

it is the business of the art critics to create a curious and fantastic literary expression for it; inferior to it, doubtless, but still akin to it. If they cannot do this, as they cannot; if there is nothing in their eulogies, as there is nothing except eulogy&mdash;then they are quacks or the high-priests of the unutterable. If the art critics can say nothing about the artists except that they are good it is because the artists are bad. They can explain nothing because they have found nothing; and they have found nothing because there is nothing to be found.

#### THE RED REACTIONARY

The one case for Revolution is that it is the only quite clean and complete road to anything&mdash;even to restoration. Revolution alone can be not merely a revolt of the living, but also a resurrection of the dead.

A friend of mine (one, in fact, who writes prominently on this paper) was once walking down the street in a town of Western France, situated in that area that used to be called La Vendee; which in that great creative crisis about 1790 formed a separate and mystical soul of its own, and made a revolution against a revolution. As my friend went down this street he whistled an old French air which he had found, like Mr.

Gandish, "in his researches into 'istry," and which had somehow taken his fancy; the song to which those last sincere loyalists went into battle. I think the words ran:

Monsieur de Charette.

Dit au gens d'ici.

Le roi varemètre.

Le fleur de lys.

My friend was (and is) a Radical, but he was (and is) an Englishman, and it never occurred to him that there could be any harm in singing archaic lyrics out of remote centuries; that one had to be a Catholic to enjoy the "Dies Irae," or a Protestant to remember "Lillibullero." Yet he was stopped and gravely warned that things so politically provocative might get him at least into temporary trouble.

A little time after I was helping King George V to get crowned, by walking round a local bonfire and listening to a local band. Just as a bonfire cannot be too big, so (by my theory of music) a band cannot be too loud, and this band was so loud, emphatic, and obvious, that I actually recognised one or two of the tunes. And I noticed that quite a formidable proportion of them were Jacobite tunes; that is, tunes that had been primarily meant to keep George V out of his throne for ever. Some of the real airs of the old Scottish rebellion were played, such as "Charlie is My Darling," or "What's a' the steer, kimmer?" songs that men had sung while marching to destroy and drive out the monarchy under

which we live. They were songs in which the very kinsmen of the present King were swept aside as usurpers. They were songs in which the actual words "King George" occurred as a curse and a derision. Yet they were played to celebrate his very Coronation; played as promptly and innocently as if they had been "Grandfather's Clock" or "Rule Britannia" or "The Honeysuckle and the Bee."

That contrast is the measure, not only between two nations, but between two modes of historical construction and development. For there is not really very much difference, as European history goes, in the time that has elapsed between us and the Jacobite and between us and the Jacobin. When George III was crowned the gauntlet of the King's Champion was picked up by a partisan of the Stuarts. When George III was still on the throne the Bourbons were driven out of France as the Stuarts had been driven out of England. Yet the French are just sufficiently aware that the Bourbons might possibly return that they will take a little trouble to discourage it; whereas we are so certain that the Stuarts will never return that we actually play their most passionate tunes as a compliment to their rivals. And we do not even do it tauntingly. I examined the faces of all the bandsmen; and I am sure they were devoid of irony: indeed, it is difficult to blow a wind instrument ironically. We do it quite unconsciously; because we have a huge fundamental dogma, which the French have not. We really believe that the past is past. It is a very doubtful point.

Now the great gift of a revolution (as in France) is that it makes men

free in the past as well as free in the future. Those who have cleared away everything could, if they liked, put back everything. But we who have preserved everything&mdash;we cannot restore anything. Take, for the sake of argument, the complex and many coloured ritual of the Coronation recently completed. That rite is stratified with the separate centuries; from the first rude need of discipline to the last fine shade of culture or corruption, there is nothing that cannot be detected or even dated. The fierce and childish vow of the lords to serve their lord "against all manner of folk" obviously comes from the real Dark Ages; no longer confused, even by the ignorant, with the Middle Ages. It comes from some chaos of Europe, when there was one old Roman road across four of our counties; and when hostile "folk" might live in the next village. The sacramental separation of one man to be the friend of the fatherless and the nameless belongs to the true Middle Ages; with their great attempt to make a moral and invisible Roman Empire; or (as the Coronation Service says) to set the cross for ever above the ball. Elaborate local tomfooleries, such as that by which the Lord of the Manor of Work-sop is alone allowed to do something or other, these probably belong to the decay of the Middle Ages, when that great civilisation died out in grotesque literalism and entangled heraldry. Things like the presentation of the Bible bear witness to the intellectual outburst at the Reformation; things like the Declaration against the Mass bear witness to the great wars of the Puritans; and things like the allegiance of the Bishops bear witness to the wordy and parenthetical political compromises which (to my deep regret) ended the wars of religion.

But my purpose here is only to point out one particular thing. In all that long list of variations there must be, and there are, things which energetic modern minds would really wish, with the reasonable modification, to restore. Dr. Clifford would probably be glad to see again the great Puritan idealism that forced the Bible into an antique and almost frozen formality. Dr. Horton probably really regrets the old passion that excommunicated Rome. In the same way Mr. Belloc would really prefer the Middle Ages; as Lord Rosebery would prefer the Erastian oligarchy of the eighteenth century. The Dark Ages would probably be disputed (from widely different motives) by Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Mr. Cunninghame Graham. But Mr. Cunninghame Graham would win.

But the black case against Conservative (or Evolutionary) politics is that none of these sincere men can win. Dr. Clifford cannot get back to the Puritans; Mr. Belloc cannot get back to the mediaevals; because (alas) there has been no Revolution to leave them a clear space for building or rebuilding. Frenchmen have all the ages behind them, and can wander back and pick and choose. But Englishmen have all the ages on top of them, and can only lie groaning under that imposing tower, without being able to take so much as a brick out of it. If the French decide that their Republic is bad they can get rid of it; but if we decide that a Republic was good, we should have much more difficulty. If the French democracy actually desired every detail of the mediaeval monarchy, they could have it. I do not think they will or should, but they could. If

another Dauphin were actually crowned at Rheims; if another Joan of Arc actually bore a miraculous banner before him; if mediaeval swords shook and blazed in every gauntlet; if the golden lilies glowed from every tapestry; if this were really proved to be the will of France and the purpose of Providence—such a scene would still be the lasting and final justification of the French Revolution.

For no such scene could conceivably have happened under Louis XVI.

#### THE SEPARATIST AND SACRED THINGS

In the very laudable and fascinating extensions of our interest in Asiatic arts or faiths, there are two incidental injustices which we tend nowadays to do to our own records and our own religion. The first is a tendency to talk as if certain things were not only present in the higher Orientals, but were peculiar to them. Thus our magazines will fall into a habit of wondering praise of Bushido, the Japanese chivalry, as if no Western knights had ever vowed noble vows, or as if no Eastern knights had ever broken them. Or again, our drawing-rooms will be full of the praises of Indian renunciation and Indian unworldliness, as if no Christians had been saints, or as if all Buddhists had been. But if the first injustice is to think of human virtues as peculiarly Eastern, the other injustice is a failure to appreciate what really is peculiarly