

THE NAMELESS MAN

There are only two forms of government the monarchy or personal government, and the republic or impersonal government. England is not a government; England is an anarchy, because there are so many kings. But there is one real advantage (among many real disadvantages) in the method of abstract democracy, and that is this: that under impersonal government politics are so much more personal. In France and America, where the State is an abstraction, political argument is quite full of human details—some might even say of inhuman details. But in England, precisely because we are ruled by personages, these personages do not permit personalities. In England names are honoured, and therefore names are suppressed. But in the republics, in France especially, a man can put his enemies' names into his article and his own name at the end of it.

This is the essential condition of such candour. If we merely made our anonymous articles more violent, we should be baser than we are now. We should only be arming masked men with daggers instead of cudgels. And I, for one, have always believed in the more general signing of articles, and have signed my own articles on many occasions when, heaven knows, I had little reason to be vain of them. I have heard many arguments for anonymity; but they all seem to amount to the statement that anonymity is safe, which is just what I complain of. In matters of truth the fact that you don't want to publish something is, nine times out of ten, a proof that you ought to publish it.

But there is one answer to my perpetual plea for a man putting his name to his writing. There is one answer, and there is only one answer, and it is never given. It is that in the modern complexity very often a man's name is almost as false as his pseudonym. The prominent person today is eternally trying to lose a name, and to get a title. For instance, we all read with earnestness and patience the pages of the 'Daily Mail', and there are times when we feel moved to cry, "Bring to us the man who thought these strange thoughts! Pursue him, capture him, take great care of him. Bring him back to us tenderly, like some precious bale of silk, that we may look upon the face of the man who desires such things to be printed. Let us know his name; his social and medical pedigree." But in the modern muddle (it might be said) how little should we gain if those frankly fatuous sheets were indeed subscribed by the man who had inspired them. Suppose that after every article stating that the Premier is a piratical Socialist there were printed the simple word "Northcliffe." What does that simple word suggest to the simple soul? To my simple soul (uninstructed otherwise) it suggests a lofty and lonely crag somewhere in the wintry seas towards the Orkneys or Norway; and barely clinging to the top of this crag the fortress of some forgotten chieftain. As it happens, of course, I know that the word does not mean this; it means another Fleet Street journalist like myself or only different from myself in so far as he has sought to secure money while I have sought to secure a jolly time.

A title does not now even serve as a distinction: it does not

distinguish. A coronet is not merely an extinguisher: it is a hiding-place.

But the really odd thing is this. This false quality in titles does not merely apply to the new and vulgar titles, but to the old and historic titles also. For hundreds of years titles in England have been essentially unmeaning; void of that very weak and very human instinct in which titles originated. In essential nonsense of application there is nothing to choose between Northcliffe and Norfolk. The Duke of Norfolk means (as my exquisite and laborious knowledge of Latin informs me) the Leader of Norfolk. It is idle to talk against representative government or for it. All government is representative government until it begins to decay. Unfortunately (as is also evident) all government begins to decay the instant it begins to govern. All aristocrats were first meant as envoys of democracy; and most envoys of democracy lose no time in becoming aristocrats. By the old essential human notion, the Duke of Norfolk ought simply to be the first or most manifest of Norfolk men.

I see growing and filling out before me the image of an actual Duke of Norfolk. For instance, Norfolk men all make their voices run up very high at the end of a sentence. The Duke of Norfolk's voice, therefore, ought to end in a perfect shriek. They often (I am told) end sentences with the word "together"; entirely irrespective of its meaning. Thus I shall expect the Duke of Norfolk to say: "I beg to second the motion together"; or "This is a great constitutional question together." I shall expect him to know much about the Broads and the sluggish rivers

above them; to know about the shooting of water-fowl, and not to know too much about anything else. Of mountains he must be wildly and ludicrously ignorant. He must have the freshness of Norfolk; nay, even the flatness of Norfolk. He must remind me of the watery expanses, the great square church towers and the long level sunsets of East England. If he does not do this, I decline to know him.

I need not multiply such cases; the principle applies everywhere. Thus I lose all interest in the Duke of Devonshire unless he can assure me that his soul is filled with that strange warm Puritanism, Puritanism shot with romance, which colours the West Country. He must eat nothing but clotted cream, drink nothing but cider, reading nothing but 'Lorna Doone', and be unacquainted with any town larger than Plymouth, which he must regard with some awe, as the Central Babylon of the world. Again, I should expect the Prince of Wales always to be full of the mysticism and dreamy ardour of the Celtic fringe.

Perhaps it may be thought that these demands are a little extreme; and that our fancy is running away with us. Nevertheless, it is not my Duke of Devonshire who is funny; but the real Duke of Devonshire. The point is that the scheme of titles is a misfit throughout: hardly anywhere do we find a modern man whose name and rank represent in any way his type, his locality, or his mode of life. As a mere matter of social comedy, the thing is worth noticing. You will meet a man whose name suggests a gouty admiral, and you will find him exactly like a timid organist: you will hear announced the name of a haughty and almost heathen grande

dame, and behold the entrance of a nice, smiling Christian cook. These are light complications of the central fact of the falsification of all names and ranks. Our peers are like a party of mediaeval knights who should have exchanged shields, crests, and pennons. For the present rule seems to be that the Duke of Sussex may lawfully own the whole of Essex; and that the Marquis of Cornwall may own all the hills and valleys so long as they are not Cornish.

The clue to all this tangle is as simple as it is terrible. If England is an aristocracy, England is dying. If this system IS the country, as some say, the country is stiffening into more than the pomp and paralysis of China. It is the final sign of imbecility in a people that it calls cats dogs and describes the sun as the moon—and is very particular about the preciseness of these pseudonyms. To be wrong, and to be carefully wrong, that is the definition of decadence. The disease called aphasia, in which people begin by saying tea when they mean coffee, commonly ends in their silence. Silence of this stiff sort is the chief mark of the powerful parts of modern society. They all seem straining to keep things in rather than to let things out. For the kings of finance speechlessness is counted a way of being strong, though it should rather be counted a way of being sly. By this time the Parliament does not parley any more than the Speaker speaks. Even the newspaper editors and proprietors are more despotic and dangerous by what they do not utter than by what they do. We have all heard the expression "golden silence." The expression "brazen silence" is the only adequate phrase for our editors. If we wake out of this throttled, gaping, and wordless

nightmare, we must awake with a yell. The Revolution that releases England from the fixed falsity of its present position will be not less noisy than other revolutions. It will contain, I fear, a great deal of that rude accomplishment described among little boys as "calling names"; but that will not matter much so long as they are the right names.

THE GARDENER AND THE GUINEA

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as an English Peasant. Indeed, the type can only exist in community, so much does it depend on cooperation and common laws. One must not think primarily of a French Peasant; any more than of a German Measle. The plural of the word is its proper form; you cannot have a Peasant till you have a peasantry. The essence of the Peasant ideal is equality; and you cannot be equal all by yourself.

Nevertheless, because human nature always craves and half creates the things necessary to its happiness, there are approximations and suggestions of the possibility of such a race even here. The nearest approach I know to the temper of a Peasant in England is that of the country gardener; not, of course, the great scientific gardener attached to the great houses; he is a rich man's servant like any other. I mean the small jobbing gardener who works for two or three moderate-sized