PART I

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

THE WORLD OUTSIDE AND THE PICTURES
IN OUR HEADS

There is an island in the ocean where in 1914 a few Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans lived. No cable reaches that island, and the British mail steamer comes but once in sixty days. In September it had not yet come, and the islanders were still talking about the latest newspaper which told about the approaching trial of Madame Caillaux for the shooting of Gaston Calmette. It was, therefore, with more than usual eagerness that the whole colony assembled at the quay on a day in mid-September to hear from the captain what the verdict had been. They learned that for over six weeks now those of them who were English and those of them who were French had been fighting in behalf of the sanctity of treaties against those of them who were Germans. For six strange weeks they had acted as if they were friends, when in fact they were enemies.

But their plight was not so different from that of most of the population of Europe. They had been mistaken for six weeks, on the continent the interval may have been only six days or six hours. There was an interval. There was a moment when the picture of Europe on which men were conducting their business as usual, did not in any way correspond to the Europe which was about to make a jumble of their lives. There was a time for each man when he was still adjusted to an environment that no longer existed. All over the world as late as July 25th men were making goods that they would not be able to ship, buying goods they would not be able to import, careers were being planned, enterprises contemplated, hopes and expectations entertained, all in the belief that the world as known was the world as it was. Men were writing books describing that world. They trusted the picture in their heads. And then over four years later, on a Thursday morning, came the news of an armistice, and people gave vent to their unutterable relief that the slaughter was over. Yet in the five days before the real armistice came, though the end of the war had been celebrated, several thousand young men died on the battlefields.

Looking back we can see how indirectly we know the environment in which nevertheless we live. We can see that the news of it comes to us now fast, now slowly; but that whatever we believe to be a true picture, we treat as if it were the environment itself. It is harder to remember that about the beliefs upon which we are now acting, but in respect to other peoples and other ages we flatter ourselves that it is easy to see when they were in deadly earnest about ludicrous pictures of the world. We insist, because of our superior hindsight, that the world as they needed to know it, and the world as they did know it, were often two quite contradictory things. We can see, too, that while they governed and fought, traded and reformed in the world as they imagined it to be, they produced results, or failed to produce any, in the world as it was. They started for the Indies and found America. They diagnosed evil and hanged old women. They thought they could grow rich by always selling and never buying. A caliph, obeying what he conceived to be the Will of Allah, burned the library at Alexandria.

Writing about the year 389, St. Ambrose stated the case for the prisoner in Plato's cave who resolutely declines to turn his head. "To discuss the nature and position of the earth does not help us in our hope of the life to come. It is enough to know what Scripture states. 'That He hung up the earth upon nothing' (Job xxvi. 7). Why then argue whether He hung it up in air or upon the water, and raise a controversy as to how the thin air could sustain the earth; or why, if upon the waters, the earth does not go crashing down to the bottom?... Not because the earth is in the middle, as if suspended on even balance, but because the majesty of God constrains it by the law of His will, does it endure stable upon the unstable and the void." [Footnote: Hexaemeron, i. cap 6, quoted in The Mediæval Mind, by Henry Osborn Taylor, Vol. i, p. 73.]

It does not help us in our hope of the life to come. It is enough to know what Scripture states. Why then argue? But a century and a half after St. Ambrose, opinion was still troubled, on this occasion by the problem of the antipodes. A monk named Cosmas, famous for his scientific attainments, was therefore deputed to write a Christian Topography, or "Christian Opinion concerning the World." [Footnote: Lecky, Rationalism in Europe, Vol. I, pp. 276-8.] It is clear

that he knew exactly what was expected of him, for he based all his conclusions on the Scriptures as he read them. It appears, then, that the world is a flat parallelogram, twice as broad from east to west as it is long from north to south., In the center is the earth surrounded by ocean, which is in turn surrounded by another earth, where men lived before the deluge. This other earth was Noah's port of embarkation. In the north is a high conical mountain around which revolve the sun and moon. When the sun is behind the mountain it is night. The sky is glued to the edges of the outer earth. It consists of four high walls which meet in a concave roof, so that the earth is the floor of the universe. There is an ocean on the other side of the sky, constituting the "waters that are above the firmament." The space between the celestial ocean and the ultimate roof of the universe

belongs to the blest. The space between the earth and sky is inhabited by the angels. Finally, since St. Paul said that all men are made to live upon the "face of the earth" how could they live on the back where the Antipodes are supposed to be? With such a passage before his eyes, a Christian, we are told, should not 'even speak of the Antipodes.'" [Footnote: Id.]

Far less should he go to the Antipodes; nor should any Christian prince give him a ship to try; nor would any pious mariner wish to

try. For Cosmas there was nothing in the least absurd about his map. Only by remembering his absolute conviction that this was the map of the universe can we begin to understand how he would have dreaded Magellan or Peary or the aviator who risked a collision with the angels and the vault of heaven by flying seven miles up in the air. In the same way we can best understand the furies of war and politics by remembering that almost the whole of each party believes absolutely in its picture of the opposition, that it takes as fact, not what is, but what it supposes to be the fact. And that therefore, like Hamlet, it will stab Polonius behind the rustling curtain, thinking him the king, and perhaps like Hamlet add:

"Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!
I took thee for thy better; take thy fortune."

Great men, even during their lifetime, are usually known to the public only through a fictitious personality. Hence the modicum of truth in the old saying that no man is a hero to his valet. There is only a modicum of truth, for the valet, and the private secretary, are often immersed in the fiction themselves. Royal personages are, of course, constructed personalities. Whether they themselves believe in their public character, or whether they merely permit the chamberlain to stage-manage it, there are at least two distinct selves, the public and regal self, the private and human. The biographies of great people fall more or less readily into the histories of these two selves. The official biographer reproduces the public life, the revealing memoir the other. The Charnwood Lincoln, for example, is a noble portrait, not of an actual human being, but of an epic figure, replete with significance, who moves on much the same level of reality as Aeneas or St. George. Oliver's Hamilton is a majestic abstraction, the sculpture of an idea, "an essay" as Mr. Oliver himself calls it, "on American union." It is a formal monument to the state-craft of federalism, hardly the biography of a person. Sometimes people create their own facade when they think they are revealing the interior scene. The Repington diaries and Margot Asquith's are a species of self-portraiture in which the intimate detail is most revealing as an index of how the authors like to think about themselves.

But the most interesting kind of portraiture is that which arises spontaneously in people's minds. When Victoria came to the throne, says Mr. Strachey, [Footnote: Lytton Strachey, Queen Victoria, p. 72.] "among the outside public there was a great wave of enthusiasm. Sentiment and romance were coming into fashion; and the spectacle of the little girl-queen, innocent, modest, with fair hair and pink cheeks, driving through her capital, filled the hearts of the beholders with raptures of affectionate loyalty. What, above all, struck everybody with overwhelming force was the contrast between Queen Victoria and her uncles. The nasty old men, debauched and selfish, pigheaded and ridiculous, with their perpetual burden of debts, confusions, and disreputabilities--they had vanished like the snows of winter and here at last, crowned and radiant, was the spring."

M. Jean de Pierrefeu [Footnote: Jean de Pierrefeu, G. Q. G. Trois

ans au Grand Quartier General, pp 94-95.] saw hero-worship at first hand, for he was an officer on Joffre's staff at the moment of that soldier's greatest fame:

"For two years, the entire world paid an almost divine homage to the victor of the Maine. The baggage-master literally bent under the weight of the boxes, of the packages and letters which unknown people sent him with a frantic testimonial of their admiration. I think that outside of General Joffre, no commander in the war has been able to realize a comparable idea of what glory is. They sent him boxes of candy from all the great confectioners of the world, boxes of champagne, fine wines of every vintage, fruits, game, ornaments and utensils, clothes, smoking materials, inkstands, paperweights. Every territory sent its specialty. The painter sent his picture, the sculptor his statuette, the dear old lady a comforter or socks, the shepherd in his hut carved a pipe for his sake. All the manufacturers of the world who were hostile to Germany shipped their products, Havana its cigars, Portugal its port wine. I have known a hairdresser who had nothing better to do than to make a portrait of the General out of hair belonging to persons who were dear to him; a professional penman had the same idea, but the features were composed of thousands of little phrases in tiny characters which sang the praise of the General. As to letters, he had them in all scripts, from all countries, written in every dialect, affectionate letters, grateful, overflowing with love, filled with adoration. They called him Savior of the World, Father of his Country, Agent of God, Benefactor of Humanity, etc.... And not only Frenchmen, but Americans, Argentinians, Australians, etc. etc.... Thousands of little children, without their

parents' knowledge, took pen in hand and wrote to tell him their love: most of them called him Our Father. And there was poignancy about their effusions, their adoration, these sighs of deliverance that escaped from thousands of hearts at the defeat of barbarism. To all these naif little souls, Joffre seemed like St. George crushing the dragon. Certainly he incarnated for the conscience of mankind the victory of good over evil, of light over darkness.

Lunatics, simpletons, the half-crazy and the crazy turned their darkened brains toward him as toward reason itself. I have read the letter of a person living in Sydney, who begged the General to save

him from his enemies; another, a New Zealander, requested him to send some soldiers to the house of a gentleman who owed him ten pounds and would not pay.

Finally, some hundreds of young girls, overcoming the timidity of their sex, asked for engagements, their families not to know about it; others wished only to serve him."

This ideal Joffre was compounded out of the victory won by him, his staff and his troops, the despair of the war, the personal sorrows, and the hope of future victory. But beside hero-worship there is the exorcism of devils. By the same mechanism through which heroes are

incarnated, devils are made. If everything good was to come from Joffre, Foch, Wilson, or Roosevelt, everything evil originated in the Kaiser Wilhelm, Lenin and Trotsky. They were as omnipotent for evil as the heroes were omnipotent for good. To many simple and frightened minds there was no political reverse, no strike, no obstruction, no mysterious death or mysterious conflagration anywhere in the world of which the causes did not wind back to these personal sources of evil.

3

Worldwide concentration of this kind on a symbolic personality is rare enough to be clearly remarkable, and every author has a weakness for the striking and irrefutable example. The vivisection of war reveals such examples, but it does not make them out of nothing. In a more normal public life, symbolic pictures are no less governant of behavior, but each symbol is far less inclusive because there are so many competing ones. Not only is each symbol charged with less feeling because at most it represents only a part of the population, but even within that part there is infinitely less suppression of individual difference. The symbols of public opinion, in times of moderate security, are subject to check and comparison and argument. They come and go, coalesce and are forgotten, never organizing perfectly the emotion of the whole group. There is, after all, just one human activity left in which whole populations accomplish the union sacrée. It occurs in those middle phases of a war when fear, pugnacity, and hatred have secured complete dominion of the spirit, either to crush every other instinct or to enlist it, and before weariness is felt.

At almost all other times, and even in war when it is deadlocked, a sufficiently greater range of feelings is aroused to establish conflict, choice, hesitation, and compromise. The symbolism of public opinion usually bears, as we shall see, [Footnote: Part V.] the marks of this balancing of interest. Think, for example, of how rapidly, after the armistice, the precarious and by no means successfully established symbol of Allied Unity disappeared, how it was followed almost immediately by the breakdown of each nation's symbolic picture of the other: Britain the Defender of Public Law, France watching at the Frontier of Freedom, America the Crusader. And think then of how within each nation the symbolic picture of itself frayed out, as party and class conflict and personal ambition began to stir postponed issues. And then of how the symbolic pictures of the leaders gave way, as one by one, Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, ceased to be the incarnation of human hope, and became merely the negotiators and administrators for a disillusioned world.

Whether we regret this as one of the soft evils of peace or applaud it as a return to sanity is obviously no matter here. Our first concern with fictions and symbols is to forget their value to the existing social order, and to think of them simply as an important part of the machinery of human communication. Now in any society that is not completely self-contained in its interests and so small that everyone can know all about everything that happens, ideas deal with events that are out of sight and hard to grasp. Miss Sherwin of Gopher Prairie, [Footnote: See Sinclair Lewis, Main Street.] is aware that a war is raging in France and tries to conceive it. She has never been to France, and certainly she has never been along what is now the battlefront.

Pictures of French and German soldiers she has seen, but it is impossible for her to imagine three million men. No one, in fact, can imagine them, and the professionals do not try. They think of them as, say, two hundred divisions. But Miss Sherwin has no access to the order of battle maps, and so if she is to think about the war, she fastens upon Joffre and the Kaiser as if they were engaged in a personal duel. Perhaps if you could see what she sees with her mind's eye, the image in its composition might be not unlike an Eighteenth Century engraving of a great soldier. He stands there boldly unruffled

and more than life size, with a shadowy army of tiny little figures winding off into the landscape behind. Nor it seems are great men oblivious to these expectations. M. de Pierrefeu tells of a photographer's visit to Joffre. The General was in his "middle class office, before the worktable without papers, where he sat down to write his signature. Suddenly it was noticed that there were no maps on the walls. But since according to popular ideas it is not possible to think of a general without maps, a few were placed in position for the picture, and removed soon afterwards." [Footnote: Op. cit., p. 99.]

The only feeling that anyone can have about an event he does not experience is the feeling aroused by his mental image of that event. That is why until we know what others think they know, we cannot truly understand their acts. I have seen a young girl, brought up in a Pennsylvania mining town, plunged suddenly from entire cheerfulness into a paroxysm of grief when a gust of wind cracked the kitchen window-pane. For hours she was inconsolable, and to me incomprehensible. But when she was able to talk, it transpired that if a window-pane broke it meant that a close relative had died. She was, therefore, mourning for her father, who had frightened her into running away from home. The father was, of course, quite thoroughly alive as a telegraphic inquiry soon proved. But until the telegram came, the cracked glass was an authentic message to that girl. Why it was authentic only a prolonged investigation by a skilled psychiatrist could show. But even the most casual observer could see that the girl, enormously upset by her family troubles, had hallucinated a complete fiction out of one external fact, a remembered superstition, and a turmoil of remorse, and fear and love for her father.

Abnormality in these instances is only a matter of degree. When an Attorney-General, who has been frightened by a bomb exploded on his doorstep, convinces himself by the reading of revolutionary literature that a revolution is to happen on the first of May 1920, we recognize that much the same mechanism is at work. The war, of course, furnished many examples of this pattern: the casual fact, the creative imagination, the will to believe, and out of these three elements, a counterfeit of reality to which there was a violent instinctive response. For it is clear enough that under certain conditions men respond as powerfully to fictions as they do to realities, and that in

many cases they help to create the very fictions to which they respond. Let him cast the first stone who did not believe in the Russian army that passed through England in August, 1914, did not accept any tale of atrocities without direct proof, and never saw a plot, a traitor, or a spy where there was none. Let him cast a stone who never passed on as the real inside truth what he had heard someone say who knew no more than he did.

In all these instances we must note particularly one common factor. It is the insertion between man and his environment of a pseudo-environment. To that pseudo-environment his behavior is a response. But because it is behavior, the consequences, if they are acts, operate not in the pseudo-environment where the behavior is stimulated, but in the real environment where action eventuates. If the behavior is not a practical act, but what we call roughly thought and emotion, it may be a long time before there is any noticeable break in the texture of the fictitious world. But when the stimulus of the pseudo-fact results in action on things or other people, contradiction soon develops. Then comes the sensation of butting one's head against a stone wall, of learning by experience, and witnessing Herbert Spencer's tragedy of the murder of a Beautiful Theory by a Gang of Brutal Facts, the discomfort in short of a maladjustment. For certainly, at the level of social life, what is called the adjustment of man to his environment takes place through the medium of fictions.

By fictions I do not mean lies. I mean a representation of the environment which is in lesser or greater degree made by man himself. The range of fiction extends all the way from complete hallucination to the scientists' perfectly self-conscious use of a schematic model, or his decision that for his particular problem accuracy beyond a certain number of decimal places is not important. A work of fiction may have almost any degree of fidelity, and so long as the degree of fidelity can be taken into account, fiction is not misleading. In fact, human culture is very largely the selection, the rearrangement, the tracing of patterns upon, and the stylizing of, what William James called "the random irradiations and resettlements of our ideas." [Footnote: James, Principles of Psychology, Vol. II, p. 638] The alternative to the use of fictions is direct exposure to the ebb and flow of sensation. That is not a real alternative, for however refreshing it is to see at times with a perfectly innocent eye,

innocence itself is not wisdom, though a source and corrective of wisdom. For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it. To traverse the world men must have maps of the world. Their persistent difficulty is to secure maps on which their own need, or someone else's need, has not sketched in the coast of Bohemia.

4

The analyst of public opinion must begin then, by recognizing the triangular relationship between the scene of action, the human picture of that scene, and the human response to that picture working itself out upon the scene of action. It is like a play suggested to the actors by their own experience, in which the plot is transacted in the real lives of the actors, and not merely in their stage parts. The moving picture often emphasizes with great skill this double drama of interior motive and external behavior. Two men are quarreling, ostensibly about some money, but their passion is inexplicable. Then the picture fades out and what one or the other of the two men sees with his mind's eye is reënacted. Across the table they were quarreling about money. In memory they are back in their youth when the girl jilted him for the other man. The exterior drama is explained: the hero is not greedy; the hero is in love.

A scene not so different was played in the United States Senate. At breakfast on the morning of September 29, 1919, some of the Senators read a news dispatch in the Washington Post about the landing of American marines on the Dalmatian coast. The newspaper said:

FACTS NOW ESTABLISHED

"The following important facts appear already established. The orders to Rear Admiral Andrews commanding the American naval forces in the Adriatic, came from the British Admiralty via the War Council and Rear Admiral Knapps in London. The approval or disapproval of the American Navy Department was not asked....

WITHOUT DANIELS' KNOWLEDGE

"Mr. Daniels was admittedly placed in a peculiar position when cables reached here stating that the forces over which he is presumed to have exclusive control were carrying on what amounted to naval warfare without his knowledge. It was fully realized that the British Admiralty might desire to issue orders to Rear Admiral Andrews to act on behalf of Great Britain and her Allies, because the situation required sacrifice on the part of some nation if D'Annunzio's followers were to be held in check.

"It was further realized that under the new league of nations plan foreigners would be in a position to direct American Naval forces in emergencies with or without the consent of the American Navy Department...." etc. (Italics mine).

The first Senator to comment is Mr. Knox of Pennsylvania. Indignantly he demands investigation. In Mr. Brandegee of Connecticut, who spoke next, indignation has already stimulated credulity. Where Mr. Knox indignantly wishes to know if the report is true, Mr. Brandegee, a half a minute later, would like to know what would have happened if marines had been killed. Mr. Knox, interested in the question, forgets that he asked for an inquiry, and replies. If American marines had been killed, it would be war. The mood of the debate is still conditional. Debate proceeds. Mr. McCormick of Illinois reminds the Senate that the Wilson administration is prone to the waging of small unauthorized wars. He repeats Theodore Roosevelt's quip about "waging peace." More debate. Mr. Brandegee notes that the marines acted "under orders of a Supreme Council sitting somewhere," but he cannot recall who represents the United States on that body. The Supreme Council is unknown to the Constitution of the United States. Therefore Mr. New of Indiana submits a resolution calling for the facts.

So far the Senators still recognize vaguely that they are discussing a rumor. Being lawyers they still remember some of the forms of evidence. But as red-blooded men they already experience all the indignation which is appropriate to the fact that American marines have been ordered into war by a foreign government and without the consent of Congress. Emotionally they want to believe it, because they are Republicans fighting the League of Nations. This arouses the

Democratic leader, Mr. Hitchcock of Nebraska. He defends the Supreme Council: it was acting under the war powers. Peace has not yet been concluded because the Republicans are delaying it. Therefore the action was necessary and legal. Both sides now assume that the report is true, and the conclusions they draw are the conclusions of their partisanship. Yet this extraordinary assumption is in a debate over a resolution to investigate the truth of the assumption. It reveals how difficult it is, even for trained lawyers, to suspend response until the returns are in. The response is instantaneous. The fiction is taken for truth because the fiction is badly needed.

A few days later an official report showed that the marines were not landed by order of the British Government or of the Supreme Council. They had not been fighting the Italians. They had been landed at the request of the Italian Government to protect Italians, and the American commander had been officially thanked by the Italian authorities. The marines were not at war with Italy. They had acted according to an established international practice which had nothing to do with the League of Nations.

The scene of action was the Adriatic. The picture of that scene in the Senators' heads at Washington was furnished, in this case probably with intent to deceive, by a man who cared nothing about the Adriatic, but much about defeating the League. To this picture the Senate responded by a strengthening of its partisan differences over the League.

5

Whether in this particular case the Senate was above or below its normal standard, it is not necessary to decide. Nor whether the Senate compares favorably with the House, or with other parliaments. At the moment, I should like to think only about the world-wide spectacle of men acting upon their environment, moved by stimuli from their pseudo-environments. For when full allowance has been made for deliberate fraud, political science has still to account for such facts as two nations attacking one another, each convinced that it is acting in self-defense, or two classes at war each certain that it speaks for the common interest. They live, we are likely to say, in different worlds. More accurately, they live in the same world, but

they think and feel in different ones.

It is to these special worlds, it is to these private or group, or class, or provincial, or occupational, or national, or sectarian artifacts, that the political adjustment of mankind in the Great Society takes place. Their variety and complication are impossible to describe. Yet these fictions determine a very great part of men's political behavior. We must think of perhaps fifty sovereign parliaments consisting of at least a hundred legislative bodies. With them belong at least fifty hierarchies of provincial and municipal assemblies, which with their executive, administrative and legislative organs, constitute formal authority on earth. But that does not begin to reveal the complexity of political life. For in each of these innumerable centers of authority there are parties, and these parties are themselves hierarchies with their roots in classes, sections, cliques and clans; and within these are the individual politicians, each the personal center of a web of connection and memory and fear

and hope.

Somehow or other, for reasons often necessarily obscure, as the result of domination or compromise or a logroll, there emerge from these political bodies commands, which set armies in motion or make peace, conscript life, tax, exile, imprison, protect property or confiscate it, encourage one kind of enterprise and discourage another, facilitate immigration or obstruct it, improve communication or censor it, establish schools, build navies, proclaim "policies," and "destiny," raise economic barriers, make property or unmake it, bring one people under the rule of another, or favor one class as against another. For each of these decisions some view of the facts is taken to be conclusive, some view of the circumstances is accepted as the

basis of inference and as the stimulus of feeling. What view of the facts, and why that one?

And yet even this does not begin to exhaust the real complexity. The formal political structure exists in a social environment, where there are innumerable large and small corporations and institutions, voluntary and semi-voluntary associations, national, provincial, urban

and neighborhood groupings, which often as not make the decision that the political body registers. On what are these decisions based?

"Modern society," says Mr. Chesterton, "is intrinsically insecure because it is based on the notion that all men will do the same thing for different reasons.... And as within the head of any convict may be the hell of a quite solitary crime, so in the house or under the hat of any suburban clerk may be the limbo of a quite separate philosophy. The first man may be a complete Materialist and feel his own body as a horrible machine manufacturing his own mind. He may listen to his thoughts as to the dull ticking of a clock. The man next door may be a Christian Scientist and regard his own body as somehow rather less substantial than his own shadow. He may come almost to regard his own arms and legs as delusions like moving serpents in the dream of delirium tremens. The third man in the street may not be a Christian Scientist but, on the contrary, a Christian. He may live in a fairy tale as his neighbors would say; a secret but solid fairy tale full of the faces and presences of unearthly friends. The fourth man may be a theosophist, and only too probably a vegetarian; and I do not see why I should not gratify myself with the fancy that the fifth man is a devil worshiper.... Now whether or not this sort of variety is valuable, this sort of unity is shaky. To expect that all men for all time will go on thinking different things, and yet doing the same things, is a doubtful speculation. It is not founding society on a communion, or even on a convention, but rather on a coincidence. Four men may meet under the same lamp post; one to paint it pea green as part of a great municipal reform; one to read his breviary in the light of it; one to embrace it with accidental ardour in a fit of alcoholic enthusiasm; and the last merely because the pea green post is a conspicuous point of rendezvous with his young lady. But to expect this to happen night after night is unwise...." [Footnote: G. K. Chesterton, "The Mad Hatter and the Sane Householder," Vanity Fair, January, 1921, p. 54]

For the four men at the lamp post substitute the governments, the parties, the corporations, the societies, the social sets, the trades and professions, universities, sects, and nationalities of the world. Think of the legislator voting a statute that will affect distant peoples, a statesman coming to a decision. Think of the Peace

Conference reconstituting the frontiers of Europe, an ambassador in a foreign country trying to discern the intentions of his own government and of the foreign government, a promoter working a concession in a backward country, an editor demanding a war, a clergyman calling on the police to regulate amusement, a club lounging-room making up its mind about a strike, a sewing circle preparing to regulate the schools, nine judges deciding whether a legislature in Oregon may fix the working hours of women, a cabinet meeting to decide on the recognition of a government, a party convention choosing a candidate and writing a platform, twenty-seven million voters casting their ballots, an Irishman in Cork thinking about an Irishman in Belfast, a Third International planning to reconstruct the whole of human society, a board of directors confronted with a set of their employees' demands, a boy choosing a career, a merchant estimating supply and demand for the coming season, a speculator predicting the course of the market, a banker deciding whether to put credit behind a new enterprise, the advertiser, the reader of advertisments.... Think of the different sorts of Americans thinking about their notions of "The British Empire" or "France" or "Russia" or "Mexico." It is not so different from Mr. Chesterton's four men at the pea green lamp post.

6

And so before we involve ourselves in the jungle of obscurities about the innate differences of men, we shall do well to fix our attention upon the extraordinary differences in what men know of the world. [Footnote: Cf. Wallas, Our Social Heritage, pp. 77 et seq.]
I do not doubt that there are important biological differences. Since man is an animal it would be strange if there were not. But as rational beings it is worse than shallow to generalize at all about comparative behavior until there is a measurable similarity between the environments to which behavior is a response.

The pragmatic value of this idea is that it introduces a much needed refinement into the ancient controversy about nature and nurture, innate quality and environment. For the pseudo-environment is a hybrid compounded of "human nature" and "conditions." To my mind it shows the uselessness of pontificating about what man is and always will be from what we observe man to be doing, or about what are the necessary conditions of society. For we do not know how men would behave in

response to the facts of the Great Society. All that we really know is how they behave in response to what can fairly be called a most inadequate picture of the Great Society. No conclusion about man or the Great Society can honestly be made on evidence like that.

This, then, will be the clue to our inquiry. We shall assume that what each man does is based not on direct and certain knowledge, but on pictures made by himself or given to him. If his atlas tells him that the world is flat he will not sail near what he believes to be the edge of our planet for fear of falling off. If his maps include a fountain of eternal youth, a Ponce de Leon will go in quest of it. If someone digs up yellow dirt that looks like gold, he will for a time act exactly as if he had found gold. The way in which the world is imagined determines at any particular moment what men will do. It does not determine what they will achieve. It determines their effort, their feelings, their hopes, not their accomplishments and results. The very men who most loudly proclaim their "materialism" and their contempt for "ideologues," the Marxian communists, place their entire hope on what? On the formation by propaganda of a class-conscious group. But what is propaganda, if not the effort to alter the picture to which men respond, to substitute one social pattern for another? What is class consciousness but a way of realizing the world? National consciousness but another way? And Professor Giddings' consciousness of kind, but a process of believing that we recognize among the multitude certain ones marked as our kind?

Try to explain social life as the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. You will soon be saying that the hedonist begs the question, for even supposing that man does pursue these ends, the crucial problem of why he thinks one course rather than another likely to produce pleasure, is untouched. Does the guidance of man's conscience explain? How then does he happen to have the particular conscience which he has? The theory of economic self-interest? But how do men come to conceive their interest in one way rather than another? The desire for security, or prestige, or domination, or what is vaguely called self-realization? How do men conceive their security, what do they consider prestige, how do they figure out the means of domination, or what is the notion of self which they wish to realize? Pleasure, pain, conscience, acquisition, protection, enhancement, mastery, are undoubtedly names for some of the ways people act. There

may be instinctive dispositions which work toward such ends. But no statement of the end, or any description of the tendencies to seek it, can explain the behavior which results. The very fact that men theorize at all is proof that their pseudo-environments, their interior representations of the world, are a determining element in thought, feeling, and action. For if the connection between reality and human response were direct and immediate, rather than indirect and inferred, indecision and failure would be unknown, and (if each of us fitted as snugly into the world as the child in the womb), Mr. Bernard Shaw would not have been able to say that except for the first nine months of its existence no human being manages its affairs as well as a plant.

The chief difficulty in adapting the psychoanalytic scheme to political thought arises in this connection. The Freudians are concerned with the maladjustment of distinct individuals to other individuals and to concrete circumstances. They have assumed that if internal derangements could be straightened out, there would be little or no confusion about what is the obviously normal relationship. But public opinion deals with indirect, unseen, and puzzling facts, and there is nothing obvious about them. The situations to which public opinions refer are known only as opinions. The psychoanalyst, on the other hand, almost always assumes that the environment is knowable, and if not knowable then at least bearable, to any unclouded intelligence. This assumption of his is the problem of public opinion. Instead of taking for granted an environment that is readily known, the social analyst is most concerned in studying how the larger political environment is conceived, and how it can be conceived more successfully. The psychoanalyst examines the adjustment to an X, called by him the environment; the social analyst examines the X, called by him the pseudo-environment.

He is, of course, permanently and constantly in debt to the new psychology, not only because when rightly applied it so greatly helps people to stand on their own feet, come what may, but because the study of dreams, fantasy and rationalization has thrown light on how the pseudo-environment is put together. But he cannot assume as his criterion either what is called a “normal biological career” [Footnote: Edward J. Kempf, Psychopathology, p. 116.] within the existing social order, or a career “freed from religious

suppression and dogmatic conventions" outside. [Footnote: Id., p. 151.] What for a sociologist is a normal social career? Or one freed from suppressions and conventions? Conservative critics do, to be sure, assume the first, and romantic ones the second. But in assuming them they are taking the whole world for granted. They are saying in effect either that society is the sort of thing which corresponds to their idea of what is normal, or the sort of thing which corresponds to their idea of what is free. Both ideas are merely public opinions, and while the psychoanalyst as physician may perhaps assume them, the sociologist may not take the products of existing public opinion as criteria by which to study public opinion.

7

The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported, and imagined. Man is no Aristotelian god contemplating all existence at one glance. He is the creature of an evolution who can just about span a sufficient portion of reality to manage his survival, and snatch what on the scale of time are but a few moments of insight and happiness. Yet this same creature has invented ways of seeing what no naked eye could see, of hearing what no ear could hear, of weighing immense masses and infinitesimal ones, of counting and separating more items than he can individually remember. He is learning to see with his mind vast portions of the world that he could never see, touch, smell, hear, or remember. Gradually he makes for himself a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world beyond his reach.

Those features of the world outside which have to do with the behavior of other human beings, in so far as that behavior crosses ours, is dependent upon us, or is interesting to us, we call roughly public affairs. The pictures inside the heads of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purposes, and relationship, are their public opinions. Those pictures which are acted upon by groups of people, or by individuals acting in the name of groups, are Public Opinion with capital letters. And so in the chapters which follow we shall inquire first into some of the reasons why the picture inside so often misleads men in their dealings with the world outside. Under this heading we shall consider first the chief factors which limit their access to the facts. They are the

artificial censorships, the limitations of social contact, the comparatively meager time available in each day for paying attention to public affairs, the distortion arising because events have to be compressed into very short messages, the difficulty of making a small vocabulary express a complicated world, and finally the fear of facing those facts which would seem to threaten the established routine of men's lives.

The analysis then turns from these more or less external limitations to the question of how this trickle of messages from the outside is affected by the stored up images, the preconceptions, and prejudices which interpret, fill them out, and in their turn powerfully direct the play of our attention, and our vision itself. From this it proceeds to examine how in the individual person the limited messages from outside, formed into a pattern of stereotypes, are identified with his own interests as he feels and conceives them. In the succeeding sections it examines how opinions are crystallized into what is called Public Opinion, how a National Will, a Group Mind, a Social Purpose, or whatever you choose to call it, is formed.

The first five parts constitute the descriptive section of the book. There follows an analysis of the traditional democratic theory of public opinion. The substance of the argument is that democracy in its original form never seriously faced the problem which arises because the pictures inside people's heads do not automatically correspond with the world outside. And then, because the democratic theory is under criticism by socialist thinkers, there follows an examination of the most advanced and coherent of these criticisms, as made by the English Guild Socialists. My purpose here is to find out whether these reformers take into account the main difficulties of public opinion. My conclusion is that they ignore the difficulties, as completely as did the original democrats, because they, too, assume, and in a much more complicated civilization, that somehow mysteriously there exists in the hearts of men a knowledge of the world beyond their reach.

I argue that representative government, either in what is ordinarily called politics, or in industry, cannot be worked successfully, no matter what the basis of election, unless there is an independent, expert organization for making the unseen facts intelligible to those who have to make the decisions. I attempt, therefore, to argue that

the serious acceptance of the principle that personal representation must be supplemented by representation of the unseen facts would alone permit a satisfactory decentralization, and allow us to escape from the intolerable and unworkable fiction that each of us must acquire a competent opinion about all public affairs. It is argued that the problem of the press is confused because the critics and the apologists expect the press to realize this fiction, expect it to make up for all that was not foreseen in the theory of democracy, and that the readers expect this miracle to be performed at no cost or trouble to themselves. The newspapers are regarded by democrats as a panacea for their own defects, whereas analysis of the nature of news and of the economic basis of journalism seems to show that the newspapers necessarily and inevitably reflect, and therefore, in greater or lesser measure, intensify, the defective organization of public opinion. My conclusion is that public opinions must be organized for the press if they are to be sound, not by the press as is the case today. This organization I conceive to be in the first instance the task of a political science that has won its proper place as formulator, in advance of real decision, instead of apologist, critic, or reporter after the decision has been made. I try to indicate that the perplexities of government and industry are conspiring to give political science this enormous opportunity to enrich itself and to serve the public. And, of course, I hope that these pages will help a few people to realize that opportunity more vividly, and therefore to pursue it more consciously.

PART II
APPROACHES TO THE WORLD OUTSIDE

CHAPTER II
CENSORSHIP AND PRIVACY

1

The picture of a general presiding over an editorial conference at the most terrible hour of one of the great battles of history seems more

PART III

CHAPTER VI
STEREOTYPES

1

Each of us lives and works on a small part of the earth's surface, moves in a small circle, and of these acquaintances knows only a few intimately. Of any public event that has wide effects we see at best only a phase and an aspect. This is as true of the eminent insiders who draft treaties, make laws, and issue orders, as it is of those who have treaties framed for them, laws promulgated to them, orders given at them. Inevitably our opinions cover a bigger space, a longer reach of time, a greater number of things, than we can directly observe. They have, therefore, to be pieced together out of what others have reported and what we can imagine.

Yet even the eyewitness does not bring back a naéve picture of the scene. [Footnote: E. g. cf. Edmond Locard, L'Enquête Criminelle et les Méthodes Scientifiques. A great deal of interesting material has been gathered in late years on the credibility of the witness, which shows, as an able reviewer of Dr. Locard's book says in The Times (London) Literary Supplement (August 18, 1921), that credibility varies as to classes of witnesses and classes of events, and also as to type of perception. Thus, perceptions of touch, odor, and taste have low evidential value. Our hearing is defective and arbitrary when it judges the source and direction of sound, and in listening to the talk of other people "words which are not heard will be supplied by the witness in all good faith. He will have a theory of the purport of the conversation, and will arrange the sounds he heard to fit it." Even visual perceptions are liable to great error, as in identification, recognition, judgment of distance, estimates of numbers, for example, the size of a crowd. In the untrained observer, the sense of time is highly variable. All these original weaknesses are complicated by tricks of memory, and the incessant creative quality of the imagination. Cf. also Sherrington, The Integrative Action of the Nervous System, pp. 318-327.

The late Professor Hugo Münsterberg wrote a popular book on this subject called On the Witness Stand.] For experience seems to show that he himself brings something to the scene which later he takes away from it, that oftener than not what he imagines to be the account of an event is really a transfiguration of it. Few facts in consciousness seem to be merely given. Most facts in consciousness seem to be partly made. A report is the joint product of the knower and known, in which the role of the observer is always selective and usually creative. The facts we see depend on where we are placed, and the habits of our eyes.

An unfamiliar scene is like the baby's world, "one great, blooming, buzzing confusion." [Footnote: Wm. James, Principles of Psychology, Vol. I, p. 488.] This is the way, says Mr. John Dewey, [Footnote: John Dewey, How We Think, pg 121.] that any new thing strikes an adult, so far as the thing is really new and strange. "Foreign languages that we do not understand always seem jibberings, babblings, in which it is impossible to fix a definite, clear-cut, individualized group of sounds. The countryman in the crowded street, the landlubber at sea, the ignoramus in sport at a contest between experts in a complicated game, are further instances. Put an inexperienced man in a factory, and at first the work seems to him a meaningless medley. All strangers of another race proverbially look alike to the visiting stranger. Only gross differences of size or color are perceived by an outsider in a flock of sheep, each of which is perfectly individualized to the shepherd. A diffusive blur and an indiscriminately shifting suction characterize what we do not understand. The problem of the acquisition of meaning by things, or (stated in another way) of forming habits of simple apprehension, is thus the problem of introducing (1) definiteness and distinction and (2) consistency or stability of meaning into what is otherwise vague and wavering."

But the kind of definiteness and consistency introduced depends upon who introduces them. In a later passage [Footnote: op. cit., p. 133.] Dewey gives an example of how differently an experienced layman and a chemist might define the word metal. "Smoothness, hardness, glossiness, and brilliancy, heavy weight for its size ... the serviceable properties of capacity for being hammered and pulled without breaking, of being softened by heat and hardened by cold, of

retaining the shape and form given, of resistance to pressure and decay, would probably be included" in the layman's definition. But the chemist would likely as not ignore these esthetic and utilitarian qualities, and define a metal as "any chemical element that enters into combination with oxygen so as to form a base."

For the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture. Of the great men who assembled at Paris to settle the affairs of mankind, how many were there who were able to see much of the Europe about them, rather than their commitments about Europe? Could anyone have penetrated the mind of M. Clemenceau, would he have found there images of the Europe of 1919, or a great sediment of stereotyped ideas accumulated and hardened in a long and pugnacious existence? Did he see the Germans of 1919, or the German type as he had learned to see it since 1871? He saw the type, and among the reports that came to him from Germany, he took to heart those reports, and, it seems, those only, which fitted the type that was in his mind. If a junker blustered, that was an authentic German; if a labor leader confessed the guilt of the empire, he was not an authentic German.

At a Congress of Psychology in Göttingen an interesting experiment was made with a crowd of presumably trained observers. [Footnote: A. von Gennep, La formation des légendes, pp. 158-159. Cited F. van Langenhove, The Growth of a Legend, pp. 120-122.]

"Not far from the hall in which the Congress was sitting there was a public fete with a masked ball. Suddenly the door of the hall was thrown open and a clown rushed in madly pursued by a negro, revolver in hand. They stopped in the middle of the room fighting; the clown fell, the negro leapt upon him, fired, and then both rushed out of the hall. The whole incident hardly lasted twenty seconds.

"The President asked those present to write immediately a report since there was sure to be a judicial inquiry. Forty reports were sent in. Only one had less than 20% of mistakes in regard to the principal facts; fourteen had 20% to 40% of mistakes; twelve from 40% to 50%;

thirteen more than 50%. Moreover in twenty-four accounts 10% of the details were pure inventions and this proportion was exceeded in ten accounts and diminished in six. Briefly a quarter of the accounts were false.

“It goes without saying that the whole scene had been arranged and even photographed in advance. The ten false reports may then be relegated to the category of tales and legends; twenty-four accounts are half legendary, and six have a value approximating to exact evidence.”

Thus out of forty trained observers writing a responsible account of a scene that had just happened before their eyes, more than a majority saw a scene that had not taken place. What then did they see? One would suppose it was easier to tell what had occurred, than to invent something which had not occurred. They saw their stereotype of such a brawl. All of them had in the course of their lives acquired a series of images of brawls, and these images flickered before their eyes. In one man these images displaced less than 20% of the actual scene, in thirteen men more than half. In thirty-four out of the forty observers the stereotypes preempted at least one-tenth of the scene.

A distinguished art critic has said [Footnote: Bernard Berenson, The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance, pp. 60, et seq.] that “what with the almost numberless shapes assumed by an object. ... What with our insensitiveness and inattention, things scarcely would have for us features and outlines so determined and clear that we could recall them at will, but for the stereotyped shapes art has lent them.” The truth is even broader than that, for the stereotyped shapes lent to the world come not merely from art, in the sense of painting and sculpture and literature, but from our moral codes and our social philosophies and our political agitations as well. Substitute in the following passage of Mr. Berenson’s the words ‘politics,’ ‘business,’ and ‘society,’ for the word ‘art’ and the sentences will be no less true: “... unless years devoted to the study of all schools of art have taught us also to see with our own eyes, we soon fall into the habit of moulding whatever we look at into the forms borrowed from the one art with which we are acquainted. There is our standard of artistic reality. Let anyone give us shapes and colors which we cannot instantly match in our paltry stock of hackneyed forms

and tints, and we shake our heads at his failure to reproduce things as we know they certainly are, or we accuse him of insincerity."

Mr. Berenson speaks of our displeasure when a painter "does not visualize objects exactly as we do," and of the difficulty of appreciating the art of the Middle Ages because since then "our manner of visualizing forms has changed in a thousand ways." [Footnote: Cf. also his comment on Dante's Visual Images, and his Early Illustrators in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art (First Series), p. 13. "We cannot help dressing Virgil as a Roman, and giving him a 'classical profile' and 'statuesque carriage,' but Dante's visual image of Virgil was probably no less mediaeval, no more based on a critical reconstruction of antiquity, than his entire conception of the Roman poet. Fourteenth Century illustrators make Virgil look like a mediaeval scholar, dressed in cap and gown, and there is no reason why Dante's visual image of him should have been other than this."] He goes on to show how in regard to the human figure we have been taught to see what we do see. "Created by Donatello and Masaccio, and sanctioned by the Humanists, the new canon of the human figure, the new cast of features ... presented to the ruling classes of that time the type of human being most likely to win the day in the combat of human forces... Who had the power to break through this new standard of vision and, out of the chaos of things, to select shapes more definitely expressive of reality than those fixed by men of genius? No one had such power. People had perforce to see things in that way and in no other, and to see only the shapes depicted, to love only the ideals presented...." [Footnote: The Central Italian Painters, pp. 66-67.]

2

If we cannot fully understand the acts of other people, until we know what they think they know, then in order to do justice we have to appraise not only the information which has been at their disposal, but the minds through which they have filtered it. For the accepted types, the current patterns, the standard versions, intercept information on its way to consciousness. Americanization, for example, is superficially at least the substitution of American for European stereotypes. Thus the peasant who might see his landlord as if he were

the lord of the manor, his employer as he saw the local magnate, is taught by Americanization to see the landlord and employer according to American standards. This constitutes a change of mind, which is, in effect, when the inoculation succeeds, a change of vision. His eye sees differently. One kindly gentlewoman has confessed that the stereotypes are of such overweening importance, that when hers are not indulged, she at least is unable to accept the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God: “we are strangely affected by the clothes we wear. Garments create a mental and social atmosphere. What can be hoped for the Americanism of a man who insists on employing a London tailor? One’s very food affects his Americanism. What kind of American consciousness can grow in the atmosphere of sauerkraut and Limburger cheese? Or what can you expect of the Americanism of the man whose breath always reeks of garlic?” [Footnote: Cited by Mr. Edward Hale Bierstadt, New Republic, June 1 1921 p. 21.]

This lady might well have been the patron of a pageant which a friend of mine once attended. It was called the Melting Pot, and it was given on the Fourth of July in an automobile town where many foreign-born workers are employed. In the center of the baseball park at second base stood a huge wooden and canvas pot. There were flights of steps up to the rim on two sides. After the audience had settled itself, and the band had played, a procession came through an opening at one side of the field. It was made up of men of all the foreign nationalities employed in the factories. They wore their native costumes, they were singing their national songs; they danced their folk dances, and carried the banners of all Europe. The master of ceremonies was the principal of the grade school dressed as Uncle Sam. He led them to the pot. He directed them up the steps to the rim, and inside. He called them out again on the other side. They came, dressed in derby hats, coats, pants, vest, stiff collar and polka-dot tie, undoubtedly, said my friend, each with an Eversharp pencil in his pocket, and all singing the Star-Spangled Banner.

To the promoters of this pageant, and probably to most of the actors, it seemed as if they had managed to express the most intimate difficulty to friendly association between the older peoples of America and the newer. The contradiction of their stereotypes interfered with the full recognition of their common humanity. The people who change their names know this. They mean to change

themselves, and the attitude of strangers toward them.

There is, of course, some connection between the scene outside and the mind through which we watch it, just as there are some long-haired men and short-haired women in radical gatherings. But to the hurried observer a slight connection is enough. If there are two bobbed heads and four beards in the audience, it will be a bobbed and bearded audience to the reporter who knows beforehand that such gatherings are composed of people with these tastes in the management of their hair. There is a connection between our vision and the facts, but it is often a strange connection. A man has rarely looked at a landscape, let us say, except to examine its possibilities for division into building lots, but he has seen a number of landscapes hanging in the parlor. And from them he has learned to think of a landscape as a rosy sunset, or as a country road with a church steeple and a silver moon. One day he goes to the country, and for hours he does not see a single landscape. Then the sun goes down looking rosy. At once he recognizes a landscape and exclaims that it is beautiful. But two days later, when he tries to recall what he saw, the odds are that he will remember chiefly some landscape in a parlor.

Unless he has been drunk or dreaming or insane he did see a sunset, but he saw in it, and above all remembers from it, more of what the oil painting taught him to observe, than what an impressionist painter, for example, or a cultivated Japanese would have seen and taken away with him. And the Japanese and the painter in turn will have seen and remembered more of the form they had learned, unless they happen to be the very rare people who find fresh sight for mankind. In untrained observation we pick recognizable signs out of the environment. The signs stand for ideas, and these ideas we fill out with our stock of images. We do not so much see this man and that sunset; rather we notice that the thing is man or sunset, and then see chiefly what our mind is already full of on those subjects.

3

There is economy in this. For the attempt to see all things freshly and in detail, rather than as types and generalities, is exhausting, and among busy affairs practically out of the question. In a circle of friends, and in relation to close associates or competitors, there is

no shortcut through, and no substitute for, an individualized understanding. Those whom we love and admire most are the men and women whose consciousness is peopled thickly with persons rather than with types, who know us rather than the classification into which we might fit. For even without phrasing it to ourselves, we feel intuitively that all classification is in relation to some purpose not necessarily our own; that between two human beings no association has final dignity in which each does not take the other as an end in himself. There is a taint on any contact between two people which does not affirm as an axiom the personal inviolability of both.

But modern life is hurried and multifarious, above all physical distance separates men who are often in vital contact with each other, such as employer and employee, official and voter. There is neither time nor opportunity for intimate acquaintance. Instead we notice a trait which marks a well known type, and fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry about in our heads. He is an agitator. That much we notice, or are told. Well, an agitator is this sort of person, and so he is this sort of person. He is an intellectual. He is a plutocrat. He is a foreigner. He is a "South European." He is from Back Bay. He is a Harvard Man. How different from the statement: he is a Yale Man. He is a regular fellow. He is a West Pointer. He is an old army sergeant. He is a Greenwich Villager: what don't we know about him then, and about her? He is an international banker. He is from Main Street.

The subtlest and most pervasive of all influences ere those which create and maintain the repertory of stereotypes. We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception. They mark out certain objects as familiar or strange, emphasizing the difference, so that the slightly familiar is seen as very familiar, and the somewhat strange as sharply alien. They are aroused by small signs, which may vary from a true index to a vague analogy. Aroused, they flood fresh vision with older images, and project into the world what has been resurrected in memory. Were there no practical uniformities in the environment, there would be no economy and only error in the human habit of accepting foresight for sight. But there are uniformities sufficiently accurate, and the need of economizing

attention is so inevitable, that the abandonment of all stereotypes for a wholly innocent approach to experience would impoverish human life.

What matters is the character of the stereotypes, and the gullibility with which we employ them. And these in the end depend upon those inclusive patterns which constitute our philosophy of life. If in that philosophy we assume that the world is codified according to a code which we possess, we are likely to make our reports of what is going on describe a world run by our code. But if our philosophy tells us that each man is only a small part of the world, that his intelligence catches at best only phases and aspects in a coarse net of ideas, then, when we use our stereotypes, we tend to know that they are only stereotypes, to hold them lightly, to modify them gladly. We tend, also, to realize more and more clearly when our ideas started, where they started, how they came to us, why we accepted them. All useful history is antiseptic in this fashion. It enables us to know what fairy tale, what school book, what tradition, what novel, play, picture, phrase, planted one preconception in this mind, another in that mind.

4

Those who wish to censor art do not at least underestimate this influence. They generally misunderstand it, and almost always they are absurdly bent on preventing other people from discovering anything not sanctioned by them. But at any rate, like Plato in his argument about the poets, they feel vaguely that the types acquired through fiction tend to be imposed on reality. Thus there can be little doubt that the moving picture is steadily building up imagery which is then evoked by the words people read in their newspapers. In the whole experience of the race there has been no aid to visualization comparable to the cinema. If a Florentine wished to visualize the saints, he could go to the frescoes in his church, where he might see a vision of saints standardized for his time by Giotto. If an Athenian wished to visualize the gods he went to the temples. But the number of objects which were pictured was not great. And in the East, where the spirit of the second commandment was widely accepted, the portraiture of concrete things was even more meager, and for that reason perhaps the faculty of practical decision was by so much reduced. In the western

world, however, during the last few centuries there has been an enormous increase in the volume and scope of secular description, the word picture, the narrative, the illustrated narrative, and finally the moving picture and, perhaps, the talking picture.

Photographs have the kind of authority over imagination to-day, which the printed word had yesterday, and the spoken word before that. They seem utterly real. They come, we imagine, directly to us without human meddling, and they are the most effortless food for the mind conceivable. Any description in words, or even any inert picture, requires an effort of memory before a picture exists in the mind. But on the screen the whole process of observing, describing, reporting, and then imagining, has been accomplished for you. Without more trouble than is needed to stay awake the result which your imagination is always aiming at is reeled off on the screen. The shadowy idea becomes vivid; your hazy notion, let us say, of the Ku Klux Klan, thanks to Mr. Griffiths, takes vivid shape when you see the Birth of a Nation. Historically it may be the wrong shape, morally it may be a pernicious shape, but it is a shape, and I doubt whether anyone who has seen the film and does not know more about the Ku Klux Klan than Mr. Griffiths, will ever hear the name again without seeing those white horsemen.

5

And so when we speak of the mind of a group of people, of the French mind, the militarist mind, the bolshevik mind, we are liable to serious confusion unless we agree to separate the instinctive equipment from the stereotypes, the patterns, and the formulae which play so decisive a part in building up the mental world to which the native character is adapted and responds. Failure to make this distinction accounts for oceans of loose talk about collective minds, national souls, and race psychology. To be sure a stereotype may be so consistently and authoritatively transmitted in each generation from parent to child that it seems almost like a biological fact. In some respects, we may indeed have become, as Mr. Wallas says, [Footnote: Graham Wallas, Our Social Heritage, p. 17.] biologically parasitic upon our social heritage. But certainly there is not the least scientific evidence which would enable anyone to argue that men are born with the political habits of the country in which they are

born. In so far as political habits are alike in a nation, the first places to look for an explanation are the nursery, the school, the church, not in that limbo inhabited by Group Minds and National Souls. Until you have thoroughly failed to see tradition being handed on from parents, teachers, priests, and uncles, it is a solecism of the worst order to ascribe political differences to the germ plasm.

It is possible to generalize tentatively and with a decent humility about comparative differences within the same category of education and experience. Yet even this is a tricky enterprise. For almost no two experiences are exactly alike, not even of two children in the same household. The older son never does have the experience of being the younger. And therefore, until we are able to discount the difference in nurture, we must withhold judgment about differences of nature. As well judge the productivity of two soils by comparing their yield before you know which is in Labrador and which in Iowa, whether they have been cultivated and enriched, exhausted, or allowed to run wild.

CHAPTER VII
STEREOTYPES AS DEFENSE

1

THERE is another reason, besides economy of effort, why we so often hold to our stereotypes when we might pursue a more disinterested vision. The systems of stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defenses of our position in society.

They are an ordered, more or less consistent picture of the world, to which our habits, our tastes, our capacities, our comforts and our hopes have adjusted themselves. They may not be a complete picture of the world, but they are a picture of a possible world to which we are adapted. In that world people and things have their well-known places, and do certain expected things. We feel at home there. We fit in. We are members. We know the way around. There we find the charm of the familiar, the normal, the dependable; its grooves and shapes are where

we are accustomed to find them. And though we have abandoned much that might have tempted us before we creased ourselves into that mould, once we are firmly in, it fits as snugly as an old shoe.

No wonder, then, that any disturbance of the stereotypes seems like an attack upon the foundations of the universe. It is an attack upon the foundations of our universe, and, where big things are at stake, we do not readily admit that there is any distinction between our universe and the universe. A world which turns out to be one in which those we honor are unworthy, and those we despise are noble, is nerve-racking. There is anarchy if our order of precedence is not the only possible one. For if the meek should indeed inherit the earth, if the first should be last, if those who are without sin alone may cast a stone, if to Caesar you render only the things that are Caesar's, then the foundations of self-respect would be shaken for those who have arranged their lives as if these maxims were not true. A pattern of stereotypes is not neutral. It is not merely a way of substituting order for the great blooming, buzzing confusion of reality. It is not merely a short cut. It is all these things and something more. It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy.

2

When, for example, in the fourth century B. C., Aristotle wrote his defense of slavery in the face of increasing skepticism, [Footnote: Zimmern: Greek Commonwealth. See his footnote, p. 383.] the Athenian slaves were in great part indistinguishable from free citizens Mr. Zimmern quotes an amusing passage from the Old Oligarch explaining the good treatment of the slaves. "Suppose it were legal for a slave to be beaten by a citizen, it would frequently happen that an Athenian might be mistaken for a slave or an alien and receive a beating;--since the Athenian people is not better clothed than the slave or alien, nor in personal appearance is there any superiority." This absence of distinction would naturally tend to dissolve the institution. If free men and slaves looked alike, what basis was there

for treating them so differently? It was this confusion which Aristotle set himself to clear away in the first book of his Politics. With unerring instinct he understood that to justify slavery he must teach the Greeks a way of seeing their slaves that comported with the continuance of slavery.

So, said Aristotle, there are beings who are slaves by nature. [Footnote: Politics, Bk. 1, Ch. 5.] “He then is by nature formed a slave, who is fitted to become the chattel of another person, and on that account is so.” All this really says is that whoever happens to be a slave is by nature intended to be one. Logically the statement is worthless, but in fact it is not a proposition at all, and logic has nothing to do with it. It is a stereotype, or rather it is part of a stereotype. The rest follows almost immediately. After asserting that slaves perceive reason, but are not endowed with the use of it, Aristotle insists that “it is the intention of nature to make the bodies of slaves and free men different from each other, that the one should be robust for their necessary purposes, but the other erect; useless indeed for such servile labours, but fit for civil life... It is clear then that some men are free by nature, and others are slaves. ...”

If we ask ourselves what is the matter with Aristotle’s argument, we find that he has begun by erecting a great barrier between himself and the facts. When he had said that those who are slaves are by nature intended to be slaves, he at one stroke excluded the fatal question whether those particular men who happened to be slaves were the particular men intended by nature to be slaves. For that question would have tainted each case of slavery with doubt. And since the fact of being a slave was not evidence that a man was destined to be one, no certain test would have remained. Aristotle, therefore, excluded entirely that destructive doubt. Those who are slaves are intended to be slaves. Each slave holder was to look upon his chattels as natural slaves. When his eye had been trained to see them that way, he was to note as confirmation of their servile character the fact that they performed servile work, that they were competent to do servile work, and that they had the muscles to do servile work.

This is the perfect stereotype. Its hallmark is that it precedes the use of reason; is a form of perception, imposes a certain character on

the data of our senses before the data reach the intelligence. The

stereotype is like the lavender window-panes on Beacon Street, like the door-keeper at a costume ball who judges whether the guest has an appropriate masquerade. There is nothing so obdurate to education or to criticism as the stereotype. It stamps itself upon the evidence in the very act of securing the evidence. That is why the accounts of returning travellers are often an interesting tale of what the traveller carried abroad with him on his trip. If he carried chiefly his appetite, a zeal for tiled bathrooms, a conviction that the Pullman car is the acme of human comfort, and a belief that it is proper to tip waiters, taxicab drivers, and barbers, but under no circumstances station agents and ushers, then his Odyssey will be replete with good meals and bad meals, bathing adventures, compartment-train escapades, and voracious demands for money. Or if he is a more serious soul he may while on tour have found himself at celebrated spots. Having touched base, and cast one furtive glance at the monument, he buried his head in Baedeker, read every word through, and moved on to the next celebrated spot; and thus returned with a compact and orderly impression of Europe, rated one star, or two.

In some measure, stimuli from the outside, especially when they are printed or spoken words, evoke some part of a system of stereotypes, so that the actual sensation and the preconception occupy consciousness at the same time. The two are blended, much as if we looked at red through blue glasses and saw green. If what we are looking at corresponds successfully with what we anticipated, the stereotype is reinforced for the future, as it is in a man who knows in advance that the Japanese are cunning and has the bad luck to run across two dishonest Japanese.

If the experience contradicts the stereotype, one of two things happens. If the man is no longer plastic, or if some powerful interest makes it highly inconvenient to rearrange his stereotypes, he pooh-poohs the contradiction as an exception that proves the rule, discredits the witness, finds a flaw somewhere, and manages to forget it. But if he is still curious and open-minded, the novelty is taken into the picture, and allowed to modify it. Sometimes, if the incident is striking enough, and if he has felt a general discomfort with his established scheme, he may be shaken to such an extent as to distrust

all accepted ways of looking at life, and to expect that normally a thing will not be what it is generally supposed to be. In the extreme case, especially if he is literary, he may develop a passion for inverting the moral canon by making Judas, Benedict Arnold, or Caesar Borgia the hero of his tale.

3

The role played by the stereotype can be seen in the German tales about Belgian snipers. Those tales curiously enough were first refuted by an organization of German Catholic priests known as Pax. [Footnote: Fernand van Langenhove, The Growth of a Legend. The author is a Belgian sociologist.] The existence of atrocity stories is itself not remarkable, nor that the German people gladly believed them. But it is remarkable that a great conservative body of patriotic Germans should have set out as early as August 16, 1914, to contradict a collection of slanders on the enemy, even though such slanders were of the utmost value in soothing the troubled conscience of their fellow countrymen. Why should the Jesuit order in particular have set out to destroy a fiction so important to the fighting morale of Germany?

I quote from M. van Langenhove's account:

"Hardly had the German armies entered Belgium when strange rumors began to circulate. They spread from place to place, they were reproduced by the press, and they soon permeated the whole of Germany. It was said that the Belgian people, instigated by the clergy, had intervened perfidiously in the hostilities; had attacked by surprise isolated detachments; had indicated to the enemy the positions occupied by the troops; that old men, and even children, had been guilty of horrible atrocities upon wounded and defenseless German soldiers, tearing out their eyes and cutting off fingers, nose or ears; that the priests from their pulpits had exhorted the people to commit these crimes, promising them as a reward the kingdom of heaven, and had even taken the lead in this barbarity.

"Public credulity accepted these stories. The highest powers in the state welcomed them without hesitation and endorsed them with their authority...

"In this way public opinion in Germany was disturbed and a lively indignation manifested itself, directed especially against the priests who were held responsible for the barbarities attributed to the Belgians... By a natural diversion the anger to which they were a prey was directed by the Germans against the Catholic clergy generally. Protestants allowed the old religious hatred to be relighted in their minds and delivered themselves to attacks against Catholics. A new Kulturkampf was let loose.

"The Catholics did not delay in taking action against this hostile attitude." (Italics mine) [Footnote: Op. cit., pp. 5-7]

There may have been some sniping. It would be extraordinary if every angry Belgian had rushed to the library, opened a manual of international law, and had informed himself whether he had a right to take potshot at the infernal nuisance tramping through his streets. It would be no less extraordinary if an army that had never been under fire, did not regard every bullet that came its way as unauthorized, because it was inconvenient, and indeed as somehow a violation of the rules of the Kriegspiel, which then constituted its only experience of war. One can imagine the more sensitive bent on convincing themselves that the people to whom they were doing such terrible things must be terrible people. And so the legend may have been spun until it reached the censors and propagandists, who, whether they believed it or not, saw its value, and let it loose on the German civilians. They too were not altogether sorry to find that the people they were outraging were sub-human. And, above all, since the legend came from their heroes, they were not only entitled to believe it, they were unpatriotic if they did not.

But where so much is left to the imagination because the scene of action is lost in the fog of war, there is no check and no control. The legend of the ferocious Belgian priests soon tapped an old hatred. For in the minds of most patriotic protestant Germans, especially of the upper classes, the picture of Bismarck's victories included a long quarrel with the Roman Catholics. By a process of association, Belgian priests became priests, and hatred of Belgians a vent for all their hatreds. These German protestants did what some Americans did when under the stress of war they created a compound object of hatred out of the enemy abroad and all their opponents at home. Against this

synthetic enemy, the Hun in Germany and the Hun within the Gate, they launched all the animosity that was in them.

The Catholic resistance to the atrocity tales was, of course, defensive. It was aimed at those particular fictions which aroused animosity against all Catholics, rather than against Belgian Catholics alone. The Informations Pax, says M. van Langenhove, had only an ecclesiastical bearing and "confined their attention almost exclusively to the reprehensible acts attributed to the priests." And yet one cannot help wondering a little about what was set in motion in the minds of German Catholics by this revelation of what Bismarck's empire meant in relation to them; and also whether there was any obscure connection between that knowledge and the fact that the prominent German politician who was willing in the armistice to sign the death warrant of the empire was Erzberger, [Footnote: Since this was written, Erzberger has been assassinated.] the leader of the Catholic Centre Party.

CHAPTER VIII
BLIND SPOTS AND THEIR VALUE

1

I HAVE been speaking of stereotypes rather than ideals, because the word ideal is usually reserved for what we consider the good, the true and the beautiful. Thus it carries the hint that here is something to be copied or attained. But our repertory of fixed impressions is wider than that. It contains ideal swindlers, ideal Tammany politicians, ideal jingoes, ideal agitators, ideal enemies. Our stereotyped world is not necessarily the world we should like it to be. It is simply the kind of world we expect it to be. If events correspond there is a sense of familiarity, and we feel that we are moving with the movement of events. Our slave must be a slave by nature, if we are Athenians who wish to have no qualms. If we have told our friends that we do eighteen holes of golf in 95, we tell them after doing the course in 110, that we are not ourselves to-day. That is to say, we are not acquainted with the duffer who foozled fifteen strokes.

Most of us would deal with affairs through a rather haphazard and shifting assortment of stereotypes, if a comparatively few men in each generation were not constantly engaged in arranging, standardizing, and improving them into logical systems, known as the Laws of Political Economy, the Principles of Politics, and the like. Generally when we write about culture, tradition, and the group mind, we are thinking of these systems perfected by men of genius. Now there is no disputing the necessity of constant study and criticism of these idealized versions, but the historian of people, the politician, and the publicity man cannot stop there. For what operates in history is not the systematic idea as a genius formulated it, but shifting imitations, replicas, counterfeits, analogies, and distortions in individual minds.

Thus Marxism is not necessarily what Karl Marx wrote in Das Kapital, but whatever it is that all the warring sects believe, who claim to be the faithful. From the gospels you cannot deduce the history of Christianity, nor from the Constitution the political history of America. It is Das Kapital as conceived, the gospels as preached and the preachment as understood, the Constitution as interpreted and administered, to which you have to go. For while there is a reciprocating influence between the standard version and the current versions, it is these current versions as distributed among men which affect their behavior. [Footnote: But unfortunately it is ever so much harder to know this actual culture than it is to summarize and to comment upon the works of genius. The actual culture exists in people far too busy to indulge in the strange trade of formulating their beliefs. They record them only incidentally, and the student rarely knows how typical are his data. Perhaps the best he can do is to follow Lord Bryce's suggestion [Modern Democracies, Vol. i, p. 156] that he move freely "among all sorts and conditions of men," to seek out the unbiassed persons in every neighborhood who have skill in sizing up. "There is a flair which long practise and 'sympathetic touch' bestow. The trained observer learns how to profit by small indications, as an old seaman discerns, sooner than the landsman, the signs of coming storm." There is, in short, a vast amount of guess work involved, and it is no wonder that scholars, who enjoy precision, so often confine their attentions to the neater formulations of other scholars.]

“The theory of Relativity,” says a critic whose eyelids, like the Lady Lisa’s, are a little weary, “promises to develop into a principle as adequate to universal application as was the theory of Evolution. This latter theory, from being a technical biological hypothesis, became an inspiring guide to workers in practically every branch of knowledge: manners and customs, morals, religions, philosophies, arts, steam engines, electric tramways--everything had ‘evolved.’ ‘Evolution’ became a very general term; it also became imprecise until, in many cases, the original, definite meaning of the word was lost, and the theory it had been evoked to describe was misunderstood. We are hardy enough to prophesy a similar career and fate for the theory of Relativity. The technical physical theory, at present imperfectly understood, will become still more vague and dim. History repeats itself, and Relativity, like Evolution, after receiving a number of intelligible but somewhat inaccurate popular expositions in its scientific aspect, will be launched on a world-conquering career. We suggest that, by that time, it will probably be called Relativismus. Many of these larger applications will doubtless be justified; some will be absurd and a considerable number will, we imagine, reduce to truisms. And the physical theory, the mere seed of this mighty growth, will become once more the purely technical concern of scientific men.” [Footnote: The Times (London), Literary Supplement, June 2, 1921, p. 352. Professor Einstein said when he was in America in 1921 that people tended to overestimate the influence of his theory, and to under-estimate its certainty.]

But for such a world-conquering career an idea must correspond, however imprecisely, to something. Professor Bury shows for how long a time the idea of progress remained a speculative toy. “It is not easy,” he writes, [Footnote: J. B. Bury, The Idea of Progress, p. 324.] “for a new idea of the speculative order to penetrate and inform the general consciousness of a community until it has assumed some external and concrete embodiment, or is recommended by some striking material evidence. In the case of Progress both these conditions were fulfilled (in England) in the period 1820-1850.” The most striking evidence was furnished by the mechanical revolution. “Men who were born at the beginning of the century had seen, before they had passed the age of thirty, the rapid development of steam navigation, the illumination of towns and houses by gas, the opening

of the first railway." In the consciousness of the average householder miracles like these formed the pattern of his belief in the perfectibility of the human race.

Tennyson, who was in philosophical matters a fairly normal person, tells us that when he went by the first train from Liverpool to Manchester (1830) he thought that the wheels ran in grooves. Then he wrote this line:

"Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves of change." [Footnote: 2 Tennyson, Memoir by his Son, Vol. I, p. 195. Cited by Bury, op. cit., p. 326.]

And so a notion more or less applicable to a journey between Liverpool and Manchester was generalized into a pattern of the universe "for ever." This pattern, taken up by others, reinforced by dazzling inventions, imposed an optimistic turn upon the theory of evolution. That theory, of course, is, as Professor Bury says, neutral between pessimism and optimism. But it promised continual change, and the changes visible in the world marked such extraordinary conquests of nature, that the popular mind made a blend of the two. Evolution first in Darwin himself, and then more elaborately in Herbert Spencer, was a "progress towards perfection."

2

The stereotype represented by such words as "progress" and "perfection" was composed fundamentally of mechanical inventions. And mechanical it has remained, on the whole, to this day. In America more than anywhere else, the spectacle of mechanical progress has made so deep an impression, that it has suffused the whole moral code. An American will endure almost any insult except the charge that he is not progressive. Be he of long native ancestry, or a recent immigrant, the aspect that has always struck his eye is the immense physical growth of American civilization. That constitutes a fundamental stereotype through which he views the world: the country village will become the great metropolis, the modest building a skyscraper, what is small shall be big; what is slow shall be fast; what is poor shall be rich; what is few shall be many; whatever is shall be more so.

Not every American, of course, sees the world this way. Henry Adams didn't, and William Allen White doesn't. But those men do, who in the magazines devoted to the religion of success appear as Makers of America. They mean just about that when they preach evolution, progress, prosperity, being constructive, the American way of doing things. It is easy to laugh, but, in fact, they are using a very great pattern of human endeavor. For one thing it adopts an impersonal criterion; for another it adopts an earthly criterion; for a third it is habituating men to think quantitatively. To be sure the ideal confuses excellence with size, happiness with speed, and human nature with contraption. Yet the same motives are at work which have ever actuated any moral code, or ever will. The desire for the biggest, the fastest, the highest, or if you are a maker of wristwatches or microscopes the smallest; the love in short of the superlative and the "peerless," is in essence and possibility a noble passion.

Certainly the American version of progress has fitted an extraordinary range of facts in the economic situation and in human nature. It turned an unusual amount of pugnacity, acquisitiveness, and lust of power into productive work. Nor has it, until more recently perhaps, seriously frustrated the active nature of the active members of the community. They have made a civilization which provides them who made it with what they feel to be ample satisfaction in work, mating and play, and the rush of their victory over mountains, wildernesses, distance, and human competition has even done duty for that part of religious feeling which is a sense of communion with the purpose of the universe. The pattern has been a success so nearly perfect in the sequence of ideals, practice, and results, that any challenge to it is called un-American.

And yet, this pattern is a very partial and inadequate way of representing the world. The habit of thinking about progress as "development" has meant that many aspects of the environment were simply neglected. With the stereotype of "progress" before their eyes, Americans have in the mass seen little that did not accord with that progress. They saw the expansion of cities, but not the accretion of slums; they cheered the census statistics, but refused to consider overcrowding; they pointed with pride to their growth, but would not see the drift from the land, or the unassimilated immigration. They expanded industry furiously at reckless cost to their natural

resources; they built up gigantic corporations without arranging for industrial relations. They grew to be one of the most powerful nations on earth without preparing their institutions or their minds for the ending of their isolation. They stumbled into the World War morally and physically unready, and they stumbled out again, much disillusioned, but hardly more experienced.

In the World War the good and the evil influence of the American stereotype was plainly visible. The idea that the war could be won by recruiting unlimited armies, raising unlimited credits, building an unlimited number of ships, producing unlimited munitions, and concentrating without limit on these alone, fitted the traditional stereotype, and resulted in something like a physical miracle. [Footnote: I have in mind the transportation and supply of two million troops overseas. Prof. Wesley Mitchell points out that the total production of goods after our entrance into the war did not greatly increase in volume over that of the year 1916; but that production for war purposes did increase.] But among those most affected by the stereotype, there was no place for the consideration of what the fruits of victory were, or how they were to be attained. Therefore, aims were ignored, or regarded as automatic, and victory was conceived, because the stereotype demanded it, as nothing but an annihilating victory in the field. In peace time you did not ask what the fastest motor car was for, and in war you did not ask what the completest victory was for. Yet in Paris the pattern did not fit the facts. In peace you can go on endlessly supplanting small things with big ones, and big ones with bigger ones; in war when you have won absolute victory, you cannot go on to a more absolute victory. You have to do something on an entirely different pattern. And if you lack such a pattern, the end of the war is to you what it was to so many good people, an anticlimax in a dreary and savorless world.

This marks the point where the stereotype and the facts, that cannot be ignored, definitely part company. There is always such a point, because our images of how things behave are simpler and more fixed than the ebb and flow of affairs. There comes a time, therefore, when the blind spots come from the edge of vision into the center. Then unless there are critics who have the courage to sound an alarm, and leaders capable of understanding the change, and a people tolerant by habit, the stereotype, instead of economizing effort, and focussing

energy as it did in 1917 and 1918, may frustrate effort and waste men's energy by blinding them, as it did for those people who cried for a Carthaginian peace in 1919 and deplored the Treaty of Versailles in 1921.

3

Uncritically held, the stereotype not only censors out much that needs to be taken into account, but when the day of reckoning comes, and the stereotype is shattered, likely as not that which it did wisely take into account is ship-wrecked with it. That is the punishment assessed by Mr. Bernard Shaw against Free Trade, Free Contract, Free Competition, Natural Liberty, Laissez-faire, and Darwinism. A hundred years ago, when he would surely have been one of the tartest advocates of these doctrines, he would not have seen them as he sees them to-day, in the Infidel Half Century, [Footnote: Back to Methuselah. Preface.] to be excuses for "'doing the other fellow down' with impunity, all interference by a guiding government, all organization except police organization to protect legalized fraud against fisticuffs, all attempt to introduce human purpose and design and forethought into the industrial welter being 'contrary to the laws of political economy'" He would have seen, then, as one of the pioneers of the march to the plains of heaven [Footnote: The Quintessence of Ibsenism] that, of the kind of human purpose and design and forethought to be found in a government like that of Queen Victoria's uncles, the less the better. He would have seen, not the strong doing the weak down, but the foolish doing the strong down. He would have seen purposes, designs and forethoughts at work, obstructing invention, obstructing enterprise, obstructing what he would infallibly have recognized as the next move of Creative Evolution.

Even now Mr. Shaw is none too eager for the guidance of any guiding government he knows, but in theory he has turned a full loop against laissez-faire. Most advanced thinking before the war had made the same turn against the established notion that if you unloosed everything, wisdom would bubble up, and establish harmony. Since the war, with its definite demonstration of guiding governments, assisted by censors, propagandists, and spies, Roebuck Ramsden and Natural Liberty have been readmitted to the company of serious thinkers.

One thing is common to these cycles. There is in each set of stereotypes a point where effort ceases and things happen of their own accord, as you would like them to. The progressive stereotype, powerful to incite work, almost completely obliterates the attempt to decide what work and why that work. Laissez-faire, a blessed release from stupid officialdom, assumes that men will move by spontaneous combustion towards a pre-established harmony. Collectivism, an antidote to ruthless selfishness, seems, in the Marxian mind, to suppose an economic determinism towards efficiency and wisdom on the part of socialist officials. Strong government, imperialism at home and abroad, at its best deeply conscious of the price of disorder, relies at last on the notion that all that matters to the governed will be known by the governors. In each theory there is a spot of blind automatism.

That spot covers up some fact, which if it were taken into account, would check the vital movement that the stereotype provokes. If the progressive had to ask himself, like the Chinaman in the joke, what he wanted to do with the time he saved by breaking the record, if the advocate of laissez-faire had to contemplate not only free and exuberant energies of men, but what some people call their human nature, if the collectivist let the center of his attention be occupied with the problem of how he is to secure his officials, if the imperialist dared to doubt his own inspiration, you would find more Hamlet and less Henry the Fifth. For these blind spots keep away distracting images, which with their attendant emotions, might cause hesitation and infirmity of purpose. Consequently the stereotype not only saves time in a busy life and is a defense of our position in society, but tends to preserve us from all the bewildering effect of trying to see the world steadily and see it whole.

CHAPTER IX
CODES AND THEIR ENEMIES

ANYONE who has stood at the end of a railroad platform waiting for a friend, will recall what queer people he mistook for him. The shape of a hat, a slightly characteristic gait, evoked the vivid picture in his mind's eye. In sleep a tinkle may sound like the pealing of a great bell; the distant stroke of a hammer like a thunderclap. For our constellations of imagery will vibrate to a stimulus that is perhaps but vaguely similar to some aspect of them. They may, in hallucination, flood the whole consciousness. They may enter very little into perception, though I am inclined to think that such an experience is extremely rare and highly sophisticated, as when we gaze blankly at a familiar word or object, and it gradually ceases to be familiar. Certainly for the most part, the way we see things is a combination of what is there and of what we expected to find. The heavens are not the same to an astronomer as to a pair of lovers; a page of Kant will start a different train of thought in a Kantian and in a radical empiricist; the Tahitian belle is a better looking person to her Tahitian suitor than to the readers of the National Geographic Magazine.

Expertness in any subject is, in fact, a multiplication of the number of aspects we are prepared to discover, plus the habit of discounting our expectations. Where to the ignoramus all things look alike, and life is just one thing after another, to the specialist things are highly individual. For a chauffeur, an epicure, a connoisseur, a member of the President's cabinet, or a professor's wife, there are evident distinctions and qualities, not at all evident to the casual person who discusses automobiles, wines, old masters, Republicans, and college faculties.

But in our public opinions few can be expert, while life is, as Mr. Bernard Shaw has made plain, so short. Those who are expert are so on only a few topics. Even among the expert soldiers, as we learned during the war, expert cavalrymen were not necessarily brilliant with trench-warfare and tanks. Indeed, sometimes a little expertness on a small topic may simply exaggerate our normal human habit of trying to squeeze into our stereotypes all that can be squeezed, and of casting into outer darkness that which does not fit.

Whatever we recognize as familiar we tend, if we are not very careful, to visualize with the aid of images already in our mind. Thus in the American view of Progress and Success there is a definite picture of human nature and of society. It is the kind of human nature and the kind of society which logically produce the kind of progress that is regarded as ideal. And then, when we seek to describe or explain actually successful men, and events that have really happened, we read back into them the qualities that are presupposed in the stereotypes.

These qualities were standardized rather innocently by the older economists. They set out to describe the social system under which they lived, and found it too complicated for words. So they constructed what they sincerely hoped was a simplified diagram, not so different in principle and in veracity from the parallelogram with legs and head in a child's drawing of a complicated cow. The scheme consisted of a capitalist who had diligently saved capital from his labor, an entrepreneur who conceived a socially useful demand and organized a factory, a collection of workmen who freely contracted, take it or leave it, for their labor, a landlord, and a group of consumers who bought in the cheapest market those goods which by the ready use of the pleasure-pain calculus they knew would give them the most pleasure. The model worked. The kind of people, which the model assumed, living in the sort of world the model assumed, invariably cooperated harmoniously in the books where the model was described.

With modification and embroidery, this pure fiction, used by economists to simplify their thinking, was retailed and popularized until for large sections of the population it prevailed as the economic mythology of the day. It supplied a standard version of capitalist, promoter, worker and consumer in a society that was naturally more bent on achieving success than on explaining it. The buildings which rose, and the bank accounts which accumulated, were evidence that the stereotype of how the thing had been done was accurate. And those who benefited most by success came to believe they were the kind of men they were supposed to be. No wonder that the candid friends of successful men, when they read the official biography and the obituary, have to restrain themselves from asking whether this is indeed their friend.

2

To the vanquished and the victims, the official portraiture was, of course, unrecognizable. For while those who exemplified progress did not often pause to inquire whether they had arrived according to the route laid down by the economists, or by some other just as creditable, the unsuccessful people did inquire. “No one,” says William James, [Footnote: The Letters of William James, Vol. I, p.65] “sees further into a generalization than his own knowledge of detail extends.” The captains of industry saw in the great trusts monuments of (their) success; their defeated competitors saw the monuments of (their) failure. So the captains expounded the economies and virtues of big business, asked to be let alone, said they were the agents of prosperity, and the developers of trade. The vanquished insisted upon the wastes and brutalities of the trusts, and called loudly upon the Department of Justice to free business from conspiracies. In the same situation one side saw progress, economy, and a splendid development; the other, reaction, extravagance, and a restraint of trade. Volumes of statistics, anecdotes about the real truth and the inside truth, the deeper and the larger truth, were published to prove both sides of the argument.

For when a system of stereotypes is well fixed, our attention is called to those facts which support it, and diverted from those which contradict. So perhaps it is because they are attuned to find it, that kindly people discover so much reason for kindness, malicious people so much malice. We speak quite accurately of seeing through rose-colored spectacles, or with a jaundiced eye. If, as Philip Littell once wrote of a distinguished professor, we see life as through a class darkly, our stereotypes of what the best people and the lower classes are like will not be contaminated by understanding. What is alien will be rejected, what is different will fall upon unseeing eyes. We do not see what our eyes are not accustomed to take into account. Sometimes consciously, more often without knowing it, we are impressed by those facts which fit our philosophy.

3

This philosophy is a more or less organized series of images for describing the unseen world. But not only for describing it. For judging it as well. And, therefore, the stereotypes are loaded with preference, suffused with affection or dislike, attached to fears, lusts, strong wishes, pride, hope. Whatever invokes the stereotype is judged with the appropriate sentiment. Except where we deliberately keep prejudice in suspense, we do not study a man and judge him to be bad. We see a bad man. We see a dewy morn, a blushing maiden, a sainted priest, a humorless Englishman, a dangerous Red, a carefree bohemian, a lazy Hindu, a wily Oriental, a dreaming Slav, a volatile Irishman, a greedy Jew, a 100% American. In the workaday world that is often the real judgment, long in advance of the evidence, and it contains within itself the conclusion which the evidence is pretty certain to confirm. Neither justice, nor mercy, nor truth, enter into such a judgment, for the judgment has preceded the evidence. Yet a people without prejudices, a people with altogether neutral vision, is so unthinkable in any civilization of which it is useful to think, that no scheme of education could be based upon that ideal. Prejudice can be detected, discounted, and refined, but so long as finite men must compress into a short schooling preparation for dealing with a vast civilization, they must carry pictures of it around with them, and have prejudices. The quality of their thinking and doing will depend on whether those prejudices are friendly, friendly to other people, to other ideas, whether they evoke love of what is felt to be positively good, rather than hatred of what is not contained in their version of the good.

Morality, good taste and good form first standardize and then emphasize certain of these underlying prejudices. As we adjust ourselves to our code, we adjust the facts we see to that code. Rationally, the facts are neutral to all our views of right and wrong. Actually, our canons determine greatly what we shall perceive and how.

For a moral code is a scheme of conduct applied to a number of typical instances. To behave as the code directs is to serve whatever purpose the code pursues. It may be God’s will, or the king’s, individual salvation in a good, solid, three dimensional paradise, success on earth, or the service of mankind. In any event the makers of the code fix upon certain typical situations, and then by some form of reasoning or intuition, deduce the kind of behavior which would

produce the aim they acknowledge. The rules apply where they apply.

But in daily living how does a man know whether his predicament is the one the law-giver had in mind? He is told not to kill. But if his children are attacked, may he kill to stop a killing? The Ten Commandments are silent on the point. Therefore, around every code there is a cloud of interpreters who deduce more specific cases. Suppose, then, that the doctors of the law decide that he may kill in self-defense. For the next man the doubt is almost as great; how does he know that he is defining self-defense correctly, or that he has not misjudged the facts, imagined the attack, and is really the aggressor? Perhaps he has provoked the attack. But what is a provocation? Exactly these confusions infected the minds of most Germans in August, 1914.

Far more serious in the modern world than any difference of moral code is the difference in the assumptions about facts to which the code is applied. Religious, moral and political formulae are nothing like so far apart as the facts assumed by their votaries. Useful discussion, then, instead of comparing ideals, reexamines the visions of the facts. Thus the rule that you should do unto others as you would have them do unto you rests on the belief that human nature is uniform. Mr. Bernard Shaw's statement that you should not do unto others what you would have them do unto you, because their tastes may be different, rests on the belief that human nature is not uniform. The maxim that competition is the life of trade consists of a whole tome of assumptions about economic motives, industrial relations, and the working of a particular commercial system. The claim that America will never have a merchant marine, unless it is privately owned and managed, assumes a certain proved connection between a certain kind of profit-making and incentive. The justification by the bolshevik propagandist of the dictatorship, espionage, and the terror, because "every state is an apparatus of violence" [Footnote: See Two Years of Conflict on the Internal Front, published by the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, Moscow, 1920. Translated by Malcolm W. Davis for the New York Evening Post, January 15, 1921.] is an historical judgment, the truth of which is by no means self-evident to a non-communist.

At the core of every moral code there is a picture of human nature, a map of the universe, and a version of history. To human nature (of the

sort conceived), in a universe (of the kind imagined), after a history (so understood), the rules of the code apply. So far as the facts of personality, of the environment and of memory are different, by so far the rules of the code are difficult to apply with success. Now every moral code has to conceive human psychology, the material world, and tradition some way or other. But in the codes that are under the influence of science, the conception is known to be an hypothesis, whereas in the codes that come unexamined from the past or bubble up from the caverns of the mind, the conception is not taken as an hypothesis demanding proof or contradiction, but as a fiction accepted without question. In the one case, man is humble about his beliefs, because he knows they are tentative and incomplete; in the other he is dogmatic, because his belief is a completed myth. The moralist who submits to the scientific discipline knows that though he does not know everything, he is in the way of knowing something; the dogmatist, using a myth, believes himself to share part of the insight of omniscience, though he lacks the criteria by which to tell truth from error. For the distinguishing mark of a myth is that truth and error, fact and fable, report and fantasy, are all on the same plane of credibility.

The myth is, then, not necessarily false. It might happen to be wholly true. It may happen to be partly true. If it has affected human conduct a long time, it is almost certain to contain much that is profoundly and importantly true. What a myth never contains is the critical power to separate its truths from its errors. For that power comes only by realizing that no human opinion, whatever its supposed origin, is too exalted for the test of evidence, that every opinion is only somebody’s opinion. And if you ask why the test of evidence is preferable to any other, there is no answer unless you are willing to use the test in order to test it.

4

The statement is, I think, susceptible of overwhelming proof, that moral codes assume a particular view of the facts. Under the term moral codes I include all kinds: personal, family, economic, professional, legal, patriotic, international. At the center of each there is a pattern of stereotypes about psychology, sociology, and history. The same view of human nature, institutions or tradition

rarely persists through all our codes. Compare, for example, the economic and the patriotic codes. There is a war supposed to affect all alike. Two men are partners in business. One enlists, the other takes a war contract. The soldier sacrifices everything, perhaps even his life. He is paid a dollar a day, and no one says, no one believes,

that you could make a better soldier out of him by any form of economic incentive. That motive disappears out of his human nature. The contractor sacrifices very little, is paid a handsome profit over costs, and few say or believe that he would produce the munitions if there were no economic incentive. That may be unfair to him. The point is that the accepted patriotic code assumes one kind of human nature, the commercial code another. And the codes are probably founded on true expectations to this extent, that when a man adopts a certain code he tends to exhibit the kind of human nature which the code demands.

That is one reason why it is so dangerous to generalize about human nature. A loving father can be a sour boss, an earnest municipal reformer, and a rapacious jingo abroad. His family life, his business career, his politics, and his foreign policy rest on totally different versions of what others are like and of how he should act. These versions differ by codes in the same person, the codes differ somewhat among persons in the same social set, differ widely as between social sets, and between two nations, or two colors, may differ to the point where there is no common assumption whatever. That is why people professing the same stock of religious beliefs can go to war. The element of their belief which determines conduct is that view of the facts which they assume.

That is where codes enter so subtly and so pervasively into the making of public opinion. The orthodox theory holds that a public opinion constitutes a moral judgment on a group of facts. The theory I am suggesting is that, in the present state of education, a public opinion is primarily a moralized and codified version of the facts. I am arguing that the pattern of stereotypes at the center of our codes largely determines what group of facts we shall see, and in what light we shall see them. That is why, with the best will in the world, the news policy of a journal tends to support its editorial policy; why a capitalist sees one set of facts, and certain aspects of human nature,

literally sees them; his socialist opponent another set and other aspects, and why each regards the other as unreasonable or perverse, when the real difference between them is a difference of perception. That difference is imposed by the difference between the capitalist and socialist pattern of stereotypes. “There are no classes in America,” writes an American editor. “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles,” says the Communist Manifesto. If you have the editor’s pattern in your mind, you will see vividly the facts that confirm it, vaguely and ineffectively those that contradict. If you have the communist pattern, you will not only look for different things, but you will see with a totally different emphasis what you and the editor happen to see in common.

5

And since my moral system rests on my accepted version of the facts, he who denies either my moral judgments or my version of the facts, is to me perverse, alien, dangerous. How shall I account for him? The opponent has always to be explained, and the last explanation that we ever look for is that he sees a different set of facts. Such an explanation we avoid, because it saps the very foundation of our own assurance that we have seen life steadily and seen it whole. It is only when we are in the habit of recognizing our opinions as a partial experience seen through our stereotypes that we become truly tolerant of an opponent. Without that habit, we believe in the absolutism of our own vision, and consequently in the treacherous character of all opposition. For while men are willing to admit that there are two sides to a “question,” they do not believe that there are two sides to what they regard as a “fact.” And they never do believe it until after long critical education, they are fully conscious of how second-hand and subjective is their apprehension of their social data.

So where two factions see vividly each its own aspect, and contrive their own explanations of what they see, it is almost impossible for them to credit each other with honesty. If the pattern fits their experience at a crucial point, they no longer look upon it as an interpretation. They look upon it as “reality.” It may not resemble the reality, except that it culminates in a conclusion which fits a real experience. I may represent my trip from New York to Boston by a

straight line on a map, just as a man may regard his triumph as the end of a straight and narrow path. The road by which I actually went to Boston may have involved many detours, much turning and twisting, just as his road may have involved much besides pure enterprise, labor and thrift. But provided I reach Boston and he succeeds, the airline and the straight path will serve as ready made charts. Only when somebody tries to follow them, and does not arrive, do we have to answer objections. If we insist on our charts, and he insists on rejecting them, we soon tend to regard him as a dangerous fool, and he to regard us as liars and hypocrites. Thus we gradually paint portraits of each other. For the opponent presents himself as the man who says, evil be thou my good. He is an annoyance who does not fit into the scheme of things. Nevertheless he interferes. And since that scheme is based in our minds on incontrovertible fact fortified by irresistible logic, some place has to be found for him in the scheme. Rarely in politics or industrial disputes is a place made for him by the simple admission that he has looked upon the same reality and seen another aspect of it. That would shake the whole scheme.

Thus to the Italians in Paris Fiume was Italian It was not merely a city that it would be desirable to include within the Italian kingdom. It was Italian. They fixed their whole mind upon the Italian majority within the legal boundaries of the city itself. The American delegates, having seen more Italians in New York than there are in Fiume, without regarding New York as Italian, fixed their eyes on Fiume as a central European port of entry. They saw vividly the Jugoslavs in the suburbs and the non-Italian hinterland. Some of the Italians in Paris were therefore in need of a convincing explanation of the American perversity. They found it in a rumor which started, no one knows where, that an influential American diplomat was in the snares of a Jugoslav mistress. She had been seen.... He had been seen.... At Versailles just off the boulevard. ... The villa with the large trees.

This is a rather common way of explaining away opposition. In their more libelous form such charges rarely reach the printed page, and a Roosevelt may have to wait years, or a Harding months, before he can force an issue, and end a whispering campaign that has reached into every circle of talk. Public men have to endure a fearful amount of poisonous clubroom, dinner table, boudoir slander, repeated,

elaborated, chuckled over, and regarded as delicious. While this sort of thing is, I believe, less prevalent in America than in Europe, yet rare is the American official about whom somebody is not repeating a scandal.

Out of the opposition we make villains and conspiracies. If prices go up unmercifully the profiteers have conspired; if the newspapers misrepresent the news, there is a capitalist plot; if the rich are too rich, they have been stealing; if a closely fought election is lost, the electorate was corrupted; if a statesman does something of which you disapprove, he has been bought or influenced by some discreditable person. If workingmen are restless, they are the victims of agitators; if they are restless over wide areas, there is a conspiracy on foot. If you do not produce enough aeroplanes, it is the work of spies; if there is trouble in Ireland, it is German or Bolshevik "gold." And if you go stark, staring mad looking for plots, you see all strikes, the Plumb plan, Irish rebellion, Mohammedan unrest, the restoration of King Constantine, the League of Nations, Mexican disorder, the movement to reduce armaments, Sunday movies, short skirts, evasion of the liquor laws, Negro self-assertion, as sub-plots under some grandiose plot engineered either by Moscow, Rome, the Free Masons, the Japanese, or the Elders of Zion.

CHAPTER X
THE DETECTION OF STEREOTYPES

1

Skilled diplomatists, compelled to talk out loud to the warring peoples, learned how to use a large repertory of stereotypes. They were dealing with a precarious alliance of powers, each of which was maintaining its war unity only by the most careful leadership. The ordinary soldier and his wife, heroic and selfless beyond anything in the chronicles of courage, were still not heroic enough to face death gladly for all the ideas which were said by the foreign offices of foreign powers to be essential to the future of civilization. There were ports, and mines, rocky mountain passes, and villages that few

soldiers would willingly have crossed No Man's Land to obtain for their allies.

Now it happened in one nation that the war party which was in control of the foreign office, the high command, and most of the press, had claims on the territory of several of its neighbors. These claims were called the Greater Ruritania by the cultivated classes who regarded Kipling, Treitschke, and Maurice Barres as one hundred percent Ruritanian. But the grandiose idea aroused no enthusiasm abroad. So holding this finest flower of the Ruritanian genius, as their poet laureate said, to their hearts, Ruritania's statesmen went forth to divide and conquer. They divided the claim into sectors. For each piece they invoked that stereotype which some one or more of their allies found it difficult to resist, because that ally had claims for which it hoped to find approval by the use of this same stereotype.

The first sector happened to be a mountainous region inhabited by alien peasants. Ruritania demanded it to complete her natural geographical frontier. If you fixed your attention long enough on the ineffable value of what is natural, those alien peasants just dissolved into fog, and only the slope of the mountains was visible. The next sector was inhabited by Ruritanians, and on the principle that no people ought to live under alien rule, they were re-annexed. Then came a city of considerable commercial importance, not inhabited by Ruritanians. But until the Eighteenth Century it had been part of Ruritania, and on the principle of Historic Right it was annexed. Farther on there was a splendid mineral deposit owned by aliens and worked by aliens. On the principle of reparation for damage it was annexed. Beyond this there was a territory inhabited 97% by aliens, constituting the natural geographical frontier of another nation, never historically a part of Ruritania. But one of the provinces which had been federated into Ruritania had formerly traded in those markets, and the upper class culture was Ruritanian. On the principle of cultural superiority and the necessity of defending civilization, the lands were claimed. Finally, there was a port wholly disconnected from Ruritania geographically, ethnically, economically, historically, traditionally. It was demanded on the ground that it was needed for national defense.

In the treaties that concluded the Great War you can multiply examples

of this kind. Now I do not wish to imply that I think it was possible to resettle Europe consistently on any one of these principles. I am certain that it was not. The very use of these principles, so pretentious and so absolute, meant that the spirit of accommodation did not prevail and that, therefore, the substance of peace was not there. For the moment you start to discuss factories, mines, mountains, or even political authority, as perfect examples of some eternal principle or other, you are not arguing, you are fighting. That eternal principle censors out all the objections, isolates the issue from its background and its context, and sets going in you some strong emotion, appropriate enough to the principle, highly inappropriate to the docks, warehouses, and real estate. And having started in that mood you cannot stop. A real danger exists. To meet it you have to invoke more absolute principles in order to defend what is open to attack. Then you have to defend the defenses, erect buffers, and buffers for the buffers, until the whole affair is so scrambled that it seems less dangerous to fight than to keep on talking.

There are certain clues which often help in detecting the false absolutism of a stereotype. In the case of the Ruritanian propaganda the principles blanketed each other so rapidly that one could readily see how the argument had been constructed. The series of contradictions showed that for each sector that stereotype was employed which would obliterate all the facts that interfered with the claim. Contradiction of this sort is often a good clue.

2

Inability to take account of space is another. In the spring of 1918, for example, large numbers of people, appalled by the withdrawal of Russia, demanded the “reestablishment of an Eastern Front.” The war, as they had conceived it, was on two fronts, and when one of them disappeared there was an instant demand that it be recreated. The unemployed Japanese army was to man the front, substituting for the Russian. But there was one insuperable obstacle. Between Vladivostok and the eastern battleline there were five thousand miles of country, spanned by one broken down railway. Yet those five thousand miles would not stay in the minds of the enthusiasts. So overwhelming was their conviction that an eastern front was needed, and so great their confidence in the valor of the Japanese army, that, mentally, they had

projected that army from Vladivostok to Poland on a magic carpet. In vain our military authorities argued that to land troops on the rim of Siberia had as little to do with reaching the Germans, as climbing from the cellar to the roof of the Woolworth building had to do with reaching the moon.

The stereotype in this instance was the war on two fronts. Ever since men had begun to imagine the Great War they had conceived Germany held between France and Russia. One generation of strategists, and perhaps two, had lived with that visual image as the starting point of all their calculations. For nearly four years every battle-map they saw had deepened the impression that this was the war. When affairs took a new turn, it was not easy to see them as they were then. They were seen through the stereotype, and facts which conflicted with it, such as the distance from Japan to Poland, were incapable of coming vividly into consciousness.

It is interesting to note that the American authorities dealt with the new facts more realistically than the French. In part, this was because (previous to 1914) they had no preconception of a war upon the continent; in part because the Americans, engrossed in the mobilization of their forces, had a vision of the western front which was itself a stereotype that excluded from their consciousness any very vivid sense of the other theatres of war. In the spring of 1918 this American view could not compete with the traditional French view, because while the Americans believed enormously in their own powers, the French at that time (before Cantigny and the Second Marne) had the gravest doubts. The American confidence suffused the American stereotype, gave it that power to possess consciousness, that liveliness and sensible pungency, that stimulating effect upon the will, that emotional interest as an object of desire, that congruity with the activity in hand, which James notes as characteristic of what we regard as “real.” [Footnote: Principles of Psychology, Vol. II, p. 300.] The French in despair remained fixed on their accepted image. And when facts, gross geographical facts, would not fit with the preconception, they were either censored out of mind, or the facts were themselves stretched out of shape. Thus the difficulty of the Japanese reaching the Germans five thousand miles away was, in measure, overcome by bringing the Germans more than half way to meet them. Between March and June 1918, there was supposed to be a German

army operating in Eastern Siberia. This phantom army consisted of some German prisoners actually seen, more German prisoners thought about, and chiefly of the delusion that those five thousand intervening miles did not really exist. [Footnote: See in this connection Mr. Charles Grasty's interview with Marshal Foch, New York Times, February 26, 1918. "Germany is walking through Russia. America and Japan, who are in a position to do so, should go to meet her in Siberia." See also the resolution by Senator King of Utah, June 10, 1918, and Mr. Taft's statement in the New York Times, June 11, 1918, and the appeal to America on May 5, 1918, by Mr. A. J. Sack, Director of the Russian Information Bureau: "If Germany were in the Allied place... she would have 3,000,000 fighting on the East front within a year."]

3

A true conception of space is not a simple matter. If I draw a straight line on a map between Bombay and Hong Kong and measure the distance, I have learned nothing whatever about the distance I should have to cover on a voyage. And even if I measure the actual distance that I must traverse, I still know very little until I know what ships are in the service, when they run, how fast they go, whether I can secure accommodation and afford to pay for it. In practical life space is a matter of available transportation, not of geometrical planes, as the old railroad magnate knew when he threatened to make grass grow in the streets of a city that had offended him. If I am motoring and ask how far it is to my destination, I curse as an unmitigated booby the man who tells me it is three miles, and does not mention a six mile detour. It does me no good to be told that it is three miles if you walk. I might as well be told it is one mile as the crow flies. I do not fly like a crow, and I am not walking either. I must know that it is nine miles for a motor car, and also, if that is the case, that six of them are ruts and puddles. I call the pedestrian a nuisance who tells me it is three miles and think evil of the aviator who told me it was one mile. Both of them are talking about the space they have to cover, not the space I must cover.

In the drawing of boundary lines absurd complications have arisen through failure to conceive the practical geography of a region. Under some general formula like self-determination statesmen have at various times drawn lines on maps, which, when surveyed on the spot, ran

through the middle of a factory, down the center of a village street, diagonally across the nave of a church, or between the kitchen and bedroom of a peasant's cottage. There have been frontiers in a grazing country which separated pasture from water, pasture from market, and in an industrial country, railheads from railroad. On the colored ethnic map the line was ethnically just, that is to say, just in the world of that ethnic map.

4

But time, no less than space, fares badly. A common example is that of the man who tries by making an elaborate will to control his money long after his death. "It had been the purpose of the first William James," writes his great-grandson Henry James, [Footnote: The Letters of William James, Vol. I, p. 6.] "to provide that his children (several of whom were under age when he died) should qualify themselves by industry and experience to enjoy the large patrimony which he expected to bequeath to them, and with that in view he left a will which was a voluminous compound of restraints and instructions. He showed thereby how great were both his confidence in his own judgment and his solicitude for the moral welfare of his descendants." The courts upset the will. For the law in its objection to perpetuities recognizes that there are distinct limits to the usefulness of allowing anyone to impose his moral stencil upon an unknown future. But the desire to impose it is a very human trait, so human that the law permits it to operate for a limited time after death.

The amending clause of any constitution is a good index of the confidence the authors entertained about the reach of their opinions in the succeeding generations. There are, I believe, American state constitutions which are almost incapable of amendment. The men who made them could have had but little sense of the flux of time: to them the Here and Now was so brilliantly certain, the Hereafter so vague or so terrifying, that they had the courage to say how life should run after they were gone. And then because constitutions are difficult to amend, zealous people with a taste for mortmain have loved to write on this imperishable brass all kinds of rules and restrictions that, given any decent humility about the future, ought to be no more permanent than an ordinary statute.

A presumption about time enters widely into our opinions. To one person an institution which has existed for the whole of his conscious life is part of the permanent furniture of the universe: to another it is ephemeral. Geological time is very different from biological time. Social time is most complex. The statesman has to decide whether to calculate for the emergency or for the long run. Some decisions have to be made on the basis of what will happen in the next two hours; others on what will happen in a week, a month, a season, a decade, when the children have grown up, or their children's children. An important part of wisdom is the ability to distinguish the time-conception that properly belongs to the thing in hand. The person who uses the wrong time-conception ranges from the dreamer who ignores the present to the philistine who can see nothing else. A true scale of values has a very acute sense of relative time.

Distant time, past and future, has somehow to be conceived. But as James says, "of the longer duration we have no direct 'realizing' sense." [Footnote: Principles of Psychology, Vol. I, p. 638.] The longest duration which we immediately feel is what is called the "specious present." It endures, according to Titchener, for about six seconds. [Footnote: Cited by Warren, Human Psychology, p. 255.] "All impressions within this period of time are present to us at once. This makes it possible for us to perceive changes and events as well as stationary objects. The perceptual present is supplemented by the ideational present. Through the combination of perceptions with memory images, entire days, months, and even years of the past are brought together into the present."

In this ideational present, vividness, as James said, is proportionate to the number of discriminations we perceive within it. Thus a vacation in which we were bored with nothing to do passes slowly while we are in it, but seems very short in memory. Great activity kills time rapidly, but in memory its duration is long. On the relation between the amount we discriminate and our time perspective James has an interesting passage: [Footnote: Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 639.]

"We have every reason to think that creatures may possibly differ enormously in the amounts of duration which they intuitively feel, and in the fineness of the events that may fill it. Von Baer has indulged

in some interesting computations of the effect of such differences in changing the aspect of Nature. Suppose we were able, within the length of a second, to note 10,000 events distinctly, instead of barely 10 as now; [Footnote: In the moving picture this effect is admirably produced by the ultra-rapid camera.] if our life were then destined to hold the same number of impressions, it might be 1000 times as short. We should live less than a month, and personally know nothing of the change of seasons. If born in winter, we should believe in summer as we now believe in the heats of the carboniferous era. The motions of organic beings would be so slow to our senses as to be inferred, not seen. The sun would stand still in the sky, the moon be almost free from change, and so on. But now reverse the hypothesis and suppose a being to get only one 1000th part of the sensations we get in a given time, and consequently to live 1000 times as long. Winters and summers will be to him like quarters of an hour. Mushrooms and the swifter growing plants will shoot into being so rapidly as to appear instantaneous creations; annual shrubs will rise and fall from the earth like restless boiling water springs; the motions of animals will be as invisible as are to us the movements of bullets and cannon-balls; the sun will scour through the sky like a meteor, leaving a fiery trail behind him, etc."

5

In his Outline of History Mr. Wells has made a gallant effort to visualize "the true proportions of historical to geological time" [Footnote: 1 Vol. II, p. 605. See also James Harvey Robinson, The New History, p. 239.] On a scale which represents the time from Columbus to ourselves by three inches of space, the reader would have to walk 55 feet to see the date of the painters of the Altamara caves, 550 feet to see the earlier Neanderthalers, a mile or so to the last of the dinosaurs. More or less precise chronology does not begin until after 1000 B.C., and at that time "Sargon I of the Akkadian-Sumerian Empire was a remote memory,... more remote than is Constantine the Great from the world of the present day.... Hammurabi had been dead a thousand years... Stonehedge in England was already a thousand years old."

Mr. Wells was writing with a purpose. "In the brief period of ten thousand years these units (into which men have combined) have grown

from the small family tribe of the early neolithic culture to the vast united realms--vast yet still too small and partial--of the present time." Mr. Wells hoped by changing the time perspective on our present problems to change the moral perspective. Yet the astronomical measure of time, the geological, the biological, any telescopic measure which minimizes the present is not "more true" than a microscopic. Mr. Simeon Strunsky is right when he insists that "if Mr. Wells is thinking of his subtitle, The Probable Future of Mankind, he is entitled to ask for any number of centuries to work out his solution. If he is thinking of the salvaging of this western civilization, reeling under the effects of the Great War, he must think in decades and scores of years." [Footnote: In a review of The Salvaging of Civilization, The Literary Review of the N. Y. Evening Post, June 18, 1921, p. 5.] It all depends upon the practical purpose for which you adopt the measure. There are situations when the time perspective needs to be lengthened, and others when it needs to be shortened.

The man who says that it does not matter if 15,000,000 Chinese die of famine, because in two generations the birthrate will make up the loss, has used a time perspective to excuse his inertia. A person who pauperizes a healthy young man because he is sentimentally overimpressed with an immediate difficulty has lost sight of the duration of the beggar's life. The people who for the sake of an immediate peace are willing to buy off an aggressive empire by indulging its appetite have allowed a specious present to interfere with the peace of their children. The people who will not be patient with a troublesome neighbor, who want to bring everything to a "showdown" are no less the victims of a specious present.

6

Into almost every social problem the proper calculation of time enters. Suppose, for example, it is a question of timber. Some trees grow faster than others. Then a sound forest policy is one in which the amount of each species and of each age cut in each season is made good by replanting. In so far as that calculation is correct the truest economy has been reached. To cut less is waste, and to cut more is exploitation. But there may come an emergency, say the need for aeroplane spruce in a war, when the year's allowance must be exceeded. An alert government will recognize that and regard the restoration of

the balance as a charge upon the future.

Coal involves a different theory of time, because coal, unlike a tree, is produced on the scale of geological time. The supply is limited. Therefore a correct social policy involves intricate computation of the available reserves of the world, the indicated possibilities, the present rate of use, the present economy of use, and the alternative fuels. But when that computation has been reached it must finally be squared with an ideal standard involving time. Suppose, for example, that engineers conclude that the present fuels are being exhausted at a certain rate; that barring new discoveries industry will have to enter a phase of contraction at some definite time in the future. We have then to determine how much thrift and self-denial we will use, after all feasible economies have been exercised, in order not to rob posterity. But what shall we consider posterity? Our grandchildren? Our great grandchildren? Perhaps we shall decide to calculate on a hundred years, believing that to be ample time for the discovery of alternative fuels if the necessity is made clear at once. The figures are, of course, hypothetical. But in calculating that way we shall be employing what reason we have. We shall be giving social time its place in public opinion. Let us now imagine a somewhat different case: a contract between a city and a trolley-car company. The company says that it will not invest its capital unless it is granted a monopoly of the main highway for ninety-nine years. In the minds of the men who make that demand ninety-nine years is so long as to mean “forever.” But suppose there is reason to think that surface cars, run from a central power plant on tracks, are going out of fashion in twenty years. Then it is a most unwise contract to make, for you are virtually condemning a future generation to inferior transportation. In making such a contract the city officials lack a realizing sense of ninety-nine years. Far better to give the company a subsidy now in order to attract capital than to stimulate investment by indulging a fallacious sense of eternity. No city official and no company official has a sense of real time when he talks about ninety-nine years.

Popular history is a happy hunting ground of time confusions. To the average Englishman, for example, the behavior of Cromwell, the corruption of the Act of Union, the Famine of 1847 are wrongs suffered by people long dead and done by actors long dead with whom no living

person, Irish or English, has any real connection. But in the mind of a patriotic Irishman these same events are almost contemporary. His memory is like one of those historical paintings, where Virgil and Dante sit side by side conversing. These perspectives and foreshortenings are a great barrier between peoples. It is ever so difficult for a person of one tradition to remember what is contemporary in the tradition of another.

Almost nothing that goes by the name of Historic Rights or Historic Wrongs can be called a truly objective view of the past. Take, for example, the Franco-German debate about Alsace-Lorraine. It all depends on the original date you select. If you start with the Rauraci and Sequani, the lands are historically part of Ancient Gaul. If you prefer Henry I, they are historically a German territory; if you take 1273 they belong to the House of Austria; if you take 1648 and the Peace of Westphalia, most of them are French; if you take Louis XIV and the year 1688 they are almost all French. If you are using the argument from history you are fairly certain to select those dates in the past which support your view of what should be done now.

Arguments about “races” and nationalities often betray the same arbitrary view of time. During the war, under the influence of powerful feeling, the difference between “Teutons” on the one hand, and “Anglo-Saxons” and French on the other, was popularly believed to be an eternal difference. They had always been opposing races. Yet a generation ago, historians, like Freeman, were emphasizing the common Teutonic origin of the West European peoples, and ethnologists would certainly insist that the Germans, English, and the greater part of the French are branches of what was once a common stock. The general rule is: if you like a people to-day you come down the branches to the trunk; if you dislike them you insist that the separate branches are separate trunks. In one case you fix your attention on the period before they were distinguishable; in the other on the period after which they became distinct. And the view which fits the mood is taken as the “truth.”

An amiable variation is the family tree. Usually one couple are appointed the original ancestors, if possible, a couple associated with an honorific event like the Norman Conquest. That couple have no ancestors. They are not descendants. Yet they were the descendants of

ancestors, and the expression that So-and-So was the founder of his house means not that he is the Adam of his family, but that he is the particular ancestor from whom it is desirable to start, or perhaps the earliest ancestor of which there is a record. But genealogical tables exhibit a deeper prejudice. Unless the female line happens to be especially remarkable descent is traced down through the males. The tree is male. At various moments females accrue to it as itinerant bees light upon an ancient apple tree.

7

But the future is the most illusive time of all. Our temptation here is to jump over necessary steps in the sequence; and as we are governed by hope or doubt, to exaggerate or to minimize the time required to complete various parts of a process. The discussion of the role to be exercised by wage-earners in the management of industry is riddled with this difficulty. For management is a word that covers many functions. [Footnote: Cf. Carter L. Goodrich, The Frontier of Control.] Some of these require no training; some require a little training; others can be learned only in a lifetime. And the truly discriminating program of industrial democratization would be one based on the proper time sequence, so that the assumption of responsibility would run parallel to a complementary program of industrial training. The proposal for a sudden dictatorship of the proletariat is an attempt to do away with the intervening time of preparation; the resistance to all sharing of responsibility an attempt to deny the alteration of human capacity in the course of time. Primitive notions of democracy, such as rotation in office, and contempt for the expert, are really nothing but the old myth that the Goddess of Wisdom sprang mature and fully armed from the brow of Jove. They assume that what it takes years to learn need not be learned at all.

Whenever the phrase “backward people” is used as the basis of a policy, the conception of time is a decisive element. The Covenant of the League of Nations says, [Footnote: Article XIX.] for example, that “the character of the mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people,” as well as on other grounds. Certain communities, it asserts, “have reached a stage of development” where their independence can be provisionally recognized, subject to advice

and assistance “until such time as they are able to stand alone.” The way in which the mandatories and the mandated conceive that time will influence deeply their relations. Thus in the case of Cuba the judgment of the American government virtually coincided with that of the Cuban patriots, and though there has been trouble, there is no finer page in the history of how strong powers have dealt with the weak. Oftener in that history the estimates have not coincided. Where the imperial people, whatever its public expressions, has been deeply convinced that the backwardness of the backward was so hopeless as not to be worth remedying, or so profitable that it was not desirable to remedy it, the tie has festered and poisoned the peace of the world. There have been a few cases, very few, where backwardness has meant to the ruling power the need for a program of forwardness, a program with definite standards and definite estimates of time. Far more frequently, so frequently in fact as to seem the rule, backwardness has been conceived as an intrinsic and eternal mark of inferiority. And then every attempt to be less backward has been frowned upon as the sedition, which, under these conditions, it undoubtedly is. In our own race wars we can see some of the results of the failure to realize that time would gradually obliterate the slave morality of the Negro, and that social adjustment based on this morality would begin to break down.

It is hard not to picture the future as if it obeyed our present purposes, to annihilate whatever delays our desire, or immortalize whatever stands between us and our fears.

8

In putting together our public opinions, not only do we have to picture more space than we can see with our eyes, and more time than we can feel, but we have to describe and judge more people, more actions, more things than we can ever count, or vividly imagine. We have to summarize and generalize. We have to pick out samples, and treat them as typical.

To pick fairly a good sample of a large class is not easy. The problem belongs to the science of statistics, and it is a most difficult affair for anyone whose mathematics is primitive, and mine remain azoic in spite of the half dozen manuals which I once devoutly

imagined that I understood. All they have done for me is to make me a little more conscious of how hard it is to classify and to sample, how readily we spread a little butter over the whole universe.

Some time ago a group of social workers in Sheffield, England, started out to substitute an accurate picture of the mental equipment of the workers of that city for the impressionistic one they had. [Footnote: The Equipment of the Worker.] They wished to say, with some decent grounds for saying it, how the workers of Sheffield were equipped. They found, as we all find the moment we refuse to let our first notion prevail, that they were beset with complications. Of the test they employed nothing need be said here except that it was a large questionnaire. For the sake of the illustration, assume that the questions were a fair test of mental equipment for English city life. Theoretically, then, those questions should have been put to every member of the working class. But it is not so easy to know who are the working class. However, assume again that the census knows how to classify them. Then there were roughly 104,000 men and 107,000 women who ought to have been questioned. They possessed the answers which would justify or refute the casual phrase about the "ignorant workers" or the "intelligent workers." But nobody could think of questioning the whole two hundred thousand.

So the social workers consulted an eminent statistician, Professor Bowley. He advised them that not less than 408 men and 408 women would prove to be a fair sample. According to mathematical calculation this number would not show a greater deviation from the average than i in 22. [Footnote: Op. cit., p. 65.] They had, therefore, to question at least 816 people before they could pretend to talk about the average workingman. But which 816 people should they approach? "We might have gathered particulars concerning workers to whom one or another of us had a pre-inquiry access; we might have worked through philanthropic gentlemen and ladies who were in contact with certain sections of workers at a club, a mission, an infirmary, a place of worship, a settlement. But such a method of selection would produce entirely worthless results. The workers thus selected would not be in

any sense representative of what is popularly called 'the average run of workers;' they would represent nothing but the little coteries to which they belonged.

“The right way of securing ‘victims,’ to which at immense cost of time and labour we rigidly adhered, is to get hold of your workers by some ‘neutral’ or ‘accidental’ or ‘random’ method of approach.” This they did. And after all these precautions they came to no more definite conclusion than that on their classification and according to their questionnaire, among 200,000 Sheffield workers “about one quarter” were “well equipped,” “approaching three-quarters” were “inadequately equipped” and that “about one-fifteenth” were “mal-equipped.”

Compare this conscientious and almost pedantic method of arriving at an opinion, with our usual judgments about masses of people, about the volatile Irish, and the logical French, and the disciplined Germans, and the ignorant Slavs, and the honest Chinese, and the untrustworthy Japanese, and so on and so on. All these are generalizations drawn from samples, but the samples are selected by a method that statistically is wholly unsound. Thus the employer will judge labor by the most troublesome employee or the most docile that he knows, and many a radical group has imagined that it was a fair sample of the working class. How many women’s views on the “servant question” are little more than the reflection of their own treatment of their servants? The tendency of the casual mind is to pick out or stumble upon a sample which supports or defies its prejudices, and then to make it the representative of a whole class.

A great deal of confusion arises when people decline to classify themselves as we have classified them. Prophecy would be so much easier if only they would stay where we put them. But, as a matter of fact, a phrase like the working class will cover only some of the truth for a part of the time. When you take all the people, below a certain level of income, and call them the working class, you cannot help assuming that the people so classified will behave in accordance with your stereotype. Just who those people are you are not quite certain. Factory hands and mine workers fit in more or less, but farm hands, small farmers, peddlers, little shop keepers, clerks, servants, soldiers, policemen, firemen slip out of the net. The tendency, when you are appealing to the “working class,” is to fix your attention on two or three million more or less confirmed trade unionists, and treat them as Labor; the other seventeen or eighteen million, who might qualify statistically, are tacitly endowed with the point of view

ascribed to the organized nucleus. How very misleading it was to impute to the British working class in 1918-1921 the point of view expressed in the resolutions of the Trades Union Congress or in the pamphlets written by intellectuals.

The stereotype of Labor as Emancipator selects the evidence which supports itself and rejects the other. And so parallel with the real movements of working men there exists a fiction of the Labor Movement, in which an idealized mass moves towards an ideal goal. The fiction deals with the future. In the future possibilities are almost indistinguishable from probabilities and probabilities from certainties. If the future is long enough, the human will might turn what is just conceivable into what is very likely, and what is likely into what is sure to happen. James called this the faith ladder, and said that "it is a slope of goodwill on which in the larger questions of life men habitually live." [Footnote: William James, Some Problems of Philosophy, p. 224.]

"1. There is nothing absurd in a certain view of the world being true, nothing contradictory;

2. It might have been true under certain conditions;

3. It may be true even now;

4. It is fit to be true;

5. It ought to be true;

6. It must be true;

7. It shall be true, at any rate true for me."

And, as he added in another place, [Footnote: A Pluralistic Universe, p. 329.] "your acting thus may in certain special cases be a means of making it securely true in the end." Yet no one would have insisted more than he, that, so far as we know how, we must avoid substituting the goal for the starting point, must avoid reading back into the present what courage, effort and skill might create in the future. Yet this truism is inordinately difficult to live by, because

every one of us is so little trained in the selection of our samples.

If we believe that a certain thing ought to be true, we can almost always find either an instance where it is true, or someone who believes it ought to be true. It is ever so hard when a concrete fact illustrates a hope to weigh that fact properly. When the first six people we meet agree with us, it is not easy to remember that they may all have read the same newspaper at breakfast. And yet we cannot send out a questionnaire to 816 random samples every time we wish to estimate a probability. In dealing with any large mass of facts, the presumption is against our having picked true samples, if we are acting on a casual impression.

9

And when we try to go one step further in order to seek the causes and effects of unseen and complicated affairs, haphazard opinion is very tricky. There are few big issues in public life where cause and effect are obvious at once. They are not obvious to scholars who have devoted years, let us say, to studying business cycles, or price and wage movements, or the migration and the assimilation of peoples, or the diplomatic purposes of foreign powers. Yet somehow we are all supposed to have opinions on these matters, and it is not surprising that the commonest form of reasoning is the intuitive, post hoc ergo propter hoc.

The more untrained a mind, the more readily it works out a theory that two things which catch its attention at the same time are causally connected. We have already dwelt at some length on the way things reach our attention. We have seen that our access to information is obstructed and uncertain, and that our apprehension is deeply controlled by our stereotypes; that the evidence available to our reason is subject to illusions of defense, prestige, morality, space, time, and sampling. We must note now that with this initial taint, public opinions are still further beset, because in a series of events seen mostly through stereotypes, we readily accept sequence or parallelism as equivalent to cause and effect.

This is most likely to happen when two ideas that come together arouse the same feeling. If they come together they are likely to arouse the

same feeling; and even when they do not arrive together a powerful feeling attached to one is likely to suck out of all the corners of memory any idea that feels about the same. Thus everything painful tends to collect into one system of cause and effect, and likewise everything pleasant.

“IId IIm (1675) This day I hear that G[od] has shot an arrow into the midst of this Town. The small pox is in an ordinary ye sign of the Swan, the ordinary Keepers name is Windsor. His daughter is sick of the disease. It is observable that this disease begins at an alehouse, to testify God’s displeasure agt the sin of drunkenness & yt of multiplying alehouses!” [Footnote: The Heart of the Puritan, p. 177, edited by Elizabeth Deering Hanscom.]

Thus Increase Mather, and thus in the year 1919 a distinguished Professor of Celestial Mechanics discussing the Einstein theory:

“It may well be that.... Bolshevist uprisings are in reality the visible objects of some underlying, deep, mental disturbance, world-wide in character.... This same spirit of unrest has invaded science.” [Footnote: Cited in The New Republic, Dec. 24, 1919, p. 120.]

In hating one thing violently, we readily associate with it as cause or effect most of the other things we hate or fear violently. They may have no more connection than smallpox and alehouses, or Relativity and Bolshevism, but they are bound together in the same emotion. In a superstitious mind, like that of the Professor of Celestial Mechanics, emotion is a stream of molten lava which catches and imbeds whatever it touches. When you excavate in it you find, as in a buried city, all sorts of objects ludicrously entangled in each other. Anything can be related to anything else, provided it feels like it. Nor has a mind in such a state any way of knowing how preposterous it is. Ancient fears, reinforced by more recent fears, coagulate into a snarl of fears where anything that is dreaded is the cause of anything else that is dreaded.

10

Generally it all culminates in the fabrication of a system of all

evil, and of another which is the system of all good. Then our love of the absolute shows itself. For we do not like qualifying adverbs. [Footnote: Cf. Freud's discussion of absolutism in dreams, Interpretation of Dreams, Chapter VI, especially pp. 288, et seq.] They clutter up sentences, and interfere with irresistible feeling. We prefer most to more, least to less, we dislike the words rather, perhaps, if, or, but, toward, not quite, almost, temporarily, partly. Yet nearly every opinion about public affairs needs to be deflated by some word of this sort. But in our free moments everything tends to behave absolutely,--one hundred percent, everywhere, forever.

It is not enough to say that our side is more right than the enemy's, that our victory will help democracy more than his. One must insist that our victory will end war forever, and make the world safe for democracy. And when the war is over, though we have thwarted a greater evil than those which still afflict us, the relativity of the result fades out, the absoluteness of the present evil overcomes our spirit, and we feel that we are helpless because we have not been irresistible. Between omnipotence and impotence the pendulum swings.

Real space, real time, real numbers, real connections, real weights are lost. The perspective and the background and the dimensions of action are clipped and frozen in the stereotype.

PART VII

CHAPTER XXI
THE BUYING PUBLIC

1

THE idea that men have to go forth and study the world in order to govern it, has played a very minor part in political thought. It could figure very little, because the machinery for reporting the world in any way useful to government made comparatively little progress from the time of Aristotle to the age in which the premises of democracy were established.

Therefore, if you had asked a pioneer democrat where the information was to come from on which the will of the people was to be based, he would have been puzzled by the question. It would have seemed a little as if you had asked him where his life or his soul came from. The will of the people, he almost always assumed, exists at all times; the duty of political science was to work out the inventions of the ballot and representative government. If they were properly worked out and applied under the right conditions, such as exist in the self-contained village or the self-contained shop, the mechanism would somehow overcome the brevity of attention which Aristotle had observed, and the narrowness of its range, which the theory of a self-contained community tacitly acknowledged. We have seen how even at this late date the guild socialists are transfixed by the notion that if only you can build on the right unit of voting and representation, an intricate cooperative commonwealth is possible.

Convinced that the wisdom was there if only you could find it, democrats have treated the problem of making public opinions as a problem in civil liberties. [Footnote: The best study is Prof. Zechariah Chafee's, Freedom of Speech.] "Who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?" [Footnote: Milton, Areopagitica, cited at the opening of Mr. Chafee's book. For comment on this classic doctrine of liberty as stated by Milton, John Stuart Mill, and Mr. Bertrand Russel, see my Liberty and the News, Ch. II.] Supposing that no one has ever seen it put to the

worse, are we to believe then that the truth is generated by the encounter, like fire by rubbing two sticks? Behind this classic doctrine of liberty, which American democrats embodied in their Bill of Rights, there are, in fact, several different theories of the origin of truth. One is a faith that in the competition of opinions, the truest will win because there is a peculiar strength in the truth. This is probably sound if you allow the competition to extend over a sufficiently long time. When men argue in this vein they have in mind the verdict of history, and they think specifically of heretics persecuted when they lived, canonized after they were dead. Milton's question rests also on a belief that the capacity to recognize truth is inherent in all men, and that truth freely put in circulation will win acceptance. It derives no less from the experience, which has shown that men are not likely to discover truth if they cannot speak it, except under the eye of an uncomprehending policeman.

No one can possibly overestimate the practical value of these civil liberties, nor the importance of maintaining them. When they are in jeopardy, the human spirit is in jeopardy, and should there come a time when they have to be curtailed, as during a war, the suppression of thought is a risk to civilization which might prevent its recovery from the effects of war, if the hysterics, who exploit the necessity, were numerous enough to carry over into peace the taboos of war. Fortunately, the mass of men is too tolerant long to enjoy the professional inquisitors, as gradually, under the criticism of men not willing to be terrorized, they are revealed as mean-spirited creatures who nine-tenths of the time do not know what they are talking about. [Footnote: Cf. for example, the publications of the Lusk Committee in New York, and the public statements and prophecies of Mr. Mitchell Palmer, who was Attorney-General of the United States during the period of President Wilson's illness.]

But in spite of its fundamental importance, civil liberty in this sense does not guarantee public opinion in the modern world. For it always assumes, either that truth is spontaneous, or that the means of securing truth exist when there is no external interference. But when you are dealing with an invisible environment, the assumption is false. The truth about distant or complex matters is not self-evident, and the machinery for assembling information is technical and expensive. Yet political science, and especially democratic political

science, has never freed itself from the original assumption of Aristotle's politics sufficiently to restate the premises, so that political thought might come to grips with the problem of how to make the invisible world visible to the citizens of a modern state.

So deep is the tradition, that until quite recently, for example, political science was taught in our colleges as if newspapers did not exist. I am not referring to schools of journalism, for they are trade schools, intended to prepare men and women for a career. I am referring to political science as expounded to future business men, lawyers, public officials, and citizens at large. In that science a study of the press and the sources of popular information found no place. It is a curious fact. To anyone not immersed in the routine interests of political science, it is almost inexplicable that no American student of government, no American sociologist, has ever written a book on news-gathering. There are occasional references to the press, and statements that it is not, or that it ought to be, "free" and "truthful." But I can find almost nothing else. And this disdain of the professionals finds its counterpart in public opinions. Universally it is admitted that the press is the chief means of contact with the unseen environment. And practically everywhere it is assumed that the press should do spontaneously for us what primitive democracy imagined each of us could do spontaneously for himself, that every day and twice a day it will present us with a true picture of all the outer world in which we are interested.

2

This insistent and ancient belief that truth is not earned, but inspired, revealed, supplied gratis, comes out very plainly in our economic prejudices as readers of newspapers. We expect the newspaper to serve us with truth however unprofitable the truth may be. For this difficult and often dangerous service, which we recognize as fundamental, we expected to pay until recently the smallest coin turned out by the mint. We have accustomed ourselves now to paying two and even three cents on weekdays, and on Sundays, for an illustrated encyclopedia and vaudeville entertainment attached, we have screwed ourselves up to paying a nickel or even a dime. Nobody thinks for a moment that he ought to pay for his newspaper. He expects the fountains of truth to bubble, but he enters into no contract, legal or

moral, involving any risk, cost or trouble to himself. He will pay a nominal price when it suits him, will stop paying whenever it suits him, will turn to another paper when that suits him. Somebody has said quite aptly that the newspaper editor has to be re-elected every day.

This casual and one-sided relationship between readers and press is an anomaly of our civilization. There is nothing else quite like it, and it is, therefore, hard to compare the press with any other business or institution. It is not a business pure and simple, partly because the product is regularly sold below cost, but chiefly because the community applies one ethical measure to the press and another to trade or manufacture. Ethically a newspaper is judged as if it were a church or a school. But if you try to compare it with these you fail; the taxpayer pays for the public school, the private school is endowed or supported by tuition fees, there are subsidies and collections for the church. You cannot compare journalism with law, medicine or engineering, for in every one of these professions the consumer pays for the service. A free press, if you judge by the attitude of the readers, means newspapers that are virtually given away.

Yet the critics of the press are merely voicing the moral standards of the community, when they expect such an institution to live on the same plane as that on which the school, the church, and the disinterested professions are supposed to live. This illustrates again the concave character of democracy. No need for artificially acquired information is felt to exist. The information must come naturally, that is to say gratis, if not out of the heart of the citizen, then gratis out of the newspaper. The citizen will pay for his telephone, his railroad rides, his motor car, his entertainment. But he does not pay openly for his news.

He will, however, pay handsomely for the privilege of having someone read about him. He will pay directly to advertise. And he will pay indirectly for the advertisements of other people, because that payment, being concealed in the price of commodities is part of an invisible environment that he does not effectively comprehend. It would be regarded as an outrage to have to pay openly the price of a good ice cream soda for all the news of the world, though the public will pay that and more when it buys the advertised commodities. The public pays for the press, but only when the payment is concealed.

Circulation is, therefore, the means to an end. It becomes an asset only when it can be sold to the advertiser, who buys it with revenues secured through indirect taxation of the reader. [Footnote: “An established newspaper is entitled to fix its advertising rates so that its net receipts from circulation may be left on the credit side of the profit and loss account. To arrive at net receipts, I would deduct from the gross the cost of promotion, distribution, and other expenses incidental to circulation.” From an address by Mr. Adolph S. Ochs, publisher of the New York Times, at the Philadelphia Convention of the Associated Advertising Clubs of The World, June 26, 1916. Cited, Elmer Davis, History of The New York Times, 1851-1921, pp. 397-398.] The kind of circulation which the advertiser will buy depends on what he has to sell. It may be “quality” or “mass.” On the whole there is no sharp dividing line, for in respect to most commodities sold by advertising, the customers are neither the small class of the very rich nor the very poor. They are the people with enough surplus over bare necessities to exercise discretion in their buying. The paper, therefore, which goes into the homes of the fairly prosperous is by and large the one which offers most to the advertiser. It may also go into the homes of the poor, but except for certain lines of goods, an analytical advertising agent does not rate that circulation as a great asset, unless, as seems to be the case with certain of Mr. Hearst’s properties, the circulation is enormous.

A newspaper which angers those whom it pays best to reach through advertisements is a bad medium for an advertiser. And since no one ever claimed that advertising was philanthropy, advertisers buy space in those publications which are fairly certain to reach their future customers. One need not spend much time worrying about the unreported scandals of the dry-goods merchants. They represent nothing really significant, and incidents of this sort are less common than many critics of the press suppose. The real problem is that the readers of a newspaper, unaccustomed to paying the cost of newsgathering, can be capitalized only by turning them into circulation that can be sold to manufacturers and merchants. And those whom it is most important to capitalize are those who have the most money to spend. Such a press is bound to respect the point of view of the buying public. It is for

this buying public that newspapers are edited and published, for without that support the newspaper cannot live. A newspaper can flout an advertiser, it can attack a powerful banking or traction interest, but if it alienates the buying public, it loses the one indispensable asset of its existence.

Mr. John L. Given, [Footnote: Making a Newspaper, p. 13. This is the best technical book I know, and should be read by everyone who undertakes to discuss the press. Mr. G. B. Diblee, who wrote the volume on The Newspaper in the Home University Library says (p. 253), that "on the press for pressmen I only know of one good book, Mr. Given's."] formerly of the New York Evening Sun, stated in 1914 that out of over two thousand three hundred dailies published in the United States, there were about one hundred and seventy-five printed in cities having over one hundred thousand inhabitants. These constitute the press for "general news." They are the key papers which collect the news dealing with great events, and even the people who do not read any one of the one hundred and seventy-five depend ultimately upon them for news of the outer world. For they make up the great

press associations which cooperate in the exchange of news. Each is, therefore, not only the informant of its own readers, but it is the local reporter for the newspapers of other cities. The rural press and the special press by and large, take their general news from these key papers. And among these there are some very much richer than others, so that for international news, in the main, the whole press of the nation may depend upon the reports of the press associations and the special services of a few metropolitan dailies.

Roughly speaking, the economic support for general news gathering is in the price paid for advertised goods by the fairly prosperous sections of cities with more than one hundred thousand inhabitants. These buying publics are composed of the members of families, who depend for their income chiefly on trade, merchandising, the direction of manufacture, and finance. They are the clientele among whom it pays best to advertise in a newspaper. They wield a concentrated purchasing power, which may be less in volume than the aggregate for farmers and workingmen; but within the radius covered by a daily newspaper they are the quickest assets.

They have, moreover, a double claim to attention. They are not only the best customers for the advertiser, they include the advertisers. Therefore the impression made by the newspapers on this public matters deeply. Fortunately this public is not unanimous. It may be "capitalistic" but it contains divergent views on what capitalism is, and how it is to be run. Except in times of danger, this respectable opinion is sufficiently divided to permit of considerable differences of policy. These would be greater still if it were not that publishers are themselves usually members of these urban communities, and honestly see the world through the lenses of their associates and friends.

They are engaged in a speculative business, [Footnote: Sometimes so speculative that in order to secure credit the publisher has to go into bondage to his creditors. Information on this point is very difficult to obtain, and for that reason its general importance is often much exaggerated.] which depends on the general condition of trade, and more peculiarly on a circulation based not on a marriage contract with their readers, but on free love. The object of every publisher is, therefore, to turn his circulation from a medley of catch-as-catch-can news stand buyers into a devoted band of constant readers. A newspaper that can really depend upon the loyalty of its readers is as independent as a newspaper can be, given the economics of modern journalism. [Footnote: "It is an axiom in newspaper publishing--'more readers, more independence of the influence of advertisers; fewer readers and more dependence on the advertiser' It may seem like a contradiction (yet it is the truth) to assert: the greater the number of advertisers, the less influence they are individually able to exercise with the publisher." Adolph S. Ochs, of. supra.] A body of readers who stay by it through thick and thin is a power greater than any which the individual advertiser can wield, and a power great enough to break up a combination of advertisers. Therefore, whenever you find a newspaper betraying its readers for the sake of an advertiser, you can be fairly certain either that the publisher sincerely shares the views of the advertiser, or that he thinks, perhaps mistakenly, he cannot count upon the support of his readers if he openly resists dictation. It is a question of whether the readers, who do not pay in cash for their news, will pay for it in loyalty.

CHAPTER XXII
THE CONSTANT READER

I

THE loyalty of the buying public to a newspaper is not stipulated in any bond. In almost every other enterprise the person who expects to be served enters into an agreement that controls his passing whims. At least he pays for what he obtains. In the publishing of periodicals the nearest approach to an agreement for a definite time is the paid subscription, and that is not, I believe, a great factor in the economy of a metropolitan daily. The reader is the sole and the daily judge of his loyalty, and there can be no suit against him for breach of promise or nonsupport.

Though everything turns on the constancy of the reader, there does not exist even a vague tradition to call that fact to the reader's mind. His constancy depends on how he happens to feel, or on his habits. And these depend not simply on the quality of the news, but more often on a number of obscure elements that in our casual relation to the press, we hardly take the trouble to make conscious. The most important of these is that each of us tends to judge a newspaper, if we judge it at all, by its treatment of that part of the news in which we feel ourselves involved. The newspaper deals with a multitude of events beyond our experience. But it deals also with some events within our experience. And by its handling of those events we most frequently decide to like it or dislike it, to trust it or refuse to have the sheet in the house. If the newspaper gives a satisfactory account of that which we think we know, our business, our church, our party, it is fairly certain to be immune from violent criticism by us. What better criterion does the man at the breakfast table possess than that the newspaper version checks up with his own opinion? Therefore, most men tend to hold the newspaper most strictly accountable in their capacity, not of general readers, but of special pleaders on matters of their own experience.

Rarely is anyone but the interested party able to test the accuracy of a report. If the news is local, and if there is competition, the editor knows that he will probably hear from the man who thinks his

portrait unfair and inaccurate. But if the news is not local, the corrective diminishes as the subject matter recedes into the distance. The only people who can correct what they think is a false picture of themselves printed in another city are members of groups well enough organized to hire publicity men.

Now it is interesting to note that the general reader of a newspaper has no standing in law if he thinks he is being misled by the news. It is only the aggrieved party who can sue for slander or libel, and he has to prove a material injury to himself. The law embodies the tradition that general news is not a matter of common concern, [Footnote: The reader will not mistake this as a plea for censorship. It might, however, be a good thing if there were competent tribunals, preferably not official ones, where charges of untruthfulness and unfairness in the general news could be sifted. Cf. Liberty and the News, pp. 73-76.] except as to matter which is vaguely described as immoral or seditious.

But the body of the news, though unchecked as a whole by the disinterested reader, consists of items about which some readers have very definite preconceptions. Those items are the data of his judgment, and news which men read without this personal criterion, they judge by some other standard than their standard of accuracy. They are dealing here with a subject matter which to them is indistinguishable from fiction. The canon of truth cannot be applied. They do not boggle over such news if it conforms to their stereotypes, and they continue to read it if it interests them. [Footnote: Note, for example, how absent is indignation in Mr. Upton Sinclair against socialist papers, even those which are as malignantly unfair to employers as certain of the papers cited by him are unfair to radicals.]

2

There are newspapers, even in large cities, edited on the principle that the readers wish to read about themselves. The theory is that if

enough people see their own names in the paper often enough, can read about their weddings, funerals, sociables, foreign travels, lodge meetings, school prizes, their fiftieth birthdays, their sixtieth birthdays, their silver weddings, their outings and clambakes, they will make a reliable circulation.

The classic formula for such a newspaper is contained in a letter written by Horace Greeley on April 3, 1860, to “Friend Fletcher” who was about to start a country newspaper: [Footnote: Cited, James Melvin Lee, The History of American Journalism, p. 405.]

“I. Begin with a clear conception that the subject of deepest interest to an average human being is himself; next to that he is most concerned about his neighbors. Asia and the Tongo Islands stand a long way after these in his regard.... Do not let a new church be organized, or new members be added to one already existing, a farm be sold, a new house raised, a mill set in motion, a store opened, nor anything of interest to a dozen families occur, without having the fact duly, though briefly, chronicled in your columns. If a farmer cuts a big tree, or grows a mammoth beet, or harvests a bounteous yield of wheat or corn, set forth the fact as concisely and unexceptionally as possible.”

The function of becoming, as Mr. Lee puts it, “the printed diary of the home town” is one that every newspaper no matter where it is published must in some measure fill. And where, as in a great city like New York, the general newspapers circulated broadcast cannot fill it, there exist small newspapers published on Greeley’s pattern for sections of the city. In the boroughs of Manhattan and the Bronx there are perhaps twice as many local dailies as there are general newspapers. [Footnote: Cf. John L. Given, Making a Newspaper, p. 13.] And they are supplemented by all kinds of special publications for trades, religions, nationalities.

These diaries are published for people who find their own lives interesting. But there are also great numbers of people who find their own lives dull, and wish, like Hedda Gabler, to live a more thrilling life. For them there are published a few whole newspapers, and sections of others, devoted to the personal lives of a set of

imaginary people, with whose gorgeous vices the reader can in his fancy safely identify himself. Mr. Hearst's unflagging interest in high society caters to people who never hope to be in high society, and yet manage to derive some enhancement out of the vague feeling that they are part of the life that they read about. In the great

cities "the printed diary of the home town" tends to be the printed diary of a smart set.

And it is, as we have already noted, the dailies of the cities which carry the burden of bringing distant news to the private citizen. But it is not primarily their political and social news which holds the circulation. The interest in that is intermittent, and few publishers can bank on it alone. The newspaper, therefore, takes to itself a variety of other features, all primarily designed to hold a body of readers together, who so far as big news is concerned, are not able to be critical. Moreover, in big news the competition in any one community is not very serious. The press services standardize the main events; it is only once in a while that a great scoop is made; there is apparently not a very great reading public for such massive reporting as has made the New York Times of recent years indispensable to men of all shades of opinion. In order to differentiate themselves and collect a steady public most papers have to go outside the field of general news. They go to the dazzling levels of society, to scandal and crime, to sports, pictures, actresses, advice to the lovelorn, highschool notes, women's pages, buyer's pages, cooking receipts, chess, whist, gardening, comic strips, thundering partisanship, not because publishers and editors are interested in everything but news, but because they have to find some way of holding on to that alleged host of passionately interested readers, who are supposed by some critics of the press to be clamoring for the truth and nothing but the truth.

The newspaper editor occupies a strange position. His enterprises depend upon indirect taxation levied by his advertisers upon his readers; the patronage of the advertisers depends upon the editor's skill in holding together an effective group of customers. These customers deliver judgment according to their private experiences and their stereotyped expectations, for in the nature of things they have no independent knowledge of most news they read. If the judgment is

not unfavorable, the editor is at least within range of a circulation that pays. But in order to secure that circulation, he cannot rely wholly upon news of the greater environment. He handles that as interestingly as he can, of course, but the quality of the general news, especially about public affairs, is not in itself sufficient to cause very large numbers of readers to discriminate among the dailies.

This somewhat left-handed relationship between newspapers and public information is reflected in the salaries of newspaper men. Reporting, which theoretically constitutes the foundation of the whole institution, is the most poorly paid branch of newspaper work, and is the least regarded. By and large, able men go into it only by necessity or for experience, and with the definite intention of being graduated as soon as possible. For straight reporting is not a career that offers many great rewards. The rewards in journalism go to specialty work, to signed correspondence which has editorial quality, to executives, and to men with a knack and flavor of their own. This is due, no doubt, to what economists call the rent of ability. But this economic principle operates with such peculiar violence in journalism that newsgathering does not attract to itself anything like the number of trained and able men which its public importance would seem to demand. The fact that the able men take up “straight reporting” with the intention of leaving it as soon as possible is, I think, the chief reason why it has never developed in sufficient measure those corporate traditions that give to a profession prestige and a jealous self-respect. For it is these corporate traditions which engender the pride of craft, which tend to raise the standards of admission, punish breaches of the code, and give men the strength to insist upon their status in society.

3

Yet all this does not go to the root of the matter. For while the economics of journalism is such as to depress the value of news reporting, it is, I am certain, a false determinism which would abandon the analysis at that point. The intrinsic power of the reporter appears to be so great, the number of very able men who pass through reporting is so large, that there must be some deeper reason why, comparatively speaking, so little serious effort has gone into raising the vocation to the level say of medicine, engineering, or

law.

Mr. Upton Sinclair speaks for a large body of opinion in America, [Footnote: Mr. Hilaire Belloc makes practically the same analysis for English newspapers. Cf. The Free Press.] when he claims that in what he calls “The Brass Check” he has found this deeper reason:

“The Brass Check is found in your pay envelope every week--you who write and print and distribute our newspapers and magazines. The Brass check is the price of your shame--you who take the fair body of truth and sell it in the market place, who betray the virgin hopes of mankind into the loathsome brothel of Big Business.” [Footnote: Upton Sinclair, The Brass Check. A Study of American Journalism. p. 116.]

It would seem from this that there exists a body of known truth, and a set of well founded hopes, which are prostituted by a more or less conscious conspiracy of the rich owners of newspapers. If this theory is correct, then a certain conclusion follows. It is that the fair body of truth would be inviolate in a press not in any way connected with Big Business. For if it should happen that a press not controlled by, and not even friendly with, Big Business somehow failed to contain the fair body of truth, something would be wrong with Mr. Sinclair’s theory.

There is such a press. Strange to say, in proposing a remedy Mr. Sinclair does not advise his readers to subscribe to the nearest radical newspaper. Why not? If the troubles of American journalism go back to the Brass Check of Big Business why does not the remedy lie in reading the papers that do not in any remote way accept the Brass Check? Why subsidize a “National News” with a large board of directors “of all creeds or causes” to print a paper full of facts “regardless of what is injured, the Steel Trust or the I. W. W., the Standard Oil Company or the Socialist Party?” If the trouble is Big Business, that is, the Steel Trust, Standard Oil and the like, why not urge everybody to read I. W. W. or Socialist papers? Mr. Sinclair does not say why not. But the reason is simple. He cannot convince anybody, not even himself, that the anti-capitalist press is the remedy for the capitalist press. He ignores the anti-capitalist press both in his

theory of the Brass Check and in his constructive proposal. But if you are diagnosing American journalism you cannot ignore it. If what you care about is "the fair body of truth," you do not commit the gross logical error of assembling all the instances of unfairness and lying you can find in one set of newspapers, ignore all the instances you could easily find in another set, and then assign as the cause of the lying, the one supposedly common characteristic of the press to which you have confined your investigation. If you are going to blame "capitalism" for the faults of the press, you are compelled to prove that those faults do not exist except where capitalism controls. That Mr. Sinclair cannot do this, is shown by the fact that while in his diagnosis he traces everything to capitalism, in his prescription he ignores both capitalism and anti-capitalism.

One would have supposed that the inability to take any non-capitalist paper as a model of truthfulness and competence would have caused Mr. Sinclair, and those who agree with him, to look somewhat more critically at their assumptions. They would have asked themselves, for example, where is the fair body of truth, that Big Business prostitutes, but anti-Big Business does not seem to obtain? For that question leads, I believe, to the heart of the matter, to the question of what is news.

CHAPTER XXIII
THE NATURE OF NEWS

1

ALL the reporters in the world working all the hours of the day could not witness all the happenings in the world. There are not a great many reporters. And none of them has the power to be in more than one place at a time. Reporters are not clairvoyant, they do not gaze into a crystal ball and see the world at will, they are not assisted by thought-transference. Yet the range of subjects these comparatively few men manage to cover would be a miracle indeed, if it were not a standardized routine.

Newspapers do not try to keep an eye on all mankind. [Footnote: See the illuminating chapter in Mr. John L. Given's book, already cited, on "Uncovering the News," Ch. V.] They have watchers stationed at certain places, like Police Headquarters, the Coroner's Office, the County Clerk's Office, City Hall, the White House, the Senate, House of Representatives, and so forth. They watch, or rather in the majority of cases they belong to associations which employ men who watch "a comparatively small number of places where it is made known when the life of anyone... departs from ordinary paths, or when events worth telling about occur. For example, John Smith, let it be supposed, becomes a broker. For ten years he pursues the even tenor of his way and except for his customers and his friends no one gives him a thought. To the newspapers he is as if he were not. But in the eleventh year he suffers heavy losses and, at last, his resources all gone, summons his lawyer and arranges for the making of an assignment. The lawyer posts off to the County Clerk's office, and a clerk there makes the necessary entries in the official docket. Here in step the newspapers. While the clerk is writing Smith's business obituary a reporter glances over his shoulder and a few minutes later the reporters know Smith's troubles and are as well informed concerning his business status as they would be had they kept a reporter at his door every day for over ten years. [Footnote: Op. cit., p. 57.]

When Mr. Given says that the newspapers know "Smith's troubles" and "his business status," he does not mean that they know them as Smith knows them, or as Mr. Arnold Bennett would know them if he had made Smith the hero of a three volume novel. The newspapers know only "in a few minutes" the bald facts which are recorded in the County Clerk's Office. That overt act "uncovers" the news about Smith. Whether the news will be followed up or not is another matter. The point is that before a series of events become news they have usually to make themselves noticeable in some more or less overt act. Generally too, in a crudely overt act. Smith's friends may have known for years that he was taking risks, rumors may even have reached the financial editor if Smith's friends were talkative. But apart from the fact that none of this could be published because it would be libel, there is in these rumors nothing definite on which to peg a story. Something definite must occur that has unmistakable form. It may be the act of going into bankruptcy, it may be a fire, a collision, an assault, a riot, an arrest, a denunciation, the introduction of a bill, a speech,

a vote, a meeting, the expressed opinion of a well known citizen, an editorial in a newspaper, a sale, a wage-schedule, a price change, the proposal to build a bridge.... There must be a manifestation. The course of events must assume a certain definable shape, and until it is in a phase where some aspect is an accomplished fact, news does not separate itself from the ocean of possible truth.

2

Naturally there is room for wide difference of opinion as to when events have a shape that can be reported. A good journalist will find news oftener than a hack. If he sees a building with a dangerous list, he does not have to wait until it falls into the street in order to recognize news. It was a great reporter who guessed the name of the next Indian Viceroy when he heard that Lord So-and-So was inquiring about climates. There are lucky shots but the number of men who can make them is small. Usually it is the stereotyped shape assumed by an event at an obvious place that uncovers the run of the news. The most obvious place is where people's affairs touch public authority. De minimis non curat lex. It is at these places that marriages, births, deaths, contracts, failures, arrivals, departures, lawsuits, disorders, epidemics and calamities are made known.

In the first instance, therefore, the news is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself. The news does not tell you how the seed is germinating in the ground, but it may tell you when the first sprout breaks through the surface. It may even tell you what somebody says is happening to the seed under ground. It may tell you that the sprout did not come up at the time it was expected. The more points, then, at which any happening can be fixed, objectified, measured, named, the more points there are at which news can occur.

So, if some day a legislature, having exhausted all other ways of improving mankind, should forbid the scoring of baseball games, it might still be possible to play some sort of game in which the umpire decided according to his own sense of fair play how long the game should last, when each team should go to bat, and who should be regarded as the winner. If that game were reported in the newspapers it would consist of a record of the umpire's decisions, plus the

reporter's impression of the hoots and cheers of the crowd, plus at best a vague account of how certain men, who had no specified position on the field moved around for a few hours on an unmarked piece of sod. The more you try to imagine the logic of so absurd a predicament, the more clear it becomes that for the purposes of newsgathering, (let alone the purposes of playing the game) it is impossible to do much without an apparatus and rules for naming, scoring, recording. Because that machinery is far from perfect, the umpire's life is often a distracted one. Many crucial plays he has to judge by eye. The last vestige of dispute could be taken out of the game, as it has been taken out of chess when people obey the rules, if somebody thought it worth his while to photograph every play. It was the moving pictures which finally settled a real doubt in many reporters' minds, owing to the slowness of the human eye, as to just what blow of Dempsey's knocked out Carpentier.

Wherever there is a good machinery of record, the modern news service works with great precision. There is one on the stock exchange, and the news of price movements is flashed over tickers with dependable accuracy. There is a machinery for election returns, and when the counting and tabulating are well done, the result of a national election is usually known on the night of the election. In civilized communities deaths, births, marriages and divorces are recorded, and are known accurately except where there is concealment or neglect. The machinery exists for some, and only some, aspects of industry and government, in varying degrees of precision for securities, money and staples, bank clearances, realty transactions, wage scales. It exists for imports and exports because they pass through a custom house and can be directly recorded. It exists in nothing like the same degree for internal trade, and especially for trade over the counter.

It will be found, I think, that there is a very direct relation between the certainty of news and the system of record. If you call to mind the topics which form the principal indictment by reformers against the press, you find they are subjects in which the newspaper occupies the position of the umpire in the unscored baseball game. All news about states of mind is of this character: so are all descriptions of personalities, of sincerity, aspiration, motive, intention, of mass feeling, of national feeling, of public opinion, the policies of foreign governments. So is much news about what is

going to happen. So are questions turning on private profit, private income, wages, working conditions, the efficiency of labor, educational opportunity, unemployment, [Footnote: Think of what guess work went into the Reports of Unemployment in 1921.] monotony, health, discrimination, unfairness, restraint of trade, waste, "backward peoples," conservatism, imperialism, radicalism, liberty, honor, righteousness. All involve data that are at best spasmodically recorded. The data may be hidden because of a censorship or a tradition of privacy, they may not exist because nobody thinks record important, because he thinks it red tape, or because nobody has yet invented an objective system of measurement. Then the news on these subjects is bound to be debatable, when it is not wholly neglected. The events which are not scored are reported either as personal and conventional opinions, or they are not news. They do not take shape until somebody protests, or somebody investigates, or somebody publicly, in the etymological meaning of the word, makes an issue of them.

This is the underlying reason for the existence of the press agent. The enormous discretion as to what facts and what impressions shall be reported is steadily convincing every organized group of people that whether it wishes to secure publicity or to avoid it, the exercise of discretion cannot be left to the reporter. It is safer to hire a press agent who stands between the group and the newspapers. Having hired him, the temptation to exploit his strategic position is very great. "Shortly before the war," says Mr. Frank Cobb, "the newspapers of New York took a census of the press agents who were regularly employed and regularly accredited and found that there were about twelve hundred of them. How many there are now (1919) I do not pretend to know, but what I do know is that many of the direct channels to news have been closed and the information for the public is first filtered through publicity agents. The great corporations have them, the banks have them, the railroads have them, all the organizations of business and of social and political activity have them, and they are the media through which news comes. Even statesmen have them." [Footnote: Address before the Women's City Club of New York, Dec. 11, 1919. Reprinted, New Republic, Dec. 31, 1919, p. 44.]

Were reporting the simple recovery of obvious facts, the press agent would be little more than a clerk. But since, in respect to most of

the big topics of news, the facts are not simple, and not at all obvious, but subject to choice and opinion, it is natural that everyone should wish to make his own choice of facts for the newspapers to print. The publicity man does that. And in doing it, he certainly saves the reporter much trouble, by presenting him a clear picture of a situation out of which he might otherwise make neither head nor tail. But it follows that the picture which the publicity man makes for the reporter is the one he wishes the public to see. He is censor and propagandist, responsible only to his employers, and to the whole truth responsible only as it accords with the employers' conception of his own interests.

The development of the publicity man is a clear sign that the facts of modern life do not spontaneously take a shape in which they can be known. They must be given a shape by somebody, and since in the daily routine reporters cannot give a shape to facts, and since there is little disinterested organization of intelligence, the need for some formulation is being met by the interested parties.

3

The good press agent understands that the virtues of his cause are not news, unless they are such strange virtues that they jut right out of the routine of life. This is not because the newspapers do not like virtue, but because it is not worth while to say that nothing has happened when nobody expected anything to happen. So if the publicity man wishes free publicity he has, speaking quite accurately, to start something. He arranges a stunt: obstructs the traffic, teases the police, somehow manages to entangle his client or his cause with an event that is already news. The suffragists knew this, did not particularly enjoy the knowledge but acted on it, and kept suffrage in the news long after the arguments pro and con were straw in their mouths, and people were about to settle down to thinking of the suffrage movement as one of the established institutions of American life. [Footnote: Cf. Inez Haynes Irwin, The Story of the Woman's Party. It is not only a good account of a vital part of a great agitation, but a reservoir of material on successful, non-revolutionary, non-conspiring agitation under modern conditions of public attention, public interest, and political habit.]

Fortunately the suffragists, as distinct from the feminists, had a perfectly concrete objective, and a very simple one. What the vote symbolizes is not simple, as the ablest advocates and the ablest opponents knew. But the right to vote is a simple and familiar right. Now in labor disputes, which are probably the chief item in the charges against newspapers, the right to strike, like the right to vote, is simple enough. But the causes and objects of a particular strike are like the causes and objects of the woman's movement, extremely subtle.

Let us suppose the conditions leading up to a strike are bad. What is the measure of evil? A certain conception of a proper standard of living, hygiene, economic security, and human dignity. The industry may be far below the theoretical standard of the community, and the workers may be too wretched to protest. Conditions may be above the standard, and the workers may protest violently. The standard is at best a vague measure. However, we shall assume that the conditions are below par, as par is understood by the editor. Occasionally without waiting for the workers to threaten, but prompted say by a social worker, he will send reporters to investigate, and will call attention to bad conditions. Necessarily he cannot do that often. For these investigations cost time, money, special talent, and a lot of space. To make plausible a report that conditions are bad, you need a good many columns of print. In order to tell the truth about the steel worker in the Pittsburgh district, there was needed a staff of investigators, a great deal of time, and several fat volumes of print. It is impossible to suppose that any daily newspaper could normally regard the making of Pittsburgh Surveys, or even Interchurch Steel Reports, as one of its tasks. News which requires so much trouble as that to obtain is beyond the resources of a daily press. [Footnote: Not long ago Babe Ruth was jailed for speeding. Released from jail just before the afternoon game started, he rushed into his waiting automobile, and made up for time lost in jail by breaking the speed laws on his way to the ball grounds. No policeman stopped him, but a reporter timed him, and published his speed the next morning. Babe Ruth is an exceptional man. Newspapers cannot time all motorists. They have to take their news about speeding from the police.]

The bad conditions as such are not news, because in all but exceptional cases, journalism is not a first hand report of the raw

material. It is a report of that material after it has been stylized. Thus bad conditions might become news if the Board of Health reported an unusually high death rate in an industrial area. Failing an intervention of this sort, the facts do not become news, until the workers organize and make a demand upon their employers. Even then, if an easy settlement is certain the news value is low, whether or not the conditions themselves are remedied in the settlement. But if industrial relations collapse into a strike or lockout the news value increases. If the stoppage involves a service on which the readers of the newspapers immediately depend, or if it involves a breach of order, the news value is still greater.

The underlying trouble appears in the news through certain easily recognizable symptoms, a demand, a strike, disorder. From the point of view of the worker, or of the disinterested seeker of justice, the demand, the strike, and the disorder, are merely incidents in a process that for them is richly complicated. But since all the immediate realities lie outside the direct experience both of the reporter, and of the special public by which most newspapers are supported, they have normally to wait for a signal in the shape of an overt act. When that signal comes, say through a walkout of the men or a summons for the police, it calls into play the stereotypes people have about strikes and disorders. The unseen struggle has none of its own flavor. It is noted abstractly, and that abstraction is then animated by the immediate experience of the reader and reporter. Obviously this is a very different experience from that which the strikers have. They feel, let us say, the temper of the foreman, the nerve-racking monotony of the machine, the depressingly bad air, the drudgery of their wives, the stunting of their children, the dinginess of their tenements. The slogans of the strike are invested with these feelings. But the reporter and reader see at first only a strike and some catchwords. They invest these with their feelings. Their feelings may be that their jobs are insecure because the strikers are stopping goods they need in their work, that there will be shortage and higher prices, that it is all devilishly inconvenient. These, too, are realities. And when they give color to the abstract news that a strike has been called, it is in the nature of things that the workers are at a disadvantage. It is in the nature, that is to say, of the existing system of industrial relations that news arising from grievances or hopes by workers should almost invariably be uncovered by an overt

attack on production.

You have, therefore, the circumstances in all their sprawling complexity, the overt act which signalizes them, the stereotyped bulletin which publishes the signal, and the meaning that the reader himself injects, after he has derived that meaning from the experience which directly affects him. Now the reader's experience of a strike may be very important indeed, but from the point of view of the central trouble which caused the strike, it is eccentric. Yet this eccentric meaning is automatically the most interesting. [Footnote: Cf. Ch. XI, "The Enlisting of Interest."] To enter imaginatively into the central issues is for the reader to step out of himself, and into very different lives.

It follows that in the reporting of strikes, the easiest way is to let the news be uncovered by the overt act, and to describe the event as the story of interference with the reader's life. That is where his attention is first aroused, and his interest most easily enlisted. A great deal, I think myself the crucial part, of what looks to the worker and the reformer as deliberate misrepresentation on the part of newspapers, is the direct outcome of a practical difficulty in uncovering the news, and the emotional difficulty of making distant facts interesting unless, as Emerson says, we can "perceive (them) to be only a new version of our familiar experience" and can "set about translating (them) at once into our parallel facts." [Footnote: From his essay entitled Art and Criticism. The quotation occurs in a passage cited on page 87 of Professor R. W. Brown's, The Writer's Art.]

If you study the way many a strike is reported in the press, you will find, very often, that the issues are rarely in the headlines, barely in the leading paragraphs, and sometimes not even mentioned anywhere. A labor dispute in another city has to be very important before the news account contains any definite information as to what is in dispute. The routine of the news works that way, with modifications it works that way in regard to political issues and international news as well. The news is an account of the overt phases that are interesting, and the pressure on the newspaper to adhere to this routine comes from many sides. It comes from the economy of noting only the stereotyped phase of a situation. It comes from the difficulty of finding

journalists who can see what they have not learned to see. It comes from the almost unavoidable difficulty of finding sufficient space in which even the best journalist can make plausible an unconventional view. It comes from the economic necessity of interesting the reader quickly, and the economic risk involved in not interesting him at all, or of offending him by unexpected news insufficiently or clumsily described. All these difficulties combined make for uncertainty in the editor when there are dangerous issues at stake, and cause him naturally to prefer the indisputable fact and a treatment more readily adapted to the reader's interest. The indisputable fact and the easy interest, are the strike itself and the reader's inconvenience.

All the subtler and deeper truths are in the present organization of industry very unreliable truths. They involve judgments about standards of living, productivity, human rights that are endlessly debatable in the absence of exact record and quantitative analysis. And as long as these do not exist in industry, the run of news about it will tend, as Emerson said, quoting from Isocrates, "to make of moles mountains, and of mountains moles." [Footnote: Id., supra] Where there is no constitutional procedure in industry, and no expert sifting of evidence and the claims, the fact that is sensational to the reader is the fact that almost every journalist will seek. Given the industrial relations that so largely prevail, even where there is conference or arbitration, but no independent filtering of the facts for decision, the issue for the newspaper public will tend not to be the issue for the industry. And so to try disputes by an appeal through the newspapers puts a burden upon newspapers and readers which they cannot and ought not to carry. As long as real law and order do not exist, the bulk of the news will, unless consciously and courageously corrected, work against those who have no lawful and orderly method of asserting themselves. The bulletins from the scene of action will note the trouble that arose from the assertion, rather than the reasons which led to it. The reasons are intangible.

4

The editor deals with these bulletins. He sits in his office, reads them, rarely does he see any large portion of the events themselves. He must, as we have seen, woo at least a section of his readers every

day, because they will leave him without mercy if a rival paper happens to hit their fancy. He works under enormous pressure, for the competition of newspapers is often a matter of minutes. Every bulletin

requires a swift but complicated judgment. It must be understood, put in relation to other bulletins also understood, and played up or played down according to its probable interest for the public, as the editor conceives it. Without standardization, without stereotypes, without routine judgments, without a fairly ruthless disregard of subtlety, the editor would soon die of excitement. The final page is of a definite size, must be ready at a precise moment; there can be only a certain number of captions on the items, and in each caption there must be a definite number of letters. Always there is the precarious urgency of the buying public, the law of libel, and the possibility of endless trouble. The thing could not be managed at all without systematization, for in a standardized product there is economy of time and effort, as well as a partial guarantee against failure.

It is here that newspapers influence each other most deeply. Thus when the war broke out, the American newspapers were confronted with a subject about which they had no previous experience. Certain dailies, rich enough to pay cable tolls, took the lead in securing news, and the way that news was presented became a model for the whole press. But where did that model come from? It came from the English press, not because Northcliffe owned American newspapers, but because at first it was easier to buy English correspondence, and because, later, it was easier for American journalists to read English newspapers than it was for them to read any others. London was the cable and news center, and it was there that a certain technic for reporting the war was evolved. Something similar occurred in the reporting of the Russian Revolution. In that instance, access to Russia was closed by military censorship, both Russian and Allied, and closed still more effectively by the difficulties of the Russian language. But above all it was closed to effective news reporting by the fact that the hardest thing to report is chaos, even though it is an evolving chaos. This put the formulating of Russian news at its source in Helsingfors, Stockholm, Geneva, Paris and London, into the hands of censors and propagandists. They were for a long time subject to no check of any kind. Until they had made themselves ridiculous they created, let us

admit, out of some genuine aspects of the huge Russian maelstrom, a set of stereotypes so evocative of hate and fear, that the very best instinct of journalism, its desire to go and see and tell, was for a long time crushed. [Footnote: Cf. A Test of the News, by Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz, assisted by Faye Lippmann, New Republic, August 4, 1920.]

5

Every newspaper when it reaches the reader is the result of a whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what position they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, what emphasis each shall have. There are no objective standards here. There are conventions. Take two newspapers published in the same city on the same morning. The headline of one reads: “Britain pledges aid to Berlin against French aggression; France openly backs Poles.” The headline of the second is “Mrs. Stillman’s Other Love.” Which you prefer is a matter of taste, but not entirely a matter of the editor’s taste. It is a matter of his judgment as to what will absorb the half hour’s attention a certain set of readers will give to his newspaper. Now the problem of securing attention is by no means equivalent to displaying the news in the perspective laid down by religious teaching or by some form of ethical culture. It is a problem of provoking feeling in the reader, of inducing him to feel a sense of personal identification with the stories he is reading. News which does not offer this opportunity to introduce oneself into the struggle which it depicts cannot appeal to a wide audience. The audience must participate in the news, much as it participates in the drama, by personal identification. Just as everyone holds his breath when the heroine is in danger, as he helps Babe Ruth swing his bat, so in subtler form the reader enters into the news. In order that he shall enter he must find a familiar foothold in the story, and this is supplied to him by the use of stereotypes. They tell him that if an association of plumbers is called a “combine” it is appropriate to develop his hostility; if it is called a “group of leading business men” the cue is for a favorable reaction.

It is in a combination of these elements that the power to create opinion resides. Editorials reinforce. Sometimes in a situation that on the news pages is too confusing to permit of identification, they

give the reader a clue by means of which he engages himself. A clue he must have if, as most of us must, he is to seize the news in a hurry. A suggestion of some sort he demands, which tells him, so to speak, where he, a man conceiving himself to be such and such a person, shall integrate his feelings with the news he reads.

"It has been said" writes Walter Bagehot, [Footnote: On the Emotion of Conviction, Literary Studies, Vol. Ill, p. 172.] "that if you can only get a middleclass Englishman to think whether there are 'snails in Sirius,' he will soon have an opinion on it. It will be difficult to make him think, but if he does think, he cannot rest in a negative, he will come to some decision. And on any ordinary topic, of course, it is so. A grocer has a full creed as to foreign policy, a young lady a complete theory of the sacraments, as to which neither has any doubt whatever."

Yet that same grocer will have many doubts about his groceries, and that young lady, marvelously certain about the sacraments, may have all kinds of doubts as to whether to marry the grocer, and if not whether it is proper to accept his attentions. The ability to rest in the negative implies either a lack of interest in the result, or a vivid sense of competing alternatives. In the case of foreign policy or the sacraments, the interest in the results is intense, while means for checking the opinion are poor. This is the plight of the reader of the general news. If he is to read it at all he must be interested, that is to say, he must enter into the situation and care about the outcome. But if he does that he cannot rest in a negative, and unless independent means of checking the lead given him by his newspaper exists, the very fact that he is interested may make it difficult to arrive at that balance of opinions which may most nearly approximate the truth. The more passionately involved he becomes, the more he will tend to resent not only a different view, but a disturbing bit of news. That is why many a newspaper finds that, having honestly evoked the partisanship of its readers, it can not easily, supposing the editor believes the facts warrant it, change position. If a change is necessary, the transition has to be managed with the utmost skill and delicacy. Usually a newspaper will not attempt so hazardous a performance. It is easier and safer to have the news of that subject taper off and disappear, thus putting out the fire by starving it.

CHAPTER XXIV
NEWS, TRUTH, AND A CONCLUSION

As we begin to make more and more exact studies of the press, much will depend upon the hypothesis we hold. If we assume with Mr. Sinclair, and most of his opponents, that news and truth are two words for the same thing, we shall, I believe, arrive nowhere. We shall prove that on this point the newspaper lied. We shall prove that on that point Mr. Sinclair's account lied. We shall demonstrate that Mr. Sinclair lied when he said that somebody lied, and that somebody lied when he said Mr. Sinclair lied. We shall vent our feelings, but we shall vent them into air.

The hypothesis, which seems to me the most fertile, is that news and truth are not the same thing, and must be clearly distinguished. [Footnote: When I wrote Liberty and the News, I did not understand this distinction clearly enough to state it, but cf. p. 89 ff.] The function of news is to signalize an event, the function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which men can act. Only at those points, where social conditions take recognizable and measurable shape, do the body of truth and the body of news coincide. That is a comparatively small part of the whole field of human interest. In this sector, and only in this sector, the tests of the news are sufficiently exact to make the charges of perversion or suppression more than a partisan judgment. There is no defense, no extenuation, no excuse whatever, for stating six times that Lenin is dead, when the only information the paper possesses is a report that he is dead from a source repeatedly shown to be unreliable. The news, in that instance, is not "Lenin Dead" but "Helsingfors Says Lenin is Dead." And a newspaper can be asked to take the responsibility of not making Lenin more dead than the source of the news is reliable; if there is one subject on which editors are most responsible it is in their judgment of the reliability of the source. But when it comes to dealing, for example, with stories of what the Russian people want, no such test exists.

The absence of these exact tests accounts, I think, for the character of the profession, as no other explanation does. There is a very small body of exact knowledge, which it requires no outstanding ability or training to deal with. The rest is in the journalist's own discretion. Once he departs from the region where it is definitely recorded at the County Clerk's office that John Smith has gone into bankruptcy, all fixed standards disappear. The story of why John Smith failed, his human frailties, the analysis of the economic conditions on which he was shipwrecked, all of this can be told in a hundred different ways. There is no discipline in applied psychology, as there is a discipline in medicine, engineering, or even law, which has authority to direct the journalist's mind when he passes from the news to the vague realm of truth. There are no canons to direct his own mind, and no canons that coerce the reader's judgment or the publisher's. His version of the truth is only his version. How can he demonstrate the truth as he sees it? He cannot demonstrate it, any more than Mr. Sinclair Lewis can demonstrate that he has told the whole truth about Main Street. And the more he understands his own weaknesses, the more ready he is to admit that where there is no objective test, his own opinion is in some vital measure constructed out of his own stereotypes, according to his own code, and by the urgency of his own interest. He knows that he is seeing the world through subjective lenses. He cannot deny that he too is, as Shelley remarked, a dome of many-colored glass which stains the white radiance of eternity.

And by this knowledge his assurance is tempered. He may have all kinds of moral courage, and sometimes has, but he lacks that sustaining conviction of a certain technic which finally freed the physical sciences from theological control. It was the gradual development of an irrefragable method that gave the physicist his intellectual freedom as against all the powers of the world. His proofs were so clear, his evidence so sharply superior to tradition, that he broke away finally from all control. But the journalist has no such support in his own conscience or in fact. The control exercised over him by the opinions of his employers and his readers, is not the control of truth by prejudice, but of one opinion by another opinion that it is not demonstrably less true. Between Judge Gary's assertion that the unions will destroy American institutions, and Mr. Gomper's assertion that they are agencies of the rights of man, the choice has, in large measure, to be governed by the will to believe.

The task of deflating these controversies, and reducing them to a point where they can be reported as news, is not a task which the reporter can perform. It is possible and necessary for journalists to bring home to people the uncertain character of the truth on which their opinions are founded, and by criticism and agitation to prod social science into making more usable formulations of social facts, and to prod statesmen into establishing more visible institutions. The press, in other words, can fight for the extension of reportable truth. But as social truth is organized to-day, the press is not constituted to furnish from one edition to the next the amount of knowledge which the democratic theory of public opinion demands. This is not due to the Brass Check, as the quality of news in radical papers shows, but to the fact that the press deals with a society in which the governing forces are so imperfectly recorded. The theory that the press can itself record those forces is false. It can normally record only what has been recorded for it by the working of institutions. Everything else is argument and opinion, and fluctuates with the vicissitudes, the self-consciousness, and the courage of the human mind.

If the press is not so universally wicked, nor so deeply conspiring, as Mr. Sinclair would have us believe, it is very much more frail than the democratic theory has as yet admitted. It is too frail to carry the whole burden of popular sovereignty, to supply spontaneously the truth which democrats hoped was inborn. And when we expect it to supply such a body of truth we employ a misleading standard of judgment. We misunderstand the limited nature of news, the illimitable complexity of society; we overestimate our own endurance, public spirit, and all-round competence. We suppose an appetite for uninteresting truths which is not discovered by any honest analysis of our own tastes.

If the newspapers, then, are to be charged with the duty of translating the whole public life of mankind, so that every adult can arrive at an opinion on every moot topic, they fail, they are bound to fail, in any future one can conceive they will continue to fail. It is not possible to assume that a world, carried on by division of labor and distribution of authority, can be governed by universal opinions in the whole population. Unconsciously the theory sets up the single

reader as theoretically omnicompetent, and puts upon the press the burden of accomplishing whatever representative government, industrial organization, and diplomacy have failed to accomplish. Acting upon everybody for thirty minutes in twenty-four hours, the press is asked to create a mystical force called Public Opinion that will take up the slack in public institutions. The press has often mistakenly pretended that it could do just that. It has at great moral cost to itself, encouraged a democracy, still bound to its original premises, to expect newspapers to supply spontaneously for every organ of government, for every social problem, the machinery of information which these do not normally supply themselves. Institutions, having failed to furnish themselves with instruments of knowledge, have become a bundle of "problems," which the population as a whole, reading the press as a whole, is supposed to solve.

The press, in other words, has come to be regarded as an organ of direct democracy, charged on a much wider scale, and from day to day, with the function often attributed to the initiative, referendum, and recall. The Court of Public Opinion, open day and night, is to lay down the law for everything all the time. It is not workable. And when you consider the nature of news, it is not even thinkable. For the news, as we have seen, is precise in proportion to the precision with which the event is recorded. Unless the event is capable of being named, measured, given shape, made specific, it either fails to take on the character of news, or it is subject to the accidents and prejudices of observation.

Therefore, on the whole, the quality of the news about modern society is an index of its social organization. The better the institutions, the more all interests concerned are formally represented, the more issues are disentangled, the more objective criteria are introduced, the more perfectly an affair can be presented as news. At its best the press is a servant and guardian of institutions; at its worst it is a means by which a few exploit social disorganization to their own ends. In the degree to which institutions fail to function, the unscrupulous journalist can fish in troubled waters, and the conscientious one must gamble with uncertainties.

The press is no substitute for institutions. It is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then

another out of darkness into vision. Men cannot do the work of the world by this light alone. They cannot govern society by episodes, incidents, and eruptions. It is only when they work by a steady light of their own, that the press, when it is turned upon them, reveals a situation intelligible enough for a popular decision. The trouble lies deeper than the press, and so does the remedy. It lies in social organization based on a system of analysis and record, and in all the corollaries of that principle; in the abandonment of the theory of the omnicompetent citizen, in the decentralization of decision, in the coordination of decision by comparable record and analysis. If at the centers of management there is a running audit, which makes work intelligible to those who do it, and those who superintend it, issues when they arise are not the mere collisions of the blind. Then, too, the news is uncovered for the press by a system of intelligence that is also a check upon the press.

That is the radical way. For the troubles of the press, like the troubles of representative government, be it territorial or functional, like the troubles of industry, be it capitalist, cooperative, or communist, go back to a common source: to the failure of self-governing people to transcend their casual experience and their prejudice, by inventing, creating, and organizing a machinery of knowledge. It is because they are compelled to act without a reliable picture of the world, that governments, schools, newspapers and churches make such small headway against the more obvious failings of democracy, against violent prejudice, apathy, preference for the curious trivial as against the dull important, and the hunger for sideshows and three legged calves. This is the primary defect of popular government, a defect inherent in its traditions, and all its other defects can, I believe, be traced to this one.