SOME MUSINGS OF AN IDLE MAN.

By Colonel R. H. Firth.

I.

A short time ago, I was on a steam trawler and had opportunities of observing the huge catches as they were emptied from the nets on to the deck. As one stood and contemplated the myriads of these denizens of the sea, one could not help wondering at the abundance, its continuance from day to day, year in year out, and as to what happens in the vast economy of the ocean. There were tons and even miles of fishes, to say nothing of the countless numbers of great and small crustaceans, copepods, diatoms, and the multitudes of infusoria. The fishes alone represented a recent locomotor power in the sea which the mind could not grasp, and yet a power soon to be transformed into a corresponding enormous power of both muscle and brain work on land. Even the offal or rejected sweepings would go to feed cattle and to fertilize the ground. One was almost aghast at the magnitude of the problems presented, and one's thoughts took the following direction.

The producers of the wealth of the ocean are the chlorophyll endowed organisms, most of which are undoubtedly plants. Of these plants, there are two great groups in the sea: first, the phytoplankton or minute algae of the superficial layers of the ocean and, second, the larger seaweeds or sea-grass, and the attendant microflora abounding in the shoal waters or shore areas. Possessed of varied pigments, all these have chlorophyll and, by virtue of that complex of glucosides, are able to utilize the energy of sunlight to build up the simple constituents of air and sea-water into more complex organic products, which, in turn, form the food of animals. On this power of photo-synthesis depends clearly the whole economy of marine and terrestrial life. Our thoughts then picture the minute and simple algae of the open seas as so many floating meadows, and on these pastures feed many inhabitants of the open seas, such as small crustaceans, which again are devoured by young fishes. In this sequence of events we conceive the growth of the sea-meadows in spring to be as important as the garment of green on a farmer's field. Close thinking further explains the observed correlation between the sunshine records of May and the quantity of mackerel in the fish markets. The rationale of this is instructive and simple, because there is a correspondence between
the catches of mackerel during May and the amount of small crustaceans of drifting habit, or plankton, upon which the mackerel feed. These small drifting crustaceans or copepods, in turn, feed largely on the drifting algae and plant organisms of the surface waters, such as diatoms and peridinians. But the multiplication of these minute organisms depends in the main on the amount of sunshine, so that we come to the sequence of the more sunshine the more mackerel. The incarnations follow one another, copepod after diatom, mackerel after copepod, and man after mackerel; truly, a marvellous illustration of the circulation of matter, and a suggestion that as, on land, all flesh is grass, so, in the sea, all fish is seaweed. Important as the minute constituents of the phytoplankton are in life, they seem equally important in their death. For when they are killed by changes of temperature or when they reach the end of their natural growth, they add to the valuable organic detritus which remains in suspension in the water or sinks to the floor of the sea. Thus, we come to the conclusion that the producers in the economy of the sea are the chlorophyll endowed plants and such small animal organisms as have stolen their secret of photo-synthesis.

If such be the producers, who then are the natural consumers of the wealth of the oceans? First, there are true carnivores, like most fishes, all the cuttle-fishes, the whelks, and many gasteropods, most of the starfishes, many of the crabs, and so on down to the sea-anemones. To these we might add certain vegetarians, like limpets and periwinkles, on the shores, and some of the open-sea animals like the copepod crustaceans; while a third group of consumers is the enormous multitude dependent on detritus. Though one thinks thus of the consumers, one does not put the classification rigidly, for it is probable that the distinction between carnivore and vegetarian is not so important as that between organisms with and organisms without hard prehensile and chewing mouth-parts.

Between the consumer and the producer there probably is a middleman. The marine middlemen are surely the bacteria. True, salt is antithetic to them as a class, but it has not kept them out of the sea, where they have more than one rôle to play. Thus some are putrefactive, reducing the dead bodies of animals and plants to carbon dioxide, ammonia and the like, which may re-enter the field of life by forming food for algae. Bacteria of this kind are the scavengers, making clean things out of the unclean; but there are others which play a subtler part, by changing the ammoniacal
nitrogen into nitrites, and others which continue the work by completing the oxidation into nitrates. Besides these, however, there are many denitrifying bacteria, which work the wrong way by reducing nitrates to nitrites, nitrites to ammonia, and ammonia to free nitrogen. Associated with this question of denitrification is the curious fact that the cold Polar waters are richer in plankton than the tropical seas; the reason of this is not quite obvious, but it may be because the higher temperature favours the action of denitrifying bacteria which, by flourishing abundantly, lessen the supply of available nitrogenous food for the phyto-plankton. An alternative view is that low temperatures slow the vital processes and increase the length of life, so that several generations of plankton organisms are living contemporaneously in the colder waters; possibly, both views are correct.

One has imaged producers, consumers, and middlemen in the economy of the ocean, but we must not push the analogy too far; thus, bivalves and their kind that feed on minute detritus or debris are ever making available, to creatures that eat them, supplies of energy which would otherwise be wasted. We know that plaice in some waters are very fond of lancelets which subsist on detritus particles, hence it follows that, in respect to the plaice, the lancelet is a producer or even a middleman. In whatever way we think of the facts, we see a never-ending cycle and true circulation of matter. The algae find nourishment in the water that bathes them and, using chlorophyll to conjure the sunbeams, build up organic compounds from inorganic constituents. Eaten by animals, the vegetable proteins are raised to a still higher grade as animal proteins; but when the plant or animal dies the complex organic substances are broken down through the agency of bacteria into simpler forms once more, and some of these being utilized by plants may enter again into the circle of life. Next time the reader eats the cod, let him remember that the cod fed probably on a whiting and the whiting on the sprat, and that the sprat feeds on copepods, which again depend on peridinians and diatoms. Such are the incarnations of the sea, and so the world goes round.

II.

While at a Church service the other day, and while the creed was being recited, the thought was irrepresible how interesting it would be if, instead of repeating the formal words of the Church service, each person were to proclaim aloud the creed of his own mind and soul. One thought all this and one writes it now, in no spirit
of doubt or scorn of the beautiful words so familiar to us, but
impelled by thoughts which suggested a spiritual exercise that
many of us might well make an effort to do inwardly, and
perhaps obtain some advantage. One realized how many might
draw therefrom some measure of consolation, for the simple
reason that the creed of the soul is not always the creed of the
intellect; it is usually simpler and more satisfactory. If we analyse
ourselves honestly, we cannot deny that we all inwardly repeat
beliefs involuntarily and constantly. Even the least introspective
among us hear a creed or belief resounding in our souls, often with
surprise, sometimes with delight, occasionally with dismay. The
situation seems to be, that the ceremonial of the soul permits of no
interruption. If we think of our fellow-intimates we know and
realize that, now and then conveyed by talk, by looks, by actions, or
more often perhaps by that indescribable emanation of the character
perceived both by long and sudden sympathy, we get to know the
latent beliefs of other men. I may be expressing myself badly, but
what one aims to bring into prominence is that in most of us there
is a latent belief, which one calls the belief of the soul, not always
consistent with the belief of our mind or intellect. Our intellect is
peculiarly liable to the influence of pessimism, and very few of us
can maintain a state of optimism by reliance upon the mind alone.
By all experience, life is a tragedy, yet as our minds argue this out,
within most of us there echoes an obverse platitude which whispers
"It is all for the best." Our intellect is usually impatient of this
inward belief, but by it our spirit or soul lives, and when we hear
simple people or those whom we think simple people saying this,
we ought to remember that they say it because they cannot help
repeating aloud their latent creed, the creed of their soul.

This line of thought brings us to the problem of fatalism, which
is one of the commonest beliefs of our minds. To some, this may
seem a surprising statement, because they are imbued with the idea
that fatalism belongs only to the East or to paganism. It is repellant
to the religious-minded as, if pushed to its logical conclusion,
fatalism denies the power of prayer, but it is reconcilable with
reliance upon Divine protection. Fatalism has been closely allied
with some forms of Christianity and, as an inner belief, dies hard; if
any doubt it, let them think of the many who find the fears,
which reflection and introspection raise, to be allayed by the
instinctive assurance that "what will be, will be," and how the
still small voice from within whispering the words "che sarà sarà"
gives to us all a negative courage and perhaps a negative peace.
Conversely, one imagines many a Moslem brought up to use the Arabic equivalent of those words as part of his intellectual and religious faith, hearing other words prompted by his soul and, as he bows his head in the mosque, says in his heart that man really is master of his fate; if so, then his soul voices a theory which accords far better with the faith of the despised infidel than with his own. Of course, there are many men into whose souls the fatalistic belief does not enter, and there are others who, if they do uphold fatalism intellectually, mistrust it inwardly. These latter are not prepared to admit it, yet they do feel instinctively that the natural course of events can be interfered with or at least modified by personal effort.

As illustrating, further, the argument of this theme, one thinks of the very many who find it difficult to uphold by reasoned argument the efficacy of prayer for any but spiritual benefits. These people represent, typically, the diametric opposition between the belief of the mind or intellect and of the soul, because in every crisis of fear or perplexity they pray for benefits which are not spiritual. Again, one thinks of the many who have grave intellectual doubts as to the life after death, and yet one goes so far as to say that there are few of them who have not been frequently startled to hear the sounds of a creed which affirms it, being repeated in their souls. In these times of mourning the greater number feel for a few moments or hours the dear companionship of their dead; and, after all, what is it that they hear? as it were from within. Surely, if they put it into words, sounds very like "the life of the world to come"? The echo dies, and they realize how hard the old belief dies; also they know that this is not the last time that those words of the latent belief of their souls will be repeated as a small voice from within, and in spite of the oft-spoken words of their intellectual belief.

The net outcome of these reflections brings one to the conclusion that, in spite of the vaunted scepticism and fashionable materialism of the day, the majority of people are, at heart, more Christian than they think they are, and that that faith appeals far more to them on its spiritual and supernatural than on its moral side. To many who believe in their inmost consciousness or soul, however much they doubt in their minds, that a world of the spirit does exist where men do not see death, the Christian or biblical morality is repugnant. All this seems curiously painful and inexplicable, and yet one cannot avoid the conviction that some apparently groundless and inexplicable beliefs form at least sub-
sidiary clauses in the creed of most men's souls. We laugh at those pet beliefs, but in our inmost hearts we believe in them, and cannot escape from their constant repetition within the inner sanctuary of our thoughts. We cannot explain them, but we have to admit that they hold a place with that which is most vital. At this point we may be content to leave the subject, perhaps astonished to find that a thought, which originally promised to expose the baser side of our fellows, develops towards a realization that man, in spite of his intellectuality, is dominated largely by beliefs which are independent of his mind.

III.

In the preceding note one has laid stress on the word "within." It is worth while thinking out what pertains to the studied use of the word, as it involves a right understanding of the relations between externality and will. The influence of materialism makes many think of "within" as referring to that portion of space marked out by our bodies, and "without" as referring to the rest of space. If we think a little, we realize that this is an error. By the "within" is meant the region where our will is supreme, flowing only into thought and not into action, that is where the will meets with no opposition; this is tantamount to saying that "within" is the realm of imagination. On the other hand, the "without" means that region where the will, passing into action, meets with appreciated opposition, and is synonymous with the realm of Nature. Were it possible to remove the inertia of bodies, we can assume that the distinction between the "within" and the "without" would disappear; hence this distinction is not one of space. Moreover, we can discover pure will nowhere in man's body; we observe only many of its effects, just as we do in the world that lies outside of his body. Evidently, therefore, the spirit or "within" is not in space, since space, being an idea, can exist only in mind or spirit; and if space exists in spirit, spirit cannot exist in space. We are forced then to think that the external world is the product of a will not our own, and that fact constitutes its externality, and not any supposed spatial relations between it and ourselves.

We advance next to the realization that the reality of the ideas of our imagination is purely individual or subjective; thus, for the man who imagines money, that imaginary money is quite as good as so-called real money, but it will not satisfy his creditors because
their imaginations are not forming a like product. On the other hand, our sense-impressions are in the main objective. But, since all experience and knowledge exists only in mind, it is evidently subjective, and absolute objectivity is unthinkable. This difficulty, however, is overcome if we postulate a Divine or Supreme Mind, and we realize that what we call objective is really subjective, that is to say, existing in or subjective to the Supreme Mind. Of course, in thus thinking of the physical universe as an idea in the mind of the Supreme, one understands it as an idea which is willed forth, and Nature is nothing more than the externality of the Divine or Supreme. It is because of our likeness to the Supreme, that this real physical universe is possible to some extent to us as an ideal construction corresponding to the Divine ideal construction. The external world we know is the world as it exists in each of our minds, but the real external world is the world as it exists in the Supreme Mind, and in so far as our ideal constructions are like or approximate to the Supreme or Divine, do we know Reality. It follows, therefore, that all science and all efforts to interpret sense-impressions, by elimination of the errors of the individual, is an attempt to read rightly the thoughts of the Supreme Being. A difficulty suggests itself here: it is that however desirous one may be of believing in a God, may not this belief be regarded as an act of faith rather than as a product of reason? Reflection compels one, however, to say that the whole logic of experience absolutely forces us into the belief, and that we have more sure grounds for the belief in the existence of that infinite Will and Mind, which we call God, than we have for that of finite minds other than our own. Each of us in our daily life perceives motions, changes and constructions of ideas, which inform us there are certain particular agents like ourselves which are associated and concur with their production. Hence the knowledge we have of other minds or spirits is not immediate, as is the knowledge of our own ideas, but depending on the intervention of ideas, referred by us to agents, or minds or spirits distinct from ourselves. Now, though there are many things which convince us that human agents are concerned in producing them, yet it is evident to all of us that those things which we call the works of Nature are not produced by or dependent on the wills of men. We are compelled therefore to think that there is, though we cannot prove it, some other agent or spirit that causes them, and, from this line of thought, we get driven to the conclusion that this universal or master Mind, which we call God, is known as certainly and
immediately as any other mind or spirit which is distinct from ourselves.

But, it may be argued, some philosophers, notably Hume, have professed to disprove the existence of soul and spirit or mind, and reduced the individual to a mere series of separate sensations or phenomena. True, this claim has been made, but our sensations are governed by definite rules of order and sequence, called the laws of Nature, and also connected by the fact of memory. Just as the laws of Nature indicate the existence of God, so does memory indicate the existence of the individual spirit; and for this to be true it is not at all necessary that memory should be capable of recalling the whole past history of the individual, but merely that it should link together every moment of its consciousness with the immediately preceding one, so as to make it possible to trace out the above-mentioned sequence; and this memory always does. Further, the sense-impressions which I call "mine" are related to one another quite differently from the manner in which they are related to those called "yours"; this is because they are mine, and find their unity in one mind or spirit which is myself. Also, the fact that I have any idea at all is to me proof of my own existence as a mind or spirit and confirms Descartes' saying that, "I think, therefore I am." At this stage, further reflection raises the question, but if the individual spirit or mind can have an immediate knowledge of his own existence, not derived through ideas of sense, may it not be possible for him to have a like knowledge of other spirits or minds? One feels convinced that it can be possible, and the group of phenomena classed as telepathy are an example in point. In them we have the undoubted transmission of ideas from mind to mind, without the utilization of the known organs of sense. It is true that what are conveyed are ideas, but such ideas appear to be transmitted by a more interior way than that of physical sense; hence they are not ideas of sensation, though objectively true. It is difficult to withhold the opinion that they are the result of a direct perception by one mind of the ideas of another. Moreover, we may have notions of the relations between ideas. There are ideas which are, as it were, exterior and physical; there are others which are more interior or more spiritual. A man who is aware of his sensations may be said to know something of what one calls the externality of God; but how far more deeply into the knowledge of the Supreme Being has the man of science penetrated by knowing and appreciating the laws of Nature? Having once admitted the possibility of a scale of
discrete ideas, one feels amazed to think, or ask the question, who
shall state where the process is to end?

Another thought obtrudes itself here; it is, that we cannot
restrict the universe to the concept of it in mind. The possibilities
of sense impressions far transcend the experiences of any individual.
The first concept we form of reality is that derived from our sense-impressions, and the world around us is regarded as a real and
permanent existence independent of mind. If we argue it out, our
reason tells us that what we term the properties of matter are
known to us only as sensations or percepts of our minds, and that
we know really nothing of matter in itself; that is, nothing beyond
the properties which we experience as sensations. Suppose we
were deprived of some of these gateways of knowledge, say sight
or touch; or, if other and more subtle senses were given us, how
different would be our concept of the external world? Therefore,
all we can assert is that external phenomena arouse a succession
of mental states, and our present interpretation of those states may
be only a little less fallacious than the erroneous interpretations we
should give if we possessed but a single sensory organ. Clearly,
our ideas of the world without us contract or expand in proportion
to the extent of the means by which that world is perceived.
Perception being impossible without a mind to perceive, mind is
certainly the deeper reality, and Nature probably a mere construc-

tion or projection from our minds. From this point of view,
Nature and ourselves are the appearance or vesture of the Supreme
Mind, and the real world is the world of the Supreme Thought.
Perhaps at this point one may be pardoned for expressing the
reflection that Nature does not exist only in the thought of men,
nor for the thought of any one man, nor by the united thoughts of
all men, but it exists as the symbolical expression of the Supreme
Thought, and is sustained perpetually by the Supreme Will. Against
this view is the difficulty of explaining the independent existence
and activity of the conscious self, for the self is not an idea nor an
object of internal observation. One can explain it only by thinking
the ego to be conscious of its activity only when that activity is
opposed, or when effort is needed. We know that an effortless
action arouses no consciousness, therefore effort lies at the root
of consciousness, and behind the sense of effort in the ego lies
impulse or desire. If so, then effort implies desire and opposition
to that desire.

Whatever view we take, we seem compelled to admit that all
our experience of phenomena is due to some form of action from
without upon our minds. The materialist says this action is due to things in themselves, and that the stream of consciousness within us accompanies the brain processes, much as a shadow accompanies an object in the sun; to such a man, Nature is as the curious, orderly marks on this printed page, the order, regularity and continuity of the printing being due to the interaction of the black marks among themselves, a chance collocation of atoms endowed with properties which have to be explained. Admittedly, one does not accept this, but rather thinks this ultimate reality to be mind, a Supreme Mind, of which our human minds give us a faint adumbration. Suppose we take the example of a printed page; we can read and understand the human thoughts expressed on that page, because we have something in common with the writer of the page, and that something is mind. The printed words do not enable us to see the author, nor do they in any way resemble him; but the printed signs are intelligible because our intelligence is related to his intelligence. And so the mental signs which the phenomena of Nature present to us are not the real world, for that, being the world of the Supreme Mind, is inaccessible to us. But those signs reveal order and purpose, and we can more or less imperfectly interpret those signs because they are an expression of an intelligence which is related to our intelligence, and can communicate with our minds. We see ourselves, therefore, as parts of a larger whole and we realize that that which is within each of us is the recognition, the development and the manifestation of the greater life within.

IV.

A newspaper paragraph arrested one's attention the other day. It was to the effect that someone, I think Marconi, had perfected an instrument or means whereby people could see through some two or three feet of brick wall. In these days it would be rash to say or even think such an attainment is impossible, but the whimsicalities associated with the very suggestion of it were irresistible. The first thought was, shall we welcome any ability to look through solid walls? To most of us it will be of doubtful and embarrassing applicability, especially as it might be used for unworthy purposes, and, in the hands of degraded persons, be employed in a manner that we should condemn. If we are to be able to see through brick walls, it will be within practical politics to look round corners, and then surely our later state will be indeed worse than our first. Of
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course, looking right through a wall is a more straightforward procedure than looking round a corner, but both suggest prying and spying. We doctors are all familiar with X-rays, and know how it is possible to see through a man's skin and flesh and look at the actual condition of his bones. Odd as it may seem, but I well recall a case when a man flatly refused to submit to the X-ray process on the plea that his bones and insides were private and not to be looked at by doctors or anyone else. True that was in the early days of that discovery, but it might find many echoes nowadays if we could walk about the streets using the X-rays and looking right into people.

Suppose we ever do come to be able to see through walls, let us hope that it will be incapable of being used in any free and easy manner, for if not, away goes all privacy. Many readers of this Journal are married, let such a reader think of himself at his club or perhaps dining à deux at a restaurant, when he wished it to be supposed that he was attending a meeting of some learned society. What would become of that sense of security which he has hitherto enjoyed if he knows that anyone, who wants to discover him, can look through the wall and see him flagrante delicto? One might give other examples which suggest not only domestic but other storms; the very thought raises many shudders.

The present-day efficiency of the telescope and field glass is notorious, and, though perhaps not going so far as to warrant a claim to read a letter at long range, still with a potential invention by which you can look through a two-foot thick brick wall in prospect the outlook is disturbing. We shall all have to write with invisible ink, and even that precaution would not provide a complete safeguard. To begin with, the use of invisible ink very properly arouses the suspicion of the authorities; but, apart from that, a message written in invisible ink cannot serve any purpose until the writing is made visible, and then, of course, the hypothetical danger is as great as ever. Undoubtedly there is much writing that would be better left invisible for all time, while some may urge that it would be better not to write at all, than to write that which can never be seen; but, as readers of this Journal know, some men have a mania for writing, apparently for the mere joy of the thing. Without being too pessimistic, one is unable to repress a fear that, if this reading through brick walls apparatus matures, some other restless inventor will scheme out an appliance by which men will be able to read each other's secret thoughts; truly, when that day comes, life will be made intolerable, tempered
only by the circumstance that everyone will, in self-defence, have to be sincere. Many of us have read the story of Judith Lee and her powers of lip-reading. If the world contains many more like her it will indeed be a case of not knowing where we are, because there will be little secrecy and certainly no privacy.

V.

On a recent railway journey, my only fellow-traveller for many miles was a citizen of the Great Republic. He was an interesting and much informed man, but one whose mentality was warped by the importance of wealth. In that respect he stood not alone in this world, but, after he had left the carriage, one could not help thinking over the mystery of wealth and the varied aspects suggested by the love of money. One recalled the cynical remark of Dr. Johnson, wherein he said that men are never more innocently employed than when they are making money. But he might, with equal truth, have added that they are never more naturally employed. To make money, or at least try to, and leave it to their children, is as natural to men as to make love and beget children; and it is safe to say that no force can prevent it.

In the eyes of some people the love of money is the root of all evil; certainly it is the root of some evil, but it can hardly be the root of all evil, for it is only one perverse passion out of many. There is, however, a kind of respectability about money which makes the love of it peculiarly insidious and dangerous, since it conceals from the lover the nature and effects of his passion. If a man wants too much food we call him greedy; if a woman wants too many clothes she is evidently vain; but money is not a thing like food or clothes, that can be enjoyed by itself; it is only a means of getting the things that can be enjoyed, consequently desire for money is really an indirect greed. We may regard it as a civilized means of conducting the struggle for existence, which to a great extent conceals from those who use money the ugliness of that struggle. Another way of regarding it is to call it a kind of diplomacy, politely conducted, behind which there is war; but the diplomats do not see the war. They deal only in documents, and they are not aware, except at second hand, what all those pieces of paper and the struggle about them mean to the mass of men. Most of us know one or more very rich men who are greedy for wealth, but it is doubtful whether those men are really greedy for all the things that money will buy. Although money keeps its
actual power and is prized for that, most of those wealthy men, in their own minds, divorce it from its real meaning. To them money is, or becomes, a mere symbol of something more romantic than it is; it inflames their imagination and the imagination of a great part of the poorer world too, as being or contributing a personal quality in the man who possesses it, and not merely a means of buying material things.

We all know that wealth can be used for great and noble purposes, but the man who is greedy for money does not usually want to use it for such purposes. More often than not, he does not want to buy an excessive number of material things; his greed has become abstract and is a desire for a symbol, quite forgetting what the symbol means. Further, this curious greed for a symbol spreads among people who are not otherwise greedy. The respectability of money wraps itself round them and conceals from them the character and results of their inordinate desire. They see only lists of securities, not heaps of gold; and even if they do quarrel about money with someone else, perhaps equally greedy for it, there is no open scrambling, but only a very decorously conducted lawsuit. All the winner knows is that he has got judgment in his favour, which means that he acquires a certain number of material things from his opponent. But it does not mean all that to him, but rather a kind of justification conveying to him a moral and legal right to own the money he gets through it.

These things are plainer to us in this time of war, because we now see greed for money as it really is, and we no longer reverence a rich man simply on account of his wealth and what he might do with it; we have other tests forced upon us. We judge a man for what he does, not for what he might do; that is, we value his personal qualities rather than his possessions. All our experiences tell us that a man may be poor, not because he is a weakling, but because he cares for other things than wealth. The question is, shall we all remember this when peace comes again? Though we know that so and so is a rich man, we must ever base our judgments of him by what he does rather than on what he has; and the great hindrance in so exercising our judgment is the reverence for money. The millionaire who amasses wealth for perhaps a posthumous charity is an inferior man to the simple soldier who gains a V.C. Of them, we may well say, “That low man seeks a little thing to do, sees it and does it; the high man, with a great thing to pursue, dies ere he knows it.” The reverence for money hides from us our own avarice and the avarice of others; it spreads a fog of
respectability where there ought to be no obscurity at all; it makes us think there is peace where there is war.

One curious fact shows, further, that we do unconsciously reverence money more than the things we buy with it. Thus, you can give a man anything except money without affecting your relations with him. This suggests that money is more sacred than other kinds of material possessions; it is difficult to say why. Possibly, the reason is, that money differs from other possessions in that it is a means of getting them, and that while you have money you keep a power of choice, because you have not chosen. If so, then the stealing of money or the giving of money is a stealing or giving of a power of choice, and this power seems to us more sacred than any of the things that can be chosen. It is a curious attitude, but we reverence undoubtedly the man who has a great deal of this power, partly because he has not yet selected, and partly because he might select well, generously or, as we think, nobly. Unfortunately, the satisfaction of the thought is discounted by the conviction that the man who can ennoble money is not he who is greedy of it, and of the power of choice which it conveys, but he who cares very little for it. One has compared the struggle or greed for wealth to a war; in so thinking, it may do us all good by opening and keeping open our eyes to the nature of the other and material war.

VI.

The conversation at mess one evening drifted to the problem of the waste of manhood in the present war and how it will affect all the nations concerned for a considerable time afterwards. As might be expected, in such an assembly, many of the views and arguments expressed were crude and lacking a clear insight or knowledge of the facts, but the conversation was interesting, if only as an index of how non-medical people were thinking. Naturally, one took a prominent part in the discussion and, afterwards, could not help reflecting upon the subject. As the matter is one which concerns us intimately, it may be useful to others if one outlines the main theme as it presented itself.

We have to recognize that war, with all its horrors, does mankind one service, and that is, it brings them back to realities. It teaches us how thin is our veneer of civilization, and sometimes recalls us to a recollection of matters fundamental to the existence of the State. In primitive communities, even among savages, the care of the children of the clan is bound up with the question of
the defence of the whole tribe. The primitive ruler regards every child as a potential warrior or mother of warriors; hence, even in the rudest tribes, some attention is given to the subject, and even among races which practise infanticide the cruel custom is relaxed in time of war. So, to-day, we in the van of civilization find ourselves as a nation once more considering the old fundamental question from the primitive standpoint. War has awakened us to a need which has too long been neglected, the need of reducing our grievous infant mortality.

So far as Britain is concerned the chief effect of the war will be the depletion of the manhood of the upper and middle classes, because of the selective death-rate among officers. This fact does not involve the view that the future generation will be the children of stay-at-homes and slackers. That view leaves the mothers out of account, and though the men are being killed, the women are not. Of course, to a great extent, the nation must be replenished from the lower orders of society, but after all, that has been happening for a long time. The average number of children in the better families is two, whereas the average family of the casual labourer is six. To keep up the proportion of a particular class, probably an average of four is needed. It is incorrect to assume that a family of two will replace the parents, since allowance has to be made for non-marrying members of these families and the wastage from early deaths. The reasons for the small family system are not merely economic. They are partly physical, arising from the increasing sensitiveness to pain, and are found strongest among the well-to-do. So much has this movement of selfishness spread, that the upper middle classes have been dividing themselves in half since the late 'seventies, and the limitation of families has now reached some of the prosperous artisans. It is curious to observe how certain trades are affected; among some types of skilled workmen we can now look only for small families, whereas men in other occupations, such as miners, are still conspicuous for the full quiver.

Apart from the extension of neo-malthusianism and the false ethics which it postulates, the steady falling of our birth-rate and the impending rise in our death-rate give cause for serious reflection. To appreciate the gravity of the question, we need to realize that the fall in the death-rate, which for a number of years had sufficed to compensate for that in the birth-rate, has now ceased to do so, and it seems only too apparent that a period of definitely lower natural increases than those of even the recent past has commenced.
Since 1901, owing largely to an increased proportion of old people in the population as a result of the decreased birth-rate, the age constitution of the whole population has become definitely less favourable, and as this change progresses it will, to an increasing extent, tend to increase the crude death-rate, and so to diminish natural increase. One often wonders how many people realize how rapidly we are becoming a nation of old people. One is writing without reference to books, but speaking from a fairly accurate memory, it may be accepted as true that, in the decade ending 1911, the population of England and Wales increased by 11 per cent; the population over fifty, however, increased by nearly 21 per cent; this means that the elder people are increasing twice as fast as the whole population. The latest emigration rate is six per thousand, and if this continues with a present birth-rate of twenty-three per thousand, we only require a rise of three points in the death-rate to bring about a stationary population. These are both suggestive and serious facts and, at the present crisis in our history, nothing could be more disastrous than to ignore or soften their meaning; neither can we encourage the view that neo-malthusianism is beneficial to a country, nor that the practice has either scientific support or statistical evidence in its favour. Further, it is unfortunately true that in all our large cities there is an appalling waste of human life, as indicated by an infant mortality rate which shows that 13 per cent of children born die within the first year of life. Clearly the remedy is not to prevent children being born, but to provide a healthy environment for mothers, and to ensure that children are born and reared in wholesome surroundings. Whatever political party may be in power after this war, improvement of the health of the people must be regarded as the most urgent task of the future; apart from other important considerations, our national safety will demand it as compensation for the falling birth-rate. There seems no need for pessimism, but there is a need to look the facts in the face.

To those who may be alarmed about the future, one feels tempted to point out that the elimination of the better social stock is no new phenomenon. The upper classes have always died out, and they represent the best fighting stock. That has happened all through history; it happened during the Wars of the Roses, which practically wiped out the last of the Norman nobility. In the Middle Ages also many of the best intellects of the nation declined parental responsibilities, for they sought the study or the cloister. There is, however, one very important difference from the biological
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standpoint between this war and previous wars. The losses of women and children will not be as great. Likewise, disease is so much under control that the mortality from that cause will reach nothing like the same proportion as in the wars of past generations. Further, we must remember that the women are just as capable of transmitting the valuable qualities of the race as the men. Some of the forecasts we have had presented concerning the problems likely to arise from the surplus of women after the War seem exaggerated; personally, one does not think we shall lose half a million men altogether. In all probability, we shall all be poorer after the War, but that may lessen luxury and selfishness, leading to a recovery in the birth-rate, since when people are poorer their families are larger. The question is, how far social tendencies, now prevalent, will continue when the War is over. The encouragement of early marriages and the re-casting of some social and legal ordinances, affecting the status of women, might have a stimulating effect on the birth-rate. These, then, have been one's thoughts; they may be neither profound nor very original, still they may be of use if only they arouse interest in what constitutes a serious and difficult problem for us as a nation. The flower of our manhood is being carried away on the tide of War; it is for us to see that the race continues quantitatively and qualitatively efficient for our imperial needs.

VII.

A perusal of the daily casualty lists and the noting of deaths, both at sea and on land, of intimate and valued friends raises many sad and serious reflections. Some recent personal incidents of the kind have prompted thoughts which may find an echo in the minds of others similarly circumstanced. War on the land leaves the havoc of its passage bitten into the face of the country. We can feel that the earth, mother-like, agonizes with us for a time, though her scars are far sooner healed than our own. It is the way of Nature to forget; she tells us plainly thereby that it is ours, not hers, to remember. Whether we all do remember, is doubtful; perhaps, only for a time. No matter if some do forget; those that do remember can surely ever feel that all those corners of foreign fields, where lie our honoured dead, are in their way so many bits of Britain. For does not that rich earth conceal a richer earth, or rather a dust which our own land bore, shaped and made aware? Surely so, and what is more, can we not think that somewhere in the eternal mind there beats a pulse or vibration which gives back
the thoughts by Britain given? I own that I think so myself, and get some consolation from it.

When we think of those who have met their end in the sea, the application of the same thought becomes more difficult, but should not be so. Our difficulties in respect of the sea and all it has taken lie surely in the fact that drowning by the ocean leaves no vestige upon the scene. We all feel the cold, unconquerable callousness of the sea, which can swallow up so much human life and agony, and yet a moment later lie calm and smiling beneath the sun. It is all so different from the land, whose green or brown waves surge more slowly and, as it seems to us, more mercifully over the scene of our tragedies than the crisp, laughing rollers that close over a "Goliath" or a "Majestic." The lesson Nature teaches here is, that it is ours, not hers, to remember and, curiously enough, sailors have the longest memories of their drowned friends and shipmates. There is more than this to take to heart. Are smooth aspects or smiling promises to lull our race to forgetfulness, once this War is over? Surely, the lesson of the soulless ocean will ever be before us. A day will come when we shall be asked to forgive and forget; but, if we are wise, we shall know that forgiveness is one thing and forgetting another. Even as the sea in a few minutes, and the soil in a season or so, wipes out the evidence of wrong and horror, so the mind of man yields, in due time, to the obliterator influence of Nature. But with the horrors of existing events before us, we must be careful, in so yielding, that we do not abandon too readily the heritage of thought which is our hard-won grip upon the fleeting skirts of Time. The memory of a warfare that knows no sacredness, that kills blindly for results at any cost of honour, and from a mere lust of frustrated dominance, will and must be cherished; not in rancour, but as a safeguard of the future. Even before forgiveness can be thought of, all the reparation that can then be given, alas too late, will be due to humanity and not to ourselves. These thoughts are not the spirit of the earth or land and still less so of the sea, but they are those of human nature betrayed. It is that betrayal which makes the events of our day not to be forgotten or sunk under placid waves with the first promise of clear skies. One writes in a moment of grief and horror, but desirous to see things in due perspective; surely, the true lesson from the sea and land, which cover and hold our dead, is that, before we accept peace, we must be sure that it is not the tropical calm that brews the morrow's storm, and that the perversion of a nation's soul is sunk for ever, not merely submerged.
VIII.

Present circumstances compel one to rise very early and, as a man who for the greater part of life has been accustomed to rise late, one is impressed with the curious new sense of well-being associated with the new habit, and the strange development of a love for the morning which carries with it a feeling of comradeship with birds and animals around. One is not going to write a homily on early rising, but, thinking this over, one is tempted to note how many of us are not only creatures of habit but also victims of certain prejudices in regard to time periods. How many of us enjoy the middle of the night? To most it is a time of anxiety or weariness and associated with a wish to be unconscious of it. Where sleep is concerned, one hour before midnight is supposed to be worth two after it, yet few of us feel that the hours before noon are worth double those which follow between then and midnight. Only a few feel a recurrent sense of pleasure which, to some, seldom fails to accompany their first consciousness of light. The awaking at dawn, to such persons, is as a restoration to life and power and thought, and is associated probably with an unconscious detestation of the dark. This pleasant sense of waking is held to be an index of good health, and most early risers eat a good breakfast. But this class of men are not usually genial or gregarious and, oddly enough, in spite of the cheery outlook with which they contemplate the coming day, their temperamental thermometer falls with the day, and by bedtime they look upon the world with other eyes. Then there is the converse class of man; he who loathes the dawn and, a veritable child of the sunset, is a churl at breakfast. As the day goes on, his fellow-creatures reconcile him to the world. We all know the type and how they want to sit up and put off the moment of going to bed. These people do not seem to care much for life for life's sake, but only for what it has to give. Representatives of these two classes of men live in mess with me now, and one is inclined to think that there is something more civilized and rather higher about the point of view of the man who wakes unhappy but ends his day by finding the world too interesting to leave at orthodox bedtime. That type is undoubtedly a bore and nuisance to the weary, but he is ever with us.

Then, again, there are our little weaknesses and prejudices about days of the week. How many can truly say that Friday is their lucky or favourite day on which to cut their nails or begin an enterprise? I recall a dame who was always called "Friday-
faced Jane," simply because she was sour-looking. Although the week is an arbitrary division of time, free of the subtle influence of the moon, yet most people have a favourite weekday. My wife, for instance, attaches great importance to Tuesday, but what the reason is I have never been able to find out. Few people express a preference for Monday, and generally that day has a bad name. Many have heard of the old joke about the second day in the week being kept as a fast after indiscretions in eating and drinking on the Sabbath. Even the clergy are wont to speak of feeling "Mondayish," as expressing the weariness and reaction following a hard day's series of services on the Sunday, and Kipling has described a headache as a Monday head. Possibly, the modern antipathy to a Monday has been emphasized for many by the circumstance that it is settling day for many household accounts and, to those who indulge in betting, the settling up with a bookmaker for the rash and unrealized anticipations of the previous week. Then there is Sunday itself; a time was when that day was dull to a degree and, even now, in some families marked by a "Friday-faced" gloom. For the many, any bitter gravity attaching to the Sunday belongs to the past, but to the thoughtful the hope exists that the reactionary tendency to liken it to other days has reached a limit. In the present day, it is a day of leisure and pleasure, tempered by opportunities for public worship which are free from any shadow of moral or other compulsion. It breaks the monotony of life for the working classes and undoubtedly exercises a democratic influence, for on that day we don our better clothes and think we all look alike. Again, there is the fact that the majority of people have a good dinner on the Sunday; one cannot help thinking that it might be better if the money, which goes in Sunday clothes and meals, went to improve the quality of some workaday garments or were spent on better daily dinners, but antagonistic to this common-sense view is the prevalent philosophy that it is preferable to be very comfortable sometimes than a little less uncomfortable always. To myself, as a Nature lover, the chief charm of a Sunday lies in the circumstance that the streets are less crowded and the atmosphere is clearer. What this latter fact means will be obvious to all who have lived in a manufacturing area.

Of the months, one's folk-lore knowledge is small, but hardly anyone likes January and very few people have a good word to say for November. Why it should be thought unlucky to marry in May is one of those conundrums yet to be solved. There are
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a few people who tell one that they like winter better than summer. To me, they are eccentrics and comparable with those who never feel so happy as when they are sitting snug over the fire and a bitter blast raging outside; those are the type of people who cannot enjoy being at ease unless they are sure that they are more at ease than somebody else. Thinking of seasons makes one think of our own lifetime periods. When we were schoolboys the custom was to assure us that it was the happiest stage of our earthly existence. With a stiff piece of Greek construe staring one in the face, backed by the certain imposition of so many lines to write or memorize, or perhaps a birching if the task were badly done, even the cheeriest and most irresponsible of boys found it difficult to accept unreservedly such a dictum. What do some of us think now? I am not so sure but that some of us in our hearts do now think that, after all, boyhood was our best time. We really had no worries then and had given no hostages to fortune. The verdict in this case will depend largely on individual experiences; probably the greater number will be found to admit that middle age is the best time of life; certainly in calm weather. Unfortunately, the weather of middle age is seldom calm for long together. The summer of life too often resembles the summer of our homeland, and resolves itself into a few fine days and a thunderstorm, but, even so, we are bound to admit that the fine days are very pleasant, almost as pleasant as spring, and only marred by their paucity. Some old men assure us that old age is the happiest time of life; perhaps so, and we can but hope that our own old age may be in accord with that assurance. As to these uncertainties, it is no use worrying; the only thing to do is to do one's best, confident in the belief that the knowledge that one has played the game throughout will bring its own reward.