

CHAPTER VIII.

DOCTRINE OF NON-RESISTANCE TO EVIL BY FORCE MUST INEVITABLY BE ACCEPTED BY MEN OF THE PRESENT DAY.

Christianity is Not a System of Rules, but a New Conception of Life, and therefore it was Not Obligatory and was Not Accepted in its True Significance by All, but only by a Few--Christianity is, Moreover, Prophetic of the Destruction of the Pagan Life, and therefore of Necessity of the Acceptance of the Christian Doctrines--Non-resistance of Evil by Force is One Aspect of the Christian Doctrine, which must Inevitably in Our Times be Accepted by Men--Two Methods of Deciding Every Quarrel--First Method is to Find a Universal Definition of Evil, which All Must Accept, and to Resist this Evil by Force--Second Method is the Christian One of Complete Non-resistance by Force--Though the Failure of the First Method was Recognized since the Early Days of Christianity, it was Still Proposed, and only as Mankind has Progressed it has Become More and More Evident that there Cannot be any Universal Definition of Evil--This is Recognized by All at the Present Day, and if Force is Still Used to Resist Evil, it is Not Because it is Now Regarded as Right, but Because People Don't Know How to Avoid It--The Difficulty of Avoiding It is the Result of the Subtle and Complex Character of the Government Use of Force--Force is Used in Four Ways: Intimidation, Bribery, Hypnotism, and Coercion by Force of Arms--State Violence Can Never

be Suppressed by the Forcible Overthrow of the Government--Men are Led by the Sufferings of the Pagan Mode of Life to the Necessity of Accepting Christ's Teaching with its Doctrine of Non-resistance by Force--The Consciousness of its Truth which is Diffused Throughout Our Society, Will also Bring About its Acceptance--This Consciousness is in Complete Contradiction with Our Life--This is Specially Obvious in Compulsory Military Service, but Through Habit and the Application of the Four Methods of Violence by the State, Men do not See this Inconsistency of Christianity with Life of a Soldier--They do Not even See It, though the Authorities Themselves Show all the Immorality of a Soldier's Duties with Perfect Clearness--The Call to Military Service is the Supreme Test for Every Man, when the Choice is Offered Him, between Adopting the Christian Doctrine of Non-resistance, or Slavishly Submitting to the Existing State Organization--Men Usually Renounce All They Hold Sacred, and Submit to the Demands of Government, Seeming to See No Other Course Open to Them--For Men of the Pagan Conception of Life there is No Other Course Open, and Never Will Be, in Spite of the Growing Horrors of War--Society, Made Up of Such Men, Must Perish, and No Social Reorganization Can Save It--Pagan Life Has Reached Its Extreme Limit, and Will Annihilate Itself.

It is often said that if Christianity is a truth, it ought to have been accepted by everyone directly it appeared, and ought to have

transformed men's lives for the better. But this is like saying that if the seed were ripe it ought at once to bring forth stalks, flower, and fruit.

The Christian religion is not a legal system which, being imposed by violence, may transform men's lives. Christianity is a new and higher conception of life. A new conception of life cannot be imposed on men; it can only be freely assimilated. And it can only be freely assimilated in two ways: one spiritual and internal, the other experimental and external.

Some people--a minority--by a kind of prophetic instinct divine the truth of the doctrine, surrender themselves to it and adopt it. Others--the majority--only through a long course of mistakes, experiments, and suffering are brought to recognize the truth of the doctrine and the necessity of adopting it.

And by this experimental external method the majority of Christian men have now been brought to this necessity of assimilating the doctrine. One sometimes wonders what necessitated the corruption of Christianity which is now the greatest obstacle to its acceptance in its true significance.

If Christianity had been presented to men in its true, uncorrupted form, it would not have been accepted by the majority, who would have been as untouched by it as the nations of Asia are now. The

peoples who accepted it in its corrupt form were subjected to its slow but certain influence, and by a long course of errors and experiments and their resultant sufferings have now been brought to the necessity of assimilating it in its true significance.

The corruption of Christianity and its acceptance in its corrupt form by the majority of men was as necessary as it is that the seed should remain hidden for a certain time in the earth in order to germinate.

Christianity is at once a doctrine of truth and a prophecy. Eighteen centuries ago Christianity revealed to men the truth in which they ought to live, and at the same time foretold what human life would become if men would not live by it but continued to live by their previous principles, and what it would become if they accepted the Christian doctrine and carried it out in their lives.

Laying down in the Sermon on the Mount the principles by which to guide men's lives, Christ said: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain

descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matt. vii. 24-27).

And now after eighteen centuries the prophecy has been fulfilled. Not having followed Christ's teaching generally and its application to social life in non-resistance to evil, men have been brought in spite of themselves to the inevitable destruction foretold by Christ for those who do not fulfill his teaching.

People often think the question of non-resistance to evil by force is a theoretical one, which can be neglected. Yet this question is presented by life itself to all men, and calls for some answer from every thinking man. Ever since Christianity has been outwardly professed, this question is for men in their social life like the question which presents itself to a traveler when the road on which he has been journeying divides into two branches. He must go on and he cannot say: I will not think about it, but will go on just as I did before. There was one road, now there are two, and he must make his choice.

In the same way since Christ's teaching has been known by men they cannot say: I will live as before and will not decide the question of resistance or non-resistance to evil by force. At every new struggle that arises one must inevitably decide; am I, or am I not, to resist by force what I regard as evil.

The question of resistance or non-resistance to evil arose when the first conflict between men took place, since every conflict is nothing else than resistance by force to what each of the combatants regards as evil. But before Christ, men did not see that resistance by force to what each regards as evil, simply because one thinks evil what the other thinks good, is only one of the methods of settling the dispute, and that there is another method, that of not resisting evil by force at all.

Before Christ's teaching, it seemed to men that the one only means of settling a dispute was by resistance to evil by force. And they acted accordingly, each of the combatants trying to convince himself and others that what each respectively regards as evil, is actually, absolutely evil.

And to do this from the earliest time men have devised definitions of evil and tried to make them binding on everyone. And such definitions of evil sometimes took the form of laws, supposed to have been received by supernatural means, sometimes of the commands of rulers or assemblies to whom infallibility was attributed. Men resorted to violence against others, and convinced themselves and others that they were directing their violence against evil recognized as such by all.

This means was employed from the earliest times, especially by

those who had gained possession of authority, and for a long while its irrationality was not detected.

But the longer men lived in the world and the more complex their relations became, the more evident it was that to resist by force what each regarded as evil was irrational, that conflict was in no way lessened thereby, and that no human definitions can succeed in making what some regard as evil be accepted as such by others.

Already at the time Christianity arose, it was evident to a great number of people in the Roman Empire where it arose, that what was regarded as evil by Nero and Caligula could not be regarded as evil by others. Even at that time men had begun to understand that human laws, though given out for divine laws, were compiled by men, and cannot be infallible, whatever the external majesty with which they are invested, and that erring men are not rendered infallible by assembling together and calling themselves a senate or any other name. Even at that time this was felt and understood by many. And it was then that Christ preached his doctrine, which consisted not only of the prohibition of resistance to evil by force, but gave a new conception of life and a means of putting an end to conflict between all men, not by making it the duty of one section only of mankind to submit without conflict to what is prescribed to them by certain authorities, but by making it the duty of all--and consequently of those in authority--not to resort to force against anyone in any circumstances.

This doctrine was accepted at the time by only a very small number of disciples. The majority of men, especially all who were in power, even after the nominal acceptance of Christianity, continued to maintain for themselves the principle of resistance by force to what they regarded as evil. So it was under the Roman and Byzantine emperors, and so it continued to be later.

The insufficiency of the principle of the authoritative definition of evil and resistance to it by force, evident as it was in the early ages of Christianity, becomes still more obvious through the division of the Roman Empire into many states of equal authority, through their hostilities and the internal conflicts that broke out within them.

But men were not ready to accept the solution given by Christ, and the old definitions of evil, which ought to be resisted, continued to be laid down by means of making laws binding on all and enforced by forcible means. The authority who decided what ought to be regarded as evil and resisted by force was at one time the Pope, at another an emperor or king, an elective assembly or a whole nation. But both within and without the state there were always men to be found who did not accept as binding on themselves the laws given out as the decrees of a god, or made by men invested with a sacred character, or the institutions supposed to represent the will of the nation; and there were men who thought

good what the existing authorities regarded as bad, and who struggled against the authorities with the same violence as was employed against them.

The men invested with religious authority regarded as evil what the men and institutions invested with temporal authority regarded as good and vice versa, and the struggle grew more and more intense. And the longer men used violence as the means of settling their disputes, the more obvious it became that it was an unsuitable means, since there could be no external authority able to define evil recognized by all.

Things went on like this for eighteen centuries, and at last reached the present position in which it is absolutely obvious that there is, and can be, no external definition of evil binding upon all. Men have come to the point of ceasing to believe in the possibility or even desirability of finding and establishing such a general definition. It has come to men in power ceasing to attempt to prove that what they regard as evil is evil, and simply declaring that they regard as evil what they don't like, while their subjects no longer obey them because they accept the definition of evil laid down by them, but simply obey because they cannot help themselves. It was not because it was a good thing, necessary and beneficial to men, and the contrary course would have been an evil, but simply because it was the will of those in power that Nice was incorporated into France, and Lorraine into

Germany, and Bohemia into Austria, and that Poland was divided, and Ireland and India ruled by the English government, and that the Chinese are attacked and the Africans slaughtered, and the Chinese prevented from immigrating by the Americans, and the Jews persecuted by the Russians, and that landowners appropriate lands they do not cultivate and capitalists enjoy the fruits of the labor of others. It has come to the present state of things; one set of men commit acts of violence no longer on the pretext of resistance to evil, but simply for their profit or their caprice, and another set submit to violence, not because they suppose, as was supposed in former times, that this violence was practised upon them for the sake of securing them from evil, but simply because they cannot avoid it.

If the Roman, or the man of mediaeval times, or the average Russian of fifty years ago, as I remember him, was convinced without a shade of doubt that the violence of authority was indispensable to preserve him from evil; that taxes, dues, serfage, prisons, scourging, knouts, executions, the army and war were what ought to be--we know now that one can seldom find a man who believes that all these means of violence preserve anyone from any evil whatever, and indeed does not clearly perceive that most of these acts of violence to which he is exposed, and in which he has some share, are in themselves a great and useless evil.

There is no one to-day who does not see the uselessness and injustice of

collecting taxes from the toiling masses to enrich idle officials; or the senselessness of inflicting punishments on weak or depraved persons in the shape of transportation from one place to another, or of imprisonment in a fortress where, living in security and indolence, they only become weaker and more depraved; or the worse than uselessness and injustice, the positive insanity and barbarity of preparations for war and of wars, causing devastation and ruin, and having no kind of justification. Yet these forms of violence continue and are supported by the very people who see their uselessness, injustice, and cruelty, and suffer from them. If fifty years ago the idle rich man and the illiterate laborer were both alike convinced that their state of everlasting holiday for one and everlasting toil for the other was ordained by God himself, we know very well that nowadays, thanks to the growth of population and the diffusion of books and education, it would be hard to find in Europe or even in Russia, either among rich or poor, a man to whom in one shape or another a doubt as to the justice of this state of things had never presented itself. The rich know that they are guilty in the very fact of being rich, and try to expiate their guilt by sacrifices to art and science, as of old they expiated their sins by sacrifices to the Church. And even the larger half of the working people openly declare that the existing order is iniquitous and bound to be destroyed or reformed. One set of religious people of whom there are millions in Russia, the so-called sectaries, consider the existing social order as unjust and to be destroyed on the ground of the Gospel teaching taken in its true sense. Others regard it as unjust on the ground of the socialistic, communistic, or anarchistic theories, which

are springing up in the lower strata of the working people. Violence no longer rests on the belief in its utility, but only on the fact of its having existed so long, and being organized by the ruling classes who profit by it, so that those who are under their authority cannot extricate themselves from it. The governments of our day--all of them, the most despotic and the liberal alike--have become what Herzen so well called "Ghenghis Khan with the telegraph;" that is to say, organizations of violence based on no principle but the grossest tyranny, and at the same time taking advantage of all the means invented by science for the peaceful collective social activity of free and equal men, used by them to enslave and oppress their fellows.

Governments and the ruling classes no longer take their stand on right or even on the semblance of justice, but on a skillful organization carried to such a point of perfection by the aid of science that everyone is caught in the circle of violence and has no chance of escaping from it. This circle is made up now of four methods of working upon men, joined together like the limes of a chain ring.

The first and oldest method is intimidation. This consists in representing the existing state organization--whatever it may be, free republic or the most savage despotism--as something sacred and immutable, and therefore following any efforts to alter it with the cruellest punishments. This method is in use now--as it has been from olden times--wherever there is a government: in

Russia against the so-called Nihilists, in America against Anarchists, in France against Imperialists, Legitimists, Communards, and Anarchists.

Railways, telegraphs, telephones, photographs, and the great perfection of the means of getting rid of men for years, without killing them, by solitary confinement, where, hidden from the world, they perish and are forgotten, and the many other modern inventions employed by government, give such power that when once authority has come into certain hands, the police, open and secret, the administration and prosecutors, jailers and executioners of all kinds, do their work so zealously that there is no chance of overturning the government, however cruel and senseless it may be.

The second method is corruption. It consists in plundering the industrious working people of their wealth by means of taxes and distributing it in satisfying the greed of officials, who are bound in return to support and keep up the oppression of the people. These bought officials, from the highest ministers to the poorest copying clerks, make up an unbroken network of men bound together by the same interest--that of living at the expense of the people. They become the richer the more submissively they carry out the will of the government; and at all times and places, sticking at nothing, in all departments support by word and deed the violence of government, on which their own prosperity also

rests.

The third method is what I can only describe as hypnotizing the people. This consists in checking the moral development of men, and by various suggestions keeping them back in the ideal of life, outgrown by mankind at large, on which the power of government rests. This hypnotizing process is organized at the present in the most complex manner, and starting from their earliest childhood, continues to act on men till the day of their death. It begins in their earliest years in the compulsory schools, created for this purpose, in which the children have instilled into them the ideas of life of their ancestors, which are in direct antagonism with the conscience of the modern world. In countries where there is a state religion, they teach the children the senseless blasphemies of the Church catechisms, together with the duty of obedience to their superiors. In republican states they teach them the savage superstition of patriotism and the same pretended obedience to the governing authorities.

The process is kept up during later years by the encouragement of religious and patriotic superstitions.

The religious superstition is encouraged by establishing, with money taken from the people, temples, processions, memorials, and festivals, which, aided by painting, architecture, music, and incense, intoxicate the people, and above all by the support of

the clergy, whose duty consists in brutalizing the people and keeping them in a permanent state of stupefaction by their teaching, the solemnity of their services, their sermons, and their interference in private life--at births, deaths, and marriages. The patriotic superstition is encouraged by the creation, with money taken from the people, of national fêtes, spectacles, monuments, and festivals to dispose men to attach importance to their own nation, and to the aggrandizement of the state and its rulers, and to feel antagonism and even hatred for other nations. With these objects under despotic governments there is direct prohibition against printing and disseminating books to enlighten the people, and everyone who might rouse the people from their lethargy is exiled or imprisoned. Moreover, under every government without exception everything is kept back that might emancipate and everything encouraged that tends to corrupt the people, such as literary works tending to keep them in the barbarism of religious and patriotic superstition, all kinds of sensual amusements, spectacles, circuses, theaters, and even the physical means of inducing stupefaction, as tobacco and alcohol, which form the principal source of revenue of states. Even prostitution is encouraged, and not only recognized, but even organized by the government in the majority of states. So much for the third method.

The fourth method consists in selecting from all the men who have been stupefied and enslaved by the three former methods a certain

number, exposing them to special and intensified means of stupefaction and brutalization, and so making them into a passive instrument for carrying out all the cruelties and brutalities needed by the government. This result is attained by taking them at the youthful age when men have not had time to form clear and definite principles of morals, and removing them from all natural and human conditions of life, home, family and kindred, and useful labor. They are shut up together in barracks, dressed in special clothes, and worked upon by cries, drums, music, and shining objects to go through certain daily actions invented for this purpose, and by this means are brought into an hypnotic condition in which they cease to be men and become mere senseless machines, submissive to the hypnotizer. These physically vigorous young men (in these days of universal conscription, all young men), hypnotized, armed with murderous weapons, always obedient to the governing authorities and ready for any act of violence at their command, constitute the fourth and principal method of enslaving men.

By this method the circle of violence is completed.

Intimidation, corruption, and hypnotizing bring people into a condition in which they are willing to be soldiers; the soldiers give the power of punishing and plundering them (and purchasing officials with the spoils), and hypnotizing them and converting them in time into these same soldiers again.

The circle is complete, and there is no chance of breaking through it by force.

Some persons maintain that freedom from violence, or at least a great diminution of it, may be gained by the oppressed forcibly overturning the oppressive government and replacing it by a new one under which such violence and oppression will be unnecessary, but they deceive themselves and others, and their efforts do not better the position of the oppressed, but only make it worse. Their conduct only tends to increase the despotism of government. Their efforts only afford a plausible pretext for government to strengthen their power.

Even if we admit that under a combination of circumstances specially unfavorable for the government, as in France in 1870, any government might be forcibly overturned and the power transferred to other hands, the new authority would rarely be less oppressive than the old one; on the contrary, always having to defend itself against its dispossessed and exasperated enemies, it would be more despotic and cruel, as has always been the rule in all revolutions.

While socialists and communists regard the individualistic, capitalistic organization of society as an evil, and the anarchists regard as an evil all government whatever, there are

royalists, conservatives, and capitalists who consider any socialistic or communistic organization or anarchy as an evil, and all these parties have no means other than violence to bring men to agreement. Whichever of these parties were successful in bringing their schemes to pass, must resort to support its authority to all the existing methods of violence, and even invent new ones.

The oppressed would be another set of people, and coercion would take some new form; but the violence and oppression would be unchanged or even more cruel, since hatred would be intensified by the struggle, and new forms of oppression would have been devised. So it has always been after all revolutions and all attempts at revolution, all conspiracies, and all violent changes of government. Every conflict only strengthens the means of oppression in the hands of those who happen at a given moment to be in power.

The position of our Christian society, and especially the ideals most current in it, prove this in a strikingly convincing way.

There remains now only one sphere of human life not encroached upon by government authority--that is the domestic, economic sphere, the sphere of private life and labor. And even this is now--thanks to the efforts of communists and socialists--being gradually encroached upon by government, so that labor and

recreation, dwellings, dress, and food will gradually, if the hopes of the reformers are successful, be prescribed and regulated by government.

The slow progress of eighteen centuries has brought the Christian nations again to the necessity of deciding the question they have evaded--the question of the acceptance or non-acceptance of Christ's teaching, and the question following upon it in social life of resistance or non-resistance to evil by force. But there is this difference, that whereas formerly men could accept or refuse to accept the solution given by Christ, now that solution cannot be avoided, since it alone can save men from the slavery in which they are caught like a net.

But it is not only the misery of the position which makes this inevitable.

While the pagan organization has been proved more and more false, the truth of the Christian religion has been growing more and more evident.

Not in vain have the best men of Christian humanity, who apprehended the truth by spiritual intuition, for eighteen centuries testified to it in spite of every menace, every privation, and every suffering. By their martyrdom they passed on the truth to the masses, and impressed it on their hearts.

Christianity has penetrated into the consciousness of humanity, not only negatively by the demonstration of the impossibility of continuing in the pagan life, but also through its simplification, its increased clearness and freedom from the superstitions intermingled with it, and its diffusion through all classes of the population.

Eighteen centuries of Christianity have not passed without an effect even on those who accepted it only externally. These eighteen centuries have brought men so far that even while they continue to live the pagan life which is no longer consistent with the development of humanity, they not only see clearly all the wretchedness of their position, but in the depths of their souls they believe (they can only live through this belief) that the only salvation from this position is to be found in fulfilling the Christian doctrine in its true significance. As to the time and manner of salvation, opinions are divided according to the intellectual development and the prejudices of each society. But every man of the modern world recognizes that our salvation lies in fulfilling the law of Christ. Some believers in the supernatural character of Christianity hold that salvation will come when all men are brought to believe in Christ, whose second coming is at hand. Other believers in supernatural Christianity hold that salvation will come through the Church, which will draw all men into its fold, train them in the Christian virtues, and

transform their life. A third section, who do not admit the divinity of Christ, hold that the salvation of mankind will be brought about by slow and gradual progress, through which the pagan principles of our existence will be replaced by the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity--that is, by Christian principles. A fourth section, who believe in the social revolution, hold that salvation will come when through a violent revolution men are forced into community of property, abolition of government, and collective instead of individual industry--that is to say, the realization of one side of the Christian doctrine. In one way or another all men of our day in their inner consciousness condemn the existing effete pagan order, and admit, often unconsciously and while regarding themselves as hostile to Christianity, that our salvation is only to be found in the application of the Christian doctrine, or parts of it, in its true significance to our daily life.

Christianity cannot, as its Founder said, be realized by the majority of men all at once; it must grow like a huge tree from a tiny seed. And so it has grown, and now has reached its full development, not yet in actual life, but in the conscience of men of to-day.

Now not only the minority, who have always comprehended Christianity by spiritual intuition, but all the vast majority who seem so far from it in their social existence recognize its true

significance.

Look at individual men in their private life, listen to their standards of conduct in their judgment of one another; hear not only their public utterances, but the counsels given by parents and guardians to the young in their charge; and you will see that, far as their social life based on violence may be from realizing Christian truth, in their private life what is considered good by all without exception is nothing but the Christian virtues; what is considered as bad is nothing but the antichristian vices. Those who consecrate their lives self-sacrificingly to the service of humanity are regarded as the best men. The selfish, who make use of the misfortunes of others for their own advantage, are regarded as the worst of men.

Though some non-Christian ideals, such as strength, courage, and wealth, are still worshiped by a few who have not been penetrated by the Christian spirit, these ideals are out of date and are abandoned, if not by all, at least by all those regarded as the best people. There are no ideals, other than the Christian ideals, which are accepted by all and regarded as binding on all.

The position of our Christian humanity, if you look at it from the outside with all its cruelty and degradation of men, is terrible indeed. But if one looks at it within, in its inner consciousness, the spectacle it presents is absolutely different.

All the evil of our life seems to exist only because it has been so for so long; those who do the evil have not had time yet to learn how to act otherwise, though they do not want to act as they do.

All the evil seems to exist through some cause independent of the conscience of men.

Strange and contradictory as it seems, all men of the present day hate the very social order they are themselves supporting.

I think it is Max Müller who describes the amazement of an Indian convert to Christianity, who after absorbing the essence of the Christian doctrine came to Europe and saw the actual life of Christians. He could not recover from his astonishment at the complete contrast between the reality and what he had expected to find among Christian nations. If we feel no astonishment at the contrast between our convictions and our conduct, that is because the influences, tending to obscure the contrast, produce an effect upon us too. We need only look at our life from the point of view of that Indian, who understood Christianity in its true significance, without any compromises or concessions, we need but look at the savage brutalities of which our life is full, to be appalled at the contradictions in the midst of which we live often without observing them.

We need only recall the preparations for war, the mitrailleuses, the silver-gilt bullets, the torpedoes, and--the Red Cross; the solitary prison cells, the experiments of execution by electricity--and the care of the hygienic welfare of prisoners; the philanthropy of the rich, and their life, which produces the poor they are benefiting.

And these inconsistencies are not, as it might seem, because men pretend to be Christians while they are really pagans, but because of something lacking in men, or some kind of force hindering them from being what they already feel themselves to be in their consciousness, and what they genuinely wish to be. Men of the present day do not merely pretend to hate oppression, inequality, class distinction, and every kind of cruelty to animals as well as human beings. They genuinely detest all this, but they do not know how to put a stop to it, or perhaps cannot decide to give up what preserves it all, and seems to them necessary.

Indeed, ask every man separately whether he thinks it laudable and worthy of a man of this age to hold a position from which he receives a salary disproportionate to his work; to take from the people--often in poverty--taxes to be spent on constructing cannon, torpedoes, and other instruments of butchery, so as to make war on people with whom we wish to be at peace, and who feel the same wish in regard to us; or to receive a salary for devoting

one's whole life to constructing these instruments of butchery, or to preparing oneself and others for the work of murder. And ask him whether it is laudable and worthy of a man, and suitable for a Christian, to employ himself, for a salary, in seizing wretched, misguided, often illiterate and drunken, creatures because they appropriate the property of others--on a much smaller scale than we do--or because they kill men in a different fashion from that in which we undertake to do it--and shutting them in prison for it, ill treating them and killing them; and whether it is laudable and worthy of a man and a Christian to preach for a salary to the people not Christianity, but superstitions which one knows to be stupid and pernicious; and whether it is laudable and worthy of a man to rob his neighbor for his gratification of what he wants to satisfy his simplest needs, as the great landowners do; or to force him to exhausting labor beyond his strength to augment one's wealth, as do factory owners and manufacturers; or to profit by the poverty of men to increase one's gains, as merchants do. And everyone taken separately, especially if one's remarks are directed at someone else, not himself, will answer, No! And yet the very man who sees all the baseness of those actions, of his own free will, uncoerced by anyone, often even for no pecuniary profit, but only from childish vanity, for a china cross, a scrap of ribbon, a bit of fringe he is allowed to wear, will enter military service, become a magistrate or justice of the peace, commissioner, archbishop, or beadle, though in fulfilling these offices he must commit acts the baseness and shamefulness of which

he cannot fail to recognize.

I know that many of these men will confidently try to prove that they have reasons for regarding their position as legitimate and quite indispensable. They will say in their defense that authority is given by God, that the functions of the state are indispensable for the welfare of humanity, that property is not opposed to Christianity, that the rich young man was only commanded to sell all he had and give to the poor if he wished to be perfect, that the existing distribution of property and our commercial system must always remain as they are, and are to the advantage of all, and so on. But, however much they try to deceive themselves and others, they all know that what they are doing is opposed to all the beliefs which they profess, and in the depths of their souls, when they are left alone with their conscience, they are ashamed and miserable at the recollection of it, especially if the baseness of their action has been pointed out to them. A man of the present day, whether he believes in the divinity of Christ or not, cannot fail to see that to assist in the capacity of czar, minister, governor, or commissioner in taking from a poor family its last cow for taxes to be spent on cannons, or on the pay and pensions of idle officials, who live in luxury and are worse than useless; or in putting into prison some man we have ourselves corrupted, and throwing his family on the streets; or in plundering and butchering in war; or in inculcating savage and idolatrous superstitious in the place of the law of

Christ; or in impounding the cow found on one's land, though it belongs to a man who has no land; or to cheat the workman in a factory, by imposing fines for accidentally spoiled articles; or making a poor man pay double the value for anything simply because he is in the direst poverty;--not a man of the present day can fail to know that all these actions are base and disgraceful, and that they need not do them. They all know it. They know that what they are doing is wrong, and would not do it for anything in the world if they had the power of resisting the forces which shut their eyes to the criminality of their actions and impel them to commit them.

In nothing is the pitch of inconsistency modern life has attained to so evident as in universal conscription, which is the last resource and the final expression of violence.

Indeed, it is only because this state of universal armament has been brought about gradually and imperceptibly, and because governments have exerted, in maintaining it, every resource of intimidation, corruption, brutalization, and violence, that we do not see its flagrant inconsistency with the Christian ideas and sentiments by which the modern world is permeated.

We are so accustomed to the inconsistency that we do not see all the hideous folly and immorality of men voluntarily choosing the profession of butchery as though it were an honorable career, of

poor wretches submitting to conscription, or in countries where compulsory service has not been introduced, of people voluntarily abandoning a life of industry to recruit soldiers and train them as murderers. We know that all of these men are either Christians, or profess humane and liberal principles, and they know that they thus become partly responsible--through universal conscription, personally responsible--for the most insane, aimless, and brutal murders. And yet they all do it.

More than that, in Germany, where compulsory service first originated, Caprivi has given expression to what had been hitherto so assiduously concealed--that is, that the men that the soldiers will have to kill are not foreigners alone, but their own countrymen, the very working people from whom they themselves are taken. And this admission has not opened people's eyes, has not horrified them! They still go like sheep to the slaughter, and submit to everything required of them.

And that is not all: the Emperor of Germany has lately shown still more clearly the duties of the army, by thanking and rewarding a soldier for killing a defenseless citizen who made his approach incautiously. By rewarding an action always regarded as base and cowardly even by men on the lowest level of morality, William has shown that a soldier's chief duty--the one most appreciated by the authorities--is that of executioner; and not a professional executioner who kills only condemned criminals, but one ready to

butcher any innocent man at the word of command.

And even that is not all. In 1892, the same William, the ENFANT TERRIBLE of state authority, who says plainly what other people only think, in addressing some soldiers gave public utterance to the following speech, which was reported next day in thousands of newspapers: "Conscripts!" he said, "you have sworn fidelity to ME before the altar and the minister of God! You are still too young to understand all the importance of what has been said here; let your care before all things be to obey the orders and instructions given you. You have sworn fidelity TO ME, lads of my guard; THAT MEANS THAT YOU ARE NOW MY SOLDIERS, that YOU HAVE GIVEN YOURSELVES TO ME BODY AND SOUL. For you there is now but one enemy, MY enemy. IN THESE DAYS OF SOCIALISTIC SEDITION IT MAY COME TO PASS THAT I COMMAND YOU TO FIRE ON YOUR OWN KINDRED, YOUR BROTHERS, EVEN YOUR OWN FATHERS AND MOTHERS--WHICH GOD FORBID!--even then you are bound to obey my orders without hesitation."

This man expresses what all sensible rulers think, but studiously conceal. He says openly that the soldiers are in HIS service, at HIS disposal, and must be ready for HIS advantage to murder even their brothers and fathers.

In the most brutal words he frankly exposes all the horrors and criminality for which men prepare themselves in entering the army,

and the depths of ignominy to which they fall in promising obedience. Like a bold hypnotizer, he tests the degree of insensibility of the hypnotized subject. He touches his skin with a red-hot iron; the skin smokes and scorches, but the sleeper does not awake.

This miserable man, imbecile and drunk with power, outrages in this utterance everything that can be sacred for a man of the modern world. And yet all the Christians, liberals, and cultivated people, far from resenting this outrage, did not even observe it.

The last, the most extreme test is put before men in its coarsest form. And they do not seem even to notice that it is a test, that there is any choice about it. They seem to think there is no course open but slavish submission. One would have thought these insane words, which outrage everything a man of the present day holds sacred, must rouse indignation. But there has been nothing of the kind.

All the young men through the whole of Europe are exposed year after year to this test, and with very few exceptions they renounce all that a man can hold sacred, all express their readiness to kill their brothers, even their fathers, at the bidding of the first crazy creature dressed up in a livery with red and gold trimming, and only wait to be told where and when

they are to kill. And they actually are ready.

Every savage has something he holds sacred, something for which he is ready to suffer, something he will not consent to do. But what is it that is sacred to the civilized man of to-day? They say to him: "You must become my slave, and this slavery may force you to kill even your own father;" and he, often very well educated, trained in all the sciences at the university, quietly puts his head under the yoke. They dress him up in a clown's costume, and order him to cut capers, turn and twist and bow, and kill--he does it all submissively. And when they let him go, he seems to shake himself and go back to his former life, and he continues to discourse upon the dignity of man, liberty, equality, and fraternity as before.

"Yes, but what is one to do?" people often ask in genuine perplexity. "If everyone would stand out it would be something, but by myself, I shall only suffer without doing any good to anyone."

And that is true. A man with the social conception of life cannot resist. The aim of his life is his personal welfare. It is better for his personal welfare for him to submit, and he submits.

Whatever they do to him, however they torture or humiliate him, he will submit, for, alone, he can do nothing; he has no principle

for the sake of which he could resist violence alone. And those who control them never allow them to unite together. It is often said that the invention of terrible weapons of destruction will put an end to war. That is an error. As the means of extermination are improved, the means of reducing men who hold the state conception of life to submission can be improved to correspond. They may slaughter them by thousands, by millions, they may tear them to pieces, still they will march to war like senseless cattle. Some will want beating to make them move, others will be proud to go if they are allowed to wear a scrap of ribbon or gold lace.

And of this mass of men so brutalized as to be ready to promise to kill their own parents, the social reformers--conservatives, liberals, socialists, and anarchists--propose to form a rational and moral society. What sort of moral and rational society can be formed out of such elements? With warped and rotten planks you cannot build a house, however you put them together. And to form a rational moral society of such men is just as impossible a task. They can be formed into nothing but a herd of cattle, driven by the shouts and whips of the herdsmen. As indeed they are.

So, then, we have on one side men calling themselves Christians, and professing the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and along with that ready, in the name of liberty, to submit to the most slavish degradation; in the name of equality,

to accept the crudest, most senseless division of men by externals merely into higher and lower classes, allies and enemies; and, in the name of fraternity, ready to murder their brothers [see footnote].

[Footnote: The fact that among certain nations, as the English and the American, military service is not compulsory (though already one hears there are some who advocate that it should be made so) does not affect the servility of the citizens to the government in principle. Here we have each to go and kill or be killed, there they have each to give the fruit of their toil to pay for the recruiting and training of soldiers.]

The contradiction between life and conscience and the misery resulting from it have reached the extreme limit and can go no further. The state organization of life based on violence, the aim of which was the security of personal, family, and social welfare, has come to the point of renouncing the very objects for which it was founded--it has reduced men to absolute renunciation and loss of the welfare it was to secure.

The first half of the prophecy has been fulfilled in the generation of men who have not accepted Christ's teaching, Their descendants have been brought now to the absolute necessity of patting the truth of the second half to the test of experience.