CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

The Bubble Bursts

Section 1

As I walk back along the river terrace to the hotel where the botanist awaits me, and observe the Utopians I encounter, I have no thought that my tenure of Utopia becomes every moment more precarious. There float in my mind vague anticipations of more talks with my double and still more, of a steady elaboration of detail, of interesting journeys of exploration. I forget that a Utopia is a thing of the imagination that becomes more fragile with every added circumstance, that, like a soap-bubble, it is most brilliantly and variously coloured at the very instant of its dissolution. This Utopia is nearly done. All the broad lines of its social organisation are completed now, the discussion of all its general difficulties and problems. Utopian individuals pass me by, fine buildings tower on either hand; it does not occur to me that I may look too closely. To find the people assuming the concrete and individual, is not, as I fondly imagine, the last triumph of realisation, but the swimming moment of opacity before the film gives way. To come to individual emotional cases, is to return to the earth.

I find the botanist sitting at a table in the hotel courtyard.

"Well?" I say, standing before him.

"I've been in the gardens on the river terrace," he answers, "hoping I might see her again."

"Nothing better to do?"

"Nothing in the world."

"You'll have your double back from India to-morrow. Then you'll have conversation."

"I don't want it," he replies, compactly.

I shrug my shoulders, and he adds, "At least with him."

I let myself down into a seat beside him.

For a time I sit restfully enjoying his companionable silence, and thinking fragmentarily of those samurai and their Rules. I entertain something of the satisfaction of a man who has finished building a bridge; I feel that I have joined together things that I had never joined before. My Utopia seems real to me, very real, I can believe in it, until the metal chair-back gives to my shoulder blades, and

Utopian sparrows twitter and hop before my feet. I have a pleasant moment of unhesitating self-satisfaction; I feel a shameless exultation to be there. For a moment I forget the consideration the botanist demands; the mere pleasure of completeness, of holding and controlling all the threads possesses me.

"You will persist in believing," I say, with an aggressive expository note, "that if you meet this lady she will be a person with the memories and sentiments of her double on earth. You think she will understand and pity, and perhaps love you. Nothing of the sort is the case." I repeat with confident rudeness, "Nothing of the sort is the case. Things are different altogether here; you can hardly tell even now how different are----"

I discover he is not listening to me.

"What is the matter?" I ask abruptly.

He makes no answer, but his expression startles me.

"What is the matter?" and then I follow his eyes.

A woman and a man are coming through the great archway--and instantly I guess what has happened. She it is arrests my attention first--long ago I knew she was a sweetly beautiful woman. She is fair, with frank blue eyes, that look with a sort of tender

receptivity into her companion's face. For a moment or so they remain, greyish figures in the cool shadow, against the sunlit greenery of the gardens beyond.

"It is Mary," the botanist whispers with white lips, but he stares at the form of the man. His face whitens, it becomes so transfigured with emotion that for a moment it does not look weak. Then I see that his thin hand is clenched.

I realise how little I understand his emotions.

A sudden fear of what he will do takes hold of me. He sits white and tense as the two come into the clearer light of the courtyard. The man, I see, is one of the samurai, a dark, strong-faced man, a man I have never seen before, and she is wearing the robe that shows her a follower of the Lesser Rule.

Some glimmering of the botanist's feelings strikes through to my slow sympathies. Of course--a strange man! I put out a restraining hand towards his arm. "I told you," I say, "that very probably, most probably, she would have met some other. I tried to prepare you."

"Nonsense," he whispers, without looking at me. "It isn't that. It's--that scoundrel----"

He has an impulse to rise. "That scoundrel," he repeats.

"He isn't a scoundrel," I say. "How do you know? Keep still! Why are you standing up?"

He and I stand up quickly, I as soon as he. But now the full meaning of the group has reached me. I grip his arm. "Be sensible," I say, speaking very quickly, and with my back to the approaching couple. "He's not a scoundrel here. This world is different from that. It's caught his pride somehow and made a man of him. Whatever troubled them there----"

He turns a face of white wrath on me, of accusation, and for the moment of unexpected force. "This is your doing," he says. "You have done this to mock me. He--of all men!" For a moment speech fails him, then; "You--you have done this to mock me."

I try to explain very quickly. My tone is almost propitiatory.

"I never thought of it until now. But he's---- How did I know he was the sort of man a disciplined world has a use for?"

He makes no answer, but he looks at me with eyes that are positively baleful, and in the instant I read his mute but mulish resolve that Utopia must end.

"Don't let that old quarrel poison all this," I say almost entreatingly. "It happened all differently here--everything is different here. Your double will be back to-morrow. Wait for him. Perhaps then you will understand----"

He shakes his head, and then bursts out with, "What do I want with a double? Double! What do I care if things have been different here? This----"

He thrusts me weakly back with his long, white hand. "My God!" he says almost forcibly, "what nonsense all this is! All these dreams! All Utopias! There she is----! Oh, but I have dreamt of her! And now----"

A sob catches him. I am really frightened by this time. I still try to keep between him and these Utopians, and to hide his gestures from them.

"It's different here," I persist. "It's different here. The emotion you feel has no place in it. It's a scar from the earth--the sore scar of your past----"

"And what are we all but scars? What is life but a scarring? It's you--you who don't understand! Of course we are covered with scars, we live to be scarred, we are scars! We are the scars of the past! These dreams, these childish dreams----!"

He does not need to finish his sentence, he waves an unteachable destructive arm.

My Utopia rocks about me.

For a moment the vision of that great courtyard hangs real. There the Utopians live real about me, going to and fro, and the great archway blazes with sunlight from the green gardens by the riverside. The man who is one of the samurai, and his lady, whom the botanist loved on earth, pass out of sight behind the marble flower-set Triton that spouts coolness in the middle of the place. For a moment I see two working men in green tunics sitting on a marble seat in the shadow of the colonnade, and a sweet little silver-haired old lady, clad all in violet, and carrying a book, comes towards us, and lifts a curious eye at the botanist's gestures. And then----

"Scars of the past! Scars of the past! These fanciful, useless dreams!"

Section 2

There is no jerk, no sound, no hint of material shock. We are in London, and clothed in the fashion of the town. The sullen roar of

London fills our ears....

I see that I am standing beside an iron seat of poor design in that grey and gawky waste of asphalte--Trafalgar Square, and the botanist, with perplexity in his face, stares from me to a poor, shrivelled, dirt-lined old woman--my God! what a neglected thing she is!--who proffers a box of matches....

He buys almost mechanically, and turns back to me.

"I was saying," he says, "the past rules us absolutely. These dreams----"

His sentence does not complete itself. He looks nervous and irritated.

"You have a trick at times," he says instead, "of making your suggestions so vivid----"

He takes a plunge. "If you don't mind," he says in a sort of quavering ultimatum, "we won't discuss that aspect of the question--the lady, I mean--further."

He pauses, and there still hangs a faint perplexity between us.

"But----" I begin.

For a moment we stand there, and my dream of Utopia runs off me like water from an oiled slab. Of course--we lunched at our club. We came back from Switzerland by no dream train but by the ordinary Bale express. We have been talking of that Lucerne woman he harps upon, and I have made some novel comment on his story. I have touched certain possibilities.

"You can't conceivably understand," he says.

"The fact remains," he goes on, taking up the thread of his argument again with an air of having defined our field, "we are the scars of the past. That's a thing one can discuss--without personalities."

"No," I say rather stupidly, "no."

"You are always talking as though you could kick the past to pieces; as though one could get right out from oneself and begin afresh. It is your weakness--if you don't mind my being frank--it makes you seem harsh and dogmatic. Life has gone easily for you; you have never been badly tried. You have been lucky--you do not understand the other way about. You are--hard."

I answer nothing.

He pants for breath. I perceive that in our discussion of his case I

must have gone too far, and that he has rebelled. Clearly I must have said something wounding about that ineffectual love story of his.

"You don't allow for my position," he says, and it occurs to me to say, "I'm obliged to look at the thing from my own point of view...."

One or other of us makes a move. What a lot of filthy, torn paper is scattered about the world! We walk slowly side by side towards the dirt-littered basin of the fountain, and stand regarding two grimy tramps who sit and argue on a further seat. One holds a horrible old boot in his hand, and gesticulates with it, while his other hand caresses his rag-wrapped foot. "Wot does Cham'lain si?" his words drift to us. "W'y, 'e says, wot's the good of 'nvesting your kepital where these 'ere Americans may dump it flat any time they like...."

(Were there not two men in green sitting on a marble seat?)

Section 3

We walk on, our talk suspended, past a ruthlessly clumsy hoarding, towards where men and women and children are struggling about a string of omnibuses. A newsvendor at the corner spreads a newspaper

placard upon the wood pavement, pins the corners down with stones, and we glimpse something about:--

MASSACRE IN ODESSA.

DISCOVERY OF HUMAN REMAINS AT CHERTSEY.

SHOCKING LYNCHING OUTRAGE IN NEW YORK STATE.

GERMAN INTRIGUES GET A SET-BACK.

THE BIRTHDAY HONOURS.--FULL LIST.

Dear old familiar world!

An angry parent in conversation with a sympathetic friend jostles against us. "I'll knock his blooming young 'ed orf if 'e cheeks me again. It's these 'ere brasted Board Schools----"

An omnibus passes, bearing on a board beneath an incorrectly drawn Union Jack an exhortation to the true patriot to "Buy Bumper's British-Boiled Jam." ...

I am stunned beyond the possibility of discussion for a space. In

this very place it must have been that the high terrace ran with the gardens below it, along which I came from my double to our hotel. I am going back, but now through reality, along the path I passed so happily in my dream. And the people I saw then are the people I am looking at now--with a difference.

The botanist walks beside me, white and nervously jerky in his movements, his ultimatum delivered.

We start to cross the road. An open carriage drives by, and we see a jaded, red-haired woman, smeared with paint, dressed in furs, and petulantly discontented. Her face is familiar to me, her face, with a difference.

Why do I think of her as dressed in green?

Of course!--she it was I saw leading her children by the hand!

Comes a crash to our left, and a running of people to see a cab-horse down on the slippery, slanting pavement outside St. Martin's Church.

We go on up the street.

A heavy-eyed young Jewess, a draggled prostitute--no crimson flower for her hair, poor girl!--regards us with a momentary speculation,

and we get a whiff of foul language from two newsboys on the kerb.

"We can't go on talking," the botanist begins, and ducks aside just in time to save his eye from the ferule of a stupidly held umbrella. He is going to treat our little tiff about that lady as closed. He has the air of picking up our conversation again at some earlier point.

He steps into the gutter, walks round outside a negro hawker, just escapes the wheel of a hansom, and comes to my side again.

"We can't go on talking of your Utopia," he says, "in a noise and crowd like this."

We are separated by a portly man going in the opposite direction, and join again. "We can't go on talking of Utopia," he repeats, "in London.... Up in the mountains--and holiday-time--it was all right. We let ourselves go!"

"I've been living in Utopia," I answer, tacitly adopting his tacit proposal to drop the lady out of the question.

"At times," he says, with a queer laugh, "you've almost made me live there too."

He reflects. "It doesn't do, you know. No! And I don't know whether, after all, I want----"

We are separated again by half-a-dozen lifted flagstones, a burning brazier, and two engineers concerned with some underground business or other--in the busiest hour of the day's traffic.

"Why shouldn't it do?" I ask.

"It spoils the world of everyday to let your mind run on impossible perfections."

"I wish," I shout against the traffic, "I could smash the world of everyday."

My note becomes quarrelsome. "You may accept this as the world of reality, you may consent to be one scar in an ill-dressed compound wound, but so--not I! This is a dream too--this world. Your dream, and you bring me back to it--out of Utopia----"

The crossing of Bow Street gives me pause again.

The face of a girl who is passing westward, a student girl, rather carelessly dressed, her books in a carrying-strap, comes across my field of vision. The westward sun of London glows upon her face. She has eyes that dream, surely no sensuous nor personal dream.

After all, after all, dispersed, hidden, disorganised, undiscovered, unsuspected even by themselves, the samurai of Utopia are in this world, the motives that are developed and organised there stir dumbly here and stifle in ten thousand futile hearts....

I overtake the botanist, who got ahead at the crossing by the advantage of a dust-cart.

"You think this is real because you can't wake out of it," I say. "It's all a dream, and there are people--I'm just one of the first of a multitude--between sleeping and waking--who will presently be rubbing it out of their eyes."

A pinched and dirty little girl, with sores upon her face, stretches out a bunch of wilting violets, in a pitifully thin little fist, and interrupts my speech. "Bunch o' vi'lets--on'y a penny."

"No!" I say curtly, hardening my heart.

A ragged and filthy nursing mother, with her last addition to our Imperial People on her arm, comes out of a drinkshop, and stands a little unsteadily, and wipes mouth and nose comprehensively with the back of a red chapped hand....

Section 4

"Isn't that reality?" says the botanist, almost triumphantly, and leaves me aghast at his triumph.

"That!" I say belatedly. "It's a thing in a nightmare!"

He shakes his head and smiles--exasperatingly.

I perceive quite abruptly that the botanist and I have reached the limits of our intercourse.

"The world dreams things like that," I say, "because it suffers from an indigestion of such people as you."

His low-toned self-complacency, like the faded banner of an obstinate fort, still flies unconquered. And you know, he's not even a happy man with it all!

For ten seconds or more I am furiously seeking in my mind for a word, for a term of abuse, for one compendious verbal missile that shall smash this man for ever. It has to express total inadequacy of imagination and will, spiritual anaemia, dull respectability, gross sentimentality, a cultivated pettiness of heart....

That word will not come. But no other word will do. Indeed the word

does not exist. There is nothing with sufficient vituperative concentration for this moral and intellectual stupidity of educated people....

"Er----" he begins.

No! I can't endure him.

With a passionate rapidity of movement, I leave his side, dart between a carriage and a van, duck under the head of a cab-horse, and board a 'bus going westward somewhere--but anyhow, going in exactly the reverse direction to the botanist. I clamber up the steps and thread my swaying way to the seat immediately behind the driver.

"There!" I say, as I whack myself down on the seat and pant.

When I look round the botanist is out of sight.

Section 5

But I am back in the world for all that, and my Utopia is done.

It is good discipline for the Utopist to visit this world occasionally.

But from the front seat on the top of an omnibus on a sunny September afternoon, the Strand, and Charing Cross corner, and Whitehall, and the great multitude of people, the great uproar of vehicles, streaming in all directions, is apt to look a world altogether too formidable. It has a glare, it has a tumult and vigour that shouts one down. It shouts one down, if shouting is to carry it. What good was it to trot along the pavement through this noise and tumult of life, pleading Utopia to that botanist? What good would it be to recommend Utopia in this driver's preoccupied ear?

There are moments in the life of every philosopher and dreamer when he feels himself the flimsiest of absurdities, when the Thing in Being has its way with him, its triumphant way, when it asks in a roar, unanswerably, with a fine solid use of the current vernacular, "What Good is all this--Rot about Utopias?"

One inspects the Thing in Being with something of the diffident speculation of primitive man, peering from behind a tree at an angry elephant.

(There is an omen in that image. On how many occasions must that ancestor of ours have had just the Utopist's feeling of ambitious unreality, have decided that on the whole it was wiser to go very quietly home again, and leave the big beast alone? But, in the end,

men rode upon the elephant's head, and guided him this way or that.... The Thing in Being that roars so tremendously about Charing Cross corner seems a bigger antagonist than an elephant, but then we have better weapons than chipped flint blades....)

After all, in a very little time everything that impresses me so mightily this September afternoon will have changed or passed away for ever, everything. These omnibuses, these great, stalwart, crowded, many-coloured things that jostle one another, and make so handsome a clatter-clamour, will all have gone; they and their horses and drivers and organisation; you will come here and you will not find them. Something else will be here, some different sort of vehicle, that is now perhaps the mere germ of an idea in some engineer student's brain. And this road and pavement will have changed, and these impressive great buildings; other buildings will be here, buildings that are as yet more impalpable than this page you read, more formless and flimsy by far than anything that is reasoned here. Little plans sketched on paper, strokes of a pen or of a brush, will be the first materialisations of what will at last obliterate every detail and atom of these re-echoing actualities that overwhelm us now. And the clothing and gestures of these innumerable people, the character of their faces and bearing, these too will be recast in the spirit of what are now obscure and impalpable beginnings.

The new things will be indeed of the substance of the thing that is,

but differing just in the measure of the will and imagination that goes to make them. They will be strong and fair as the will is sturdy and organised and the imagination comprehensive and bold; they will be ugly and smeared with wretchedness as the will is fluctuating and the imagination timid and mean.

Indeed Will is stronger than Fact, it can mould and overcome Fact. But this world has still to discover its will, it is a world that slumbers inertly, and all this roar and pulsation of life is no more than its heavy breathing.... My mind runs on to the thought of an awakening.

As my omnibus goes lumbering up Cockspur Street through the clatter rattle of the cabs and carriages, there comes another fancy in my mind.... Could one but realise an apocalyptic image and suppose an angel, such as was given to each of the seven churches of Asia, given for a space to the service of the Greater Rule. I see him as a towering figure of flame and colour, standing between earth and sky, with a trumpet in his hands, over there above the Haymarket, against the October glow; and when he sounds, all the samurai, all who are samurai in Utopia, will know themselves and one another....

(Whup! says a motor brougham, and a policeman stays the traffic with his hand.)

All of us who partake of the samurai would know ourselves and one

another!

For a moment I have a vision of this resurrection of the living, of a vague, magnificent answer, of countless myriads at attention, of all that is fine in humanity at attention, round the compass of the earth.

Then that philosophy of individual uniqueness resumes its sway over my thoughts, and my dream of a world's awakening fades.

I had forgotten....

Things do not happen like that. God is not simple, God is not theatrical, the summons comes to each man in its due time for him, with an infinite subtlety of variety....

If that is so, what of my Utopia?

This infinite world must needs be flattened to get it on one retina. The picture of a solid thing, although it is flattened and simplified, is not necessarily a lie. Surely, surely, in the end, by degrees, and steps, something of this sort, some such understanding, as this Utopia must come. First here, then there, single men and then groups of men will fall into line--not indeed with my poor faulty hesitating suggestions--but with a great and comprehensive plan wrought out by many minds and in many tongues. It is just

because my plan is faulty, because it mis-states so much, and omits so much, that they do not now fall in. It will not be like my dream, the world that is coming. My dream is just my own poor dream, the thing sufficient for me. We fail in comprehension, we fail so variously and abundantly. We see as much as it is serviceable for us to see, and we see no further. But the fresh undaunted generations come to take on our work beyond our utmost effort, beyond the range of our ideas. They will learn with certainty things that to us are guesses and riddles....

There will be many Utopias. Each generation will have its new version of Utopia, a little more certain and complete and real, with its problems lying closer and closer to the problems of the Thing in Being. Until at last from dreams Utopias will have come to be working drawings, and the whole world will be shaping the final World State, the fair and great and fruitful World State, that will only not be a Utopia because it will be this world. So surely it must be----

The policeman drops his hand. "Come up," says the 'bus driver, and the horses strain; "Clitter, clatter, cluck, clak," the line of hurrying hansoms overtakes the omnibus going west. A dexterous lad on a bicycle with a bale of newspapers on his back dodges nimbly across the head of the column and vanishes up a side street.

The omnibus sways forward. Rapt and prophetic, his plump hands clasped round the handle of his umbrella, his billycock hat a trifle askew, this irascible little man of the Voice, this impatient dreamer, this scolding Optimist, who has argued so rudely and dogmatically about economics and philosophy and decoration, and indeed about everything under the sun, who has been so hard on the botanist and fashionable women, and so reluctant in the matter of beer, is carried onward, dreaming dreams, dreams that with all the inevitable ironies of difference, may be realities when you and I are dreams.

He passes, and for a little space we are left with his egoisms and idiosyncrasies more or less in suspense.

But why was he intruded? you ask. Why could not a modern Utopia be discussed without this impersonation--impersonally? It has confused the book, you say, made the argument hard to follow, and thrown a quality of insincerity over the whole. Are we but mocking at Utopias, you demand, using all these noble and generalised hopes as the backcloth against which two bickering personalities jar and squabble? Do I mean we are never to view the promised land again except through a foreground of fellow-travellers? There is a common notion that the reading of a Utopia should end with a swelling heart and clear resolves, with lists of names, formation of committees, and even the commencement of subscriptions. But this Utopia began upon a philosophy of fragmentation, and ends, confusedly, amidst a

gross tumult of immediate realities, in dust and doubt, with, at the best, one individual's aspiration. Utopias were once in good faith, projects for a fresh creation of the world and of a most unworldly completeness; this so-called Modern Utopia is a mere story of personal adventures among Utopian philosophies.

Indeed, that came about without the writer's intention. So it was the summoned vision came. For I see about me a great multitude of little souls and groups of souls as darkened, as derivative as my own; with the passage of years I understand more and more clearly the quality of the motives that urge me and urge them to do whatever we do.... Yet that is not all I see, and I am not altogether bounded by my littleness. Ever and again, contrasting with this immediate vision, come glimpses of a comprehensive scheme, in which these personalities float, the scheme of a synthetic wider being, the great State, mankind, in which we all move and go, like blood corpuscles, like nerve cells, it may be at times like brain cells, in the body of a man. But the two visions are not seen consistently together, at least by me, and I do not surely know that they exist consistently together. The motives needed for those wider issues come not into the interplay of my vanities and wishes. That greater scheme lies about the men and women I know, as I have tried to make the vistas and spaces, the mountains, cities, laws, and order of Utopia lie about my talking couple, too great for their sustained comprehension. When one focuses upon these two that wide landscape becomes indistinct and distant, and when one regards that then the

real persons one knows grow vague and unreal. Nevertheless, I cannot separate these two aspects of human life, each commenting on the other. In that incongruity between great and individual inheres the incompatibility I could not resolve, and which, therefore, I have had to present in this conflicting form. At times that great scheme does seem to me to enter certain men's lives as a passion, as a real and living motive; there are those who know it almost as if it was a thing of desire; even for me, upon occasion, the little lures of the immediate life are seen small and vain, and the soul goes out to that mighty Being, to apprehend it and serve it and possess. But this is an illumination that passes as it comes, a rare transitory lucidity, leaving the soul's desire suddenly turned to presumption and hypocrisy upon the lips. One grasps at the Universe and attains--Bathos. The hungers, the jealousies, the prejudices and habits have us again, and we are forced back to think that it is so, and not otherwise, that we are meant to serve the mysteries; that in these blinkers it is we are driven to an end we cannot understand. And then, for measured moments in the night watches or as one walks alone or while one sits in thought and speech with a friend, the wider aspirations glow again with a sincere emotion, with the colours of attainable desire....

That is my all about Utopia, and about the desire and need for Utopia, and how that planet lies to this planet that bears the daily lives of men.

APPENDIX

SCEPTICISM OF THE INSTRUMENT

A Portion of a Paper read to the Oxford Philosophical Society, November 8, 1903, and reprinted, with some Revision, from the Version given in Mind, vol. xiii. (N.S.), No. 51.

(See also Chapter I., Section 6, and Chapter X., Sections 1 and 2.)

It seems to me that I may most propitiously attempt to interest you this evening by describing very briefly the particular metaphysical and philosophical system in which I do my thinking, and more particularly by setting out for your consideration one or two points in which I seem to myself to differ most widely from current accepted philosophy.

You must be prepared for things that will strike you as crude, for a certain difference of accent and dialect that you may not like, and you must be prepared too to hear what may strike you as the clumsy statement of my ignorant rediscovery of things already beautifully thought out and said. But in the end you may incline to forgive me some of this first offence.... It is quite unavoidable that, in

setting out these intellectual foundations of mine, I should lapse for a moment or so towards autobiography.

A convergence of circumstances led to my having my knowledge of concrete things quite extensively developed before I came to philosophical examination at all. I have heard someone say that a savage or an animal is mentally a purely objective being, and in that respect I was like a savage or an animal until I was well over twenty. I was extremely unaware of the subjective or introverted element in my being. I was a Positivist without knowing it. My early education was a feeble one; it was one in which my private observation, inquiry and experiment were far more important factors than any instruction, or rather perhaps the instruction I received was less even than what I learnt for myself, and it terminated at thirteen. I had come into pretty intimate contact with the harder realities of life, with hunger in various forms, and many base and disagreeable necessities, before I was fifteen. About that age, following the indication of certain theological and speculative curiosities, I began to learn something of what I will call deliberately and justly, Elementary Science--stuff I got out of Cassell's Popular Educator and cheap text-books--and then, through accidents and ambitions that do not matter in the least to us now, I came to three years of illuminating and good scientific work. The central fact of those three years was Huxley's course in Comparative Anatomy at the school in Exhibition Road. About that as a nucleus I arranged a spacious digest of facts. At the end of that time I had

acquired what I still think to be a fairly clear, and complete and ordered view of the ostensibly real universe. Let me try to give you the chief things I had. I had man definitely placed in the great scheme of space and time. I knew him incurably for what he was, finite and not final, a being of compromises and adaptations. I had traced his lungs, for example, from a swimming bladder, step by step, with scalpel and probe, through a dozen types or more, I had seen the ancestral caecum shrink to that disease nest, the appendix of to-day, I had watched the gill slit patched slowly to the purposes of the ear and the reptile jaw suspension utilised to eke out the needs of a sense organ taken from its native and natural water. I had worked out the development of those extraordinarily unsatisfactory and untrustworthy instruments, man's teeth, from the skin scutes of the shark to their present function as a basis for gold stoppings, and followed the slow unfolding of the complex and painful process of gestation through which man comes into the world. I had followed all these things and many kindred things by dissection and in embryology--I had checked the whole theory of development again in a year's course of palaeontology, and I had taken the dimensions of the whole process, by the scale of the stars, in a course of astronomical physics. And all that amount of objective elucidation came before I had reached the beginnings of any philosophical or metaphysical inquiry, any inquiry as to why I believed, how I believed, what I believed, or what the fundamental stuff of things was.

Now following hard upon this interlude with knowledge, came a time when I had to give myself to teaching, and it became advisable to acquire one of those Teaching Diplomas that are so widely and so foolishly despised, and that enterprise set me to a superficial, but suggestive study of educational method, of educational theory, of logic, of psychology, and so at last, when the little affair with the diploma was settled, to philosophy. Now to come to logic over the bracing uplands of comparative anatomy is to come to logic with a lot of very natural preconceptions blown clean out of one's mind. It is, I submit, a way of taking logic in the flank. When you have realised to the marrow, that all the physical organs of man and all his physical structure are what they are through a series of adaptations and approximations, and that they are kept up to a level of practical efficiency only by the elimination of death, and that this is true also of his brain and of his instincts and of many of his mental predispositions, you are not going to take his thinking apparatus unquestioningly as being in any way mysteriously different and better. And I had read only a little logic before I became aware of implications that I could not agree with, and assumptions that seemed to me to be altogether at variance with the general scheme of objective fact established in my mind.

I came to an examination of logical processes and of language with the expectation that they would share the profoundly provisional character, the character of irregular limitation and adaptation that pervades the whole physical and animal being of man. And I found the

thing I had expected. And as a consequence I found a sort of intellectual hardihood about the assumptions of logic, that at first confused me and then roused all the latent scepticism in my mind.

My first quarrel with the accepted logic I developed long ago in a little paper that was printed in the Fortnightly Review in July 1891. It was called the "Rediscovery of the Unique," and re-reading it I perceive not only how bad and even annoying it was in manner--a thing I have long known--but also how remarkably bad it was in expression. I have good reason for doubting whether my powers of expression in these uses have very perceptibly improved, but at any rate I am doing my best now with that previous failure before me.

That unfortunate paper, among other oversights I can no longer regard as trivial, disregarded quite completely the fact that a whole literature upon the antagonism of the one and the many, of the specific ideal and the individual reality, was already in existence. It defined no relations to other thought or thinkers. I understand now, what I did not understand then, why it was totally ignored. But the idea underlying that paper I cling to to-day. I consider it an idea that will ultimately be regarded as one of primary importance to human thought, and I will try and present the substance of that early paper again now very briefly, as the best opening of my general case. My opening scepticism is essentially a doubt of the

objective reality of classification. I have no hesitation in saying that is the first and primary proposition of my philosophy.

I have it in my mind that classification is a necessary condition of the working of the mental implement, but that it is a departure from the objective truth of things, that classification is very serviceable for the practical purposes of life but a very doubtful preliminary to those fine penetrations the philosophical purpose, in its more arrogant moods, demands. All the peculiarities of my way of thinking derive from that.

A mind nourished upon anatomical study is of course permeated with the suggestion of the vagueness and instability of biological species. A biological species is quite obviously a great number of unique individuals which is separable from other biological species only by the fact that an enormous number of other linking individuals are inaccessible in time--are in other words dead and gone--and each new individual in that species does, in the distinction of its own individuality, break away in however infinitesimal degree from the previous average properties of the species. There is no property of any species, even the properties that constitute the specific definition, that is not a matter of more or less. If, for example, a species be distinguished by a single large red spot on the back, you will find if you go over a great number of specimens that red spot shrinking here to nothing, expanding there to a more general redness, weakening to pink,

deepening to russet and brown, shading into crimson, and so on, and so on. And this is true not only of biological species. It is true of the mineral specimens constituting a mineral species, and I remember as a constant refrain in the lectures of Prof. Judd upon rock classification, the words "they pass into one another by insensible gradations." That is true, I hold, of all things.

You will think perhaps of atoms of the elements as instances of identically similar things, but these are things not of experience but of theory, and there is not a phenomenon in chemistry that is not equally well explained on the supposition that it is merely the immense quantities of atoms necessarily taken in any experiment that mask by the operation of the law of averages the fact that each atom also has its unique quality, its special individual difference. This idea of uniqueness in all individuals is not only true of the classifications of material science; it is true, and still more evidently true, of the species of common thought, it is true of common terms. Take the word chair. When one says chair, one thinks vaguely of an average chair. But collect individual instances, think of armchairs and reading chairs, and dining-room chairs and kitchen chairs, chairs that pass into benches, chairs that cross the boundary and become settees, dentists' chairs, thrones, opera stalls, seats of all sorts, those miraculous fungoid growths that cumber the floor of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition, and you will perceive what a lax bundle in fact is this simple straightforward term. In co-operation with an intelligent joiner I would undertake

to defeat any definition of chair or chairishness that you gave me. Chairs just as much as individual organisms, just as much as mineral and rock specimens, are unique things--if you know them well enough you will find an individual difference even in a set of machine-made chairs--and it is only because we do not possess minds of unlimited capacity, because our brain has only a limited number of pigeon-holes for our correspondence with an unlimited universe of objective uniques, that we have to delude ourselves into the belief that there is a chairishness in this species common to and distinctive of all chairs.

Let me repeat; this is of the very smallest importance in all the practical affairs of life, or indeed in relation to anything but philosophy and wide generalisations. But in philosophy it matters profoundly. If I order two new-laid eggs for breakfast, up come two unhatched but still unique avian individuals, and the chances are they serve my rude physiological purpose. I can afford to ignore the hens' eggs of the past that were not quite so nearly this sort of thing, and the hens' eggs of the future that will accumulate modification age by age; I can venture to ignore the rare chance of an abnormality in chemical composition and of any startling aberration in my physiological reaction; I can, with a confidence that is practically perfect, say with unqualified simplicity "two eggs," but not if my concern is not my morning's breakfast but the utmost possible truth.

Now let me go on to point out whither this idea of uniqueness tends. I submit to you that syllogism is based on classification, that all hard logical reasoning tends to imply and is apt to imply a confidence in the objective reality of classification. Consequently in denying that I deny the absolute validity of logic. Classification and number, which in truth ignore the fine differences of objective realities, have in the past of human thought been imposed upon things. Let me for clearness' sake take a liberty here--commit, as you may perhaps think, an unpardonable insolence. Hindoo thought and Greek thought alike impress me as being overmuch obsessed by an objective treatment of certain necessary preliminary conditions of human thought--number and definition and class and abstract form. But these things, number, definition, class and abstract form, I hold, are merely unavoidable conditions of mental activity--regrettable conditions rather than essential facts. The forceps of our minds are clumsy forceps, and crush the truth a little in taking hold of it.

It was about this difficulty that the mind of Plato played a little inconclusively all his life. For the most part he tended to regard the idea as the something behind reality, whereas it seems to me that the idea is the more proximate and less perfect thing, the thing by which the mind, by ignoring individual differences, attempts to comprehend an otherwise unmanageable number of unique realities.

Let me give you a rough figure of what I am trying to convey in this first attack upon the philosophical validity of general terms. You have seen the results of those various methods of black and white reproduction that involve the use of a rectangular net. You know the sort of process picture I mean--it used to be employed very frequently in reproducing photographs. At a little distance you really seem to have a faithful reproduction of the original picture, but when you peer closely you find not the unique form and masses of the original, but a multitude of little rectangles, uniform in shape and size. The more earnestly you go into the thing, the closer you look, the more the picture is lost in reticulations. I submit the world of reasoned inquiry has a very similar relation to the world I call objectively real. For the rough purposes of every day the net-work picture will do, but the finer your purpose the less it will serve, and for an ideally fine purpose, for absolute and general knowledge that will be as true for a man at a distance with a telescope as for a man with a microscope it will not serve at all.

It is true you can make your net of logical interpretation finer and finer, you can fine your classification more and more--up to a certain limit. But essentially you are working in limits, and as you come closer, as you look at finer and subtler things, as you leave the practical purpose for which the method exists, the element of error increases. Every species is vague, every term goes cloudy at its edges, and so in my way of thinking, relentless logic is only

another phrase for a stupidity,--for a sort of intellectual pigheadedness. If you push a philosophical or metaphysical inquiry through a series of valid syllogisms--never committing any generally recognised fallacy--you nevertheless leave a certain rubbing and marginal loss of objective truth and you get deflections that are difficult to trace, at each phase in the process. Every species waggles about in its definition, every tool is a little loose in its handle, every scale has its individual error. So long as you are reasoning for practical purposes about the finite things of experience, you can every now and then check your process, and correct your adjustments. But not when you make what are called philosophical and theological inquiries, when you turn your implement towards the final absolute truth of things. Doing that is like firing at an inaccessible, unmarkable and indestructible target at an unknown distance, with a defective rifle and variable cartridges. Even if by chance you hit, you cannot know that you hit, and so it will matter nothing at all.

This assertion of the necessary untrustworthiness of all reasoning processes arising out of the fallacy of classification in what is quite conceivably a universe of uniques, forms only one introductory aspect of my general scepticism of the Instrument of Thought.

I have now to tell you of another aspect of this scepticism of the instrument which concerns negative terms.

Classes in logic are not only represented by circles with a hard firm outline, whereas they have no such definite limits, but also there is a constant disposition to think of negative terms as if they represented positive classes. With words just as with numbers and abstract forms there are definite phases of human development. There is, you know, with regard to number, the phase when man can barely count at all, or counts in perfect good faith and sanity upon his fingers. Then there is the phase when he is struggling with the development of number, when he begins to elaborate all sorts of ideas about numbers, until at last he develops complex superstitions about perfect numbers and imperfect numbers, about threes and sevens and the like. The same is the case with abstracted forms, and even to-day we are scarcely more than heads out of the vast subtle muddle of thinking about spheres and ideally perfect forms and so on, that was the price of this little necessary step to clear thinking. You know better than I do how large a part numerical and geometrical magic, numerical and geometrical philosophy has played in the history of the mind. And the whole apparatus of language and mental communication is beset with like dangers. The language of the savage is, I suppose, purely positive; the thing has a name, the name has a thing. This indeed is the tradition of language, and to-day even, we, when we hear a name, are predisposed--and sometimes it is a very vicious disposition--to imagine forthwith something answering to the name. We are disposed, as an incurable mental vice, to accumulate intension in terms. If I say to you Wodget or Crump, you find yourself passing over the fact that these are nothings, these are,

so to speak, mere blankety blanks, and trying to think what sort of thing a Wodget or a Crump may be. And where this disposition has come in, in its most alluring guise, is in the case of negative terms. Our instrument of knowledge persists in handling even such openly negative terms as the Absolute, the Infinite, as though they were real existences, and when the negative element is ever so little disguised, as it is in such a word as Omniscience, then the illusion of positive reality may be complete.

Please remember that I am trying to tell you my philosophy, and not arguing about yours. Let me try and express how in my mind this matter of negative terms has shaped itself. I think of something which I may perhaps best describe as being off the stage or out of court, or as the Void without Implications, or as Nothingness or as Outer Darkness. This is a sort of hypothetical Beyond to the visible world of human thought, and thither I think all negative terms reach at last, and merge and become nothing. Whatever positive class you make, whatever boundary you draw, straight away from that boundary begins the corresponding negative class and passes into the illimitable horizon of nothingness. You talk of pink things, you ignore, if you are a trained logician, the more elusive shades of pink, and draw your line. Beyond is the not pink, known and knowable, and still in the not pink region one comes to the Outer Darkness. Not blue, not happy, not iron, all the not classes meet in that Outer Darkness. That same Outer Darkness and nothingness is infinite space, and infinite time, and any being of infinite

qualities, and all that region I rule out of court in my philosophy altogether. I will neither affirm nor deny if I can help it about any not things. I will not deal with not things at all, except by accident and inadvertence. If I use the word 'infinite' I use it as one often uses 'countless,' "the countless hosts of the enemy"--or 'immeasurable'--"immeasurable cliffs"--that is to say as the limit of measurement rather than as the limit of imaginary measurability, as a convenient equivalent to as many times this cloth yard as you can, and as many again and so on and so on. Now a great number of apparently positive terms are, or have become, practically negative terms and are under the same ban with me. A considerable number of terms that have played a great part in the world of thought, seem to me to be invalidated by this same defect, to have no content or an undefined content or an unjustifiable content. For example, that word Omniscient, as implying infinite knowledge, impresses me as being a word with a delusive air of being solid and full, when it is really hollow with no content whatever. I am persuaded that knowing is the relation of a conscious being to something not itself, that the thing known is defined as a system of parts and aspects and relationships, that knowledge is comprehension, and so that only finite things can know or be known. When you talk of a being of infinite extension and infinite duration, omniscient and omnipotent and Perfect, you seem to me to be talking in negatives of nothing whatever. When you speak of the Absolute you speak to me of nothing. If however you talk of a great yet finite and thinkable being, a being not myself, extending beyond my imagination in time and space,

knowing all that I can think of as known and capable of doing all that I can think of as done, you come into the sphere of my mental operations, and into the scheme of my philosophy....

These then are my first two charges against our Instrument of Knowledge, firstly, that it can work only by disregarding individuality and treating uniques as identically similar objects in this respect or that, so as to group them under one term, and that once it has done so it tends automatically to intensify the significance of that term, and secondly, that it can only deal freely with negative terms by treating them as though they were positive. But I have a further objection to the Instrument of Human Thought, that is not correlated to these former objections and that is also rather more difficult to convey.

Essentially this idea is to present a sort of stratification in human ideas. I have it very much in mind that various terms in our reasoning lie, as it were, at different levels and in different planes, and that we accomplish a large amount of error and confusion by reasoning terms together that do not lie or nearly lie in the same plane.

Let me endeavour to make myself a little less obscure by a most flagrant instance from physical things. Suppose some one began to talk seriously of a man seeing an atom through a microscope, or better perhaps of cutting one in half with a knife. There are a

number of non-analytical people who would be quite prepared to believe that an atom could be visible to the eye or cut in this manner. But any one at all conversant with physical conceptions would almost as soon think of killing the square root of 2 with a rook rifle as of cutting an atom in half with a knife. Our conception of an atom is reached through a process of hypothesis and analysis, and in the world of atoms there are no knives and no men to cut. If you have thought with a strong consistent mental movement, then when you have thought of your atom under the knife blade, your knife blade has itself become a cloud of swinging grouped atoms, and your microscope lens a little universe of oscillatory and vibratory molecules. If you think of the universe, thinking at the level of atoms, there is neither knife to cut, scale to weigh nor eye to see. The universe at that plane to which the mind of the molecular physicist descends has none of the shapes or forms of our common life whatever. This hand with which I write is in the universe of molecular physics a cloud of warring atoms and molecules, combining and recombining, colliding, rotating, flying hither and thither in the universal atmosphere of ether.

You see, I hope, what I mean, when I say that the universe of molecular physics is at a different level from the universe of common experience;--what we call stable and solid is in that world a freely moving system of interlacing centres of force, what we call colour and sound is there no more than this length of vibration or that. We have reached to a conception of that universe of molecular

physics by a great enterprise of organised analysis, and our universe of daily experiences stands in relation to that elemental world as if it were a synthesis of those elemental things.

I would suggest to you that this is only a very extreme instance of the general state of affairs, that there may be finer and subtler differences of level between one term and another, and that terms may very well be thought of as lying obliquely and as being twisted through different levels.

It will perhaps give a clearer idea of what I am seeking to convey if I suggest a concrete image for the whole world of a man's thought and knowledge. Imagine a large clear jelly, in which at all angles and in all states of simplicity or contortion his ideas are imbedded. They are all valid and possible ideas as they lie, none in reality incompatible with any. If you imagine the direction of up or down in this clear jelly being as it were the direction in which one moves by analysis or by synthesis, if you go down for example from matter to atoms and centres of force and up to men and states and countries--if you will imagine the ideas lying in that manner--you will get the beginning of my intention. But our Instrument, our process of thinking, like a drawing before the discovery of perspective, appears to have difficulties with the third dimension, appears capable only of dealing with or reasoning about ideas by projecting them upon the same plane. It will be obvious that a great multitude of things may very well exist together in a solid jelly,

which would be overlapping and incompatible and mutually destructive, when projected together upon one plane. Through the bias in our Instrument to do this, through reasoning between terms not in the same plane, an enormous amount of confusion, perplexity and mental deadlocking occurs.

The old theological deadlock between predestination and free-will serves admirably as an example of the sort of deadlock I mean. Take life at the level of common sensation and common experience and there is no more indisputable fact than man's freedom of will, unless it is his complete moral responsibility. But make only the least penetrating of analyses and you perceive a world of inevitable consequences, a rigid succession of cause and effect. Insist upon a flat agreement between the two, and there you are! The Instrument fails.

It is upon these three objections, and upon an extreme suspicion of abstract terms which arises materially out of my first and second objections, that I chiefly rest my case for a profound scepticism of the remoter possibilities of the Instrument of Thought. It is a thing no more perfect than the human eye or the human ear, though like those other instruments it may have undefined possibilities of evolution towards increased range, and increased power.

So much for my main contention. But before I conclude I may--since I am here--say a little more in the autobiographical vein, and with

a view to your discussion to show how I reconcile this fundamental scepticism with the very positive beliefs about world-wide issues I possess, and the very definite distinction I make between right and wrong.

I reconcile these things by simply pointing out to you that if there is any validity in my image of that three dimensional jelly in which our ideas are suspended, such a reconciliation as you demand in logic, such a projection of the things as in accordance upon one plane, is totally unnecessary and impossible.

This insistence upon the element of uniqueness in being, this subordination of the class to the individual difference, not only destroys the universal claim of philosophy, but the universal claim of ethical imperatives, the universal claim of any religious teaching. If you press me back upon my fundamental position I must confess I put faith and standards and rules of conduct upon exactly the same level as I put my belief of what is right in art, and what I consider right practice in art. I have arrived at a certain sort of self-knowledge and there are, I find, very distinct imperatives for me, but I am quite prepared to admit there is no proving them imperative on any one else. One's political proceedings, one's moral acts are, I hold, just as much self-expression as one's poetry or painting or music. But since life has for its primordial elements assimilation and aggression, I try not only to obey my imperatives, but to put them persuasively and convincingly into other minds, to

bring about my good and to resist and overcome my evil as though they were the universal Good and the universal Evil in which unthinking men believe. And it is obviously in no way contradictory to this philosophy, for me, if I find others responding sympathetically to any notes of mine or if I find myself responding sympathetically to notes sounding about me, to give that common resemblance between myself and others a name, to refer these others and myself in common to this thing as if it were externalised and spanned us all.

Scepticism of the Instrument is for example not incompatible with religious association and with organisation upon the basis of a common faith. It is possible to regard God as a Being synthetic in relation to men and societies, just as the idea of a universe of atoms and molecules and inorganic relationships is analytical in relation to human life.

The repudiation of demonstration in any but immediate and verifiable cases that this Scepticism of the Instrument amounts to, the abandonment of any universal validity for moral and religious propositions, brings ethical, social and religious teaching into the province of poetry, and does something to correct the estrangement between knowledge and beauty that is a feature of so much mental existence at this time. All these things are self-expression. Such an opinion sets a new and greater value on that penetrating and illuminating quality of mind we call insight, insight which when it

faces towards the contradictions that arise out of the imperfections of the mental instrument is called humour. In these innate, unteachable qualities I hold--in humour and the sense of beauty--lies such hope of intellectual salvation from the original sin of our intellectual instrument as we may entertain in this uncertain and fluctuating world of unique appearances....

So frankly I spread my little equipment of fundamental assumptions before you, heartily glad of the opportunity you have given me of taking them out, of looking at them with the particularity the presence of hearers ensures, and of hearing the impression they make upon you. Of course, such a sketch must have an inevitable crudity of effect. The time I had for it--I mean the time I was able to give in preparation--was altogether too limited for any exhaustive finish of presentation; but I think on the whole I have got the main lines of this sketch map of my mental basis true. Whether I have made myself comprehensible is a different question altogether. It is for you rather than me to say how this sketch map of mine lies with regard to your own more systematic cartography....

Here followed certain comments upon Personal Idealism, and Mr. F. C. S. Schiller's Humanism, of no particular value.