

CHAPTER X - THE ENDLESS EMPIRE

One of the adventures of travel consists, not so much in finding that popular sayings are false, as that they mean more than they say. We cannot appreciate the full force of the phrase until we have seen the fact. We make a picture of the things we do not know out of the things we know; and suppose the traveller's tale to mean no more abroad than it would at home. If a man acquainted only with English churches is told about certain French churches that they are much frequented, he makes an English picture. He imagines a definite dense crowd of people in their best clothes going all together at eleven o'clock, and all coming back together to lunch. He does not picture the peculiar impression he would gain on the spot; of chance people going in and out of the church all day, sometimes for quite short periods, as if it were a sort of sacred inn. Or suppose a man knowing only English beer-shops hears for the first time of a German beer-garden, he probably does not imagine the slow ritual of the place. He does not know that unless the drinker positively slams down the top of his beer-mug with a resounding noise and a decisive gesture, beer will go on flowing into it as from a natural fountain; the drinking of beer being regarded as the normal state of man, and the cessation of it a decisive and even dramatic departure. I do not give this example in contempt; heaven forbid. I have had so much to say of the inhuman side of Prussianised Germany that I am glad to be able to pay a passing tribute to those more generous German traditions which we hope may revive and make Germany once more a part of Christendom. I merely give it as an instance of the way in which things we have all heard of, like church-going or beer-drinking, in foreign lands, mean much more, and something much more special, than we should infer from our own land. Now this is true of a phrase we have all heard of deserted cities or temples in the Near East: "The Bedouins camp in the ruins." When I have read a hundred times that Arabs camp in some deserted town or temple near the Nile or the Euphrates, I always thought of gipsies near some place like Stonehenge. They would make their own rude shelter near the stones, perhaps sheltering behind them to light a fire; and for the rest, generations of gipsies might camp there without making much difference. The thing I saw more than once in Egypt and Palestine was much more curious. It was as if the gipsies set to work to refurbish Stonehenge and make it a commodious residence. It was as if they spread a sort of giant umbrella over the circle of stones, and elaborately hung curtains between them, so as to turn the old Druid temple into a sort of patchwork pavilion. In one sense there is much more vandalism, and in another sense much more practicality; but it is a practicality that always stops short of the true creative independence of going off and building a house of their own. That is the attitude of the Arab; and it runs through all his history. Noble as is his masterpiece of the Mosque of Omar, there is something about it of that

patchwork pavilion. It was based on Christian work, it was built with fragments, it was content with things that fastidious architects call fictions or even shams.

I frequently saw old ruined houses of which there only remained two walls of stone, to which the nomads had added two walls of canvas making an exact cube in form with the most startling incongruity in colour. He needs the form and he does not mind the incongruity, nor does he mind the fact that somebody else has done the solid part and he has only done the ramshackle part. You can say that he is nobly superior to jealousy, or that he is without artistic ambition, or that he is too much of a nomad to mind living half in somebody else's house and half in his own. The real quality is probably too subtle for any simple praise or blame; we can only say that there is in the wandering Moslem a curious kind of limited common sense; which might even be called a short-sighted common sense. But however we define it, that is what can really be traced through Arab conquests and Arab culture in all its ingenuity and insufficiency. That is the note of these nomads in all the things in which they have succeeded and failed. In that sense they are constructive and in that sense unconstructive; in that sense artistic and in that sense inartistic; in that sense practical and in that sense unpractical; in that sense cunning and in that sense innocent. The curtains they would hang round Stonehenge might be of beautifully selected colours. The banners they waved from Stonehenge might be defended with glorious courage and enthusiasm. The prayers they recited in Stonehenge might be essentially worthy of human dignity, and certainly a great improvement on its older associations of human sacrifice. All this is true of Islam and the idolatries and negations are often replaced. But they would not have built Stonehenge; they would scarcely, so to speak, have troubled to lift a stone of Stonehenge. They would not have built Stonehenge; how much less Salisbury or Glastonbury or Lincoln.

That is the element about the Arab influence which makes it, after its ages of supremacy and in a sense of success, remain in a subtle manner superficial. When a man first sees the Eastern deserts, he sees this influence as I first described it, very present and powerful, almost omnipresent and omnipotent. But I fancy that to me and to others it is partly striking only because it is strange. Islam is so different to Christendom that to see it at all is at first like entering a new world. But, in my own case at any rate, as the strange colours became more customary, and especially as I saw more of the established seats of history, the cities and the framework of the different states, I became conscious of something else. It was something underneath, undestroyed and even in a sense unaltered. It was something neither Moslem nor modern; not merely oriental and yet very different from the new occidental nations from which I came. For a long time I could not put a name to this historical atmosphere. Then one day, standing in one of the Greek churches, one of those houses of gold full of hard highly coloured pictures, I fancied it came to me. It was the Empire. And certainly not

the raid of Asiatic bandits we call the Turkish Empire. The thing which had caught my eye in that coloured interior was the carving of a two-headed eagle in such a position as to make it almost as symbolic as a cross. Every one has heard, of course, of the situation which this might well suggest, the suggestion that the Russian Church was far too much of an Established Church and the White Czar encroached upon the White Christ. But as a fact the eagle I saw was not borrowed from the Russian Empire; it would be truer to say that the Empire was borrowed from the eagle. The double eagle is the ancient emblem of the double empire of Rome and of Byzantium; the one head looking to the west and the other to the east, as if it spread its wings from the sunrise to the sunset. Unless I am mistaken, it was only associated with Russia as late as Peter the Great, though it had been the badge of Austria as the representative of the Holy Roman Empire. And what I felt brooding over that shrine and that landscape was something older not only than Turkey or Russia but than Austria itself. I began to understand a sort of evening light that lies over Palestine and Syria; a sense of smooth ruts of custom such as are said to give a dignity to the civilisation of China. I even understood a sort of sleepiness about the splendid and handsome Orthodox priests moving fully robed about the streets. They were not aristocrats but officials; still moving with the mighty routine of some far-off official system. In so far as the eagle was an emblem not of such imperial peace but of distant imperial wars, it was of wars that we in the West have hardly heard of; it was the emblem of official ovations.

When Heracleius rode homewards from the rout of Ispahan With the captives dragged behind him and the eagles in the van.

That is the rigid reality that still underlay the light mastery of the Arab rider; that is what a man sees, in the patchwork pavilion, when he grows used to the coloured canvas and looks at the walls of stone. This also was far too great a thing for facile praise or blame, a vast bureaucracy busy and yet intensely dignified, the most civilised thing ruling many other civilisations. It was an endless end of the world; for ever repeating its rich finality. And I myself was still walking in that long evening of the earth; and Caesar my lord was at Byzantium.

But it is necessary to remember next that this empire was not always at its evening. Byzantium was not always Byzantine. Nor was the seat of that power always in the city of Constantine, which was primarily a mere outpost of the city of Caesar. We must remember Rome as well as Byzantium; as indeed nobody would remember Byzantium if it were not for Rome. The more I saw of a hundred little things the more my mind revolved round that original idea which may be called the Mediterranean; and the fact that it became two empires, but remained one civilisation, just as it has become two churches, but remained one religion.

In this little world there is a story attached to every word; and never more than when it is the wrong word. For instance, we may say that in certain cases the word Roman actually means Greek. The Greek Patriarch is sometimes called the Roman Patriarch; while the real Roman Patriarch, who actually comes from Rome, is only called the Latin Patriarch, as if he came from any little town in Latium. The truth behind this confusion is the truth about five hundred very vital years, which are concealed even from cultivated Englishmen by two vague falsehoods; the notion that the Roman Empire was merely decadent and the notion that the Middle Ages were merely dark. As a fact, even the Dark Ages were not merely dark. And even the Byzantine Empire was not merely Byzantine. It seems a little unfair that we should take the very title of decay from that Christian city, for surely it was yet more stiff and sterile when it had become a Moslem city. I am not so exacting as to ask any one to popularise such a word as "Constantinopolitan." But it would surely be a better word for stiffness and sterility to call it Stamboulish. But for the Moslems and other men of the Near East what counted about Byzantium was that it still inherited the huge weight of the name of Rome. Rome had come east and reared against them this Roman city, and though and priest or soldier who came out of it might be speaking as a Greek, he was ruling as a Roman. Its critics in these days of criticism may regard it as a corrupt civilisation. But its enemies in the day of battle only regarded it as civilisation. Saladin, the greatest of the Saracens, did not call Greek bishops degenerate dreamers or dingy outcasts, he called them, with a sounder historical instinct, "The monks of the imperial race." The survival of the word merely means that even when the imperial city fell behind them, they did not surrender their claim to defy all Asia in the name of the Christian Emperor. That is but one example out of twenty, but that is why in this distant place to this day the Greeks who are separated from the see of Rome sometimes bear the strange name of "The Romans."

Now that civilisation is our civilisation, and we never had any other. We have not inherited a Teutonic culture any more than a Druid culture; not half so much. The people who say that parliaments or pictures or gardens or roads or universities were made by the Teutonic race from the north can be disposed of by the simple question: why did not the Teutonic race make them in the north? Why was not the Parthenon originally built in the neighbourhood of Potsdam, or did ten Hansa towns compete to be the birthplace of Homer? Perhaps they do by this time; but their local illusion is no longer largely shared. Anyhow it seems strange that the roads of the Romans should be due to the inspiration of the Teutons; and that parliaments should begin in Spain because they came from Germany. If I looked about in these parts for a local emblem like that of the eagle, I might very well find it in the lion. The lion is common enough, of course, in Christian art both hagiological and heraldic. Besides the cavern of Bethlehem of which I shall speak presently, is the cavern of St. Jerome, where he lived with that real or

legendary lion who was drawn by the delicate humour of Carpaccio and a hundred other religious painters. That it should appear in Christian art is natural; that it should appear in Moslem art is much more singular, seeing that Moslems are in theory forbidden so to carve images of living things. Some say the Persian Moslems are less particular; but whatever the explanation, two lions of highly heraldic appearance are carved over that Saracen gate which Christians call the gate of St. Stephen; and the best judges seem to agree that, like so much of the Saracenic shell of Zion, they were partly at least copied from the shields and crests of the Crusaders.

And the lions graven over the gate of St. Stephen might well be the text for a whole book on the subject. For if they indicate, however indirectly, the presence of the Latins of the twelfth century, they also indicate the earlier sources from which the Latin life had itself been drawn. The two lions are pacing, passant as the heralds would say, in two opposite directions almost as if prowling to and fro. And this also might well be symbolic as well as heraldic. For if the Crusaders brought the lion southward in spite of the conventional fancy of Moslem decoration, it was only because the Romans had previously brought the lion northward to the cold seas and the savage forests. The image of the lion came from north to south, only because the idea of the lion had long ago come from south to north. The Christian had a symbolic lion he had never seen, and the Moslem had a real lion that he refused to draw. For we could deduce from the case of this single creature the fact that all our civilisation came from the Mediterranean, and the folly of pretending that it came from the North Sea. Those two heraldic shapes over the gate may be borrowed from the Norman or Angevin shield now quartered in the Royal Arms of England. They may have been copied, directly or indirectly, from that great Angevin King of England whose title credited him with the heart of a lion. They may have in some far-off fashion the same ancestry as the boast or jest of our own comic papers when they talk about the British Lion. But why are there lions, though of French or feudal origin, on the flag of England? There might as well be camels or crocodiles, for all the apparent connection with England or with France. Why was an English king described as having the heart of a lion, any more than of a tiger? Why do your patriotic cartoons threaten the world with the wrath of the British Lion; it is really as strange as if they warned it against stimulating the rage of the British rhinoceros. Why did not the French and English princes find in the wild boars, that were the objects of their hunting, the subjects of their heraldry? If the Normans were really the Northmen, the sea-wolves of Scandinavian piracy, why did they not display three wolves on their shields? Why has not John Bull been content with the English bull, or the English bull-dog?

The answer might be put somewhat defiantly by saying that the very name of John Bull is foreign. The surname comes through France from Rome; and the

Christian name comes through Rome from Palestine. If there had really been any justification for the Teutonic generalisation, we should expect the surname to be "ox" and not "bull"; and we should expect the hero standing as godfather to be Odin or Siegfried, and not the prophet who lived on locusts in the wilderness of Palestine or the mystic who mused with his burning eyes on the blue seas around Patmos. If our national hero is John Bull and not Olaf the Ox, it is ultimately because that blue sea has run like a blue thread through all the tapestries of our traditions; or in other words because our culture, like that of France or Flanders, came originally from the Mediterranean. And if this is true of our use of the word "bull," it is obviously even truer of our use of the word "lion." The later emblem is enough to show that the culture came, not only from the Mediterranean, but from the southern as well as the northern side of the Mediterranean. In other words, the Roman Empire ran all round the great inland sea; the very name of which meant, not merely the sea in the middle of the land, but more especially the sea in the middle of all the lands that mattered most to civilisation. One of these, and the one that in the long run has mattered most of all, was Palestine.

In this lies the deepest difference between a man like Richard the Lion Heart and any of the countless modern English soldiers in Palestine who have been quite as lion-hearted as he. His superiority was not moral but intellectual; it consisted in knowing where he was and why he was there. It arose from the fact that in his time there remained a sort of memory of the Roman Empire, which some would have re-established as a Holy Roman Empire. Christendom was still almost one commonwealth; and it seemed to Richard quite natural to go from one edge of it that happened to be called England to the opposite edge of it that happened to be called Palestine. We may think him right or wrong in the particular quarrel, we may think him innocent or unscrupulous in his incidental methods; but there is next to no doubt whatever that he did regard himself not merely as conquering but as re-conquering a realm. He was not like a man attacking total strangers on a hitherto undiscovered island. He was not opening up a new country, or giving his name to a new continent, and he could boast none of those ideals of imperial innovation which inspire the more enlightened pioneers, who exterminate tribes or extinguish republics for the sake of a gold-mine or an oil-field. Some day, if our modern educational system is further expanded and enforced, the whole of the past of Palestine may be entirely forgotten; and a traveller in happier days may have all the fresher sentiments of one stepping on a new and nameless soil. Disregarding any dim and lingering legends among the natives, he may then have the honour of calling Sinai by the name of Mount Higgins, or marking on a new map the site of Bethlehem with the name of Brownsville. But King Richard, adventurous as he was, could not experience the full freshness of this sort of adventure. He was not riding into Asia thus romantically and at random; indeed he was not riding into Asia at all. He was riding into Europa Irredenta.

But that is to anticipate what happened later and must be considered later. I am primarily speaking of the Empire as a pagan and political matter; and it is easy to see what was the meaning of the Crusade on the merely pagan and political side. In one sentence, it meant that Rome had to recover what Byzantium could not keep. But something further had happened as affecting Rome than anything that could be understood by a man standing as I have imagined myself standing, in the official area of Byzantium. When I have said that the Byzantine civilisation seemed still to be reigning, I meant a curious impression that, in these Eastern provinces, though the Empire had been more defeated it has been less disturbed. There is a greater clarity in that ancient air; and fewer clouds of real revolution and novelty have come between them and their ancient sun. This may seem an enigma and a paradox; seeing that here a foreign religion has successfully fought and ruled. But indeed the enigma is also the explanation. In the East the continuity of culture has only been interrupted by negative things that Islam has done. In the West it has been interrupted by positive things that Christendom itself has done. In the West the past of Christendom has its perspective blocked up by its own creations; in the East it is a true perspective of interminable corridors, with round Byzantine arches and proud Byzantine pillars. That, I incline to fancy, is the real difference that a man come from the west of Europe feels in the east of Europe, it is a gap or a void. It is the absence of the grotesque energy of Gothic, the absence of the experiments of parliament and popular representation, the absence of medieval chivalry, the absence of modern nationality. In the East the civilisation lived on, or if you will, lingered on; in the West it died and was reborn. But for a long time, it should be remembered, it must have seemed to the East merely that it died. The realms of Rome had disappeared in clouds of barbaric war, while the realms of Byzantium were still golden and gorgeous in the sun. The men of the East did not realise that their splendour was stiffening and growing sterile, and even the early successes of Islam may not have revealed to them that their rule was not only stiff but brittle. It was something else that was destined to reveal it. The Crusades meant many things; but in this matter they meant one thing, which was like a word carried to them on the great west wind. And the word was like that in an old Irish song: "The west is awake." They heard in the distance the cries of unknown crowds and felt the earth shaking with the march of mobs; and behind them came the trampling of horses and the noise of harness and of horns of war; new kings calling out commands and hosts of young men full of hope crying out in the old Roman tongue "Id Deus vult," Rome was risen from the dead.

Almost any traveller could select out of the countless things that he has looked at the few things that he has seen. I mean the things that come to him with a curious clearness; so that he actually sees them to be what he knows them to be. I might almost say that he can believe in them although he has seen them. There can be no rule about this realisation; it seems to come in the most random

fashion; and the man to whom it comes can only speak for himself without any attempt at a critical comparison with others. In this sense I may say that the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem contains something impossible to describe, yet driving me beyond expression to a desperate attempt at description. The church is entered through a door so small that it might fairly be called a hole, in which many have seen, and I think truly, a symbol of some idea of humility. It is also said that the wall was pierced in this way to prevent the appearance of a camel during divine service, but even that explanation would only repeat the same suggestion through the parable of the needle's eye. Personally I should guess that, in so far as the purpose was practical, it was meant to keep out much more dangerous animals than camels, as, for instance, Turks. For the whole church has clearly been turned into a fortress, windows are bricked up and walls thickened in some or all of its thousand years of religious war. In the blank spaces above the little doorway hung in old times that strange mosaic of the Magi which once saved the holy place from destruction, in the strange interlude between the decline of Rome and the rise of Mahomet. For when the Persians who had destroyed Jerusalem rode out in triumph to the village of Bethlehem, they looked up and saw above the door a picture in coloured stone, a picture of themselves. They were following a strange star and worshipping an unknown child. For a Christian artist, following some ancient Eastern tradition containing an eternal truth, had drawn the three wise men with the long robes and high head-dresses of Persia. The worshippers of the sun had come westward for the worship of the star. But whether that part of the church were bare and bald as it is now or coloured with the gold and purple images of the Persians, the inside of the church would always be by comparison abruptly dark. As familiarity turns the darkness to twilight, and the twilight to a grey daylight, the first impression is that of two rows of towering pillars. They are of a dark red stone having much of the appearance of a dark red marble; and they are crowned with the acanthus in the manner of the Corinthian school. They were carved and set up at the command of Constantine; and beyond them, at the other end of the church beside the altar, is the dark stairway that descends under the canopies of rock to the stable where Christ was born.

Of all the things I have seen the most convincing, and as it were crushing, were these red columns of Constantine. In explanation of the sentiment there are a thousand things that want saying and cannot be said. Never have I felt so vividly the great fact of our history; that the Christian religion is like a huge bridge across a boundless sea, which alone connects us with the men who made the world, and yet have utterly vanished from the world. To put it curtly and very crudely on this point alone it was possible to sympathise with a Roman and not merely to admire him. All his pagan remains are but sublime fossils; for we can never know the life that was in them. We know that here and there was a temple to Venus or there an altar to Vesta; but who knows or pretends to know what he

really felt about Venus or Vesta? Was a Vestal Virgin like a Christian Virgin, or something profoundly different? Was he quite serious about Venus, like a diabolist, or merely frivolous about Venus, like a Christian? If the spirit was different from ours we cannot hope to understand it, and if the spirit was like ours, the spirit was expressed in images that no longer express it. But it is here that he and I meet; and salute the same images in the end.

In any case I can never recapture in words the waves of sympathy with strange things that went through me in that twilight of the tall pillars, like giants robed in purple, standing still and looking down into that dark hole in the ground. Here halted that imperial civilisation, when it had marched in triumph through the whole world; here in the evening of its days it came trailing in all its panoply in the pathway of the three kings. For it came following not only a falling but a fallen star and one that dived before them into a birthplace darker than a grave. And the lord of the laurels, clad in his sombre crimson, looked down into that darkness, and then looked up, and saw that all the stars in his own sky were dead. They were deities no longer but only a brilliant dust, scattered down the vain void of Lucretius. The stars were as stale as they were strong; they would never die for they had never lived; they were cursed with an incurable immortality that was but the extension of mortality; they were chained in the chains of causation and unchangeable as the dead. There are not many men in the modern world who do not know that mood, though it was not discovered by the moderns; it was the final and seemingly fixed mood of nearly all the ancients. Only above the black hole of Bethlehem they had seen a star wandering like a lost spark; and it had done what the eternal suns and planets could not do. It had disappeared.

There are some who resent the presence of such purple beside the plain stable of the Nativity. But it seems strange that they always rebuke it as if it were a blind vulgarity like the red plush of a parvenu; a mere insensibility to a mere incongruity. For in fact the insensibility is in the critics and not the artists. It is an insensibility not to an accidental incongruity but to an artistic contrast. Indeed it is an insensibility of a somewhat tiresome kind, which can often be noticed in those sceptics who make a science of folk-lore. The mark of them is that they fail to see the importance of finding the upshot or climax of a tale, even when it is a fairy-tale. Since the old devotional doctors and designers were never tired of insisting on the sufferings of the holy poor to the point of squalor, and simultaneously insisting on the sumptuousness of the subject kings to the point of swagger, it would really seem not entirely improbable that they may have been conscious of the contrast themselves. I confess this is an insensibility, not to say stupidity, in the sceptics and simplifiers, which I find very fatiguing. I do not mind a man not believing a story, but I confess I am bored stiff (if I may be allowed the expression) by a man who can tell a story without seeing the point of the story, considered as a story or even considered as a lie. And a man who sees

the rags and the royal purple as a clumsy inconsistency is merely missing the meaning of a deliberate design. He is like a man who should hear the story of King Cophetua and the beggar maid and say doubtfully that it was hard to recognise it as really a marriage de convenance; a phrase which (I may remark in parenthesis but not without passion) is not the French for "a marriage of convenience," any more than hors d'oeuvre is the French for "out of work"; but may be more rightly rendered in English as "a suitable match." But nobody thought the match of the king and the beggar maid conventionally a suitable match; and nobody would ever have thought the story worth telling if it had been. It is like saying that Diogenes, remaining in his tub after the offer of Alexander, must have been unaware of the opportunities of Greek architecture; or like saying that Nebuchadnezzar eating grass is clearly inconsistent with court etiquette, or not to be found in any fashionable cookery book. I do not mind the learned sceptic saying it is a legend or a lie; but I weep for him when he cannot see the gist of it, I might even say the joke of it. I do not object to his rejecting the story as a tall story; but I find it deplorable when he cannot see the point or end or upshot of the tall story, the very pinnacle or spire of that sublime tower.

This dull type of doubt clouds the consideration of many sacred things as it does that of the shrine of Bethlehem. It is applied to the divine reality of Bethlehem itself, as when sceptics still sneer at the littleness, the localism, the provincial particularity and obscurity of that divine origin; as if Christians could be confounded and silenced by a contrast which Christians in ten thousand hymns, songs and sermons have incessantly shouted and proclaimed. In this capital case, of course, the same principle holds. A man may think the tale is incredible; but it would never have been told at all if it had not been incongruous. But this particular case of the lesser contrast, that between the imperial pomp and the rustic poverty of the carpenter and the shepherds, is alone enough to illustrate the strange artistic fallacy involved. If it be the point that an emperor came to worship a carpenter, it is as artistically necessary to make the emperor imperial as to make the carpenter humble; if we wish to make plain to plain people that before this shrine kings are no better than shepherds, it is as necessary that the kings should have crowns as that the shepherds should have crooks. And if modern intellectuals do not know it, it is because nobody has really been mad enough even to try to make modern intellectualism popular. Now this conception of pomp as a popular thing, this conception of a concession to common human nature in colour and symbol, has a considerable bearing on many misunderstandings about the original enthusiasm that spread from the cave of Bethlehem over the whole Roman Empire. It is a curious fact that the moderns have mostly rebuked historic Christianity, not for being narrow, but for being broad. They have rebuked it because it did prove itself the desire of all nations, because it did satisfy the cravings of many creeds, because it did prove itself to idolaters as something as magic as their idols, or did prove itself to patriots

something as lovable as their native land. In many other matters indeed, besides this popular art, we may find examples of the same illogical prejudice. Nothing betrays more curiously the bias of historians against the Christian faith than the fact that they blame in Christians the very human indulgences that they have praised in heathens. The same arts and allegories, the same phraseologies and philosophies, which appear first as proofs of heathen health turn up later as proofs of Christian corruption. It was noble of pagans to be pagan, but it was unpardonable of Christians to be paganised. They never tire of telling us of the glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome, but the Church was infamous because it satisfied the Greek intellect and wielded the Roman power.

Now on the first example of the attempt of theology to meet the claims of philosophy I will not here dwell at length. I will only remark in passing that it is an utter fallacy to suggest, as for instance Mr. Wells suggests in his fascinating Outline of History, that the subtleties of theology were a mere falling away from the simplicities of religion. Religion may be better simple for those who find it simple; but there are bound to be many who in any case find it subtle, among those who think about it and especially those who doubt about it. To take an example, there is no saying which the humanitarians of a broad religion more commonly offer as a model of simplicity than that most mystical affirmation "God is Love." And there is no theological quarrel of the Councils of the Church which they, especially Mr. Wells, more commonly deride as bitter and barren than that at the Council of Nicea about the Co-eternity of the Divine Son. Yet the subtle statement is simply a metaphysical explanation of the simple statement; and it would be quite possible even to make it a popular explanation, by saying that God could not love when there was nothing to be loved. Now the Church Councils were originally very popular, not to say riotous assemblies. So far from being undemocratic, they were rather too democratic; the real case against them was that they passed by uproarious votes, and not without violence, things that had ultimately to be considered more calmly by experts. But it may reasonably be suggested, I think, that the concentration of the Greek intellect on these things did gradually pass from a popular to a more professional or official thing; and that the traces of it have finally tended to fade from the official religion of the East. It was far otherwise with the more poetical and therefore more practical religion of the West. It was far otherwise with that direct appeal to pathos and affection in the highly coloured picture of the Shepherd and the King. In the West the world not only prolonged its life but recovered its youth. That is the meaning of the movement I have described as the awakening of the West and the resurrection of Rome. And the whole point of that movement, as I propose to suggest, was that it was a popular movement. It had returned with exactly that strange and simple energy that belongs to the story of Bethlehem. Not in vain had Constantine come clad in purple to look down into that dark cave at his feet; nor did the star mislead him when it seemed to end in the entrails of the earth. The

men who followed him passed on, as it were, through the low and vaulted tunnel of the Dark Ages; but they had found the way, and the only way, out of that world of death, and their journey ended in the land of the living. They came out into a world more wonderful than the eyes of men have looked on before or after; they heard the hammers of hundreds of happy craftsmen working for once according to their own will, and saw St. Francis walking with his halo a cloud of birds.