely true, but this does not mean that therefore the percentage of homosexuality among obscure writers must be necessarily small. So long as you don't say they are well-known because homosexual, or homosexual because well-known, all is well . . . though here," he shrugged his shoulders, "there may be some connection. In any case all I have established is that homosexuality has never been as widespread among well-known, or, if you like, 'established', writers as it is today. That is the first stage of my inquiry."

"Has it anything to do with approach, style, manner, philosophy?" I said.

"Very little. A stupid American critic once said that the homosexual is characterised by a 'flashy, restless brilliance', like Wilde. It isn't true.

There are many homo writers whose style is as drab as the style of a government publication. You can't pin things down like that. You find homos among the most important writers and among those who write for pulp magazines. Look at him, for example. . . ." He turned the pages and showed me a name: a man whose books I greatly admire.

"Of all people!" I said.

"Yes. For the best part of the last ten years he has been living in perfect marital harmony with one man. Before that he lived with another."

"I suppose you have all the scientific evidence . . .?" I said.

"In his case it was easy enough to get it. He's my uncle."

I thought a good deal about the conversation with my psychiatrist friend and inevitably I began to think of André Gide. France's most famous author not only told us more about the homosexual (in *Corydon*, in *L'Immoraliste*, in *The Counterfeiters* and in *Si le grain ne meurt* . . .) than anybody else, except Proust, but Gide with the greatest candour and honesty revealed his own private life again and again. That may have been due to the fact that in France there was a more complete literary freedom than anywhere else, but this was hardly the point, I thought. Gide's disturbingly frank confessions were neither sensationalism on his part, nor were they mere psychological curiosities. With Gide, homosexuality and his admission of it to the whole world represented a *Weltanschauung* and it also marked the beginning of new writing in France. Gide is a frontier, a watershed in French writing, and you can quite safely talk about the "pre-Gide" and the "post-Gide" writer in France.

For what has happened? Gide's open confession—which is much more candid than Rousseau's—caused a revolt against practically everything for which French writing has stood for before he appeared on the scene. There came a revolt against the old-fashioned cause-and-effect psychology, against so-called "normal" society, against the time-honoured and attractive erotic traditions of France and against the institutionalized form of love, which before him had been looked on as "final" and which for centuries had been the life-giving centre of French literature. Most people know, I think, that from politics to business, in France, practically everything seems to be based on men-women emotional relations, to which centuries of tradition have given a beautiful sense of balance. Until quite recently Frenchwomen have never had the vote, but they have been running the country for centuries in the same way as England has been run by men.

Love in France is not a hidden, discreet, intimate thing, but a semi-public business. The revolt Gide brought about, therefore, was almost a

literary revolt against "Frenchness". He did not persuade the younger French writers to fall in love with men instead of women, but he did persuade them (and succeeded) to try to free themselves from the ties of rationalism; his confessions helped them towards merciless intellectual honesty and towards outspoken candour about themselves. It was also he who told them by implication that there was a new psychology, deeper, truer, more important and more exciting and disturbing than the old cause-and-effect psychology.

In England Gide has never been popular, partly because he is too intellectual and quite often tiresome, partly because in many respects he is "so English" a Protestant, etc., but largely because his teaching and message are either out of date or impossible to follow here. The English writer has never been excessively rationalist, nor has he ever sworn by the cause-and-effect psychology, and as for the men-women relations, the essential revolution in England occurred in the opposite direction (women and love became more important in England, less important in France).

The strange fact, if my psychiatrist friend is right about the widespread character of sexual inversion among English writers—and he may well be right—is that this circumstance is so far without any apparent effect on contemporary English writing. The English writer seems to be "homosexual for nothing". The explanation may, of course, come in the next generation, and we must leave this subject to that convenient device, that universal uncle: the historian of the future.

The writer, with the musician, the painter and the actor, is a member of the so-called "free professions", a group which today is characterized by cut-throat competition and by an almost complete lack of security. There are, however, few people in the "free professions" whose situation is as difficult today as the writer's. Doctors, dentists, solicitors, architects, scientists, accountants are doing well, or tolerably well, and are more or less secure; others, like barristers, journalists, film directors, have some needy members in their ranks; but when it comes to artists, the number of those who can depend on their work for their livelihood is very small. The average writer in England is as likely as not a woman with a small private income, or a married woman kept by her husband, who is making on an average two to four hundred pounds a year out of writing, which she usually spends on keeping a servant. Thus writing is in many cases an alternative to housework, plus the fact that she gains a little prestige. There are also several male writers with private incomes, while some are kept by their wives or simply by women.

Many writers, however, are in regular or part-time employment: teachers, civil servants, advertising men or employees of public bodies

like the B.B.C. Very few of them are on the staff of newspapers. A staff job in Fleet Street is a whole-time job and a very exacting and fiercely competitive one.

What Terry really meant—to revert to him yet once more—by “times didn’t change” was that, since the war, overproduction in reading matter is almost as serious as before the war. The war represented a brief golden age for the book trade: a large stock of books went up in flames, and war-time boredom, dislocation and black-out drove many such people to reading who had never read before. Furthermore, foreign travel was impossible, and motoring and “social life” restricted. Cinemas, theatres closed early and, finally, times were “serious”. But reading is a habit which has comparatively few real addicts and as a habit it is easy to break. The majority of people who took to reading during the war because they were forced to gave up books at the first spring of peace. As well as being a habit, reading is a “non-gregarious” activity: you can only do it alone. There is far more strain attached to it than seeing a play or a film. Finally, neither reading nor culture carry any social prestige.

During my journey through England I often commented on the growing similarity between England and the Continent, but I doubt if the literary standards of the Continental middle class could be easily adopted by the English middle class. In Central Europe a large proportion of the middle class was Jewish (“a race which has not stopped reading for two thousand years,” said Paul Morand), which is not the case in England in spite of the Jewish influx. Furthermore, the Central European middle class lost the major portion of its wealth and social position after World War I, and it has never been a very stable class. In England this group—the “New Poor” of an impoverishing middle class—is still too new, perhaps genteel, but not highly educated enough and hasn’t yet discovered that good literature is a form of compensation. Besides, the tradition of Philistinism is still strong. The Philistine himself, bodily, economically, socially, may be approaching his death-throes, his last convulsions, but his art-hating, intellect-hating tradition is still here and might easily survive him.

I do not know that Philistinism is really part of the English character, but I think it is fair to say that the Philistines’ instincts were, on the whole, correct instincts. The stockbroker disguised as a playboy, the businessman disguised as a sportsman, the manufacturer disguised as a country gentleman and their followers of the Philistine army, may have been illiterate, but they sensed quite correctly that the “long-haired highbrow”, or at least the intellectual, was their enemy. The war and 1945 proved that the Philistine’s instincts were healthy (from his own point of view, of course), for it was the “long-haired highbrow” (no longer long-haired;

he is conventionally dressed and if he doesn't yet know how to talk to the worker, he certainly knows how *not* to, but he usually does) who began to squeeze the Philistine where it hurt him most: the economic basis of his existence.

The economic problem of the contemporary writer, which in England is undoubtedly his worst problem, manifests itself through the censorship of books. This is not the censorship of the official or that of the busybody. Official, or semi-official, censorship in contemporary England only does good to authors, especially if it remains a mere threat. All a newspaper proprietor or feature journalist has to do today is to say that a certain book ought to be banned and it becomes a best-seller overnight. The really deadly censorship is the one exercised by the public itself. It perhaps presents the same situation as that in which the 17th-century writer found himself, except that today the causes are different.

The contemporary reading public is desperately spoilt by two generations of popular journalists who sweat blood in order to find the right "wavelength"; the thing the public really wants. The *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mirror* increased their circulation not because they represented a lower level than their competitors, but because they succeeded in finding the "wavelength"; they are precisely what the public wants: unpopular subjects are banned regardless of their importance. The make-up is a masterpiece, the headings usually first-rate. And reading them requires hardly any effort. Every word is calculated, every paragraph specially polished often by two journalists, every news item carefully weighed. The danger of this popular journalism is that five years of it might unfit a man to read such vitally important books which cannot be made popular below a certain level, and it makes the public exercise an impatient, jaded censorship towards books which take an unpopular line.

This sad condition, however, does not entirely absolve the contemporary English writer from all blame, especially those writers who are well-to-do and successful. I believe the primary duty of the novelist is that he should be a critic of society, a protesting voice, or alternatively that he should reflect the age in which he lives. The successful contemporary writer only reflects fragments of it, and those fragments are quite often not even very important. The Soviet often accuses English writers of "trivialities". The Soviet, of course, means that English authors refrain from Communist propaganda. Nevertheless they are really writing about "trivialities", whether they are highbrow or lowbrow. The difference between those two today is largely a question of vocabulary and diction, and a more boring approach on the part of the

highbrow to more or less the same subject. Neither of them really gives what the writer ought to give: a complete vision, a deep interpretation of the times we live in and that decisive imaginative intensity which alone can bring into the unconscious mind the real significance of our times. What some of them do is to inject a few—usually secondhand—philosophical ideas into a piece of entertainment which is like the retrospective “hand sewing” on a Charing Cross Road suit or shirt which was finished by machine. (Did I hear someone whisper: “Graham Greene”?)

The cause of this may be that the contemporary novelist represents a reaction against the 19th-century tradition of the novel as a “hold-all”, which culminated in H. G. Wells, though the real trouble with H. G. Wells was not that he filled his novels with important social, political, economic problems, as that his philosophy was out of date. The contemporary author may think that such problems belong to the scientist today—and true enough the contemporary scientist, historian and political essayist often have a style or tricks as good as the novelist’s. Nevertheless, science is still new and the writer’s intuition, for the time being at least, is still superior to the scientist’s new and therefore somewhat private methods.

These are, of course, interim notes, of one man looking at the literary scene in 1950, but it is certain that today the economic problem is the only serious problem for the writer. A good deal has been said about “the writer and the State”, largely wishful thinking by unsuccessful writers who hope that State “interference” may mean cushy jobs, but the State in 1950 is not buying. And if and when it will, it does purchase best-seller authors.

THE BEND OF THE RIVER

IN 1927 when I first visited the City of London I became a little excited by what I then called an "odd contrast", namely the presence of an immense number of churches in a district entirely given over to finance, shipping and commerce. I didn't say anything about the "worship of God and Mammon", for I knew that the City of London worshipped neither. But I did say it was exciting and attractive, that a discussion on a new issue of Brazilian Railways or Egyptian Electricity shares, or the struggle over a favourable rate of interest in connection with a loan to Bulgaria should be accompanied by the fairy-tale chimes of an ancient church.

I thought about that first visit as I parked the car on a bombed site off Bishopsgate and walked along the narrow, tortuous, mediaeval streets of London's oldest district. I know "better" now; the contrast was not odd, in fact, it was not a contrast at all, but a very proper piece of symbolism. In 1927 I knew that the churches in the City were Protestant churches, but I did not know the deeper implications and significance of the very faith in which I had been brought up. The point is that without Protestantism the City of London could not have become the "Fortress of Capitalism", in fact Capitalism as such would have been hardly possible, so the close proximity of church and bank was incidental but appropriate. Protestantism was not an exclusively religious ideology; no ideology ever is exclusively the thing it looks or claims to be. When England began to shout "Down with the Bishop of Rome!" something far more important was happening than getting away from the Holy Catholic Church. On one hand Henry VIII, for the first time in English history and much to his own surprise, was addressed as "Your Majesty", implying that England became a country fully sovereign. On the other hand, Protestantism openly approved the charging of interest on loans and thus the most important obstacle from the path of Capitalism had been removed.

That today a few clergymen are preaching Socialism in an attempt to fill some of these lovely City churches is less significant as it is known that Socialism is not exclusively a religious ideology. What is important and significant is that it isn't exclusively a political-economic one as it appears to be and as it claims to be. James Burnham, in his *Managerial Revolution*, describes Socialism as a "managerial" ideology under whose

slogans a new society is emerging which is as different from Capitalism as it is from Socialism: a society run by managers. I have made a thorough study of all Burnham's books, and had a number of arguments with Burnham while I was in America; I have come to the conclusion that his main thesis seems to be correct and can be used as a key to what is happening in the world today.

As this must be clear to most people, the "Socialist" revolution predicted by Marx—which some Marxists are still awaiting as anxiously as the Orthodox Jew awaits the Messiah—is not taking place. For that matter we are, in fact, going through a revolution right now (The Revolution of Our Time), but this is not the revolution Marx predicted, because it is not establishing the Proletariat. Marx, as likely as not, drew the wrong conclusion from those revolutions which established Capitalism. Hoping that the Proletariat would grasp power from the Capitalist in the same way as the latter had grasped it from the Feudalist, Marx forgot that when they took over the Capitalists were already a group of people with skill, experience and some wealth, whereas the Proletariat does not, *as a group*, possess skill, experience or wealth. Besides—and this is again important—the Capitalist who took over from the old feudal order had quite often himself been a member of the old feudal order, who, instead of fighting the new order, "let his own class down" and joined forces with it.

What then are the implications of this "managerial" revolution called "Socialism" in the City of London? The temptation to draw conclusions from visible changes and say that they are "symbolical" is very strong. If you walk about the City today you see a picture of havoc and destruction. Whole sections of this mediaeval town have been reduced to Piranesi ruins, and there are grass and wild flowers over what used to be a bank, the palace of an ancient guild, the headquarters of a shipping company, or the warehouse of a tea merchant. There are lonely steeples without a church, like political leaders deserted by their followers, ancient doorways that lead nowhere, and whole streets that consist of nothing but pavements. These are not "symbolical", because the change inside the City is less violent. Apparently there is as much Capitalism and private enterprise in the City today as there was in 1939. Neither banking nor insurance has been socialized. The Government is trying to encourage finance capital to new industries, new areas, but it is not yet using compulsion. And the rich—and sometimes the not-so-rich too—can still gamble on the Stock Exchange and their gains are not subject to Income Tax.

The real change in connection with the City is that it has far less real power than ever before—though it still remains important as a section of private enterprise. The Bank of England, for example, no longer has any

real power of its own, and is acting almost entirely as an agent of the Treasury. If one thinks of the terrible power which was in Montagu Norman's hands over the Government in the 'twenties and 'thirties, this is indeed an enormous and dramatic change: the tables are completely turned.

I drove slowly down Ludgate Hill, then turned to the Embankment, which is a splendid stretch of road because it is not yet over-congested. A great deal of the charm of London has gone because of congestion, because the main thoroughfares of the metropolis are used by five times as many people as was intended by their planners. Promenading—which was still a habit in the 19th century—today is restricted to a few parks, and to a small number of people, and the crowds which invade the streets of London now are as different in size from the 18th or even 19th century crowds as they are from the point of view of their culture and pursuits. Nevertheless, much of the beauty of London is still with us. Despite the fact that its glamour is tarnished it still remains a glamorous place, except that today glamour is not obvious and you have to search for it. And the Londoner, who was almost always a kindly man, today is slowly reverting to what he was before the 19th century: a friendly human being.

But I did not drive along the Embankment in order to take new stock of its attractions. I merely followed the bend of the river because, by a strange coincidence, everything connected with the power over England is within a stone's throw of the Thames. The first is the City, then you may include Fleet Street and the Temple, if you like, though I would say that the Press and the Law represent far more "influence" over England than real power. The same may apply to Lambeth Palace, on the other side of the river, but when it comes to power there cannot be any dispute about the following: Big Business—including the National Boards—Whitehall, the Houses of Parliament and Transport House. All these are within a few minutes of the river and the rulers of England could—if they wanted to—quite comfortably visit each other by means of water transport. It seems to me that thousands of people have written about the "importance" of the Thames on London and England, but so far nobody seems to have noticed this particular aspect of "importance".

I passed a palace raised to soap, another to oil and a third to electricity. Chemicals, engineering, coal, shipbuilding, iron are farther on, some by the banks, others farther "inland", but all are found round the bend of the river. The business itself, the factory, the workers, are often somewhere else, but the administration and the nerve centre of the business are usually here, and if their windows are open they can hear the deep baying of ships' horns, or even see the tides.

What are the changes in Big Business? The most typical characteristic of the heads of Big Business is that they are not railing too much against the Labour Government or its policy. I am, naturally, not talking about the chairmen and directors of the National Boards, like Coal, Gas, Electricity, Transport, for those are Labour Government appointments. The men I am discussing are the heads of that other Big Business which still remains private enterprise. Who are they? Practically none of them are owners of their businesses, few of them are self-made men and hardly any of them are self-made millionaires. (Lord Nuffield is one of the very few notable exceptions.) Many of them, no doubt, are shareholders, many of them are rich, but their real importance lies not in ownership, but in control. Some rose to their position through family or political connections, some through sheer ability, and usually through a combination of these three. You may disagree with me, but I cannot regard them as "Capitalists".

One occasionally hears them criticizing the Government—accompanied by the clatter of plates at public dinners—but hardly any of them regard controls or planning or even nationalization as a piece of "Socialist outrage". They realize that these "Socialist" measures are a vital necessity and that, in some form or another, they had to come, regardless of which political party was elected in 1945, or 1950. On the other hand, they are waiting for the cat to jump. They are managers and are confident that the country's life cannot go on without them, though many of them wish that the shift from Capitalism to Managerialism were conducted by the Conservative Party. Big Business men have, after all, got used to working with the Conservatives, many of them are, or have been, Conservative members of Parliament. Many of them were at school with Conservative leaders or are related to them. It is true that Big Business men can look on many Trade Unionists, as well as on most members of the Labour Cabinet, as natural allies, but this change is recent. There is a past to be lived down, so co-operation is a little uneasy.

The businessmen who genuinely foam at the mouth at the mere mention of the Labour Government are smaller fish: capitalists who usually own their business through ability or inheritance, and the smaller managers. They are as a rule Tories who accuse the Tory Party of cowardice. You find them all over the country owning factories, businesses, chains of shops. Sometimes they are disguised as country gentlemen, sometimes as "business genius". The artist and the writer might accuse them of being Philistines, which is neither here nor there. Their weakness is that their knowledge of world trends, political trends, is deficient, apart from too much orthodoxy in production methods. Their other handicap is that individually they are not important enough

for the Government to seek their co-operation, though collectively they are vastly important because they are "private enterprise" and they add up to more than Big Business plus the National Boards.

Then, of course, there is the frustrated enthusiast among the lesser managers, who has read "books", who is quite ready to welcome the Labour Government, and discreetly steal a march on his fellow capitalists, only to find that the Labour Party has either chosen *another* renegade or filled the job with one of its own "boys" when it came to the newly established National Boards.

I approached the Houses of Parliament, where the sovereignty of the country lies. What changes are there here? As far as the social background of the House of Commons is concerned, there is little change, except that today there are more people in Parliament who left school at twelve or fourteen than there were ever before. The bulk is still middle class, either by origin or by adoption. Let us not be misled by regional accents, dropped aitches and crumpled suits, as in many cases these are retained for vote-catching purposes. Even if they are genuine, they mean little, as it is very difficult for a man to avoid becoming a member of the middle class if his occupation and contacts for years have been middle class, not to mention his income. Besides, a Cockney accent and a crumpled shirt is quite a useful device to hide the fact that Labour politicians have the same appetite for directorships as Conservatives or Liberals.

The more important change around Parliament is intimately connected with the revolution of our time. The Government of a country today is not only a tremendous, whole-time occupation, but it inevitably calls for the expert (the "manager"), which means that, after a time, power from the elected representatives of the people might slip into the hands of experts: bureaucrats, planners, social engineers, who are not subject to election and are not responsible to the people. If this happens, if, in other words, Parliament, the democratic representative institution, fails to catch up with the needs and requirements of our time, then democracy is finished. This, however, is not happening, and while there are indications that it *might* happen in the future, there is *no* guarantee that it *will*. What is happening is that far more of the technicalities of legislation are passing into the hands of top-class civil servants than ever before, but Parliament still retains its supreme authority. This is easy to see in many instances. For example, few bills are ever introduced or ministerial orders made which might provoke active resistance from a minority of considerable size, even if the voting machine could easily pass them.

Parliament is still very sensitive about public opinion, and the vast majority of cabinet members are still either professional politicians or "mere politicians". By this I mean that the vast majority are not experts

and don't even claim to be experts of their departments. There have been examples in England of "expert" civil servants like Grigg and Anderson, manpower experts like Bevin or Army experts like Kitchener and Seely, etc., being invited into the Cabinet and being given a safe seat in Parliament, but the experiments were not always happy. The expert, indeed, after a time might develop a contempt for Parliament, and that sentiment in England is only allowed to be indulged in by people outside Parliament. My own explanation for the unchanged authority in Parliament is that so far there has been no need for a shift of sovereignty (i.e. the supreme authority of Parliament) to occur, and that the "Managerial Revolution"—a foregone conclusion—is happening in England in an English, democratic way, whereas in Germany or Russia it *could not* happen in a democratic way.

In this respect there is only one single danger point for England and that is war. If a war were to destroy a really significant proportion of Britain's wealth—some of which is not in cash, factories, investments, and other tangible assets, but in organizing ability, trained understanding, knowledge and skill—then British democracy might be very seriously endangered. The materialist would straightaway say that in that case British democracy would be finished. I am not so sure. It is true that the anti-materialist school has over-emphasized the importance of wisdom, intelligence, tradition, self-discipline, and that historical experience which in the past has always been instrumental in the success of England in handling issues of revolutionary change. Nevertheless, such intangible factors might still count and some measure of democracy still be preserved.

The question has often been asked: are Labour politicians less honest than the Conservatives? The answer depends almost entirely as to what we mean by "honesty". The point is that in a modern democracy it is quite legal for the politician to increase his wealth or to fill his pockets by acquiring directorships—unless he happens to be a minister. Nor is there an unwritten law against this, because public opinion is divided on the subject. There are a few Socialists who are not taking directorships out of sheer Puritanism or out of adherence to some other ethical principle, as well as a few men, rich or poor (Socialist as well as Conservative), who just don't wish to "bother", but a glance at the Directory of Directors shows how small their number is. It would be silly to bait Socialists on this issue, for their answer is difficult to challenge. They would say, "If you don't allow us to be real Socialist, if you force us to live largely under the old conditions, then why deny us the plums of the old conditions?"

When it comes to really shady dealings, the reason why Socialist politicians land themselves in trouble more often than Conservatives, and

why there are more "whispers"—sometimes quite loud—about Labour politicians than about Conservatives, the answer is usually found in two factors. The first is that the capitalist Press gives publicity to any Labour peccadillo. The second is connected with the individual background of the politician. Those who have been concerned in scandals and rumours were usually men of humble social-economic origin, uncertain of their new position and were anxious to make hay while the sun shone as fast as possible. But they got at it the wrong way. Their rise in the world was sudden, and moreover it occurred in middle age when even if it is not difficult to make new friends it is difficult to *know* the new friend (the old ones were abandoned if not in theory then in substance: the hearty backslap, the calling of them by their Christian name—sometimes the wrong one—the old jokes, the warm tone of the letters remained, and if the old friend was stupid enough to believe that nothing happened, that "Joe is still one of us", then all was well). And the new friends were not always above reproach and got the politician into taking stupid risks.

Having dealt with Parliament I don't have to say much more about the Civil Service, or rather of those few hundred top-grade Civil Servants who are "experts" and as such are doing much of the actual legislation of the country. Political brains trusts are not yet as important in England as they might become later, and some of the members of the Brains Trusts quite often are only self-important. A few ministers have their private brains trusts—quite often Central European Jews—who walk about between the dining-room of the House of Commons and Golder's Green or Oxford and Cambridge quads as if the destinies of England were exclusively resting on their sloping shoulders.

Of late a good deal has been said, and written, about the Secret Service, which, according to some people, is reputed to have an "alarmingly great power" uncontrolled by the Government. In view of the fact that in recent years there has been a good deal of tampering with *Habeas Corpus*, many people are feeling uneasy. Their uneasiness is unjustified. Military Intelligence or Secret Service is part of the defence mechanism of the country as much as its police or its Army, Navy and Air Force. Broadly speaking, all these are "secret services", which is as it should be. No matter how democratic a country is, its Minister for War, for example, cannot discuss at an open session of Parliament the details of the Army's secrets. The functions of the Secret Service, however, must be restricted in a democracy, and in Britain they are. It cannot, for example, exercise jurisdiction: it cannot arrest or detain people or try and punish them.

A safeguard against abuse of power (as well as an incentive for

efficiency) is the highly privileged position of the Secret Service. The job itself is not hard and very seldom as dangerous as readers of E. Phillips Oppenheim might believe. It is extremely well remunerated and its members do not pay Income Tax. Though it contains a good deal of routine and as often as not paperwork, it is more interesting than the job of a Scotland Yard detective. Furthermore, members of the Secret Service cannot be dragged into a court of law for libel and damages if they make a mistake. These privileges ought to be a powerful inducement for a sufficient number of intelligent and suitable candidates to come forward and volunteer for Secret Service duty so that its directors are not forced to advertise in the newspapers. (*"Secret Service agents wanted. Good pay and promotion, hardly any danger, knowledge of foreign languages unnecessary. Emotional unorthodoxy an advantage."*)

The danger in view of the privileges is that, in order to hold down such a good job, many agents may make mistakes in order to prove their worth. They listen to tittle-tattle and sometimes they may even invent. They can cause a good deal of unpleasantness. As a result lesser people may be innocently dismissed from a job and lesser people may not have the money, connections or the presence of mind to insist on an inquiry or to get a few M.P.s to ask the Government inconvenient questions. An important person innocently accused is in a safe position. He would shout at the top of his voice, and an inquiry is made. The minister in question then publicly upholds the Secret Service, in fact he may distribute a couple of bouquets (he must not shake confidence by open censure), but the culprit by that time is politely "persuaded" to return to the Brigade of Guards or the Ordnance Corps, or to peddle vacuum cleaners or luxury cars.

My last port of call round the bend of the river is Transport House, the headquarters of the Trade Unions, a seat of power which has grown enormously in the last fifteen years. Trade Unions represent great power in the ruling of the country and great power towards their own members. The latter is a recent, and "managerial", development, and I personally think more important than the former. On one hand the organized worker today is in a better social-economic position than he has ever been in the course of history. He is fully employed, his "real" wages are as good as before, sometimes even higher, and he cannot be sacked except for inefficiency. On the other hand, however, since the Trade Unions today are part of the ruling group of the country, it is obvious that they have to consider the interests of the whole country and that sometimes may happen at the expense of the worker. Accordingly, the Trade Unions realize that pegging wages is not an interest of the "Capitalist Class" but

of the whole country, and it is not surprising that, after a hundred years' struggle for higher wages, they sometimes have to struggle today against their own followers to accept lower wages, longer hours and—if needed—some direction.

What are the people like who control more than the actual figure of eight million out of the twenty odd million total of Britain's workers? Without exception, they are people of working-class origin, and many of them left school at twelve. Most of them are strongly influenced by Christian ethics, even though some of them profess to be agnostics. They are shrewd, experienced, practical people, who mistrust theory and sometimes lack horizon. They are also reputed to be "conservative", which really means that they are traditionalists. The worker often feels that these Trade Union bureaucrats are "dictators"; people who love power for its own sake. This seems to be substantiated by their simple, often quite austere, way of life, but the charge is only partly true. The point is that Unions are mostly too large—especially the Transport and General Workers' Union—when it comes to decisions, it rests in the hands of a small composite body in which each occupational section (such as dockers, transport workers, etc.) is only a minority having little in common with other sections. Thus the worker often feels his union bosses are hostile "dictators".

In the past Trade Union functions were restricted to the workers' welfare and wages; today—apart from the fact that they have real power over the worker—they should try to bridge the gap between the worker and the country and the worker and management, so that the worker does not feel lost as a tiny cog in a giant machinery and feel exploited. This psychological gap in my own experience is as important as wages and other tangible improvements, if not more so. The bridging of this gap can only be done by information, and this should be partly a function of the Trade Unions.

These institutions round the bend of London's river govern the country as they always have done since the beginning of contemporary democracy, but today some of them, like Transport House or Whitehall, are more important than the City. Nevertheless, none of them has an overwhelming power and still less a monopoly of power.

What we ought to see now is the change in the power relations between the classes. If we look on class as a group whose power is measured—as it should be—not by its wealth but by its strength and/or influence, then England today can no longer be divided into Disraeli's "Two Nations", the "rich" and "poor", but into a number of pressure groups, each fighting the other for a larger share of the national income.

This change is the result of at least a century of evolution, but this had been greatly accelerated in the last ten years. I dare say many people have not noticed what has happened, but that, I think, is due to the fact that England's traditional social framework still stands, and that it is more than a mere façade. Titles may mean much less than they used to even ten years ago, but great wealth still remains in a few hands and with it a good deal of power. Money can buy fewer things than it could ten years ago, but it can still buy an irritatingly large number of things.

The other factor—bound up with the traditional social framework—is that the old class system still survives, quite independent of power. The small trader, the bank clerk, the white-collar worker generally, still feels superior to the manual worker and the manual worker still feels inferior to the former. The changes in the last ten years have affected tremendously the economic relations between the classes and to an extent even the power relations, but not the social relations. Class consciousness is still strong in England, because culturally there are still enormous gaps between the classes. The miner—through his union—is roughly twice as strong as the trader—through his union—but not the individual miner. And nothing on earth but democratic education can close that gap.

CHAPTER XVIII

SUMMING UP

MY journey is over and I am back at my desk. What are the final reflections of a traveller who has just completed a tour of England in the last year of the first half of the century?

I found an England in which there is almost as much essential freedom as before and a far greater equality, and neither of them is superficial. The English people—all in all—are not only better dressed, better fed, healthier-looking and even better instructed, if not yet better housed, but on paper at least they are more economically secure. Genuine need and suffering in the England of the nineteen-fifties are restricted to small groups: some workers here and there, a few unlucky members of the middle class, including a group of artists and writers. Partly because the more glaring social-economic contrasts are gone, England today is a less colourful and less exciting country to live in, not only for the writer but for the reader as well. It is also a far more introspective country than ever before. The Englishman's threefold and traditional defensive weapons against the adversity of life: sentimentalism-romanticism, evasion and a sense of humour are as strong as ever, but this time nearly everybody knows that they are not strong enough to cope easily with the situation.

My training and interests having been social and political, in the course of my journey I have been looking for changes in the composition of the English social structure and for the changes in the relation of one class to another. As a result of my observations I find (a) that in spite of the great changes in the last ten years, the country still remains in the traditional mould: England is still a "class-ridden" country; (b) that the relations of one class to another are on the whole good; and (c) that the national unity of the country is strong. These three things together are neither a contradiction nor a miracle as they may appear to people unfamiliar with the nature of social and political forces. National solidarity indeed always maintains a given class system, whether this is desirable, passable or undesirable. This is partly the price which the faithful have to pay for their faith.

I found, in fact, not only a united country but a country with a strong national purpose, thereby contradicting not only a handful of foreign observers, but hundreds of thousands of native British "observers" as well. The problem to my mind, therefore, is not whether England today

has a strong national purpose, because I have already said she has, but whether that strong national purpose in itself is enough. And the answer is that it is not enough.

The real change in the world today is just in the very fact that a national purpose—in England or elsewhere under the sun—is not enough, and that the sovereign, independent, nation-state in which we have been living for centuries (but not *for many* centuries) is becoming a more and more out-of-date design for living, incompatible with contemporary trends and contemporary needs. In my own view this incompatibility is very largely responsible for the revolution of our time; and the wars of our time, together with fears and uncertainties, are symptoms of that revolution.

But let us stick to England. As a result of the revolution of our time it has become obvious that England as an economic unit is obsolete—in spite of her efficiency, which may be the highest in her history—and that she is even more obsolete as a defence unit—again in spite of her efficiency, pluck, courage and intermittent heroism. The sum total of these two results is that this country can no longer guarantee her citizens' daily bread, nor the safety of their person or homes. It is obvious that these observations are not parts of my literary copyright and that, on the contrary, a large number of English men and women share them with me, with the result that there is a good deal of fear, uncertainty and lethargy in the country. During my journey I have seen much of it. A sense of uncertainty—to mention only one sentiment—in an intelligent person is inevitable when he forgets about food rationing, shortages and the cost of living and begins to see that England, and the world, five years after the conclusion of a world war are not merely "talking" about the next, but are busily preparing for it. For the first time in "peacetime" in English history there are American troops stationed in the country, staff talks between Allied military leaders are being conducted with a publicity as full as interests of security allow it, the Government issues pamphlets on defence measures against atom-bombs, and two complementary unions—an Atlantic one and a Western one—are coming into being against practically everybody's inner sentiments. Besides, every intelligent person knows that that greater equality—material if not social—which one observes in England is—in the final analysis—a defensive measure against war. We are distributing the national income in order to purchase the loyalty of the masses.

Now it may or may not be obvious from the rest of the book that I do not share the lethargy of the middle-aged, the increasing impatience of the young and the general anxiety and fear of practically all those who think of the future of Britain. On this account here I must categorically

state that I certainly do not share these sentiments, and there are good reasons why I do not. They have perhaps less to do with generations than with my personal circumstances. My own generation—on the threshold of the forties—is tougher and more seasoned than such a generation has ever been before; nevertheless some of them are full of anxiety. On the other hand, perhaps by birth, perhaps by circumstances, I belong to a group of people which in the nineteen-fifties is still comparatively rare—even though by no means unique—on the surface of the earth: the un-national man. Physically and emotionally my “home” is England, a home I consciously chose for myself at the age of nineteen and a choice which I have never regretted, but “something” in me—intellect or emotion, who knows?—refuses to be “naturalized” and remains—apparently for ever—detached. So much I said earlier. The disadvantages of such a state are obvious, but it has equally obvious advantages, especially for a writer: it gives him a certain measure of objectivity and calmness, or at least an opportunity for both.

Not only do I not share the fears and anxieties, but on the contrary I am feeling delighted that my adopted compatriots are “getting excited”. And I feel delighted because I am convinced that this time fear and anxiety are serving a useful purpose. As a student of politics I do know that fear can be a dreadful enemy, but I also know that fear can be an ally too. It is a mistake to look on fear exclusively as a factor which provokes the exercise of force. We know that this has often been the case, but we also know that fear in the past has equally often been a factor which provoked constructive action. And this time, in the nineteen-fifties, this second and hopeful alternative is far more likely.

I’ll tell you why. For the first time in our century the world is preparing to face a situation in the right way. By this I mean the threatening shadow of the Third World War and those alliances which fear of the war is bringing into being. On one hand the alliance between Great Britain or the British Commonwealth and the United States, on the other Western Union. Looking at them from a world perspective they are a humble beginning, but unlike the League of Nations or U.N.O. they are realistic and hopeful, and there is no reason to believe that they cannot eventually become the core of a future united world. The fact that there is so little apparent idealism about them is again a very hopeful sign. It is a natural reaction against the incurable sentimentality and optimism of the 19th-century Liberal. Poor man, he had been living in an historical period when the government and the administration of the world as a single unit had *not* been technically possible, as it *certainly is* in our time, and yet he hoped that world government would one day come about through peaceful consent. In one respect the man was right: it is, as a

matter of fact, coming into being, but it is coming through strife, coercion, blackmail, bribery and an agonizing fear.

But let us talk of the "core" first: the alliance between the democratic countries. In the speeches and Press comments there is little verbiage about the service of "the good of humanity" or any such rubbish. The democratic unions, in fact, are coming into being in order to enable the countries concerned either to avoid the Third World War or to fight it more efficiently and with smaller loss if it cannot be averted. This in itself is a very realistic foundation indeed. As in all cases of territorial amalgamations, unions and federations—in fact of the birth of nations—fear has proved to be one of the most efficient inspirations, roots, causes or call it what you will. (The other is conquest plus subsequent extension of full equality to the defeated.) Without fear and anxiety nothing ever would come out of either an alliance with the United States or with Western Europe. Of the former there is no need to talk; the latter, however, needs a few words of comment.

If we look at the six or seven countries of Continental Europe which are proposing to form a Western Union, we find that they are more similar in the most vital respects to England and to each other than to any other country. Four of them are, or have been, colonial powers (France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark), all of them to an extent are industrialized and they represent the highest European standards of living, democratic institutions and civilization in general. You might say that this, in itself, ought to be a realistic basis for federalism, but you would be wrong. In this case the identities would not attract but repel. That is to say the six countries are not complementary to each other or to England; if anything they are rivals. At the same time they are either less successful or less powerful than England, most of them have fought England in the past and lost the conflict, besides they are all (except Belgium) "old" countries with strong, proud, cultural traditions.

In connection with this federation England has often been accused of "dragging her feet" or playing "hard to get", but the reality behind the accusation is that England has more to risk than the six countries. To mention only one fact—among the many—well over forty per cent of Britain's capital goes into welfare services and housing, and the British taxpayer is not really revolting against this. Apart from this, for a country which happens to be an island co-operation with other countries is naturally more difficult than for countries with less defined frontiers (even though sovereignty and sentiment turn all countries into islands). The fact that England is playing for time is obvious, but it is equally obvious that when the danger comes nearer England will become a member of the federation. And this time it is not likely that the offer of common

citizenship will arrive too late, as it did when Churchill offered it to the French in 1940. (The *true* story of that offer, for too obvious reasons, has never been published.)

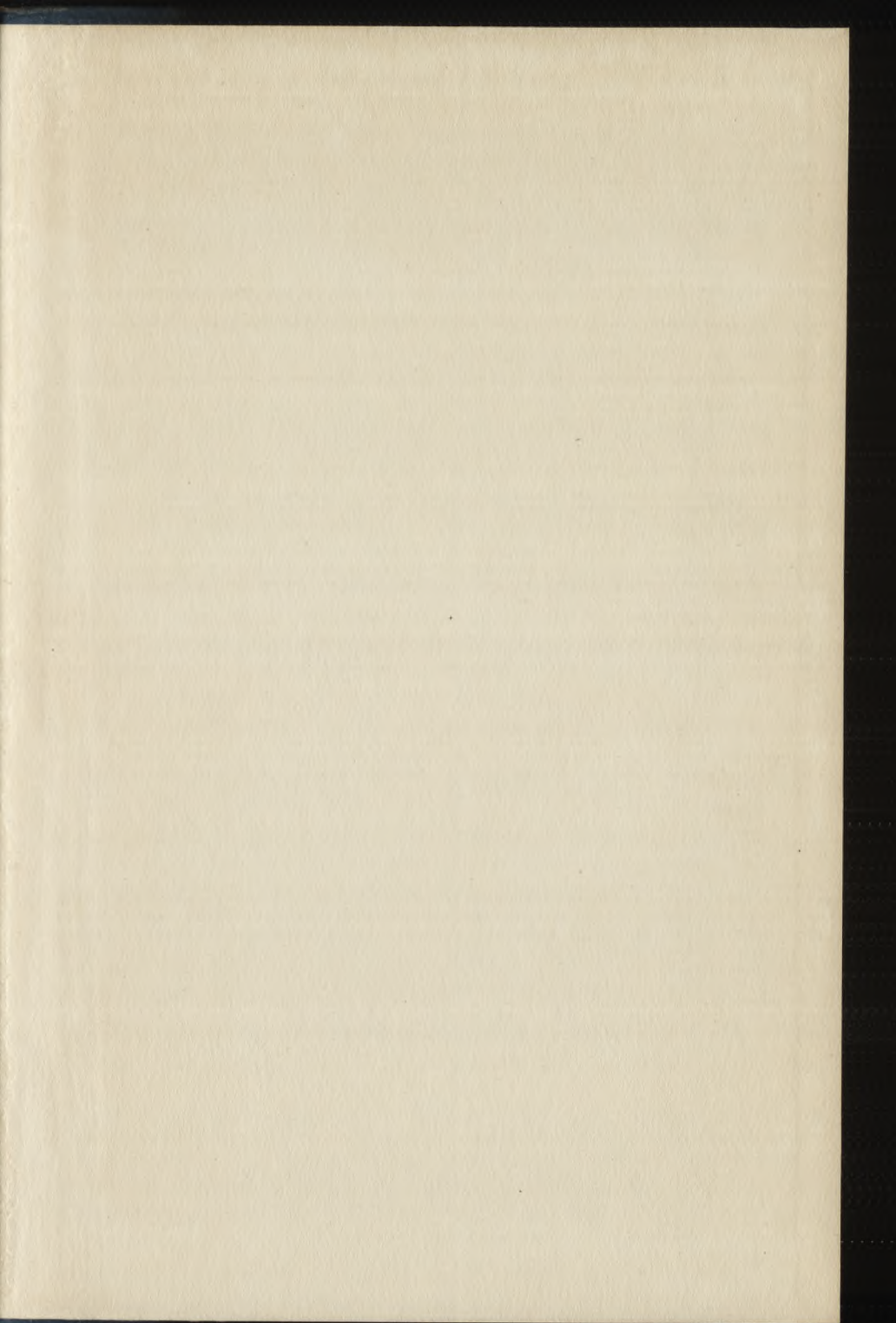
The final implications of a Western European federation would be, in so many words, the "socialization" of the West: a horizontal political process, whereas radical processes so far have always been vertical. And the horizontal one is the true and the really satisfactory process, the only form of socialism. To call Family Allowances, Bevan's National Health Bill, or the Education Act of 1946 "socialism" is foolish. You may call it radicalism, reformism, welfarism or "national socialism". Real socialism is essentially something between or above nations: a horizontal activity. It is glaringly obvious why horizontal (i.e. real) Socialism could not in the past be effected: first of all there was sovereignty and therefore rivalry and lack of trust; secondly, vertical (therefore "national") socialism could only happen in a gradual and democratic manner. (The rich in England have not been liquidated, the mine-owners have not been evicted without compensation, the doctors have not been subjected to totalitarian pressure.) Gradualism with horizontal socialism is not so easy.

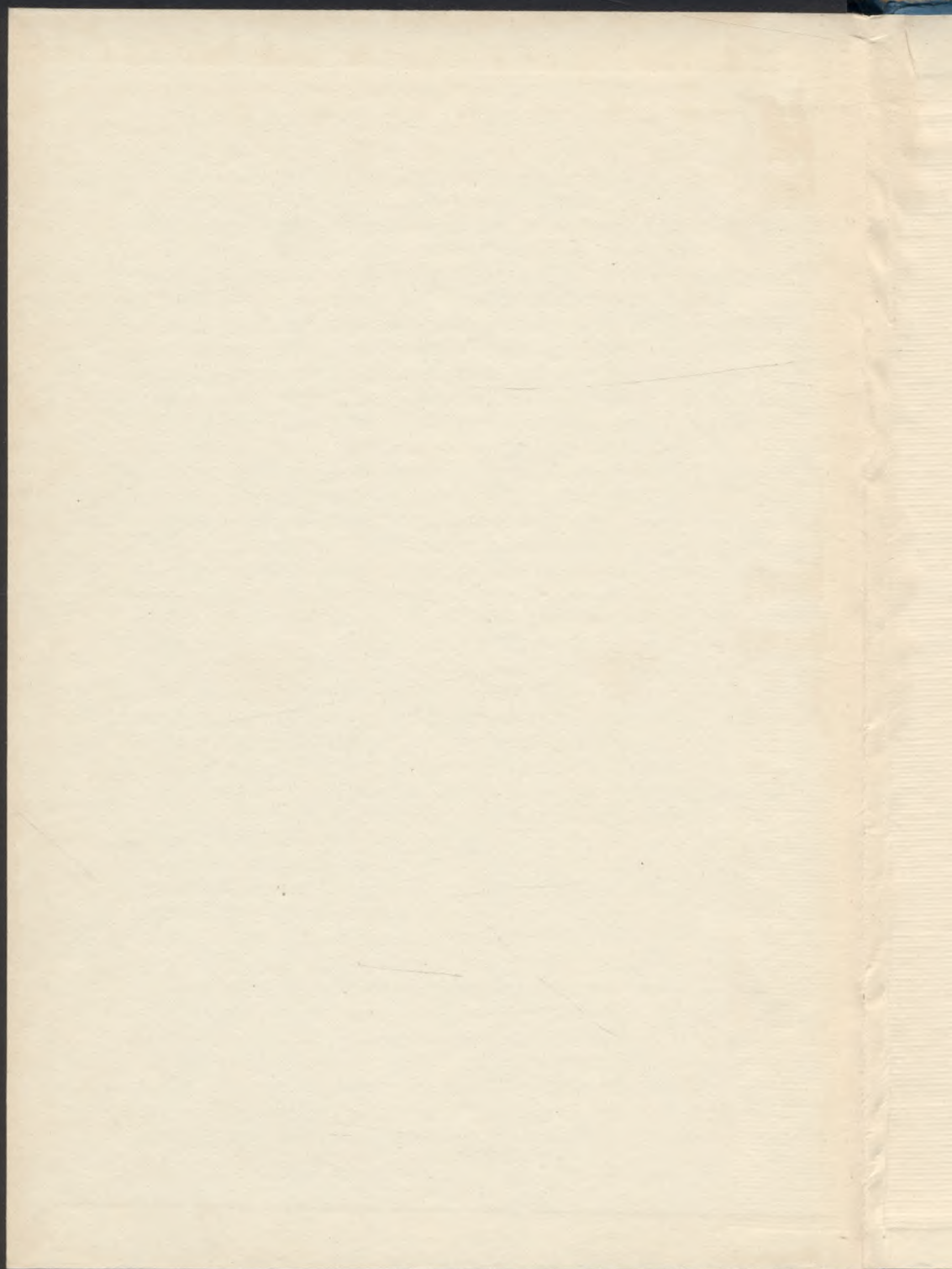
The likelihood is that Western Union will before long fuse with the United States and possibly with a few more countries, and such a fusion indeed is the only hope of avoiding the third world war. And if the worst happens and the war is not avoided there is no question—if the Alliance is strong enough—that it will win its war against the Soviet Union comparatively quickly and with comparatively little loss. After that the Alliance will force a united government on the world.

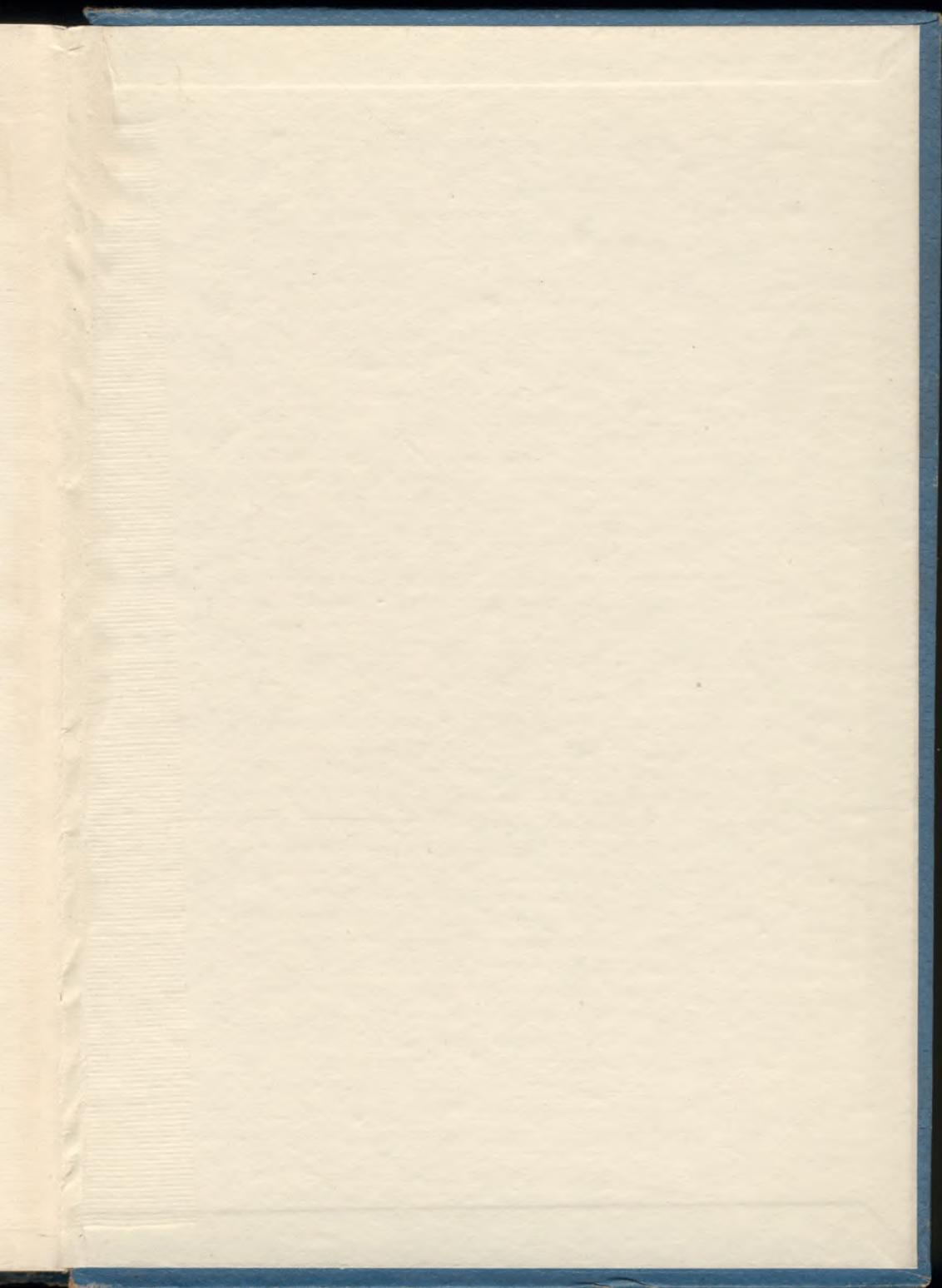
It has recently been said that there are three other alternatives to a world government so established, namely, (a) a world empire established by the Soviet, (b) total annihilation of human life, or (c) a relapse into barbarism. While I am fully convinced that none of these three alternatives is an empty threat—on the contrary they are all material possibilities—I think the first solution is far more likely, because the fear of an eventual Soviet domination or of the two alternative possibilities is far greater in the more civilized and more efficient countries of the world than that other fear which is largely induced by the unknown and the untried over the *habit* of living in islands, surrounded by water or otherwise.

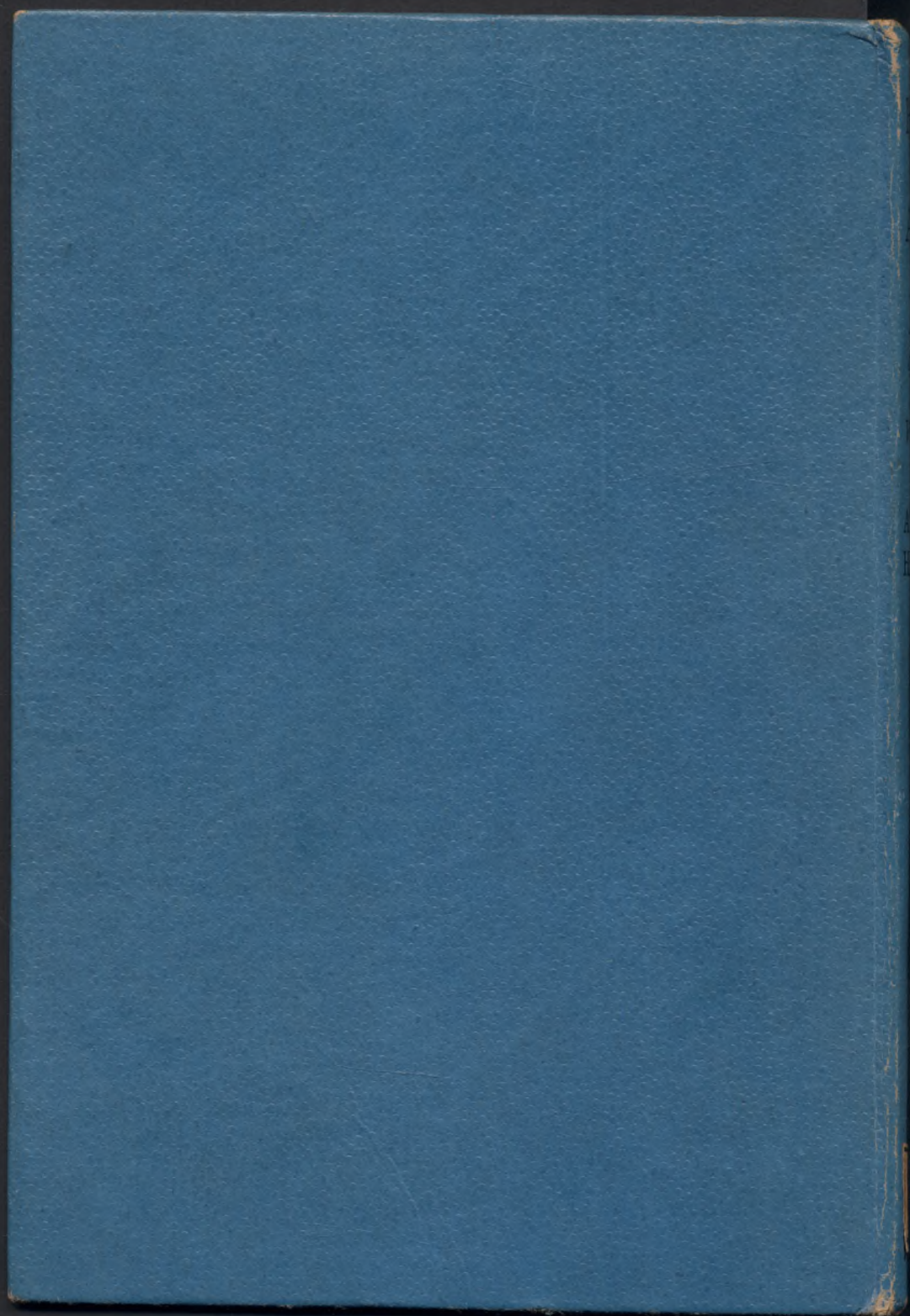
THE END











HOME AND AWAY

*Notes on
England
after the
Second
World War*

ADAM DE
HEGEDUS

CB

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HUTCHINSON