X.

THOUGHT IN THE MODERN STATE

These speculations upon the possibilities and means of raising the average human result have brought us at last to the problem of increasing the amount of original intellectual activity in the state, as a culminating necessity. That average child who threads our speculations has been bred and fed, we now suppose, educated in school and college, put under stimulating political and social conditions and brought within reach and under the influence of the available literature of the time, and he is now emerging into adult responsibility. His individual thought and purpose has to swim in and become part of the general thought and purpose of the community. If that general flow of thought is meagre, his individual life will partake of its limitations. As the general thought rises out of its pools and narrow channels towards a wide flood, so each individual becomes more capable of free movements and spacious co-operations towards the general end. We have bred our citizen and trained him only to waste all his energy at last; he is no better than the water in an isolated dry-season pool in the bed of a tropical river, unless he can mingle in the end with the general sea of thought and action.

Thought is the life, the spontaneous flexibility of a community. A community that thinks freely and fully throughout its population is

capable of a thousand things that are impossible in an unthinking mass of people. The latter, collectively considered, is a large rigid thing, a lifeless thing, that will break rather than bend, that will die rather than develop. Its inevitable end is dust and extinction. Look at the thing from the baser level of political conceptions, and still that floating tide of thought is a necessity. With thought and gathered knowledge things that mean tumult, bloodshed, undying hatreds, schisms and final disaster to uncivilized races, are accomplished in peace; constitutional changes, economic reorganizations, boundary modifications and a hundred grave matters. Thought is the solvent that will make a road for men through Alpine difficulties that seem now unconquerable, that will dissolve those gigantic rocks of custom and tradition that loom so forbiddingly athwart all our further plans. For three thousand years and more the Book has been becoming more and more the evident salvation of man. If our present civilization collapse, it will collapse as all previous civilizations have collapsed, not from want of will but from the want of organization for its will, for the want of that knowledge, that conviction, and that general understanding that would have kept pace with the continually more complicated problems that arose about it. [Footnote: Dr. Beattie Crozier, in his most interesting and suggestive History of Intellectual Development, terms the literary apparatus that holds a people together to a common purpose, the "Bible" of that people, and suggests that the "Bible" of a modern people should be the History of Civilization. His work expresses by very different phrases and methods a line of thought closely akin to the thesis of this paper.]

One writes "our present civilization" and of previous civilizations, but indeed no civilizations have yet really come into existence. Tribes have aggregated into nations, nations have aggregated into empires, and then, after a struggle, has come a great confusion of thought, a failure to clarify a common purpose, and disintegration. Each successive birth has developed a more abundant body of thought, a more copious literature than the last, each has profited by the legacy of the previous failure, but none have yet developed enough. Mankind has been struggling to win this step of a permanent civilized state, and has never yet attained any sort of permanency--unless perhaps in China. And that sole imperfect permanency was based primarily upon a literature. A literature is the triumphant instrument of the invincible culture of the Jews. Through the whole volume of history the thoughtful reader cannot but exclaim, again and again, "But if they had only understood one another, all this bloodshed, all this crash, disaster, and waste of generations could have been avoided!" Our time has come, and we of the European races are making our struggle in our turn. Slavery still fights a guerilla war in factory and farm, cruelty and violence peep from every slum, barbaric habits, rude barbaric ways of thinking, grossness and stupidity are still all about us. And yet in many ways we seem to have got nearer to the hope of permanent beginnings than any of those previous essays in civilization. Collectively we know a great deal more, and more of us are in touch with the general body of knowledge than was ever the case at any earlier stage. Assuredly we know enough to hope that we have passed the

last of the Dark Ages. But though we hope, we deal with no certainties, and it is upon the broadening and increase of the flow of ideas that our hope depends.

At present this stream of thought and common understanding is not nearly so wide and deep as it might conceivably become, as it must become if indeed this present civilization is to be more than another false start. Our society [Footnote: Anticipations, Chapter III. Developing Social Elements.] has ceased to be homogeneous, and it has become a heterogeneous confusion without any secure common grounds of action, under the stress of its own material achievements. For the lack of a sufficient literature we specialize into inco-ordinated classes. A number of new social types are developing, ignorant of each other, ignorant almost of themselves, full of mutual suspicions and mutual misunderstandings, narrow, limited, and dangerously incapable of intelligent collective action in the face of crises. The medical man sees nothing beyond his profession; he misunderstands the artist, the divine, and the engineer. The engineer hates and despises the politician, the lawyer misses the aims of the medical man, the artist lives angrily in a stuffy little corner of pure technique; none of them read any general literature at all except perhaps a newspaper. Each thinks parochially in his own limits, and, except for his specialty, is an illiterate man. It is absolutely necessary to the progress of our civilization that these isolations should be overcome, that the community should become aware of itself collectively and should think as a whole. And the only thing that can overcome these isolations and

put the mass of intelligent men upon a common basis of understanding, is an abundant and almost universally influential contemporary literature.

We have already discussed the possibility of developing the innervation of the state, the distribution of books, the stimulation and direction of reading, and all the peripheral aspects of literature, and we come now to the difficult and intricate problem of whether we can do anything, and what it is we may do, to stimulate the central thought. Can we hope to improve the conditions of literary production, to make our literature more varied, quintessential and abundant, to enforce it with honour and help, to attract to its service every man and woman with gifts of value, and to make the most of these gifts?

Quite a number of people will assert that those things that constitute literature come and go beyond the control and will of man, they will speak of Shakespeare as being a sort of mystical consequence, of Roger Bacon or Newton as men independent of circumstances, inevitably great. And if they are by way of being comic writers--the word "humorist," as Schopenhauer long since pointed out, is a stolen lion's skin for these gentry--they will become extremely facetious about the proposed school for Bacons and Shakespeares. But a little reflection will convince the reader that none of the great figures of the past appeared without certain conditions being added to their inherent powers. In the first place, they had to be reasonably sure of a sympathetic and intelligent atmosphere, however limited in extent--there was no Plato in the heroic

age, and no Newton during the Heptarchy--and in the second, the medium, language or what not, had to be ready for their use. In the third place they needed personally a certain minimum of training and preparation, and in the fourth they had to feel that for some reason--not necessarily a worldly one--the thing was "worth while." Given a "developer" of these ingredients, and they appeared. But without this developer they would not have appeared, and it is therefore reasonable to suppose, first, that a great number of men of a quality as rare as were those who constitute the unparalleled roll of English intellectual greatness, lived and died undeveloped before ever the developer was compounded at all, and that even in the last few hundred years the necessary combination has fallen upon so small an area of our racial life as to have missed far more than it has hit. The second of these papers is, indeed, an attempt to present quite convincingly what the comic man will probably regard as his effectual objection, that inherent tendency cannot be produced at will. But that the developer may conceivably be made in much greater quantities and spread much wider than it is at present is an altogether different thing. There are, one submits, enormous reserves of intellectual force unworked and scarcely touched, even to-day.

We have already discussed the means and possibilities of a net of education that should sweep through the whole social body, and of the creation of an atmosphere more alert and active than our present one. We have now to consider how the greatest proportion of those born with exceptional literary powers may be picked out and induced to exercise

those powers to the utmost. Let us admit at once that this is a research of extraordinary subtlety and complexity, that there are ten thousand ways of going wrong, and perhaps mischievously wrong. That one may submit, is not a sufficient reason for abandonment and despair. To take an analogous case, it may be a complex and laborious thing to escape out of a bear-pit into which one has fallen, but few people will consider that a reason for inaction. Even if they had small hope of doing anything effectual they might find speculation and experiments in escape, a congenial way of passing the time. It is the sort of project one should only abandon at the final and conclusive proof of its impossibility. Exactly the same principle applies to human destinies and the saving of other lives than our own. As a matter of fact, the enterprise is not at all a hopeless one if it is undertaken honestly, warily, and boldly.

Let us consider the lines upon which men must go to ensure the greatest possible growth of original thought in the state, original thought of which what scientific men call Research is only one phase.

Before we can consider how we may endow him and equip him and help him, we have to consider how we may find the original thinker, and we have, if we can, to define him and to discover whatever we can of his methods and habits, his natural history as it were. We are attempting generalization about a class of remarkably peculiar and difficult persons. They are persons either of great intellectual power or simply of great imaginative power, whose bias and quality it is to apply these

exceptional powers not directly and simply to their personal advancement and enrichment, but primarily through philosophical, scientific, or artistic channels, to the increase of knowledge or of wisdom or of both. And here is the peculiar point in this problem, they are men who put, or who wish to put the best of themselves and most of themselves into occupations and interests that do not lead to practical results, that often for the individual in open competition and the market fail more or less completely to "pay." Their activities, of course, pay tremendously at last for the race, but that is not their personal point of application. They take their lives and their splendid powers, they waste themselves in remote and inaccessible regions and bring back precious things that immediately any sharp commercial-minded man will turn into current coin for himself and the use of the world.

There are certain things follow naturally from this remote concentration, and we must persistently keep them in mind. These men of exceptional mental quality, if they are really to do what they are specially fitted to do, with all their power, will be unable to give their personal affairs, their personal advancement, sustained attention. In a democratic community whose principle is "hustle," in a leisurely monarchy where only opulence, a powerful top-note, and conspicuous social gifts succeed, they will have either to neglect or taint their special talent in order to survive. It does not follow that because a man's special qualities and inclinations are towards, let us say, illuminating inquiries into the constitution of matter, or profound and beautiful or simply beautiful renderings of his individual

vision of life, that he is indifferent to or independent of honour, of all the freedoms to do and to rest from doing that come with wealth, or of the many lures and pleasures of life. Posthumous Fame is losing its attractiveness in an age which has discovered excellent reasons for doubting whether after all ære perennius was not rather too strong a figure. However powerful the impulse to think, to state and create, there comes a point--often a point a long way from starvation--at which a genius will stop working. Your man of scientific, literary, or artistic genius will not work below his conception of the endurable minimum, the minimum of hope and honour and attention as well as of material things, any more than a coal-heaver will--and we live in a period when the Standard of Life tends to rise. To secure these things which most men make the entire objective of their lives is, or should be, an irrelevancy to the man of exceptional gifts. This means an enormous handicap for him. Unless, therefore, we endow him and make life easy for him so long as he does his proper work, he will have either to pervert his powers more or less completely to these irrelevant ends, or if his powers do not admit of such perversion, he will have no use for them whatever. He will take some subordinate place in the world as a rather less than average man and, it may be, find the leisure to give just an amateurish ineffectual expression of the thing he might have been.

Now this is the case with a great deal of scientific and artistic work, and with nearly all literature at the present time, throughout the English-speaking community. There are a few sciences slightly endowed,

there are a few arts patronized with some intelligence and generosity, and for the rest there is nothing for it, for the man who wants to do these most necessary and vital things, but to hammer some at least of his precious gold into the semblance of a brass trumpet and to devote a certain proportion of his time and energy to blowing that trumpet and with that air of conscious modesty the public is pleased to consider genuine, proclaiming the value of his wares. Some men seem able to do this sort of thing without any deterioration in quality and some with only a partial deterioration, but the way of self-advertisement is on a slippery slope, and it has brought many a man of indisputable gifts to absolute vulgarity and ineffectiveness of thought and work. At the best it is a shameful business, this noise and display, for all that Scott and Dickens were past masters in the art. And some men cannot do it at all. Moreover, what the good man may do with an effort, the energetic quack, whose only gift is simulation, can do infinitely better. It is only in the unprofitable branches of intellectual work that the best now holds the best positions unchallenged. In the really popular branches of artistic work every honourable success draws a parasitic swarm of imitators like fish round bread in a pool. In the world of thought, far more than in the world of politics, the polling method, the democratic method has broken down, the method that will only permit an author to write--unless his subject is one that allows him to hold a Professorial Chair--on condition that he can get a publisher to induce the public to buy a certain minimum number of copies of each of his works, a method that will give him no rest, once he is in the full swing of "production," until the end, no freedom to change his style or

matter, lest he should lose that paying following by the transition or the pause.

Now before we can discuss how else we can deal with those who constitute the current thought of the community, we must consider how we are to distinguish what is worth sustaining from what is not.

This is the public aspect of Criticism. It is the mineralogy of literature and art. At present Criticism, as a public function, is discharged by private persons, usually anonymous and frequently mysterious, and it is discharged with an astonishing ineffectiveness. Nowhere in the whole English-speaking world is there anything one can compare to a voice and a judgment--much less any discussion between reputable voices. There are periodicals professing criticism, but most of them have the effect of an omnibus in which disconnected heterogeneous people are continually coming and going, while the conductor asks first one of his fluctuating load and then another haphazard for an opinion on this or that. The branch of literature that has first to be put on a sound footing is critical literature. The organization into efficiency of the criticism of contemporary work one is forced to believe an almost necessary preliminary to the hopeful treatment of the rest of the current of thought.

There is, of course, also the suggestion that an English Academy of Letters might be of great service in discounting vulgar "successes" and directing respect and attention to literary achievements. One may doubt

whether such an Academy as a Royal Charter would give the world would be of any service at all in this connection. But Mr. Herbert Trench has suggested recently that it might be possible to organize a large Guild of literary men and women, which would include all capable writers, and from which a sort of Academy could be elected, either by a general poll or, I would suggest, by a Jury of Election or successive Juries confirming one another. The New Republican would like to see such a Guild not purely English, but Anglo-American, or in duplicate for the two countries. With a very carefully chosen nucleus and some little elaboration in the admission of new members--whose works might be submitted to the report of a critical jury--such a Guild might be made fairly representative of literary capacity. Election, one may suggest, should be involuntary. There would be a number of literary men, one fears--great men some of them--who would absolutely refuse to work with any such body, and from the first the Guild would have to determine to make such men unwilling members, members to whom all the honours and privileges of the Guild would be open whenever they chose to abandon their attitude of scorn or distrust. Such a Guild would furnish a useful constituency, a useful jury-list. It could be used to recommend writers for honours, to check the distribution of public pensions for literary services, perhaps even to send a member or so to the Upper Chamber. It is, at any rate, an experiment worth trying.

But such a Guild at best is only one of many possible expedients in this matter. Another is for a few people of means to subsidize a magazine for the exhaustive criticism of contemporary work for a few

years. Quite a small number of people, serious in this matter, a couple of thousand or so, could float such a magazine by the simple expedient of guaranteeing subscriptions. [Footnote: It may be suggested that among other methods of putting the criticism of contemporary literature upon a better footing is one that might conceivably be made to pay its own expenses. There is so much room for endowments nowadays that where one can get at the purse of the general public one should certainly prefer it to that of the generous but overtaxed donor. The project would require a strong endowment, but that endowment might be of the nature of a guarantee fund, and might in the end return unimpaired to the lender. The suggestion is the establishment of a well-planned and reasonably cheap monthly or weekly critical magazine, written on a level at present unattainable--chiefly because of the low rate of payment for all literary criticism. There can be no doubt among those who read much among literary and quasi-literary periodicals in English that there is a very considerable amount of high critical ability available. Buried and obscured to an ineffectual degree among much that is formal, foolish, and venial, there is to be found to-day a really quite remarkable number of isolated reviews, criticisms and articles in which style is apparent, in which discrimination shines fitfully, in which there is the unmistakable note of honest enthusiasm for good work. For the most part, such criticism bears also the marks of haste--as, indeed, it must do when a review as long as the column of a daily paper, a day's work, that is, of steady writing, earns scarcely a pound. But the stuff is there. Scarcely a number of the Academy, or the Spectator, scarcely a week of the Morning Post,

the Daily News, or the Daily Chronicle, but there is a review, or a piece of a review, that has the stigmata of literature. And this suggestion is that some of these writers shall be got together, shall be paid at least as well as popular short-story writers are paid, shall each have a definite department marked out under a trustworthy editor, and be pledged to limit their work to the pages of this new critical magazine. Their work would be signed, and there they would be, conspicuously urged to do the best that was in them, apropos of more or less contemporary books and writers. They would have leisure for deliberate judgments, for the development of that consistency of thought which the condition of journalism renders so impossible. This review would mean for them status, reputation, and opportunity. They would deal with contemporary fiction, with contemporary speculative literature, and with the style, logic, methods and vocabulary of scientific and philosophical writers. Their work would form the mass of the magazine, but there would also be (highly paid) occasional writers, towards whose opinions the regular staff would very carefully define their attitude. The project, of course, in foolish hands, might be very foolishly misinterpreted. It might be quite easy to drive a team of egregious asses in this way over contemporary work, leaving nothing but hoof-marks and injuries, but we are assuming the thing to be efficiently done. It is submitted that such a magazine, patiently and generously sustained for a few years, would at last probably come to pay its way. Unless the original selection of the staff was badly done, it would by sheer persistent high quality win its way to authority with the reading public, and so

fill its covers with a swelling mass of advertisement pages. And once it paid, then forthwith a dozen rivals would be in the field, all of them, of course, also paying highly for critical matter and competing for critics of standing. Such an enterprise would be a lever for criticism through the whole of our literary world.]

Then it should also be possible to endow university lectureships and readerships in contemporary criticism, lectureships and readerships in which questions of style and method could be illustrated by quotation (not necessarily of a flattering sort) from contemporary work. Why should there not be an endowment which would enable a man of indisputable critical capacity to talk through an illuminating course, to sit before a little pile of marked books and reading sometimes here and sometimes there and talking between, to distinguish the evil from the good? What a wholesome thing to have Mr. Henley, for example, at that in the place of some of the several specialists who will lecture you so admirably on the Troubadours! How good to hear Mr. Frederic Harrison (with some one to follow) adjusting all our living efforts to the scale of the divine Comte, and Mr. Walkley and Mr. Herbert Paul making it perfectly clear that a dead dog is better than a living lion, by demonstrations on the lion. Criticism to-day is all too much in the case of that doctor whose practice was deadly, indeed, but his post-mortems admirable! No doubt such lectures would consist at times of highly contentious matter, but what of that? There could be several chairs. It would not be an impossible thing to set a few Extension Lecturers afloat upon the same channel. We have now numerous courses of

lectures on the Elizabethan Dramatists and the evolution of the Miracle Play, and the people who listen to this sort of thing will depart straight away to recreate their souls in the latest triumph of vehement bookselling. Why not base the literary education of people upon the literature they read instead of upon literature that they are scarcely more in touch with than with Chinese metaphysics? A few carefully chosen pages of contemporary rubbish, read with a running comment, a few carefully chosen pages of what is, comparatively, not rubbish, a little lucid discussion of effects and probabilities, would do more to quicken the literary sense of the average person than all the sham enthusiasm about Marlowe and Spenser that was ever concocted. There are not a few authors who would be greatly the better and might even be subsequently grateful for a lecture upon themselves in this style. Let no one say from this that the classics of our tongue are depreciated here. But the point is, that for people who know little of history, little of our language, whose only habitual reading is the newspaper, the popular novel, and the sixpenny magazine, to plunge into the study of works written in the language of a different period, crowded with obsolete allusions, and saturated with obsolete ideas and extinct ways of thinking, is pretentious and unprofitable, and that most of such Extension Lecturing is fruitless and absurd. And I appeal to these two facts in confirmation, to the thousands of people who every year listen to such lectures and to the hundreds of thousands of copies of our national classics sold by the booksellers, on the one hand, and on the other to the absolute incapacity of our public to judge any new literary thing or to protect itself in any way from violently and

vulgarly boomed rubbish of the tawdriest description. Without a real and popular criticism of contemporary work as a preliminary and basis, the criticism and circulation of the classics is quite manifestly vain.

By such expedients very much might be done for the literary atmosphere. By endowing a critical review or so, by endowing a few chairs and readerships in contemporary criticism, by organizing a Guild of Literature and a system of exemplary honours for literature, by stimulating the general discussion of contemporary work through lectures and articles, criticism could, I believe, be made "worth while" to an extent that is now scarcely imaginable, and there might be created an atmosphere of attention, appreciation, and judgment that would be in itself extraordinarily stimulating to all forms of literary effort. Of course all this sort of thing may be done cheaply, stupidly, dishonestly, and vulgarly, and one imagines the shy and exquisite type of mind recoiling from the rude sanity of these suggestions. But, indeed, they need not be done any other way than finely and well. People whose conception of what is good in art and literature is inseparable from rarity ought, I submit, to collect stamps. At an earlier phase in this series of discussions there was broached a project for an English Language Society, which would set itself to do or get done a number of services necessary to the teaching and extension of the language of our universal peoples. With such a Society those who undertook this project for the habilitation of criticism would necessarily co-operate and interlock.

It is upon this basis of an organized criticism and of a well-taught and cherished language that the English literature of the Twentieth Century, the literature of analysis and research, and the literature of creative imagination, has to stand. Upon such a basis it becomes possible to consider the practicability of the endowment of general literature. For to that at last we come. I submit that it is only by the payment of authors, and if necessary their endowment in a spacious manner, and in particular by the entire separation of the rewards of writing from the accidents of the book market, that the function of literature can be adequately discharged in the modern state. The laws of supply and demand break down altogether in this case. We have to devise some means of sustaining those who discharge this necessary public function in the progressive state.

There are several general propositions in this matter that it may be worth while to state at this point. The first is that both scientific generalization and literature proper have been and are and must continue to be the product of a quite exceptionally heterogeneous aggregation of persons. They are persons of the most various temperaments, of the most varied lop-sidedness, of the most various special gifts, and the most various social origins, having only this in common, the ability to add to the current of the world's thought. They are not to be dealt with as though they were a class of persons all of exceptional general intelligence, of exceptional strength of character, or of exceptional sanity. To do that, would be to hand over literature from the man of genius to the man of talent. A single method of

selection, help, honour, and payment, measurement by one general standard cannot, therefore, be accepted as a solution. There must not be any one single central body, any authoritative single control, for such a body or authority would inevitably develop a "character" in its activity and greet with especial favour (or with especial disfavour) certain types. In this case, at any rate, organization is not centralization, and it is also not uniformity. The proposition may indeed be thrown out that the principle of Many Channels (a principle involving the repudiation both of the monarchical and the democratic idea) is an essential one to go upon in all questions of honour and promotion in the modern state. And not only Many Channels, but Many Methods. Whatever the value of that as a universally valuable proposition, it certainly applies here.

And next we may suggest that we must take great care that we pay for the thing we need and not for some subsidiary qualification of less value. The reward must be directly related to the work, and independent of all secondary considerations. It must have no taint of charity. The recipient must not have to show that he is in want. Because a writer or investigator is a sober, careful body and quite solvent in a modest way, that is no reason why we should not pay him stimulatingly for his valuable contributions to the general mind, or because he is a shiftless seeker of misfortunes, why we should pay him in excess. But pay him anyhow. Almost scandalous private immorality, I submit, should not bar the literary worker from his pay any more than it justifies our stealing his boots. We must deal with immorality as immorality, and

with work as work. Above all, at the present time, we must keep clearly in view that popularity has no relation to literary, philosophic or scientific value, it neither justifies nor condemns. At present, except in the case of certain forms of research and in relation to the altogether too charitable-looking British Civil List, we make popularity the sole standard by which a writer may be paid. The novelist, for example, gets an income extraordinarily made up of sums of from sixpence to two shillings per person sufficiently interested to buy his or her books. The result is entirely independent of real literary merit. The sixpences and shillings are, of course, greatly coveted, and success in getting them on anything like a magnificent scale makes a writer, good or bad, vehemently hated and abused, but the hatred and abuse--unaccompanied as they are by any proposals for amelioration--are hardly less silly than the system. And for our present purpose it really does not matter if the fortunate persons who interest the great public are or are not overpaid. Our concern is with the underpaid, and with all this affair of mammoth editions and booming only as it affects that aspect. We are concerned with the exceptional man's necessities and not with his luxuries. The fly of envy in the True Artist's ointment may, I think, very well stop there until magnanimity becomes something more of a cult in the literary and artistic worlds than it is at the present time.

This, perhaps, is something of a digression from our second general proposition, that we must pay directly for the work itself. But it leads to a third proposition. The whole history of literature and

science abundantly shows that no critical judgment is more than an approximation to the truth. Criticism should be equal to the exposure of the imitator and the pure sham, of course, it should be able to analyze and expose these types, but above that level is the disputed case. At the present time in England only a very few writers or investigators hold high positions by anything approaching the unanimous verdict of the intelligent public--of that section of the public that counts. In the department of fiction, for example, there is a very audible little minority against Mr. Kipling, and about Mr. George Moore or Mr. Zangwill or Mr. Barrie one may hear the most diverse opinions. By the test of blackballing, only the unknown would survive. The valuation is as erratic in many branches of science. The development of criticism will diminish, but it certainly will not end, this sort of thing, and since our concern is to stimulate rather than punish, we must do just exactly what we should not do if we were electing men for a club, we must include rather than exclude. I am told that Americans remark in relation to University endowments, "we speculate in research," and that will serve for only a slight exaggeration of this third proposition. So long as we get most of the men of exceptional mental gifts in the community under the best conditions for their work, it scarcely matters if, for each one of them, we get four or five shams or mere respectabilities upon our hands. Respectabilities and shams have a fatal facility for living on the community anyhow, and there is no more reason in not doing these things on their account than there would be in burning a house down to get rid of cockroaches and rats. The rat poison of sound criticism--to follow that analogy--is the

remedy here. And if the respectability lives, his work at any rate dies.

But if the reward must be directly for the work, it must not have any quantitative relation to the output of work. It is quality we want, not quantity; we want absolutely to invert the abominable conditions of the present time by which every exercise of restraint costs an author a fine. It is my personal conviction that almost every well-known living writer is or has been writing too much. "No book, no income" is practically what the world says to an author, and the needy authors make a pace the independent follow; there is no respect for fine silences, if you cease you are forgotten. The literature of the past hundred years is unparalleled in the world's history in this feature that the greater portion of it is or has been written under pressure. It was the case with Scott, the case with Dickens, Tennyson, even with Browning, and a host of other great contributors to the edifice. No one who loves Dickens and knows anything of the art he practised but deplores that evil incessant demand that never permitted him to revise his plans, to alter, rearrange and concentrate, that never released him from the obligation to touch dull hearts and penetrate thick skins with obtrusive pathos and violent caricature.

Once embarked upon his course, he never had a moment for reconstruction. He had no time to read, no time to think. A writer nowadays has to think in books and articles; to read a book he must criticize or edit it; if he dare attempt an experiment, a new

departure, comes his agent in a panic. Every departure from the lines of his previous success involves chaffering, unless he chance to be a man of independent means. When one reflects on these things it is only amazing that the average book is not more copious and crude and hasty than it is, and how much in the way of comprehensive and unifying work is even now in progress. There are all too many books to read. It would be better for the public, better for our literature, altogether better, if this obligation to write perpetually were lifted. Few writers but must have felt at times the desire to stop and think, to work out some neglected corner of their minds, to admit a year's work as futile and thrust it behind the fire, or simply to lie fallow, to camp and rest the horses. Let us, therefore, pay our authors as much not to write as though they wrote; instead of that twenty or thirty volumes, which is, I suppose, the average product, let us require a book or so, worth having. Which means, in fact, that we must find some way of giving an author, once he has proved his quality, a fixed income quite irrespective of what he does. We might, perhaps, require evidence that he was doing some work now and then, we might prohibit alien occupations, but for my own part I do not think even that is necessary. Most authors so sustained will write, and all will have written. We are presupposing, be it remembered, the stimulus of honours and criticism and of further honours and further emoluments.

Finally, in making schemes for the endowment of original mental activity, we must not ignore the possibility of a perversion that has already played its part in the histories of painting and music, and

that is the speculative financing of promising candidates for these endowments. If we are going to make research, criticism, and creation "worth while" we must see to it that in reality we are not simply making it worth while for Solomons and Moses to "spot" the early promise, to stimulate its modesty, to help it to its position, and to draw the major profits of the enterprise. The struggling young man of exceptional gifts who is using his brains not to make his position but to do his destined work, is by that at a great disadvantage in dealing with the business man, and it is to the interest of the community that he should be protected from his own inexperience and his own self-distrust. The average Whitechapel Jew could cheat a Shakespeare into the workhouse in no time, and our idea is rather to make the world easy for Shakespeares than to hand it over to the rat activities of the "smart" business man.

Freedom of Contract is an idea no one outside a debating society dreams of realizing in the state. We protect tenants from landlords in all sorts of ways, our law overrides all sorts of bargains, and in the important case of marriage we put almost all the conditions outside bargaining and speculative methods altogether by insisting upon one universal contract or none. We protect women who are physically and economically weak in this manner, not so much for their own good as the good of the race. The state already puts literary property into a class apart by limiting its duration. At a certain point, which varies in different circumstances, copyright expires. It is possible for an author, whose fame comes late, to be present as a row of dainty volumes

in half the comfortable homes in the world, while his grandchildren beg their bread. The author's blood is sacrificed to the need the whole world has of cheap access to his work. And since we do him this injury for the sake of our intellectual life, it is surely not unreasonable to interfere for his benefit also if that subserves the greater end.

Now there are two ways at least in which the author may be and should be protected from the pressure of immediate necessities. The first of these is to render his copyright in his work inalienably his, to forbid him to make any bargain by which the right to revise, abbreviate, or alter what he has written passes out of his hands, and to make every such bargain invalid. He would be free himself to alter or to endorse alterations, but to yield no carte blanche to others. He would be free also to make whatever bargain he chose for the rights of publication. But, and this is the second proposal, no bargain he made should be valid for a longer period than seven years from the date of its making. Every seven years his book would come back into his control, to suppress, revise, resell, or do whatever he liked to do with it. Only in one way could he escape this property, and that would be by declaring it void and making his copyright an immediate present to the world. And upon this proposal it is possible to base one form--and a very excellent form--of paying for the public service of good writing and so honouring men of letters and thought, and that is by buying and, more or less, completely extinguishing their copyrights, and so converting them into contemporary classics.

Throughout these papers a disposition to become concrete has played unchecked. Always definite proposals have been preferred to vague generalizations, and here again it will be convenient to throw out an almost detailed scheme--simply as an illustration of the possibilities of the case. I am going to suggest to the reader that to endow a thousand or so authors, as authors, would be a most wise and admirable proceeding for a modern statesman, and I would ask him before he dismisses this suggestion as absurd and impossible, to rest contented with no vague rejection but to put to himself clearly why the thing should under present conditions be absurd and impossible. Always in the past the need of some organ for the establishment and preservation of a common tone and substance of thought in the state has been recognized; commonly this organ has taken the form of a Church, a group of Churches (as in America) or an educational system (as in China). But all previous schemes of social and political organization have been static, have aimed at a permanent state. Our modern state we know can only live by adaptation, and we have to provide not a permanent but a developing social, moral and political culture. Our new scheme must include not only priests and teachers but prophets and seekers. Literature is a vitally necessary function of the modern state.

Let us waive for the moment the subtle difficulty that arises when we ask who are the writers of literature, the guides and makers of opinion, the men and women of wisdom, insight, and creation, as distinguished from those who merely resonate to the note of the popular mind; let us assume that this is determined, and let us make a scheme

in the air to support these people under such conditions as will give us their best. Suppose the thing done boldly, and that for every hundred thousand people in our population we subsidize an author--if we can find as many. Suppose we give him some sort of honour or title and the alternative of going on writing under copyright conditions--which many popular favourites would certainly prefer--or of giving up his copyrights to the public and receiving a fixed income, a respectable mediocre income, £800 or £1000 for example.

That means four hundred or more subsidized authors for Great Britain, which would work out, perhaps, as eighteen or twenty every year, and a proportionate number for America and the Colonial States of the British Empire. Suppose, further, that from this general body of authors we draw every year four or five of the seniors to form a sort of Academy, a higher stage of honour and income; this would probably give something under a hundred on this higher stage. Taking the income of the two stages as £1000 and £2000 respectively, this would work out at about £500,000 a year for Great Britain--a quite trivial addition to what is already spent on educational work. A scheme that would provide for widows and children whose education was unfinished, and for the official printing and sale of correct texts of the books written, would still fall within the dimensions of a million pounds. I am assuming this will be done quite in addition to the natural growth of Universities and Colleges, to the evolution of great text-books and criticism, and to the organization and publication of special research in science and letters. This is to be an endowment specifically for

unspecialized literature, for untechnical philosophy that is, and the creative imagination.

It must not be imagined that such an endowment would be a new payment, by the community. In all probability we are already paying as much, or more, to authors, in the form of royalties, of serial fees, and the like. We are paying now with an unjust unevenness--we starve the new and deep and overpay the trite and obvious. Moreover, the community would have something in exchange for its money; it would have the copyright of the works written. It may be suggested that by a very simple device a large proportion of these payments could be recovered. Suppose that all books, whether copyright or not, and all periodicals sold above a certain price--sixpence, let us say--had to bear a defaced stamp of--for example--a halfpenny for each shilling of price. This would probably yield a revenue almost sufficient to cover these literary pensions. In addition the books of the pensioned authors might bear an additional stamp as the equivalent of the present royalty.

The annual selection of eighteen or twenty authors might very well be a dispersed duty. One or two each might be appointed in some way by grouped Universities, or by three or four of the Universities taken in rotation, by such a Guild of Authors as we have already considered, by the British Academy of History and Philosophy, by the Royal Society, by the British Privy Council. The Jury system would probably be of very great value in making these appointments.

That is a rough sketch of a possible scheme--presented in the most open-minded way. It would not meet all conceivable cases, so it would need to be supplemented in many directions; moreover, it is presented with hideous crudity, but for all that, would not something of the sort work well? How would it work? There would certainly be a great diminution in the output of written matter from the thousand or more recognized writers this would give us, and almost as certainly a great rise in effort and deliberation, in distinction, quality, and value in their work. This would also appear in the work of their ambitious juniors. Would it extinguish anything? I do not see that it would. Those who write trivially for the pleasure of the public would be just as well off as they are now, and there would be no more difficulty than there is at present for those who begin writing. Less, indeed; for the thousand subsidized writers, at least, would not be clamorously competing to fill up magazines and libraries; they might set a higher and more difficult standard, but they would leave more space about them. The thing would scarcely affect the development of publishing and book distribution, nor injure nor stimulate--except by raising the standard and ideals of writing--newspapers, magazines, and their contributors in any way.

I do not believe for one moment the thing would stop at such a subsidized body of authors, such a little aristocracy of thought, as this project presents. But it would be an efficient starting-point. There are those who demand a thinking department for Army and Navy; and that idea admits of extension in this direction, this organized general

literature of mine would be the thinking organization of the race. Once this deliberate organization of a central ganglion of interpretation and presentation began, the development of the brain and nervous system in the social body would proceed apace. Each step made would enable the next step to be wider and bolder. The general innervation of society with books and book distributing agencies would be followed by the linking up of the now almost isolated mental worlds of science, art, and political and social activity in a system of intercommunication and sympathy.

We have now already in the history of the world one successful experiment in the correlation of human endeavour. Compare all that was accomplished in material science by the isolated work of the great men before Lord Verulam, and what has been done since the system of isolated inquiry gave place to a free exchange of ideas and collective discussion. And this is only one field of mental activity and one aspect of social needs. The rest of the intellectual world is still unorganized. The rest of the moral and intellectual being of man is dwarfed and cowed by the enormous disproportionate development of material science and its economic and social consequences. What if we extend that same spirit of organization and free reaction to the whole world of human thought and emotion? That is the greater question at which this project of literary endowment aims.

It may seem to the reader that all this insistence upon the supreme necessity for an organized literature springs merely from the obsession

of a writer by his own calling, but, indeed, that is not so. We who write are not all so blinded by conceit of ourselves that we do not know something of our absolute personal value. We are lizards in an empty palace, frogs crawling over a throne. But it is a palace, it is a throne, and, it may be, the reverberation of our ugly voices will presently awaken the world to put something better in our place. Because we write abominably under pressure and for unhonoured bread, none the less we are making the future. We are making it atrociously no doubt; we are not ignorant of that possibility, but some of us, at least, would like to do it better. We know only too well how that we are out of touch with scholarship and contemplation. We must drive our pens to live and push and bawl to be heard. We must blunder against men an ampler training on either side would have made our allies, we must smart and lose our tempers and do the foolish things that are done in the heat of the day. For all that, according to our lights, we who write are trying to save our world in a lack of better saviours, to change this mental tumult into an order of understanding and intention in which great things may grow. The thought of a community is the life of that community, and if the collective thought of a community is disconnected and fragmentary, then the community is collectively vain and weak. That does not constitute an incidental defect, but essential failure. Though that community have cities such as the world has never seen before, fleets and hosts and glories, though it count its soldiers by the army corps and its children by the million, yet if it hold not to the reality of thought and formulated will beneath these outward things, it will pass, and all its glories will pass, like smoke before

the wind, like mist beneath the sun; it will become at last only one more vague and fading dream upon the scroll of time, a heap of mounds and pointless history, even as are Babylon and Nineveh.