

# H. G. WELLS:

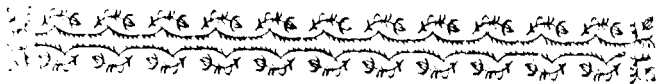
EDUCATIONIST

*by*

F. H. DOUGHTY



JONATHAN CAPE, 30 BEDFORD SQUARE



## H. G. WELLS: EDUCATIONIST

**A** GENERAL survey of the lines along which Mr. Wells' educational ideas have developed, and a criticism of these ideas. Mr. Wells has always regarded education in the broadest light—never as a narrow academic or scholastic affair, but as a process that touches life at all points. Education in this wider aspect has, therefore, assumed so great an importance in his work as a whole, that a survey such as this amounts to a more or less complete review of his philosophy.

While therefore, the book appeals first to the educationist, it is also of value for the general reader, particularly those who regard Mr. Wells as one of the most significant figures in modern literature.

H. G. WELLS: EDUCATIONIST

*By the Same Author*

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EDUCATION AND THE SPIRIT

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## PREFACE

My thanks are due to Mr. Wells, who by permitting me to read his novel, *The World of William Clissold*, in typescript, enabled me to bring that work within the purview of my study without delaying its completion.

To Mr. George Sampson also I wish to offer my sincerest thanks, both for the encouragement I received from him while the work was in preparation, and for his kindness in reading and offering valuable advice on the completed typescript.

To M. Georges Connes of the University of Dijon I am further indebted, first for the help I received from his very adequate *Etude sur la Pensée de Wells*, and second for his *H. G. Wells Dictionary* (privately printed, Dijon, 1926) which he was good enough to send me, and which I found invaluable for reference.

F. H. D.

The personal element cannot be eliminated from the consideration of works written by living persons for living persons. We want to know who is who - whom we can depend upon to have no other end than the making things clear to himself and his readers, and whom we should mistrust as having an ulterior aim on which he is more intent than in the furthering of our better misunderstanding - who is trying to bolster up the system in which his interests are vested.

SAMUEL BUTLER: *The Humour of Homer*

Une fois prêtre, toujours prêtre; une fois pédagogue toujours pédagogue. Wells n'a jamais oublié qu'il avait enseigné: quand il parle d'éducation, c'est un ancien professionnel.

GEORGES CONNES: *Etude sur la Pensée de Wells*

## CHAPTER ONE

### Prophet or Quack?

'The only events of permanent importance in human affairs are educational events.'

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IN reviewing a work of somewhat similar intent to this, Mr. Shanks wrote (in the *London Mercury*): 'To summarize the ideas of a living author (assuming that he has any) is to do a service to him and to his contemporaries, whether you contravert him or not, *or successfully or not . . .*' Accepting this as the warrant for my undertaking, and enheartened by the words I have italicized, there yet remain two questions at issue before my apology can be regarded as adequate. The first is: Why Mr. Wells? And the second: Why Education?

The second question is easily enough answered. Mr. Wells is not, himself, in any doubt as to the urgency of the problem of education. One has not far to look for an expression of this urgency; at the close of *The Salvaging of Civilization*, having in that work passed in review the measures he proposes as necessary to the saving of what yet remains to us out of the wreck of Europe, he writes, as a summing up of the whole position, 'We need, before all other sorts of organization, educational organizations; we need, before any other sort of work, work of education and enlightenment; we need everywhere active societies pressing for a better, more efficient conduct of public schooling, for a wider, more enlightening school curriculum . . . And in his latest Utopia (*Men Like Gods*) we find the Utopian, Lion, explaining to Mr. Barnstaple the absence

of any centralized government, any political system or organization, by the fact that their *education* is their government. These are no half-hearted estimates of the function and value of education; nor are they the words of a narrow-minded educational fanatic; they are the words of one who has come to this belief after the widest possible survey of human society, not only in the past and in the present, but also, by prophecy, in the future.

And now, Why Mr. Wells? The answer to this question is partly to be found in the previous paragraph. He is, in this matter of education, a believer, and this alone renders his work of interest to his fellow-believers. But a further consideration remains, and that concerns the influence his books have had on modern thought in general, and educational thought in particular. For the most weighty and voluminous of works which had failed to attract and hold any considerable public interest would scarcely have more than academic significance. But it can hardly be doubted that Mr. Wells has played an immense and incalculable part in forming the mind of the generation to which I belong. He is, in the words of Mr. Shanks, 'a vigorous and restless thinker who has powerfully disturbed the waters of his generation.' Vernon Lee has said that 'Mr. Wells possesses the intolerable power of setting me off thinking anew when I have shaken down comfortably among my own ideas, and do not want to hear any more of his.' So much for his influence; and no point would be served by the further elaboration, by quotation or otherwise, of what may be taken for granted.

But, lest we concur too readily in these high estimates,

it would be as well to look for awhile upon the other side, and at the same time to examine in slightly greater detail Mr. Wells' claim upon our attention. Lord Gorell, the Chairman of the Teachers' Registration Council, addressing, in 1925, the annual meeting of the Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools, launched an indictment against Mr. Wells that fell under the following three main heads: first that Mr. Wells is a type of a 'mischievous phenomenon in the world of education;' second, that he knows 'certainly nothing about history;' and third, that he knows 'very little about education.'<sup>1</sup>

So far as the first item in this formidable indictment is concerned, its force entirely depends upon what meaning we are to place upon the term 'education.' If we are to understand by it that type of public school - university education by which Lord Gorell has profited, Mr. Wells would no doubt quite readily and cheerfully plead guilty. He might even add that the more mischievous he was, the better. Lord Gorell said, for example, that he had seen a 'programme of education' drawn up by Mr. Wells that was 'ridiculous.' But on the other hand, Mr. Wells has in effect told us that he has seen (and suffered under) a system of education that was not so much 'ridiculous' as positively criminal. The second item, which arraigns Mr. Wells at the bar of History may be neglected and for a

<sup>1</sup> 'A Prime Minister had actually quoted Mr. Wells as an authority in the history of education. When that stage was reached it was time that the sedulously fostered fiction that Mr. Wells was an authority on education should be exploded.' LORD GORELL, *loc. cit.*

somewhat similar reason; for there is History – and History; the ‘history’ of the *Outline* for example, and ‘the trumpery dignity of classical history;’ the ‘history’ of Herodotus and the ‘history’ of Mr. Belloc.

The third item is, however, much more serious, and must be more fully dealt with as being intimately germane to our issue. But first let Mr. Wells speak in his own defence. ‘I am,’ he writes (in *The Salvaging of Civilization*), ‘upon my own ground here [i.e. in Education]. I am a trained teacher, and a student of pedagogic science . . .’ And again, in the same book: ‘I am an old and seasoned educationist; most of my earliest writings are concealed in the anonymity of the London educational papers of a quarter of a century ago, and my knowledge of educational literature is fairly extensive. I know in particular the literature of educational reform.’

Mr. Wells, to speak in general terms, stands entirely outside the traditional course of English ‘higher’ education. So completely is he detached from it that he has never been able to understand it, nor even to find any sympathy for it. His education roughly coincides with the advent of that science teaching which alone would have served, if not to revolutionize education, then at least to bring into it, not only a whole scale of new values and new ideals, but also a totally new conception of educational aims and methods. Accordingly he speaks as one of that growing class who have renounced, or never known, the old tradition; whether the people who compose this class have, or ever will have, a new tradition with which to replace it is a question of far-reaching importance, and,

in these days of rapid transition, of considerable obscurity. 'In one respect,' writes Mr. Wells, 'the old educational order had a great advantage over the new that Sanderson was to inaugurate . . . the new system was confessedly undeveloped and experimental.' If Sanderson may be regarded as one of the pioneers of the movement, then we may justly regard the Bert Smallways of *The War in the Air* and the 'Enry Straker of *Man and Superman* as typical of its lower class rank and file - men who have a certain technical ability and native acuity, but no culture - 'Vulgar little creatures; the sort of pert, limited souls that the old civilization of the twentieth century produced by the million.' Mr. Chesterton sees here a new and significant phenomenon in social life, as indeed it is. So far as the old tradition is concerned it is worth noting that some of the keenest critics of the old tradition have been those who have been through it - critics such as Samuel Butler and Mr. Henry Salt. So far this quarrel of Lord Gorell's is merely an aspect of the clash between an old tradition and a problematical, and untried, new one.

Mr. Wells has always (not by any means conformably with other great men) spoken in highest terms of his own education - once he had escaped from Mr. Sandsome,<sup>1</sup> and his like. 'Every man,' he writes, 'is likely to be biased in favour of his own educational course. Yet it seems to me that those three years of work [at South Kensington] were educational - that they gave a vision of the universe as a whole, and a discipline and a power such as no other course - could do.' Some little time after the completion of this

<sup>1</sup> 'The Phases of Mr. Sandsome,' *Certain Personal Matters*.

course he graduated Bachelor of Science of London University with 1st class Honours in Zoology and 2nd class Honours in Geology. He then became a teacher, this being the only course open to a young man without any 'pull,' and, indeed, the object of the scholarship by means of which he had found his way to South Kensington. That he took his duties seriously is evidenced by his successful study for the diploma of Fellow of the College of Preceptors, this being at that time the most distinguished educational qualification obtainable. To obtain it one must have acquired a fairly detailed knowledge of Psychology, Logic, and Ethics, as they were then understood, and a fairly wide knowledge of the history and practice of education, together with some discussion of educational purposes and aims. These were of course the days before the mass production of pedagogical works had been instituted in America - before the days of Prof. Dewey and Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, and the indefatigable and enormous industry of thousands of aspiring post-graduate toilers in the field of education - a field now limitless and sown thick with a barren crop of solemn technicalities.

A more or less direct result of his theoretical studies is to be found in *First and Last Things*, and *Mankind in the Making*; and the result of his practical acquaintance with teaching is shown in an interest in educational affairs written large over all his work. Circumstances, largely beyond his own control, took him from the school and led him to the trade of letters. 'I realized,' he has since written, 'that if I did not get out of this profession it would



fling me out . . . still I did that with a good deal of regret, and I never lost my interest in this tremendous thing I touched in those days - the business of education.'

This is as much of the academical and professional qualifications of Mr. Wells as one need know. Possibly it does not content Lord Gorell; but at least it does suffice to give Mr. Wells, provisionally at least, the title of 'educationist.' What, after all, is an educationist? Some of the best known and most influential of educational works have been written by men whose credentials would scarcely have satisfied a bureaucrat with an educational post to fill. For example there are Froebel, Pestalozzi, Herbert Spencer. On the other hand, of the professors of education in the University of London, one is a psychologist, another a mathematician, and a third an authority in English Literature. At conferences of educational Associations (whose name is legion) all sorts and conditions of people blossom forth, for the time being, as educationists. Prize Days, Founders' Days, and the like, discover educationists among the higher clergy, even in the higher ranks of the Army and Navy; and of course there is the ubiquitous politician. The Education Section of the British Association is a recognized dumping ground for all sorts of opinions - vaguely and pseudo-educational - that cannot conveniently be disposed of before the more strictly scientific sections - providing an audience for 'the preposterously funny denunciations' (as Mr. George Sampson termed them) of such as Bishop Welldon. The outstanding merit of education as a subject for discourse is that it demands no previous knowledge, no laborious

apprenticeship. One has but to get up and say what one thinks – or, more properly, what one thinks it is expedient to think. Now, although it may be very difficult to decide what an ‘educationist’ really is, these persons certainly merit the opprobrium of Lord Gorell’s ‘Mischievous phenomenon.’

However essential it may be to make clear the fact that Mr. Wells is not another individual of this ignorantly interfering type (which seems to be the gist of Lord Gorell’s objection), this is, of course, a totally unnecessary discussion, for it degrades our subject to a plane to which it most certainly does not belong. By allowing ourselves to be drawn into such an argument we are taking up the same attitude as did the critic in *Fanny’s First Play* who declined to criticize a play whose author he did not know – who proclaimed, in fact, the impossibility of so doing. One would scarcely pause to demand the credentials of a fireman who came to extinguish the fire that threatened one’s dwelling. The only significant fact is that we have before us these fifty odd volumes, the product of Mr. Wells’ untiring and amazing genius and industry, some of which volumes are almost exclusively educational treatises, and scarcely one is without some special interest for the educationist. Merely to argue such a mass of work away demands patience and application, and not a little industry. The books exist, and have been widely read, by teachers in particular; and as teachers have an ineradicable distaste, and even scorn, for ‘educational’ works (probably acquired during their ‘training’ days), practically the only avenue by which educational ideas can freely enter the

teaching profession as a whole is through such works as these we are preparing to examine. The vast activity of educational associations is an activity which does not to any considerable degree affect the great body of teachers. So far as 'educational' books are concerned, a well-known educationist, himself a writer of many books, once said to me: 'The only people who read books on education are themselves writers of books on education.' What counts in the long run is not system nor institutions, nor organizations; and certainly not the infinite talk of societies founded for this, that, and the other purpose; but the individual teacher's attitude to his own particular task, and it is just this that is so vitally affected by such works as these of Mr. Wells. Such a view is without doubt repugnant to the official and academic mind, and yet the history of education shows quite conclusively that reform has invariably had its origin in the school itself. What could be more obvious than that the educational theorist can never do more than discern (often very belatedly) the movements that are taking place in the actual work of the schools? The theory of the future, that is to say, is based upon the practice of the present, and this is a permanent and unchangeable relation.

For good or ill Mr. Wells has powerfully affected educational thought: if for good, then it is profitable to inquire what good; if for ill, then it is obviously desirable that his evil influence should be made clear, to the effect that it may be removed, or at least combated as a 'mischievous phenomenon.' Not however with a contemptuous gesture, but viewing his books as the serious contributions of an

acute and unusually well-filled mind to the solution of an ever urgent question:— what are we *trying* to do, what *ought* we to try to do with, and for, our children. Whether you agree with Mr. Wells or no; whether you feel irritated or inspired; whether you accept him as the omniscient prophet of his age or as no more than a mere novelist who cannot (as Mr. Winston Churchill has said, and Lord Gorell inferred) mind his own proper business,<sup>1</sup> his work and his influence remain. On the other hand, we need not fly to the opposite extreme of Jacobinism; and this said, one may be as uncompromisingly critical as one can, for criticism is the life of ideas, just as surely as uncritical acceptance is their death.

<sup>1</sup>This complaint, by the way, comes very curiously from two men who have essayed the art of the novelist, with, one is bound to say, very mediocre success!

## CHAPTER TWO

### From *The Time Machine* to *Joan and Peter*

'We are going to write, subject only to our limitations, about the whole of human life. We are going to deal with political questions and religious questions and social questions. We are going to write about it all. Before we have done, we will have all life within the scope of the novel' (1914).

★

IN his essay, 'The Late Mr. Wells,'<sup>1</sup> Mr. H. L. Mencken traces that process of 'gradual and obscure decay' by which Mr. Wells the consummate artist of *Tono-Bungay* became obsessed with the 'Messianic delusion' of the writer of *Joan and Peter*, and of that 'idiotic religious tract' *God the Invisible King*; the 'tin-pot reformer . . . merchant of banal pedagogics . . . hawker of sociological liver-pills.' Mr. G. K. Chesterton has traced the transition from the lighthearted cosmic romances and world-destructions of the early Wells, to his later preoccupation with that infinitely more romantic and significant thing the human soul. Now, whether we choose to regard this transition, with Mr. Mencken, as the loss of a great artist, or, with Mr. Chesterton, as the attainment of a truer and deeper insight, it remains a fact, and one of cardinal importance when we essay to examine Mr. Wells' work.

But, before more fully investigating the character of this development, it would be as well to deal with a criticism of Mr. Wells quite frequently and confidently made. It is variously stated, but usually comes to this: that Mr. Wells is, or seems to be, constantly changing his mind,

<sup>1</sup> *Prejudices: First Series.*

or in some other fashion, contradicting himself. 'Do I contradict myself?' said Whitman. 'Very well then, I contradict myself.' The matter is not, it is true, of very great importance; but certainly, upon a superficial view there is about Mr. Wells' work a certain effect of a constantly changing orientation, an effect, at times, even of irresponsibility; he is not above special pleading in what appeals to him as a worthy cause; he appears at times to be working out his thought as he goes along, making, to use a phrase of his own, his beliefs 'as he wants them;' conducting, to use a phrase of Mr. Chesterton's, 'his education in public.' All this is true; to take specific examples, he is quite capable of praising the 'elementary teachers' of the country in one place, and in another place of vilifying them; of decrying Eugenics here, and advocating it there; of demanding fully qualified technical experts in one book and making fun of them in another; of pointing out the iniquity of tariffs in one set of circumstances, and demanding them in another. But this superficial effect of contradiction should not blind us to his essentially constant attitude to life and its problems, nor to his absolute and unvarying honesty; nor should it obscure the fact that, though it may not be possible to arrive at a clearly formulated and minutely defined 'Wellsian' philosophy, yet there is to be found in his works indisputable evidence of a view of life essentially a steady and a whole view — a *Weltanschauung* that is unmistakable even if it cannot be logically presented. Mr. Thurston Hopkins has said that it is 'impossible to prophesy anything about the final beliefs of Mr. Wells.' This is not so. It is merely impos-

sible to prophesy anything about the final form that these beliefs may happen to take. Impossible for the simple and sufficient reason that we, no more than Mr. Wells (in spite of the fact that he is by way of being a professional prophet), can foretell how things will develop, and that there can be no more finality about the shape of events, any more than there is about the human soul. But whatever may happen, it will find Mr. Wells ready as ever to examine, to criticize, to offer advice and admonition.

None the less there is plainly a vast difference between the writer of *The Time Machine* and the writer of *Joan and Peter*; and the development from the one to the other is a fact of cardinal importance in the study of the works that lie between. The only question concerns the selection of that aspect of this development that is likely to prove of most value for our immediate purpose. The happiest years of Mr. Wells' life must have been the few closing years of the nineteenth and the opening years of the twentieth century. He has himself spoken of 'that remote and comparatively happy year 1898.' And again in 1922, he records:

'The other day my friend Mr. Charlie Chaplin brought his keen observant eyes back to London, after an absence of ten years.

"People are not laughing and careless here as they used to be," he told me. "It isn't the London I remember. They are anxious. Something hangs over them."

Again, Dr. Martineau of *The Sacred Places of the Heart* speaks of a sense of coming smash 'a new state of mind. Before the war it was abnormal - Now it is almost the normal state with whole classes of intelligent people.' In

those remote days, the world seemed to have paused awhile in a state of unstable, but seemingly stable enough, equilibrium. The advances of science had brought ease and comparative prosperity to many; the standard of life had appreciably risen, and these scientific advances, and the attendant industrial development, were then sufficiently modest and germinal to have been provisionally absorbed and not sufficiently great to have brought the evils of mal-absorption in their train.<sup>1</sup> It was not so true then, as it is to-day, that the rapidity of scientific advance and industrial and commercial development, had, as I have elsewhere written, 'created a complex environment to which the newly awakened spiritual faculty of man has in vain tried to adjust itself.' There was leisure for discussion, and though there were wrongs that demanded righting, it was quite confidently believed that we had but to meet and discuss, and a way would be found. Socialism was a polite hobby for the more intelligent well-to-do; 'slumming' a society craze. Those curious lines of Alfred Austin's, absurd as they may be, yet strike an authentic note:

'Is life worth living? Yes, so long  
As there are wrongs to right,  
Wail of the weak against the strong,  
Or tyranny to fight. . . .'

And so on. Life was certainly well worth the living, and becomes, upon this basis of its worth, ever more worthy.

'On the whole,' Mr. Wells has since written of this

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chapter III.



period, 'sustaining and constructive forces did indeed for a time more than balance the malignant drift of chance, and the natural ignorance, prejudice, blind passion, and wasteful self seeking of mankind,' and there undoubtedly had been for several generations an 'easy general forward movement' that had seemed to justify all the hopes of 'progress.'

The problems to which Mr. Wells then applied himself were treated in the main as intellectual problems, amenable to reasoned and urbane presentation. There is about his books of this period an air of tolerance rarely broken by irascibility, an air of dispassionate calmness rarely ruffled by hints of that later tendency to scold. We have, belonging to this period, a survey of life in general, (*First and Last Things*) of social organization, (*New Worlds for Old*) of education, (*Mankind in the Making*); to which trilogy may be added his first exercise in deliberate and calculated prophecy, *Anticipations*; and in these books may be found laid down, once and for all, the essential features of the Wellsian philosophy. What remained was their working out in a time which brought huge unimagined and unforeseen stresses; which brought catastrophe and ruin to millions; and there is no wonder if, under these stresses, something had to go; and that something was, as often as not, Mr. Wells' temper. Upon this particular aspect of his development the full and intimate account of Mr. Britling's reactions to the war serves to throw much light, as also, in another key, does the strange alteration in character that befell the 'Author' in Boon's *Wild Asses of the Devil*, subsequent to his

acquaintance with the devil who was responsible for the letting loose of those asses in the world.

*Mankind in the Making* is Mr. Wells' most considerable and most closely reasoned and definitely intended educational work. For this alone it merits our special attention. The spirit of this book was very general at the time it appeared. One felt inclined to sit down and discuss such an argument, an argument which keeps consistently close to earth, and invites us, not to a vague and infinitely distant New Jerusalem, but to a very fine and efficient school just round the next corner. Though it obviously 'dates' (Dr. Cunliffe writes of it, 'The advanced educationist in the United States of to-day would find Wells' educational programme quite conservative'), it remains, having due regard to its time, one of the best, and probably one of the most timely and fruitful, of educational books of this century. That it is in so many particulars out-of-date is, after all, a great tribute to the essential sanity of Mr. Wells' principles as there laid down and to the positive effect of his teaching.

But time moved on; the disintegration of Western civilization, temporarily concealed, began to show itself. In *The War in the Air* (1908) Mr. Wells was already talking of those who 'complacently assumed a necessary progress towards which they had no moral responsibility. They did not realize that this security of progress was a thing still to be won or lost, and that the time to win it was a time that passed.' On the eve of the European war appeared *The World Set Free*, in which romance the ever-increasing urgency of Mr. Wells' concern for the welfare

of humanity first unmistakably shows itself. The story element which looms so large in those romances written in the first eight years of the century, begins for the first time seriously to diminish, and the propagandist element proportionally to increase; the 'death' of the artist was imminent. So events moved ever more quickly and inexorably to the final *débâcle* of 1914, and to that great collapse which at the time appeared due to the catastrophic incidence of the war, but now appears as a collapse that the war served merely to reveal. 'The spectacular catastrophe of the Great War has revealed an accumulation of destructive forces in our outwardly prosperous society of which few of us had dreamt.'

Though Mr. Wells had already uttered (in what he himself has termed 'the deliberate pessimism of youth') the dreadful and fatalistic prophecies of the *Time Machine*; though he had portrayed with stark and vivid realism the tragic world before the impact of the comet, and its insane torturing of the feeble Willie Leadford, he was to find happening in his own world things almost as dreadful as any he had imagined. The ideals of his earlier sociological work were removed from the plane of the ideal to the plane of the urgently necessary; that civilization had its way still to find was, in 1908, a calmly enough proposed dictum; in 1914 it was a fact to be shouted from the house-tops, to be ingeminated in any and every fashion, so long as these were emphatic enough.

Thus in that urgent post-war tract, *The Salvaging of Civilization*, ideals often to be met with in earlier works are restated with all the emphasis due to indispensable

measures of salvage. But they are not, in the main, new proposals. For example, his insistence upon the necessity for a World State is to be found as far back as 1901. He then wrote (in *Anticipations*), discussing the necessary foundations of the process of social development, 'this process aims finally, and will attain to the establishment of one World State at peace with itself.' Or again the germ of the project of a 'Bible of Civilization' which takes so prominent a place in the *Salvaging* you may find in *Mankind in the Making*, and yet again in *A Modern Utopia*.

What has really happened is that the fine, free, careless rapture (or as Mr. J. D. Beresford has termed it 'the exuberance') in which his earlier romances were written, and the subsequent mood of calm intellectual and theoretical examination in which his 'sociological' works were written, broke down under the pressure of an ever-increasing intolerance for that human failure and foolishness, which events were serving ever more clearly to make manifest; a spirit of exacerbation and impatience ensued, and *Tono-Bungay* which had replaced *The Sleeper Wakes*, was in due time itself replaced by *The Dream*, and in the examination of those three works will be found the main secret of Mr. Wells' development, for they are essentially treatments of the same spiritual theme. And in *The Dream* we have in Sarnac's continued protest that, if his hearers keep on interrupting him for explanations and for comment, he will never get his story told,<sup>1</sup> a symbol of the

<sup>1</sup> 'No!' cried Sarnac, stopping a question from Willow by a gesture. 'I shall never tell my story,' said Sarnac, 'if you interrupt with questions. I was *telling you* . . .'

tendency of the later Wells to adopt an uncompromisingly pontifical method, and to substitute dogma for argument and discussion.

So we arrive at the later Wells with all his scoldings, his impatience with the world as it is, his subordination of all his powers to the one ever-present obsession with social regeneration; but who has, on the whole, merely restated, with some dottings of the i's, much crossing and recrossing of the t's, the ideal principles that he laid down more than seventeen years ago. This is what Mr. Mencken regards as his succumbing to the 'messianic delusion,' but what one might just as fairly regard as the very natural destiny of one such as Mr. Wells, living through a time such as that he lived through; of one, that is, whose habit of mind is (as he himself has told us) 'colossally interrogative' and 'anticipatory,' one whose mind 'confronts and perplexes my sense of things as they simply are, and reaches forward to the shaping of the future.' He is a man such as Kant had in mind when he wrote: 'The gradual approach of human nature to its true end is possible only through the efforts of liberally inclined propagandists who take an interest in the world's welfare, and who are capable of conceiving the idea of a future improved state.' In brief the import of this development (from the special view point of the educationist) is that it suggests the main outline of the scenery, so to speak, of the stage upon which the drama of modern education is to be played. Education cannot, as a practical question (or indeed even as a theoretical one), be considered apart from the actual movement of events, and it is in direct *rapport* with

this movement that Mr. Wells has himself developed.

There is another aspect of the development of Mr. Wells' method that is, perhaps, quite as important, and certainly quite as germane to our issue. Some of his works are primarily literature. Others of his works are purely intellectual discussions of sociological problems, however much they may owe in their expression to the technical skill of an eminent master of the literary craft, however much their logical value may be enhanced (and possibly also distorted) by the persuasive power of a master of special pleading. Our first concern with works of art is to experience them. Our proper attitude towards books of an intellectual and theoretical character is an attitude of critical intellectual attention. The two things are distinct and incompatible, and we confuse them at our peril. 'The reader of Art Kipps' fortunes,' writes Ivor Brown, 'may, if he will, dig out the raw material for a first-rate Fabian tract. But he would be better advised to let such betterment be and concentrate, if I may be pardoned the pun, on Art for Art's sake.' To search with German thoroughness and American élan for propaganda in the purely æsthetic is indeed indefensible.

The matter is however further complicated by the fact that not always has Mr. Wells kept his dual personality of artist and thinker quite distinct. It is of course hardly to be expected that he could do so. To take an extreme example, in *Joan and Peter*, Mr. Wells the novelist, having in his own inimitable style set the story going, abdicates in favour of the thinker, and only returns at intervals (perhaps, one might hazard, when the movement lags *too*

obviously) to interpolate brief and illuminating flashes of artistic brilliance. One is reminded of that type of musical comedy or 'revue' in which, upon a given and often ludicrously slender cue, one of the characters steps towards the footlights and breaks into a song, bearing but the remotest significance to the action of the play, serving no other purpose than that of a 'musical' interlude, and, perhaps, merely affording a display of some special talent. In its literary form it is the interpolated essay of Fielding, the sententious aside of Thackeray. The ninth chapter of *Joan and Peter* is a case in point. Mr Wells in this instance, recognized the fact himself, for after thirty pages of varied discussion ranging through Africa, Imperialism, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, Ulster, Tariff Reform, Regent Street, the coming of the automobile, Whitehall, the South African War, dreams, education and so forth, he observes, 'But it is high time that Joan and Peter came back into this narrative. For it is their story. . . .' A more recent and equally illustrative example is to be found in *Christina Alberta's Father*. With the death of Christina Alberta's 'father' the story finishes; but Mr. Wells lingers awhile upon the stage to draw together the threads of what propagandist argument the book has, and to deliver one more disquisition on the Wellsian theme of the world mind that is to 'Swallow up individual egotistical men in its common aims.'

The distinction between the artist and thinker is integral to any study of Mr. Wells. It leads to much apparent contradiction. To quote Mr. Mencken, 'As an artist Mr. Wells had' (the past tense should be noted) 'a

lively and charming imagination, he wrote with the utmost fluency, he had humour and eloquence, he had a sharp eye for the odd and intriguing in human character, and, most of all, he was full of feeling, and could transmit it to the reader.' As examples of apparent contradiction caused directly by the differing inspiration of the two factors in his work, we find the thinker demanding scientific knowledge and technical skill as a necessary factor in progress; the artist draws for us Dr. Winkles<sup>1</sup> of *The Food of the Gods* and Mr. Farr<sup>1</sup> of the *Undying Fire*. The thinker demands order, system, and foresight. The artist sees pre-war Germany, and draws the Heinrich of *Mr. Britling*. The thinker demands an enlightened bureaucracy, a completely systematized social organization; the artist shows us the Baileys. And, yet again, the thinker demands educational associations dedicated to the furthering of the welfare of education, the spread of educational ideas; the artist with extreme economy and a vivid sense of human character shows us - Miss Murgatroyd!<sup>2</sup> To the pure thinker, particularly if his thoughts habitually play around a Utopian society of the far future, our present social organization may well seem beyond all hope, a veritable 'Age of Confusion,' a time in which, *horribile dictu*, men are actually 'permitted to sell brightly coloured distended bladders to children,' in our streets! But to one who has a vital sense of human values, of the interplay of human character, our life even as it is, is strangely shot with beauty. The thinker therefore has developed a 'local pessimism;' while the artist's perception

<sup>1</sup> See page 68.

<sup>2</sup> See page 74.



of beauty remains undimmed, and his optimism persists. In brief Mr. Wells is very often, like the Ibsen of *Brand* and of *The Wild Duck* the keenest critic of his own ideas. An excellent example is afforded by words that he puts in the mouth of William Clissold: 'My distant cousin Wells . . . has written frequently and abundantly of the supreme necessity of education, of that race he detects in human affairs between "education and catastrophe" . . . and he has shown a pathetic disposition throughout a large part of his life to follow schoolmasters about and ask them to be more so, but different. . . . He produced encyclopædic schemes and curricula that no schoolmaster would or could undertake.' Mr. Wells has on several occasions adopted this tone of semi-jocular badinage in speaking of his own earlier work.

In such cases of self-contradiction, which are we to follow, the artist or the thinker? 'It is,' wrote Dixon Scott, 'the flashes and splashes, and sudden, unforeseen sallies that are reliable, that reveal; it is the deliberate calculations that go wrong.' This is illuminating, but requires certain modification. For so many of Mr. Wells' 'deliberate calculations' have gone right. Aeroplanes, tanks, war in the air, war involving the decay of Western civilization; these and many more were strikingly accurate prophecies. But, it is important to note, these were developments of a more or less mechanical character. They (even the war) did not involve any very profound or obscure problems of human psychology. Whatever we may say of the skill of the player, the cards were undoubtedly all on the table. Take for contrast a prophecy that went wrong. 'I cannot,' he

said of the submarine boat, before it had come, 'imagine it.' Then if you will turn to that wonderful description of the submarine sailors in *The Undying Fire* you may discover one of the neglected factors which rendered the imagination of such a vessel impossible. It was, briefly, a sense of the determination, the heroism, and the docility of men; he did not sufficiently allow for their 'quality.' Where the prophecies involve that incalculable factor, the human soul, as do his prophecies about the mother of the future, they do undoubtedly tend to 'go wrong.'<sup>1</sup> Education again is essentially a spiritual process, and in no field are deliberate calculations more fraught with danger, or more subject to the unforeseen intrusion of some unknown quantity that will render the whole calculation radically false. This Mr. Wells has seen as clearly as anyone. 'So long,' he says, 'as one adopts the assumptions of the old political economist, and assumes men without idiosyncrasy, without prejudices, without, as people say, wills of their own - the business of prophecy is easy. But from the first I feel distrust for that facility in prophesying; I perceived that always there lurked something, an incalculable opposition to mechanically conceived forces, in law, in usage, in the poetic power of exceptional individual men.'

Boswell's immortal Oliver Edwards 'had tried hard to be a philosopher . . . but cheerfulness was always breaking in;' Mr. Wells has tried equally hard; but the artist (he

<sup>1</sup> As, further, in his pre-war affirmation of the impossibility of training a 'civilian' army in under two years or so (or officers in under five) - *The Commonsense of Warfare*, 1914).

whom Dixon Scott termed the 'genuine,' and Mr. Mencken the 'real' Wells) was always breaking in, and revealing in sudden flashes a sense of beauty, of humour, a sympathy with, and an acute perception of the uniqueness and the significance of human character with which (with the best will in the world) we cannot credit the philosopher. For, in what is possibly from the artistic standpoint one of the worst of his novels,<sup>1</sup> *The Dream*, may be found the precious jewel of Matilda Good. And while the thinker in *Mr. Polly* ('the high-browed, spectacled gentleman living at Highbury') saw 'those ill-adjusted units that abound in a society that has failed to develop a collective intelligence -' and so forth, he did not see, as the artist had seen, the immortal Uncle Pentstemon. Though the thinker 'wrestled with what he called "Social problems" in a bloodless, but at times, I think one must admit, an extremely illuminating manner,' he did not see Mr. Polly's barge pole, nor the dead eel of Uncle Jim; and so the epic quality of the defence of the Potwell Inn completely escaped him; and such things are life.

<sup>1</sup> I am classifying it here as a 'novel,' but its character of a 'dream' places it among the romances.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Progress and Change

'But I know that I believe so firmly in this great World at Peace that lies so close to our own, ready to come into being as our wills turn towards it, that I must needs go about this present world of disorder and darkness like an exile, doing such feeble things as I can towards the world of my desire, now hopefully, now bitterly, as the moods may happen, until I die.'

★

NEARLY a fourth part of the work of Mr. Wells deals in some form or another with the future of mankind. It was his earlier work, with its stories of *The Year Million*, its pictures of the dying pangs of our planet, of the London of A.D. 2000, and so forth, that gave Mr. Wells the title, and invested him with the mantle of 'prophet;' and this mantle, assumed in the exercise of his art as a novelist, he has retained in his later character of propagandist. The 'Discovery of the Future,' thus early made was directly a result of his scientific training, as well as being an equally direct expression of his own peculiar genius, his 'brooding pre-occupation with how ideas will shape presently, what they will lead to, what seed they will sow, and how they will wear;' thus, for once, the stars in their courses worked together for our enchantment and profit.

The terms 'evolution' and 'progress' are often enough used, and yet are used so lightly, and are so little understood, that they may be the cause of endless discussion. The fact of *change* is obvious enough, but to call it anything else, without due critical regard for the terms used is extremely hazardous. To term it 'progress' begs a very involved question. The practice of applying this term to

anything that looks like change has had one result in the expression of a very widespread scepticism as to the reality of any progress at all; and not only a scepticism as to whether there really has been any general amelioration of the lot of man in historic times, or any real change in his character, but also as to whether the vaunted 'progress' of this ultra-progressive age is destined to leave any more enduring mark upon the future than have all the other tentative beginnings of civilization in the western world. This scepticism is the necessary and obvious reaction of any mind sufficiently intelligent to see through the vast welter of shifting and changing modern conditions to the realities beneath. To it Mr. Wells has himself often given expression; as for example in the words of Gidding of *The Passionate Friends*. He asks Stratton what there is in this self-satisfied modern 'civilization' that promises any greater degree of permanence than all the beginnings of the past.

'There's Science,' said Stratton a little doubtfully.

'At Cnossus, there, they had Daedalus, Sir, fifty centuries ago! He was an F.R.S. all right - we're too conceited about our little modern things.' Anatole France has summed up *his* view of all this 'progress' in the dictum that 'man's destiny is to fall into contrary excesses in succession.'

The process of change, or as some may prefer to term it 'progress,' has resulted in what is termed 'civilization.' Can civilization exist without change? 'Democracy,' says Norman Douglas, 'has substituted Progress for Civilization.' When we compare the ancient static civilizations typical of the East with the mushroom-like growths of the

'progressive' West, it is clearly enough to be seen that these embody ideals that may be regarded as diametrically opposed; that we have here illustrated that dichotomy drawn in *The Discovery of the Future* between the 'backward looking' type of mind and the 'forward-looking.' As Mr. Lawrence Carmine told Mr. Direck (*Mr. Britling Sees it Through*), 'The primitive patriarchal village is Utopia to India and China . . . or at any rate it is their social ideal. They want no Utopias.' There is neither historical nor external evidence that can unmistakably and finally establish the superiority of the one ideal over the other; and as for *internal* evidence – that is to say as regards the life of the individual man under one or the other system – what evidence there is may just as well be used on one side as on the other. For example, Gandhi has written: 'India's salvation consists in unlearning what she has learned during the last fifty years. The railways, telegraphs . . . have all to go . . . There was true wisdom in the sages of old having so regulated society as to limit the material condition of the people. Therein lies salvation.' The Erewhonians came, it may be remarked, in the matter of machinery, to very much the same conclusion, even if on rather different grounds. And again there is the late W. H. Hudson who, in *A Crystal Age* writes: 'Thus we know that in the past men sought after knowledge of various kinds, asking not whether it was for good or evil . . . and while their knowledge grew apace, that better knowledge and discrimination which the Father gives to every living soul, both in man and beast, was taken from them. Thus by increasing their riches they were made

poorer . . . by seeing much they became afflicted with blindness . . .'

So much must of necessity be suggested in order that our problem may appear in its true light. But whatever be our own feeling in regard to these troubled matters, two certainties remain. The first is the fact that the environment in which the work of the teacher lies, is a rapidly changing one; and whether we like the process or not, whether we elect to term it progression or retrogression, it is one that the practical educationist must take into consideration as being one of the basal conditions of his work. The world the pupils of to-day enter when they pass from the school will not be the same world as that into which we ourselves passed from *our* schools; that is a fact that cannot possibly be denied, even if it may be deplored. Not only has the teacher, as an individual, to make his own personal adjustment to changing conditions (a difficult and sufficiently trying task), but the dynamic character of our social and economic environment must find a reflection in his work in the school; the school must, if it is to be anything more than a deadening routine, maintain an active relation to life. It should not be forgotten that the admission of Greek into the school (as, nowadays, the admission of science) was directly due to 'modernist' influence, and it is not altogether fantastic to imagine some ultra-conservative head master of the far future holding on with grim determination, and in the face of powerful 'modernist' tendencies, to the dry and desiccated remnants of a sterile scientific legacy from the dim past. There are many other questions that centre around this fact of change; it may be

that the teacher has some definite part to play in the process; it may be, as the late Mr. Clutton Brock suggested, that it is his duty to prepare the child for a better world than the one in which we ourselves live. It may even be that in his hands lies to no small degree the shaping of the future; Mr. Wells believes it does; Mr. Shaw on the contrary has affirmed that 'there is no way out through the schoolmaster.' These, however, are questions for the educational philosopher and need not, here, detain us. The first fact, therefore, is the fact that for good or ill we live in a rapidly changing environment.

The second fact is that Mr. Wells believes utterly and unreservedly in progress. 'I believe,' he has written, 'in the future of mankind.' And in another place he writes: 'On the whole - and nowadays almost steadily' (this was in 1908) - 'things get better.' Though much has happened since that date, the spirit of that utterance has remained with him, however much it may tend to become obscured by his deepening local pessimism, his increasing impatience with the present. And so the cardinal point in his philosophy, by which all his work may be orientated, is this conception of and belief in the progress of man, and his consequent concern with the shaping of the future.

'Every present,' said Leibnitz, 'is laden with the past, and big with the future.' Langelier, in Anatole France's *White Stone*, tells his companions that 'Our knowledge of what the future has in store is in proportion of our acquaintance with the past.' Therefore, as in addition Mr. Wells has avowed himself 'a prophet by use and wont . . . more interested in to-morrow than in to-day' and has



affirmed that the past is just 'material for future guessing,' our next concern is to see how this 'past' appears to Mr. Wells; for that will obviously give us a valuable clue to his reading of the future. In the first place, of course, his discovery of the past (except such 'past' as is revealed by the methods of comparative anatomy) is of far more recent date than his discovery of the future. In *The Future in America* he wrote, 'All human history presents itself to me as the unconscious, or half-conscious struggle of human thought to emerge from the sightless interplay of instinct, individual passion, prejudice, and ignorance.' And again in the same work, 'All human affairs are mental affairs.' Later, in *First and Last Things*, we find that 'The essential fact in man's history to my sense is the slow unfolding of a sense of community with his kind.' Here is emphasized the *mental* aspect of progress, the central factor in which is the growth of this 'sense of community' to ever wider and wider references, until it becomes the basal principle underlying the world state of the future. Oswald Sydenham, in *Joan and Peter* sums up the case thus: 'All history is the record of an effort in man to form communities, an effort against resistance. There seems no natural and proper limit to human community. . . . That is the final teaching of history.'

But there is another factor to take into consideration, and that is the possibility of ever-increasing control of nature - scientific in origin, and administered by highly trained and efficient experts - the development of power, the utilizing of natural resources. Thus in the *World Set Free* Mr. Wells writes, 'The history of mankind is the

history of the attainment of external power,' and in masterly fashion he outlines the steps by which man progressed, from his first great discovery of fire, to the fatal (but in effect beneficial) atomic bombs. Now, whether we choose to consider as of primary importance the *mental* phenomena associated with progress, or the scientific and mechanical aspects of it, we have, it is important to notice, merely been observing its *outward* manifestation. We are not explaining it, nor are we attempting to explain it; we are merely putting forward a description of that aspect of it that we wish, for our immediate purpose, to present. In *First and Last Things* Mr. Wells has himself shown us how the logical process really works in actual practice. The typical syllogism goes, not as the text-books give it, but somewhat like this:

S<sub>1</sub> is P

S<sub>2</sub> is probably classifiable with S<sub>1</sub>

So S<sub>2</sub> is probably more or less P.

Try it.

So, in this matter of 'progress,' Mr. Wells seems to have argued thus:—

Scientific progress has resulted in the attainment  
of external power.

Human progress is probably classifiable with  
scientific progress.

So human progress is probably more or less the attain-  
ment of external power.

Try it.

And in *The World Set Free* you may see it 'tried out.'

The Marxist, arguing from different premisses, but in

much the same way, sees social evolution as an affair of the interaction of economic forces; Carlyle's *Teufelsdröckh* saw it as a process of the elaboration and evolution of clothes; the thoroughgoing Neo-Darwinist sees it as a struggle for existence eliminating undesirable elements and tending always to some incalculable end (but an end calculable were we but in possession of all the data), obeying always some mechanical laws. For his particular purpose in *Mankind in the Making* Mr. Wells regarded life as a 'tissue of births,' and quite legitimately. The scientist sees the animating principle in terms of science; the artist (when he troubles about the process at all) in terms of art; the politician in terms of political theory and organization. The possibilities are indeed endless, so long as we are content to confine our attention to some one particular aspect or other, and to follow out its implications so that we may view the aspect of truth thus revealed. Behind all social speculation, as, indeed, behind all speculation whatsoever, stands the spectre of what Vaihinger has termed 'As If.'

But still the inner fact, the essential nature of the process escapes us; its origin unknown, its goal unknowable; and in general, we are content to leave it so. From the typical Marxist materialistic interpretation of history (and its biological counterpart in Neo-Darwinism) to Mr. Wells' conception of its partial, at least, mental basis is a vast step, certainly in the right direction, from the educationist's standpoint. If, as Butler suggested,<sup>1</sup> Darwin

<sup>1</sup> 'The Neo-Darwinist doctrine of natural selection . . . involves an essentially mindless conception of the Universe.'

banished mind from the universe, Mr. Wells may be said, to a great degree, to have recalled it. But still the deeper question remains; what is the essential character and meaning of the process? Is there no deeper principle discoverable by which all these perplexing aspects (each, within its limits, adequate and true) can be seen as *aspects* merely? Or, again, is it of any moment to the educationist that he should seek such a principle, or is the external aspect of the process sufficient? 'Is there a plot to the show?' asks William Clissold; 'Is it a drama, moving through a vast complexity to a definite end, or at any rate moving in a definite direction?' Many explanations – beautifully systematized and specious explanations – have been offered for the consolation of mankind, and yet – 'there is some invincible fact or group of facts outside of, or positively inconsistent with, all [these] explanations.'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wells has himself hinted at such 'fact,' at something which cannot be perceived in an external examination of the process. 'The process,' he wrote (in *Anticipations*), 'has an air of being independent of any collective will in man – rather the expression of a greater will . . .' Or again, as previsionary of his later theological development, we find him writing (in 1906), 'Much may be foretold as certain, much more as possible, but the last decisions, and the greatest decisions, lie in the hearts and wills of unique, incalculable men . . . here insight is of more account than induction, and the perception of fine tones than the counting of heads.'

To the philosopher it is this question that appeals as

<sup>1</sup> William Clissold.

the essential one. But Mr. Wells is not, in this sense, a philosopher. His concern is not primarily with the *riddle* of existence at all, but with the intricate tangle of social and economic affairs through the ages,<sup>1</sup> with the confusion of our present life. The source of Mr. Wells' concern with the material and surface features of progress, and his comparative unconcern with the profounder problem of *meaning* is not difficult to discover. He has stated it himself beyond any question. 'Many men of commanding intelligence have been historians, and I offer no comparison between the intellectual quality of historians and that of scientific men. But trained as I was in the clear, subtle, and beautiful disciplines of comparative anatomy, I found myself amazed at the easy carelessness of the average historian's habitual terminology, his slovenly parallelisms and reckless assumptions.' Here is the exact point of difference between the theory of a 'science' of history and a 'philosophy' of history. History presents itself to Mr. Wells not only as 'mere material for future guessing,'<sup>2</sup> but as a dead, somewhat poorly-preserved, specimen on which he may use the 'clear, subtle, and beautiful disciplines' appropriate to anatomical science. In one of his earliest essays in futurity (*The Discovery of the Future*) it can clearly enough be seen how this 'scientific' conception of

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XI, page 165.

<sup>2</sup> This view he has of course somewhat qualified. In the *Outline* (which concludes, as Mr. George Sampson has put it 'as a Tract for the Times') the purpose of history, or of 'common historical ideas' is to assist in the creation of a concept of a 'United States of the World.' It is still, however, an 'instrument,' merely 'material,' to be used for a purpose.

history tends from the very first to underly his work. In it he wrote, 'The man of science comes to believe at last that the events of the year A.D. 4,000 are as fixed, settled, and unchangeable as the events of the year 1600.'

But of course the beautifully disciplined technique cannot be used; for the corollary to his own proposition is that the faults he ascribed to the 'average historian' were precisely the faults that that same historian ascribed to him when, much to the historian's disgust, he found Mr. Wells trespassing upon his own preserve, and (crowning crime!) being read by thousands where the historian could barely count his units.<sup>1</sup>

Here we meet the dual personality of Mr. Wells in a new aspect. The Wells who experiences and expresses with the persuasion and power of the artist the mighty drama of human history; who has produced an 'Outline of History' that is unrivalled and inimitably graphic; that is, whatever the historian may say of it, or however he may cavil at its detail, a significant achievement in historical literature and likely to prove Mr. Wells' most pregnant contribution to educational thought; this Wells is opposed to the Wells who desires and seeks scientific precision of

<sup>1</sup> For example see A. W. Gomme: *Mr. Wells as Historian*: Mr. Wells does not possess perception, nor 'the power of expression by means of generalization and definition.' In consequence he is 'unable himself to see the meaning of facts, and will only lead the reader through a maze of unmeaning details' (page 4). And again (page 31), 'Mr Wells has a mind the opposite of the Greek, creative and imaginative indeed, but vague and unscientific, with a feeling only for an indefinite largeness, not for shape.' *Tu quoque!*

analysis, and accurate forecasting upon data so obtained. And so we find the great men of the past tending to be examined not in the light of their own achievements in their own age, but in the light of a standard set up and fixed by the contemplation of some imagined life of the future; just as, in his student days, Mr. Wells examined the swimming bladder of the fish in the light of its later development into the lung of man. Regarded thus it is undoubtedly a ridiculously elementary organ, but to the fish it may well appear the last word in convenience and utility. In any case it is no good upbraiding the fish for not having made any better use of its capabilities. The *Outline*, whatever its merits may be, can never be regarded as *pure* history; it is what the French call *histoire à thèse*; and in the opposition suggested above is to be found the prime cause of much of the confusions and contradictions that critics have discovered in Mr. Wells' philosophy of history. Criticism that does not take this into full consideration is criticism lost and astray.

We have then, as the two factors in human progress that have presented themselves to Mr. Wells as mainly operative towards this process, first the advance in scientific and technical knowledge and control, and second the origin, growth, and proliferation of ideas. Ultimately the former must merge into the latter. As a matter of fact, at present, scientific resources are, Mr. Wells has told us, far in advance of the wisdom that should inspire their use. 'The last hundred years,' said Mr. Sanderson in his tragic last speech, 'has resulted in a race between the changed conditions that science has brought about and the organiza-

tion required to control them, in what has been called by Mr. Wells a race between education and catastrophe.' So we find ourselves, when all is said, with the conception of a primarily mental movement towards a Utopia, which is, first and foremost, a World-State, and secondly one in which all men are well disposed one towards another; in which all inimical influences having been eliminated or overcome, human ideals can work themselves out to fuller and fuller realization. Thus, the educationist appears as one of the main transforming agencies; as (to use the type of metaphor dear to pedagogical writers) the midwife of the new age; as the cultivator who stands by and tends the very growing plant of progress; for it is in the hands of the teacher that the possibility of the gradual inculcation of ideas leading towards the consummation of all earthly hopes lies. And the phrase *the inculcation of ideas* must be particularly noted; it is the key to so much that follows. 'The teacher has to be the very soul and centre of a reconstructed human life – nothing less than that. Only by and through the teachers – the heroic teachers of the world, not all the teachers – will it be possible to conceive of any escape from the distressful, unsatisfactory life that mankind lives to-day.' Ultimately government itself is destined to become merged in the process of education, and the products of the Utopian School live in a state of altruistic and benevolent anarchism; their education is their government.

There are three topics arising out of the foregoing discussion to which our attention must be given, once we have admitted Mr. Wells' primary thesis of the reality of pro-



gress in the past, and its continued possibility, and his secondary thesis of its 'mental' basis. First, in the light of this possibility of progress, the present cannot fail to stand condemned; second, it will be necessary to examine the basis of the new life; third, there is the urgently and severely practical question as to how we are going to attain to it. The first – the critical aspect – demands separate treatment. Mr. Wells has ranged over the whole field of English education, and criticised unsparingly, if at times somewhat captiously, or even ill-naturedly, a vast range of schools and schoolmasters. The bases of the new life, again, are ultimately concerned with Mr. Wells' conception of the human soul, and this necessitates an inquiry into his views upon such subjects as psychology and ethics.

When we turn to the *machinery* of change we find a bewildering, but at the same time an entertaining diversity of suggestions. In *The World Set Free* the change is consequent upon mere war-weariness, a sense of the foolishness of the vast destruction caused by the atomic bombs. *In the Days of the Comet* presents to us a world purged and transformed by the impact of a comet, which in some way removes from our atmosphere a constituent deleterious to the normal functioning of the mind, its present functioning being vitiated by some fatal miasma in the very air we breathe. *A Modern Utopia* is reached by a pure effort of imagination. 'Men like Gods' live in a world co-existent with our own, the possibilities of intercommunication with which lie in a rather obscure excursion through the fourth dimension. The Time Traveller travels upon a machine of his own devising, the secret of which is unhappily (or

happily?) lost with him. All these are imaginative devices, invented and improvised firstly for fictional purposes, and in the second place for the purpose of presenting the future and providing material for propoganda. One point must be dealt with, although from the point of view of the educationist it is rather the *result* than the *method* that is of interest. Mr. Wells is so skilful an artist that it is not at first, and sometimes not even at last, that one realizes how very slender and artificial is the machinery by means of which even his most persuasive effects are obtained. The description of the Time Traveller's instrument; the immediate effects following upon the impact of the comet; the new consciousness awakened by the atomic bombs; the explanation given by the Utopians to the Earthlings of the means whereby they entered Utopia; all these are suggested in so masterly a fashion as temporarily at least to blind us to the extreme artificiality and slenderness of the machinery employed. The examples I have cited are sufficiently obvious to need no explanation; they do not deceive one into accepting them as probabilities. But about all Mr. Wells' work is this air of verisimilitude; and it must not be forgotten that, even where Mr. Wells seems most realistic there is the artist at work; his work abounds in subtle suggestions, and is pervaded by such an obvious air of realism as often to blind the judgment. This is not the place to embark upon a discussion of that extremely debatable term 'realism,' but a comparison between Arnold Bennett and Mr. Wells is sufficient to show that there is a very real sense in which Mr. Wells is not a realist at all, but essentially a romantic. In fact so consummate is the

art which has constructed for us these persuasive pictures of the future that it entirely effaces itself thus conforming to one of the best known 'tags' relative to æsthetic theory.

We may therefore pass over such imaginative machinery of change, and come to more practical matters. After all, these are our main concern. Education is not a theory but a severely practical business. Whatever we think about it, however profoundly we philosophize about it, it continues to go on. There is little to be said for 'the theoretical teacher, who is dreaming of individuality, or freedom, or even of the latest theory of intelligence, when his boys need help in solving quadratic equations.'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wells has himself said that 'education is altogether too much the prey of theories.' We may be interested in the topography and organization of Utopia, or visit with critical, perhaps approving eye, its schools. However tempting it may be to take the short cut of imagining a sudden and catastrophic change in man's nature, not thus does change come; it looks so easy, so persuasive, as Mr. Wells puts it, but not thus suddenly can we hope that Utopia will come, but only through long years of bitter experience, of hard and unremitting toil. It took the Utopians of *Men Like Gods* five centuries to attain to their enlightened state. 'The broadening of human thought is a slow and complex process. We do go on, we do get on. But when one thinks people are living and dying now, quarrelling and sulking, misled, and misunderstanding, vaguely fearful, condemning and thwarting one another in the close darkness of these narrow cults - O God, one wants a gale out of heaven,

<sup>1</sup> Findlay, *The Foundations of Education*, Vol. I, p. 10.

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one wants a great wind from the sea.' But, as Voltaire, I think, has said, man comes to love the chains that bind him, and unregenerate human nature will always tend to say, with Johnson-Cory,

'You promise heavens free from strife,  
Pure truth and perfect change of will;  
But sweet, sweet is this human life,  
So sweet I fain would breathe it still;  
Your chilly stars I can forego,  
This warm, kind earth is all I know.'

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Age of Confusion

'He could never leave an accepted formula alone. His mind was like some insatiable corrosive that . . . bit its way through every plausibility of appearance.'

Of TRAFFORD: *Marriage*.

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UNDER the stress of that ever-growing exacerbation with the failures and foolishness of men with which we have already dealt, Mr. Wells has tended to see in ever darker and darker colours this present age, and to oppose against it pictures, ever more beautiful and bright, of the Utopia of his dreams. 'My imagination takes refuge,' he has written, 'from the slums of to-day in a world like a great garden, various, orderly, lovingly cared for . . . I have come to believe in the complete possibility of such a world, and to realize the broad lines upon which we can look for its attainment – upon a framework of a new, far-reaching educational organization . . . By projecting my mind forward to that greater civilization I do succeed in throwing a veil of unreality over the solemn ineptitudes of to-day.'<sup>1</sup> The Utopians of the latest development (*Men Like Gods* and *The Dream*) looking back to a stage in their own historical development correlative with the one we Earthlings are now enduring, can find no better nor more complimentary term for it than *The Age of Confusion*.

There is neither point nor value in criticism that leads

<sup>1</sup> Also in another place: – 'I have come to be, I am afraid, even a little unsensitive to fine immediate things through this anticipatory habit.'

nowhere, that has ultimately no positive purpose, that is in effect merely cynicism or worse. Vital and productive criticism may aim at unsettling our minds, and forcing them out of the comfortable rut of careless acquiescence in a deplorable state of affairs; it may go further and aim at laying the foundations for a new and saner state of affairs. Mr. Wells has pursued both ends; this is abundantly clear from the quotation given above. For the moment we shall follow him merely in his iconoclastic character. But this destructive criticism is a necessary basis for all that follows, as worlds, no less than men, may 'rise on stepping stones of their dead selves.' A word of warning is here necessary; the word has been passed to us by Mr. Wells himself. 'Scolding the Schoolmaster,' he wrote, in *Mankind in the Making*, 'gibing at the schoolmaster, guying, afflicting and exasperating the schoolmaster in every conceivable way, is an amusement so entirely congenial to my temperament that I do not for one moment propose to abandon it. It is a devil I have, and I admit it . . . I do not cast him out.'

The confusion of this age is not of course limited to education. Polity, international and national; organization, social and economic; ideas, individual and communal; in fact any and everything that the spirit of man has devised for his own discomfiture fall under the comprehensive damnation. Educational 'confusion' is in part a by-product of the more general chaos, and in part (a vicious circle) a cause of it. So let not teachers (despite the 'devil' who possesses Mr. Wells) imagine that they, and they alone, are sole exemplars of, or contrivers at, this

confusion. Surveying the greater London that proliferated so sprawlingly and in so unpremeditated and casual a fashion over the country-side of some fifty years ago, Mr. Wells saw 'an infinitude of parallelograms of grimy boxes with public-houses at the corners and churches and chapels in odd places, towering over which rose the council schools, big, blunt, truncated looking masses, the means to an education as blunt and truncated, born of tradition and confused purposes, achieving by accident what they achieve at all.' Schools and schoolmasters are but parts of a large (Mr. Wells would add 'evil') system; these 'council' schools are but the appropriate fruit of an unlovely tree; however boldly the school may stand out from the meanness of the surrounding houses, it is of the same stuff, drawing its material, and even its 'ideals' from the same tainted source. It is worth recalling that to another acute observer this train-view of London (which in its unblushing revelation must have given many other observers food for thought) had a far different significance. To Sherlock Holmes (as he informed his 'Dear Watson'), those same blunt, outstanding masses were lighthouses of culture. But as Mr. Wells might very well retort, a lighthouse denotes something to be avoided.

However this may be, in this *Age of Confusion* there is no such thing as a system of education; there are only different brands, each in its own partial and feeble way as bad as the other. That much is clear; Mr. Wells is scarcely the voice crying in the wilderness! Remington found himself, as he grew up to a comprehension of the

bases of our social life 'more and more struck by the oddity of the educational methods pursued, their aimless disconnectedness from the constructive forces in the community.' And Sarnac, telling his 'dream' in which he had lived the life (and died the death) of a man of our time, says in answer to Sunray's horrified amazement that he should even *dream* such things:

'Dream! It is as men *were* - It is as men are, except for the education that . . . releases us. For we are not four score generations from the *Age of Confusion*, and that was but a few thousand more from the hairy ape man. . . . But our schools in the days of Harry Mortimer Smith were still half-way back to the cave - ' These schools were, he tells in another place, ill-equipped and understaffed; 'the only materials of which there was enough to go round were a stock of dirty reading books, and a lot of slabs of slate in frames. . . . Drawing materials we had practically none - there was nothing to count with in that school, and no geometrical models. There were hardly any pictures except a shiny one of Queen Victoria.' It is strange perhaps, that such a one as Sarnac, with all his (presumably) deeper knowledge of psychology, and keener interest in life, to say nothing of his vastly improved educational experience, should have focused his criticism upon such comparatively trivial things, but that may pass. As a result of this travesty of education 'the still exquisite and impressionable brains of the new generation came tumbling down the stream, curious, active, greedy, and the eddying schools caught them with a grip of iron and spun them round and round for six or seven



precious years, and at last flung them out.' So the generations 'run to waste like rapids.'

The fact is, of course, that, as Oswald Sydenham said, 'the world's hardly begun to touch education yet.' Our practice is ludicrously bad; 'our educational science is the poorest miscellany of aphorisms and dodges.' Our teachers would know no better what to do with an apple from the Tree of Knowledge than did the junior schoolmaster Mr. Hinchcliff,<sup>1</sup> who, it will be remembered, threw it over a wall — a charming but wicked allegory. Comparing the typical products of our system with the products of that of Utopia, it may easily be seen that, unless we can contrive something more nearly approaching an *education*, unless we are prepared to make an effort on an altogether unprecedented scale, there can be no 'escape from the chancy, disordered, restricted and tragic life men are living now.'

To leave these general considerations, and come to more particular matters, in a gallery of schoolmasters as extensive and various as one can desire (one might say a veritable Newgate Calendar of pedagogues), Mr. Sandsome must be given pride of place as being the earliest. I give him, therefore, the fuller description his priority demands; for in later novels he reappears, though with changes of name, and disguises not very difficult to pierce. An afternoon school is being described. 'We now stood up, thirty odd of us altogether, to read, reading out of books in a soothing monotone; he [Mr. Sandsome] sat with his reading book in front of him, ruddy as the setting

<sup>1</sup> 'The Apple,' *The Plattner Story and Others*.

sun, and slowly, slowly, settling down. But now and then he would jerk back suddenly into staring wakefulness as though he were fishing – with himself for bait – for schoolboy crimes in the water of oblivion – and fancied a nibble. At last he went right under, and slept, and the reading grew cheerful, full of faint glosses, and unexpected gaps, leaping playfully from boy to boy, instead of travelling round with a proper decorum.’ Mr. Sandsome, his nap over, pursued a course of progressive deterioration of temper as the afternoon crept on, and at its close his pupils went home ‘exhausted, with minds lax, lounging attitudes, and red ears.’ The critic in Mr. Wells was awakened, even in those remote days, and thus he moralizes: ‘I wondered then, and I wonder still, what it was all for . . . the things I learnt lie in my mind like the “Sarsen” stones of Wiltshire – great disconnected time-worn chunks amidst the natural herbage of it – I sometimes fancy the world may be mad . . .’ And one may say that the trail of Mr. Sandsome is over all Mr. Wells’ succeeding work; and that what Mr. Wells in those earlier days sometimes fancied, he now knows for certain; the world is mad.

The portrait of Mr. Sandsome is in all probability drawn from an actual memory. For Mr. Wells, being ‘middle class,’ was spared the indignity of the Board School, and like his own glorious trinity, Hoopdriver – Kipps – Polly, was sent to ‘one of those wretched dens of disorderly imposture, a middle-class school, where an absolute failure to train or educate [was] seasoned with religious cant, lessons in piano-playing, lessons in French

- mortarboard caps, and a high social tone.' Hoopdriver, in the wholly delightful *Wheels of Chance*, brushed by the wings of romance (as once, in his turn, was Mr. Polly) and so half-awakened to the realities of his fate, saw something of the injustice that had been done him. 'If,' he lamented, 'I'd been exercised properly, if I'd been fed reasonable - but there! the old folks didn't know no better. The schoolmaster ought to have. But he didn't, poor old fool.' And again, 'My old schoolmaster ought to have a juiced *hiding*. He's a thief. He pretended to make a man of me, and he's stole twenty-three years of my life, filled me up with scraps and sweepings.'

Samuel Butler in *The Way of All Flesh* warns the schoolmaster never to see a wretched little urchin sitting disconsolately in his study on the edge of a chair without saying to himself, 'Perhaps this boy is he who . . . will one day tell the world what manner of man I was.' Generations of boys had suffered at the hands of the private schoolmaster, and escaped with their minds permanently crippled; 'in much the same state that you would be in . . . if you were operated upon for appendicitis by a well-meaning, boldly enterprising, but rather over-worked butcher boy, who was succeeded . . . by a left-handed clerk of high principles but intemperate habits - that is to say, in a thorough mess.' And in Mr. Wells was found the voice - only too articulate - to tell the world what manner of education this was.

Leaving now the private school, where Mr. Wells may be regarded as on his own ground, and coming to the public school, we find Mr. Wells adding his quota to a

growing body of criticism of this particular variety of 'education.' Some of the keenest, not to say unkindest, critics of the public school have been men who themselves have passed through it; but Mr. Wells speaks as an outsider. His criticism of these schools is therefore mainly superficial; his complaint concerns rather what they fail to do than what they actually do accomplish; whereas Mr. Chesterton's complaint is, characteristically enough, not that the public school *fails*, but actually that it *succeeds*. Mr. Wells has never probed so deeply as did Butler; he has never, except in the High Cross School of *Joan and Peter* (too highly drawn to be altogether convincing), criticized them in the positive aspects of their defects; defects well enough known to need no reference here.

We need not therefore consider in any great detail Mr. Wells' criticism of the public school. It can be found most aptly summarized in Sydenham's 'Catechism for Headmasters.' 'What sort of a curriculum is my ward to go through?

'Why is he to do Latin?

'Why is he to do Greek?

'Is he going to read or write or speak these languages?

'Then what is the strange and peculiar benefit of them?

'What will my ward know about Africa when you have done with him?

'What will he know about India?'

And so the catechism goes on. What will he know about Italy?—about engineering?—about Darwin?—will he be able

to write good English? – will he learn German, Russian, Spanish, Hindustani? Will he know anything about Exchange – finance – currency – ? ‘But if you can’t teach him *everything*, why not leave out those damned classics of yours?’ Little wonder that the catechized became troublesome! It might be true that these head masters knew nothing about education; but then neither did Oswald; and when Greek meets Greek – ’tis folly to be wise, as Mrs. Malaprop might say. Here is to be found in broad outline Mr. Wells’ indictment of the public school, the sins of which are in the main sins of omission; a general and complete failure to keep in touch with life in general, and modern conditions in particular; the maintaining of the school in ‘a backwater of intellectual apathy;’ so that (typically at Oundle under Park) the school could boast of uninterrupted scholarship successes at Cambridge even when its real educational value to the country ‘was a negative quantity.’ As Uncle Ponderevo told the young and aspiring George, Latin is ‘no good to you of course – except to pass examinations with, but there you are.’ And as Mr. Wells has repeatedly told us, there we remain! Mr. Ivor Brown has, in his *H. G. Wells* added much point to Mr. Wells’ criticism of the public school by an account of his own education. ‘At the age of twenty-two the writer was in a position to look back upon eight years of complete specialization, of total immersion in classical waters. . . . Yet he could not but feel humiliated in the presence of his own abysmal ignorance of the world. . . . No science, no modern languages save schoolboy French, no English literature, no geography, no modern history, no training in handi-

craft had come into the curriculum. Shades of the prison house indeed!

The main root of the matter is these 'damned classics.' Not that Latin and Greek are totally useless things - Mr. Wells has himself advocated the teaching of so much as may be necessary to the mastery of English. His complaint is rather that the classics are excluding so many other vital things from the curriculum. But the evil is not altogether this negative one; the entire subordination of the school to classical demands turns it into an illiberal, deadening, grammatical grind that leads nowhere, 'robs us of a directive class of lively intelligences,' and 'is the root cause of the unproductive sterility of contemporary statecraft.' In short it militates against that all-round liberal education that should aim first at a wide, systematic view of the Universe, and man's place therein. It is therefore 'a useless civility to write flattering things about classical education,' and Mr. Wells is certainly by no means flattering.<sup>1</sup> Latin and Greek were once modern studies; Latin because it was a means of international communication, the language of international literary culture (which has never been international since); Greek because it was the literary medium of the Renaissance. But those days are far away. The modern apologist for the classics must make other claims; he talks of mental discipline, of the glories of the ancient

<sup>1</sup> 'At the present time, in the face of the world's present need, it is impossible to regard a school or college presided over by a classical scholar and devoted to the classical tradition as anything but a dead and death-diffusing spot in our educational system.'

literatures, and so forth; all of which Mr. Wells waives contemptuously aside. 'For my own part I believe all this defence of the classics on the part of men with classical education is but one more example of that human weakness that splashes Oxford metaphysical writings with needless tags and shreds of Greek, and sets Demetrius the silversmith bawling in the streets.' They are not honest; there yet remain things unstated; two at *least*. One is stated by Remington, who finds a deeper reason for the classical burden borne by the school in this; 'Since most men of any importance or influence in the country had been through the mill, it was hard to persuade them that it was not quite the best and most ennobling mill the wit of man could devise.' The other thing is this; if you take from a classical scholar his classics, you have left (as Mr. Wells said of Gladstone) an 'essentially ignorant man'; and such a man is hardly to be expected to bear such denudation willingly, to lose at one blow his sole claim to eminence. He naturally expostulates, loudly, at length, and often (unfortunately for the 'literary training' supposed to result from study of the classics) in bad English.<sup>1</sup> In his attitude towards the classics Mr. Wells reminds one of Butler; but Butler hated them because of the things they stood for, of which they were the typical product; Mr. Wells for the time and energy they steal. He has never achieved the irony of the older writer, for example in the account of the Erewhonian 'Colleges

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., *Joan and Peter*, p. 328; *An Englishman looks at the World*, p. 244; also, George Sampson, *English for the English*, p. 52.

of Unreason;' and his criticism, although much more extensive, is nothing like so bitter nor so searching; and Butler was a twelfth classic, and Wells is a B.Sc. of London!

Mr. Wells' latest hero, Mr. William Clissold, joins his earlier ones in their attacks upon the public school, saying much the same things in effect, but pointing his biggest guns in a new direction. He finds the very institution of the 'boarding' school an institution that has outlived its function and its value. 'When [the world] was barbaric and dangerous, then there was some excuse for making little refuges and fostering places for civilized traditions and learning, under monastic sanctions.' But it is, Clissold points out, now that the world grows 'Safe and orderly and decent' merely a mischievous anachronism - and points his moral with a picture - terrible yet convincing - of Walpole Stent, the type of schoolmaster whom we allow to stand *in loco parentis* to our boys in the most formative years of their lives. But Walpole Stent is, to readers of Mr. Wells, an old friend, or one might more truly say, an old enemy.

At the public school, the boy, caught in the classical routine, finds himself, just as surely as did Minton, the fellow slave of Kipps, in a drain; only it does not seem a *drain*, but rather an avenue to honour and distinction. The routine goes thus: Prize boy, scholar, fellow, don, pedagogue; prize boy - and so on in unending succession. 'Into that relentless circle the bright, curious little Peters - were drawn; the little Joans, too, were being drawn.' Thus, caught in the machine, ultimately the university



claims them, and in the don may be observed the final product of this grinding and desiccating process, the apotheosis of 'ignorance classically adorned.' The spectacle of a don<sup>1</sup> reminded Remington of a young animal he had once seen in the Zoo, beneath a label that read 'Born in the Menagerie,' a phrase so apt and suggestive that Mr. Wells has since adopted it as his own.<sup>2</sup> The dons 'sit in their studies and make a sort of tea of dry old words, and think they are distilling the spirit of wisdom;' they are 'pompous, patronizing, and prosy'; they career about Oxford a-foot and a-wheel 'wearing old gowns, and mortarboards, giggling over Spooner's latest, and being tremendous characters.' The typical product of the university has 'the gentility of the household slave, the same abject respect for patron, prince, and politician . . .' he criticizes 'like a slave, sneering and hinting; he quarrels like a slave, despises all he dares despise with the eagerness of a slave.' And in the highly objectionable, but otherwise negligible, Mr. Plaice of *The Dream* you may find him drawn - more or less - from the life. Add to this that Mr. Wells has even dared to criticize that very citadel of academic culture, Balliol ('always famous for its retardation of adolescence'), and one realizes that his condemnation of the whole system is utter and complete.

But it is not criticism, any more than was Sarnac's tirade against the school of Harry Mortimer Smith. It is rather the expression of a deep and active hatred, an antagonism (and perhaps an ignorance of reality) that finally forbids any possibility of sympathy or understand-

<sup>1</sup> Codger.

<sup>2</sup> *Joan and Peter*, 407.

ing. But while as criticism it is not of much value, the hatred is illuminating, just as, in the case of Sanderson, though Mr. Wells' exposition adds little or nothing to the official biography, the enthusiasm shown for Sanderson's work is a significant fact for the critic of Wells. He does not like dons; that is by now obvious; there is no place for them in Utopia – except maybe upon one of the penal islands, an 'Island of Irreclaimable and Hide-bound Pedants.' And we may infer that Mr. Wells would not be unduly perturbed if this island were near that other island, the Island for Hopeless Cheats – perhaps even incorporated with it.

A glance may be given at technical and professional training before we pass on to the elementary school. In Dr. Winkles (F.R.S., M.D., F.R.C.P., D.Sc., J.P., D.L., etc.) of *The Food of the Gods*, Mr. Farr of *The Undying Fire*, and the botanist of *A Modern Utopia*, we have what we are justified in regarding as typical examples of men who have passed examinations and have 'just as much knowledge – as a rotating bookshelf containing the "Times Encyclopædia."<sup>1</sup> Of Dr. Winkles we are told: 'He doesn't know anything . . . He is utterly void of imagination, and as a consequence incapable of knowledge.' And of Mr. Farr we are told: 'He was a man of real attainments in technical chemistry. But he was nothing more.' His mind was no more opened than a cricket professional's . . . 'he has no religion, no faith, no devotion.' The only ambition of which he was capable was the ambition to supersede Mr. Huss as head master of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. page 101.

Woldingstanton. In more general terms the man of this type is, equally with the classicist, an undeveloped, uneducated, and essentially ignorant man. There is, after all, as William Clissold expressed it, 'no presumption that a man who has the diploma, or whatever they call it, of M.A., is even a moderately educated man.' And for 'M.A.' you may substitute any professional or academic distinction you wish; the truth will remain. Salvation is no more to be found in scientific or technical training than in classical education, but in something deeper, something we have not yet even attempted to achieve, and that is, in an education that has as its primary inspiration the inculcation of a true sense of values, a true perspective of life.

Entering the elementary school we find ourselves in a world totally distinct from any we have yet discussed. The question of the maintenance of a social tone does not enter, as it does into the ideals, such as they are, of the private school; nor is there any widespread conception of a cultural end, as might conceivably be said of the public school. As for the possible continuation of education up to university standard, or into technical fields, this necessitates an early and a complete escape from the elementary grade. Accordingly by the time the children of this grade reach the age of eleven, all that remains to the elementary school is a vast mass of boys and girls of mediocre talent that, when the age of fourteen is reached, leaves the hands of the educator for ever. This mass represents the main body of the electors of the future. Thus the problem, *so far as the social and economic situation*

*of to-day is concerned*, is one strictly *sui generis*; and compared with the questions we have been discussing, of overwhelming importance. What are we to make of these schools? What are we supposed to be doing, or what do we intend to do, with these children? It is all very well for the apologist for the public school to speak of that training as directed towards the education of the future rulers of the country – an extraordinary claim actually made – for in a democratic state, in theory, our rulers are being trained in the primary schools.

The only characters in Mr. Wells' fictions that experience (one might say 'suffer') the elementary school are Harry Smith of *The Dream*, and Mr. Polly in his earliest years. And in *The Dream* Mr. Wells has given such freedom of rein to his impatience, and is so manifestly rigging the cards against the present in favour of the Utopia of the Future, that it is scarcely reliable as a true indication of Mr. Wells' opinion. But he has in various places given his opinion of the teachers of the elementary schools (or as they are somewhat humorously termed 'elementary teachers') and this may be interesting, even if one may suspect that he has praised them mainly with a view to emphasizing his displeasure with their colleagues (only of course, no one ever thinks of them as such)<sup>1</sup> of the public school. Though the 'elementary teachers' belong to 'an ill-trained, ill-organized, poorly-respected and much-abused profession' they are 'the only men who, as a class, know how to teach.'

<sup>1</sup> For example, see the account given of Mr. Lewisham's adventures among scholastic agents.

It is worth while noting, here, one very real distinction that William Clissold drew between the 'teachers' in our elementary schools, and the 'masters' in our public schools. These latter are a residue - 'the whole crowd of upper class youth has been picked over again and again before the schoolmasters come. . . .' They are unskilled; the school is for them a last resource. 'A few public schoolmasters may have a vocation; the body of them, the substance of the profession, is that sort of residue. Its mentality is the mentality of residual men.' Our elementary teachers are, on the other hand, drawn in the main from the working class, and are not a residuum but an 'élite.' And, says Mr. Clissold, 'I am all for making them, and not the Walpole Stents, the backbone of the teaching profession of the future.' In the main this distinction is real enough, and yet, like all such clearly cut distinctions breaks down at the edges, and at the same time leaves no place for a comparatively recent phenomenon that is destined to have an incalculable effect upon the educational development of the immediate future. The frontier between teacher and schoolmaster is becoming increasingly ill-defined, and scarcely at all by the merging of the one into the other, but by the arising of an entirely new class that is neither 'working-class' nor upper middle class, but which consists of such semi-professional classes as civil servants of the intermediate grades, dissenting ministers, elementary school teachers, clerks who have worked their way into positions of trust and comparative financial ease. Though actually of working-class stock, they are yet one, or at most two generations removed from it. Any review, such

as William Clissold attempts of our whole body of available teachers that does not take this newer development into account is inadequate; and so, when Clissold makes his choice of the *teachers* rather than the Walpole Stents, he is overlooking just that class that is far more likely than either of these to prove a worthy recruiting ground for the schools of the future. And already we see signs of this; these men – not only trained, comparatively speaking, but academically highly qualified,<sup>1</sup> are staffing our secondary schools, creeping into the grammar school, and even intruding themselves into the public school, where we may safely leave them to the operations of that biological law known by the phrase ‘the survival of the fittest.’

On the whole, I venture to say, it does not seem that Mr. Wells’ acquaintance with the elementary school – particularly the elementary school of to-day – can be very intimate. In any case, what acquaintance there has been must have been an unhappy one, for he writes: ‘If you go into any school to-day, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred you will find an inexpert and ill-prepared young teacher giving a clumsy, vamped-up lesson. He or she will have no proper notes, and no proper diagrams. . . . The thing is preposterous.’ Or, one should add, *would* be preposterous if it were true; but for one thing it is precisely the young teacher who would be most certain to have

<sup>1</sup> By way of example, twenty years ago in a well-known English Training College for Teachers the ‘University student’ was comparatively rare. To-day not a single student is taking the usual Board of Education ‘Certificate’ course.

the notes and so forth. Had he said *old* teacher. . . . It is, it must be noted, of 'any' school that this is affirmed; but, as elementary schools are by far the most numerous, it obviously hits them much harder than it does any other type. And yet, on the other hand, the elementary schools are 'least imperfect. I would almost go so far as to say that, considering the badness of their material, the huge, clumsy classes they have to deal with, the pooriness of their directive administration . . . the elementary teachers of this country are amazingly efficient.'

Such, in summary outline, is Mr. Wells' opinion of our English education of this Age of Confusion. It is perfectly true that Mr. Wells has said little or nothing that has not been said before, and often said with greater knowledge and in far more intimate detail. It is also true that he has again and again repeated himself, being rather content to open the vials of his wrath upon the more obvious (and often quite personal) failings and ignorance of schoolmasters, than to dig down into the deeper and more vital fallacies upon which this imposing mass of failure that we term 'education' is reared. It is, further, quite true that much that Mr. Wells has criticized is passing, or has already passed; that much that he has demanded is already supplied; and that he is open to the suspicion that he is not by any means so closely in touch with the education of to-day as he was in touch with that of a decade or so ago. What really renders this criticism of importance is, first, its continuity and its bulk; and, second, the fact that it serves as a composite picture of the educational system of the immediate past, and as such

will be a valuable store-house for the educational historian of the future. For the picture is, on the whole, a true one, and, whether they like it or no, it will not be their own opinion of themselves that will tell the future what the teachers of to-day were, but the opinions of such men as Samuel Butler, Mr. Bernard Shaw, and Mr. Wells. There is only one consolation possible for them, and that is, they will at least be dead!

Finally, though I have expressed doubt as to Mr. Wells' acquaintance with modern conditions, we may with profit ask ourselves how far modern developments in theory and in practice have indeed rendered Mr. Wells' criticism nugatory. For one thing, although there is undoubtedly a fine air of liberalism abroad, it may be true, as Mr. Britling suggested, that there are 'two sorts of liberalism, that pretend to be the same thing; there's the liberalism of great aims, and the liberalism of defective moral energy. . . .'<sup>1</sup> The School of St. George and the Venerable Bede has displaced Mr. Sandome's. Have we really gained? The Secondary School, again, is a distinctly modern product; are we so sure of its value? In Miss Murgatroyd (the energetic and up-to-date Head mistress of the above-mentioned school) Mr. Wells has given us a picture of a type of teacher very common to-day, and a type upon which we are apt to congratulate ourselves. And by inference therefrom we have his criticism of that newer spirit in teaching which seeks always that which is new (and preferably American) and is inordinately receptive of the fad of the moment, and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for example the 'Artilleryman,' p. 129.



above all conscientious – painfully and laboriously conscientious. And at this point the Mr. Wells of the future – whoever may don the mantle Mr. Wells puts off – will take up his parable, and possibly tell a story of confusion worse confounded.

That fatal predilection of mankind for falling ‘into contrary excesses in succession’ is as well exemplified in the field of education as in any other. It is said<sup>1</sup> that in the store-rooms of Clark University (the University of the great Stanley Hall) are tons and tons of documents relative to the ‘child study’ that Hall inaugurated; which documents (having served their primary purpose of making doctors of philosophy) are now where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Just at present the intelligence test has usurped the place of the old vaguer, less mathematical, but on the whole more human, ‘child study,’<sup>2</sup> and ‘individual’ methods are all the rage in practical teaching. So time passes; and to one who maintains an ironic aloofness *au-dessus de la mêlée* (an attitude necessarily infuriating to the combatants) the educational scene is mainly one of shifting and passing fad. And the worst of the matter is that all this surface agitation serves but to hide that honest, hard and sincere work done by teachers who never seek, and even shun, the limelight of ‘teachers’ politics,’ or of educational

<sup>1</sup> P. B. Ballard, *The New Examiner*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> ‘I believe that the recommended interest of teachers in the “science” of education – in “psycho-analysis” . . . in “tests of intelligence” . . . in “experimental psychology” – means excessive concern with the heads of children and no concern for their souls.’ – GEORGE SAMPSON: *English for the English*.

societies; that doing of plain and good work honestly, and regardless of self-interest, that is the real strength, the real glory of English education. Critics of education are, perhaps, not too severely to be blamed for not seeing this, but it seems they might have asked how it is that a system of education which is so bad has produced results 'by accident' as Mr. Wells expressed it.

'The one remains; the many change and pass.' To one who, like Mr. Wells, has eyes set upon the eternal radiance of the city of God, the vast activities of this present may well seem little more than the tireless, restless, and aimless meanderings of creatures too foolish, and too minutely insignificant, to be worthy of a moment's consideration. It is all a matter of perspective; and yet – perhaps even a deeper matter still:

'Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument  
About it and about; but evermore  
Came out by the same Door as in I went.'

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Making of Man

'The imagination, unless it is strengthened by a very sound training in the laws of causation, wanders like a lost child in the blackness of things to come, and returns - empty.'

★

MR. WELLS, as we have already seen, regards his three years' work at South Kensington as a truly educative experience. He has, mainly for this reason, never ceased to regard biology as an absolutely integral factor in anyone's education. 'The central fact of those three years,' he has written, 'was Huxley's course in Comparative Anatomy . . . At the end of that time I had acquired what I still think to be a fairly clear, and complete, and ordered view of the ostensibly real universe. . . . I had man definitely placed in the great scheme of space and time. I knew him incurably for what he was, finite and not final, a being of compromises and adaptations. . . .' Biology thus appears as the necessary basis, not alone of individual education but of any system of thought that aims at a rational, clear, and single view of the educative process. 'From [the biological course] students would pass on illuminated to the study of psychology, philosophical science, and educational method.' Of that branch of biological inquiry termed 'Heredity' Mr. Wells tells us it is 'ten times more important to humanity than all the chemistry, and physics, all the technical and industrial science that ever has been, or ever will be discovered.'

All this is apt to strike the non-biological student as, at least, somewhat over-forcibly expressed. But Mr. Wells

has, of course, his reasons. It cannot be said that it is yet realized that biology is indeed one of the basal sciences concerned in the *theory* of education; for we can waive Mr. Wells' larger claims. Psychology has won its place within the lifetime of teachers not yet old; and if one may hazard a prophecy (and prophesying is an infectious complaint), it will before long be found that biology will take a place equal in importance with psychology in the training of teachers; particularly nowadays when psychology itself depends so largely upon biological principle. In earnest of this belief may be cited Dr. Nunn's *Education: Its Data and First Principles*; one of the most suggestive and most broadly conceived of modern works on the subject, in which the whole field of mental development is approached from the biological standpoint.

Dr. Martineau, in *The Secret Places of the Heart*, thus expresses the vital importance of this approach. 'Consider what you are,' he bids Sir Richmond: 'Face the accepted facts. Here is a creature not ten thousand generations from the ape his ancestor . . . A man's body, his bodily powers, are just the body and powers of an ape, a little improved, a little adapted to novel needs. That brings me to my point. *Can his mind and will be anything better?*'

That is precisely the question of the educationist. The central factor is the principle of evolution. In the days of Mr. Wells' education Darwinism had largely made its way, and held the field. That other stream of evolutionary theory (of philosophical biology) which has led from Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, Butler & Semon to the

moderns, Bergson & Freud,<sup>1</sup> was not then of any importance or influence in academic biological theory. An account of certain aspects of this development can be found in the preface to Mr. Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*.<sup>2</sup> It is of course impossible to over-estimate the work of Darwin and Wallace; the *Origin of Species* was, as Mr. Wells has expressed it, 'for countless minds the discovery of a new romance in life;' nor is it easily possible to over-estimate the literary and practical genius of Huxley who popularized the theories there put forward. But biological speculation did not end with Darwin, any more than it began with him; nor have we yet pierced the veil that hides from us the secret of man's origin and destiny. Biology to-day is in a confused state; in no other science are the theories proposed so disproportionately various compared with the data, the observed and recorded facts. There are at least three distinct schools: the first is the Darwinian, which insists upon the all-sufficiency of the Darwinian conception of struggle and survival, of Natural Selection;<sup>3</sup> there is again that Darwinism which is more truly in succession to Darwin himself;<sup>4</sup> and thirdly there are those who, like Bergson in philosophy, and the late A. D. Darbishire in pure biology, tend towards a conception of the process of evolution as a spiritual process, and

<sup>1</sup> See the present writer's *Education and the Spirit*, in which this question is more fully dealt with.

<sup>2</sup> Or, to seek these ideas at their source, in Butler's *Evolution Old and New*.

<sup>3</sup> See Bateson: *Biological Fact and the Structure of Society*.

<sup>4</sup> See Thomson: *Secrets of Animal Life*, pp. 221, 229, 254.

away from the materialistic implications of Neo-Darwinism.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary thus to suggest the main branches of biological thought, because Mr. Wells will be found to have progressed from a more or less defined Darwinism, to a much deeper and more spiritual view of evolution; and because sociological speculation tends to take on a more and more evident biological character.

Of Mr. Wells' earlier leaning towards Darwinism many examples can be found. It is to be observed in many of his earlier romances - *The Time Machine*, and *The Sleeper Wakes* for example; in fact, in all those earlier works that may be termed 'fatalistic' in character. 'It was clear to me,' he wrote (1908), 'by a hundred considerations, that I in my body upon this planet Earth, was the outcome of countless generations of conflict and becoming, the creature of natural selection, the heir of good and bad engendered in the struggle.'

But such fatalistic and mechanical conceptions of human destiny could not long content so keen and so sympathetic an observer. Crude Darwinism, with its fine air of explaining everything, explained nothing. There remains a deeper and far more significant question: what is this process *at*? Is there nothing beyond this vast, meaningless drama of struggle? To leave the general idea and come to a particular example (and how else, in the end, can one exemplify it?), we find Stratton writing of himself and Lady Mary, 'We were both still very young

<sup>1</sup> See Darbishire: *An Introduction to a Biology*. Lodge: *The Making of Man*. Bergson: *Creative Evolution*.

in quality, we had scarcely begun to think ourselves out, we were greatly swayed by the suggestion of our circumstances; complex, incoherent, and formless emotions confused our minds. But I see now that *in us there struggled vast creative forces, forces that through a long future, in forms as yet undreamt of, must needs mould the destiny of our race.*<sup>1</sup> Thus, from a more or less clearly defined Darwinism, Mr. Wells has progressed (to a great extent in complete defiance of his intellectual convictions), on the whole steadily, towards that conception, most clearly formulated in that otherwise somewhat unsatisfactory book *God the Invisible King*, of an indomitable and undying spirit in man, that, so far from being the *product* of mechanical forces, is in rebellion against, and destined finally to master, them. The whole argument is closely followed out in *The Undying Fire*, in which Dr. Barrack speaks very much as the earlier Wells, and Mr. Huss as the Wells of *God the Invisible King*.

'Let the scientists,' writes Robert Nichols,<sup>2</sup> 'turn from the destructive forces of material evolution to the study of the constructive forces of spiritual evolution. The evolutionary scientists of to-day have ceased their labour where it should start—in the heart of man. There lies your riddle. When you have succeeded in explaining "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" as the result of the *struggle* for existence, then I will believe you.' And this is exactly the story of Mr. Wells' beliefs. Whether his conversion is complete enough to satisfy so exigent a critic as Mr. Nichols, or whether the escape from

<sup>1</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>2</sup> *Fantastica*.

the mechanistic *impasse*, that Mr. Wells has discovered, is the *true* way of escape are questions that for the present may be left.<sup>1</sup> It is in that series of books written between 1916 and 1919 that this newer conception of evolution is most clearly to be observed.<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible to follow out in any detail this development, nor indeed would much purpose be served by so doing. But having thus laid down its principal lines, we may escape (thankfully) from the innumerable controversies and contradictions involved, and as faithfully as is possible suggest what seem to be the basal assumptions upon which Mr. Wells' social (and hence educational) philosophy rests.

The chief reflection of biological speculation in popular educational theory is that vexed question concerning the relative importance of Heredity and Environment, or to adopt the educational equivalent of these terms, *Nature* and *Nurture*. It is an endlessly debated, and an endlessly debatable question. The thorough-going Darwinist tells us that if we want to improve the human stock we must do it by selective breeding. At the other extreme the believer in Nurture says that if we want to change man's nature, we can only do it by changing his environment. Both of course being extremists are obviously at fault; only one thing is common to both, and that is a realization of the necessity for change — they neither of them like man as he is. It cannot possibly be denied that struggle and selection have been powerfully operative as

<sup>1</sup> They are resumed in Chapter XI.

<sup>2</sup> From *Mr. Britling* to *The Undying Fire*.



*methods* of evolution, in human, as in sub-human, development; that 'the way of Nature is to kill the weaker, and the sillier, to crush them, to starve them, to overwhelm them. . . .' The consequent sifting-out process has in the case of man undoubtedly resulted in the creation of a range of 'Social Types' that, in their extremes, differ far more radically than do the racial types of the 'unobservant, over-scholarly people who talk or write in the profoundest manner about a Teutonic race and a Celtic race.' Urban civilization tends to degrade certain types, to accentuate and finally to segregate them; and this lends the weightiest of arguments to those who wish for their own ends to talk of 'sub-men,' of vicious or criminal strains, of 'degeneration.' The very nadir of unimaginative solemnity is reached in such pseudo-scientific theories as those of Lombroso, and the acme of frightfulness is reached in such family histories as that of the 'Jukes.' Here is a typical statement of the Darwinist view:<sup>1</sup> 'The stunted individuals are not the product of a one-roomed tenement; but the one-roomed tenement is the expression of the inherent incapacity of this race to be able to do anything better for itself; it is the natural outcome of their already existing physical, moral and intellectual degeneration. These degenerates are mutations and breed true to their degeneracy.' In all sorts of different disguises this theory masquerades as the bogey behind various (mainly political) criticisms of elementary education; the prevalent tendency being to regard the elementary school as a more or less desperate remedy for dysgenic evils, or,

<sup>1</sup> *Mendel Journal*, 1909. C. P. Mudge.

alternatively, as a desperate attempt to make serviceable material out of a waste product.

Is this phenomenon really the stubborn biological fact Mr. Mudge would have us believe? Or is it not more truly a *social* phenomenon, as Mr. Wells suggests? At least we must admit that it is a problem that urgently calls for solution, and that it is a distinct challenge to the educationist. The general import of Mr. Wells' teaching is that these failures of our civilization are not primarily biological failures, but social failures; that to accept this differentiation of class as a permanent and unchangeable condition of human evolution is not only unjust and unwise, but indeed incredibly foolish. It may be true that the weakest go to the wall, but it should not be forgotten that these unfortunates who find their way to the wall (from whatever cause, sheer bad luck, economic injustice, the shifting orientation of industrial conditions, or merely personal weakness) do tend to become, in the end, the weaker; the aphorism should really run: Those who go to the wall become the weakest. So we drive men to the wall, and the operations of heredity, biological and social, tend to keep them there.<sup>1</sup> But it is important to see the situation in true perspective, not as the operation of an inflexible, relentless and perfectly comprehended scientific law, but as a mere by-product of social conditions. It is important that we should regard these 'lower orders' not with pseudo-scientific disdain, but with human sympathy and pity, as being so much

<sup>1</sup> Compare the 'labour class' in *The Sleeper Wakes* and *A Story of the Days to Come*.

divinity spoiled; human beings caught in the machinery of an evil system and crushed in its Satanic Mills. 'Lives that statesmanship has permitted, errors it has not foreseen and educated against, must not be punished by death. If the State does not keep faith, no one will keep faith. Crime and bad lives are the measure of a State's failure; all crime in the end is the crime of the community.'

There are, in the work of Mr. Wells, many pictures of the 'etiolated,' futile, and often tragic lives of these unfortunates, from the imaginary 'labour' class of *The Sleeper Wakes* to the only too real (if somewhat exaggerated) Frapps of *Tono-Bungay* and Smiths of *The Dream*, and to the Willie Leadford of *In the Days of the Comet*, who, maddened to the very point of crime, is miraculously withheld from its consummation. These people are not where they are, and as they are, for us to build imposing eugenic theories upon; neither to point political morals of a reactionist tendency, nor to adorn tales of preordained degeneracy (the modern and scientific mutation of Calvinism); nor are they there for us to exercise our self-comforting charitable proclivities on; not for any of these things, but to warn us what happens when selfishness, carelessness, and culpable ignorance sit in the high places. The days are surely past when Nature must be blamed for our own crimes. The time will come when people will laugh (as Mr. Wells' Utopians would laugh) at our imputation of poverty and want, and ineffectual lives to the operations of biological laws, just as we, to-day, laugh at people of the days gone by when

plague and pestilence came from the hand of God.<sup>1</sup>

To turn now to more specific questions, we find in the work of Mr. Wells two Utopias which in their biological foundations, as in most else, differ profoundly. *A Modern Utopia* is sufficiently near these present days for its examination to have for us distinctly practical bearings. That of *Men Like Gods* is so far away from us, that its interest cannot be any more than purely theoretical. The one is a definitely sociological study; the other (among other things) is a far flight in idealistic speculation. In *A Modern Utopia* we recognize ourselves as moving among fellow-beings, however much they may transcend earthly standards of breeding and education. Problems that here upon earth perplex us – questions involving social failure, crime, sexual matters, the existence of types of individuals that show themselves unamenable to social regulation – are, there, still at issue. Its cultural environment is still sufficiently akin to ours to render the interchange of ideas of no difficulty – Firefly in *The Dream*, it may be noted, was nonplussed by Sarnac's earthly use of 'rather,' and by the term 'Chiropodist,' just as the Earthlings of *Men Like Gods* encountered strange silences and contradictions in the communications of the Utopians. Proposals, or at least ideas, of an uncompromisingly idealistic

<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, another aspect of this process of decay. 'I couldn't be any sort of help to you, any sort of wife, any sort of mother. I am spoilt by this rich idle way of living until every habit is wrong, every taste wrong. The world is wrong. People can be ruined by wealth just as much as by poverty.' Beatrice Normandy in *Tono-Bungay*. Cf. also the Eloi and the Morlocks of *The Time Machine*.

tendency, as are Mr. Wells' later Utopian speculations, need to be revised and adjusted when they are brought down to the level of practical affairs of to-day, and of the immediate to-morrow. Truth, as idealism reveals it, would have to be sacrificed to expediency. It might easily be affirmed and maintained (as for example in Ibsen's *Brand*) that nothing could conceivably prove more disastrous than an ideal applied without any regard for existing conditions. Imagine, for example, the extraordinary effect upon the stock market were the demand, *Sell all thou hast and give to the poor*, universally accepted!

Social distinctions, a vast range of intellectual and moral quality, racial and sexual problems, and so forth, exist in *A Modern Utopia* just as they do on Earth; but all have disappeared as active factors in social life in the land of men like Gods. So that it is rather to the former that the reader should be referred for a discussion of the immediate biological factors that call for our consideration. Passing over Mr. Wells' variously expressed demand for a limitation of the world's population, and his criticism of the present haphazard, unchecked, and often disastrous, human proliferation; and passing over too his criticism of such unscientific racial studies as are, to-day, associated with the name of Lothrop Stoddard, let us see how the Utopians dealt with the differentiation of human quality. They adopted a provisional classification into four major types.<sup>1</sup> The question of the particular type to which the individual conformed was left in abeyance for the first few years of life. 'Education is uniform until differentia-

<sup>1</sup> Poietic, Kinetic, Dull, and Base.

ture becomes unmistakable, and each man (and woman) must establish his position with regard to the lines of this abstract classification by his own quality and choice, and development.' This ideal of *equal opportunity* is at the base of all Utopian polity; and the classes 'are not hereditary classes, nor is there any attempt to develop any class by special breeding, simply because the intricate interplay of heredity is untraceable and incalculable.' And, incidentally, in this demand for equal opportunity (a phrase current enough to-day) is to be found the only hope of a system of education that shall really be a system and not a medley of divergent purposes, adventitious distinctions, and profoundly anti-educational values.

In discussing such questions as these there is no need to go into arid detail regarding the transmissibility or nontransmissibility of 'acquired characters.' We are not, indeed, as practical educationists, called upon to discuss them (nor, as theoretical educationists even *entitled* to) until we can say that we are making the best and fullest use of the 'characters' already given us. And the fact is, as Mr. Wells has never tired of affirming, none of us, even of the so-called 'cultured' class, ever has the faintest hope of realizing the best that is in one. We are all, judged by the standard of a quite reasonable, even if idealistic educational theory, undeveloped mentally and physically; caricatures of the men and women we might have been. 'The average citizen of our Great State is, I would respectfully submit, scarcely more than a dirty clout about his own buried talents.' We cannot assess, nor can we even imagine, what fine flowers of the spirit are striving to

bloom, if they can but find a congenial environment in which to do so. This is as sound biology as ever came out of the schools. The old – and now solved – riddle of that extraordinary amphibian the axolotl is an interesting zoological case in point, and might be used as a pertinent fable. This axolotl, regarded for years as a distinct species, breeding true and in accordance with biological laws as then known, turned out in the end to be merely the tadpole stage in the full life-history of the amblystoma, a fact only discovered when the axolotl was given the environment necessary to complete its metamorphosis.<sup>1</sup> Nature takes little account of accidents that may come to the individual in this ill-organized and chancy world of ours. When the time comes for the individual to reproduce his kind, the resultant individual takes over, not the battered and broken mental and physical frame of the progenitor, but reproduces once again the fine possibilities that have failed of realization. Talents undeveloped; fine creative strivings for which the world found no use, and rudely crushed; high moral earnestness mocked and betrayed; beauty of character aborted and deformed; generation by generation is the tragedy retold, the tragedy of what Sanderson called the *unstretched faculty*, of what Graham Wallas has termed the *balked disposition*. Generation by generation these riches reappear, awaiting our will;

<sup>1</sup> 'Beyond all organisms man is distinguished by the possession of many sets of inherited characteristics; the decision as to which shall be produced depending on the environment. The axolotles may be compared to an uneducated man, the amblystoma to an educated man.' H. S. Jennings, 'Prometheus.'

and for that generation that wills, and can contrive, an education by which, and an environment in which, these spiritual riches can emerge, Utopia dawns.

The Darwinist can, as we have seen, find no help for our present discontents and failures save in measures of selective breeding, positive and negative. To the questions: *Can we raise, and if so, what can we do to raise, the quality of the average birth?* Mr. Wells answered, in 1903, we can, in a positive way, do nothing; negatively, it being conceivable that certain recognizedly inferior or evil strains breed true to their inferiority, these strains *might* be eliminated. As however I am extremely doubtful about these same inferior or evil strains, I would, for safety's sake, leave things very much as they are at present.

So far as any positive measures of eugenics may be concerned, Mr. Wells has answered the assumptions and the claims of the eugenists so completely, says G. K. Chesterton, as finally to dispose of them. But in answering them he has, it is important to note, argued with them entirely in their own terms. His objection is that eugenics is not practical politics because we do not *know* enough to be able to effect 'breeding,' not that eugenic proposals are radically false in their premisses and in their scientific basis. The theoretical possibility thus remains open, and he conceives it possible that there may come a time, when, by reason of our surer knowledge of the obscure laws which govern human heredity, eugenics will become a practical question. The real basis of objection, however, seems to me to be threefold; first, that any such proposals are a complete denial of spiritual evolution; again, that



any proposal for selective breeding infers that we know the *purpose* for which, the *end* to which, we breed; and lastly that such proposals are a mere translation into quasi-scientific terms of what Mr. Wells has himself called 'abstract, refined, intellectualized ideas,' such as Right, Liberty, Happiness, Duty or Beauty.<sup>1</sup> Conscientiousness, for example, means nothing. It might be allied to all sorts of other qualities which might just as easily be bad ones as good; and, in any case, it could never be a substitute for knowledge and skill. So that, deliberately to breed for conscientiousness – even could it be done – would be just as futile as to uphold it as a practical ideal, as in the end they amount to much the same thing.

But Mr. Wells has not made these objections, and so the theoretical possibility remains open. 'There is,' he writes in *The Salvaging of Civilization*, 'an enormous amount of what is called Eugenic literature and discussion to-day. But I will set all that sort of thing aside from our present discussion because I do not think anything of its kind is practicable at the present time.' Again, in *The World Set Free* we find Karenin, high in the Himalayas, awaiting his operation, asking Fowler the surgeon 'And how is it with heredity?'

'Fowler told him of the mass of inquiry accumulated by Tchen, who was beginning to define clearly the laws of inheritance and how the sex of children, and the complexions, and many of the parental qualities could be

<sup>1</sup> 'Plato turned his back on truth when he turned towards his museum of specific ideals.'

determined.' And, later, Karenin says: 'If we do not like any type of men and women we'll have no more of it.' Now 'to define clearly the laws of inheritance' would be to penetrate the essential arcanum of man's destiny; there is no escaping this, for in the phenomenon of variation lies that deepest of all mysteries, and the crux of the whole problem of evolution. But, it seems, it is going to be done, for we find the Utopians of *Men Like Gods* telling Barnstaple of 'eugenic beginnings, of a new and surer decision in the choice of parents, of an increasing certainty in the science of heredity.' As a result, 'there were few dull, and no really defective people – the idle strains, the people of lethargic dispositions or weak imaginations, have mostly died out; the melancholic – spiteful and malignant characters are disappearing.' It might be interesting to survey the field offered by artists (names come readily to mind, quite unbidden!) and speculate as to how many of them would have stood a dog's – or even a reasonable – chance in such a eugenically purged Utopia; but it would prove little when done, as the dilemma of Mr. Shaw's doctor may serve to warn us.

It will by now be clear that the search for some easily stated and systematic presentation of Mr. Wells' biological ideas is a vain one. I have not cared to stress the contradictions that are discoverable. I would even go so far as to say, with Mr. Wells' own authority, that of any two contradictory ideas, each may possibly be a true one. Reduced to its simplest terms Mr. Wells' teaching amounts to this; progress is a reality, and the race moves onward and upward to something finer – to an ennobled

race of beings living in a perfectly hygienic and congenial environment that serves to bring out the highest qualities of which they are capable; and even that is not the end — there is no end. Whether or no eugenics can do anything towards this alluring consummation, one thing is certain, and that is that education can. The claims for education that began so modestly in *Mankind in the Making* have gradually increased in urgency and volume until to-day they tend to absorb all others. The whole story is not yet told, for there is a further stage in the development of Mr. Wells' ideas, but this is as far as our distinctively biological examination will carry us.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Mind of Man

*'Our real perplexities are altogether psychological.'*

★

REMINGTON, that acute, and at times even profound, analyst of the political life of the first decade or so of this present century, tells how he came to apprehend, at first vaguely, but subsequently quite clearly, how, in every person, behind the ostensible self, behind the frontage offered to the world, there exists to a greater or lesser degree a 'more generalized self-behind-the-frontage.' The mind may thus be imagined as working at two levels. There is that level at which the immediate demands of the outward and visible life are met. 'Everyday affairs, and whatever is made an everyday affair, are transactions of the ostensible self, the being of habits, interests, usage. Temper, vanity, hasty reaction to imitation, personal feeling, are their substance.' It is the level of logical, rational thought; of fixed ideas and dogma, the seat and citadel of tradition.

Underneath this goes on 'more or less distinct from the adventures and achievements of the ostensible self' a subconscious elaboration and development of ideas, an endo-psyche functioning, as seemingly independent of our conscious personality as though 'we are all no more than little cells and corpuscles in some great brain beyond our understanding. . . .' To this level, Remington applies the term 'hinterland.'

Although the words are Remington's, the ideas are beyond doubt the ideas of Mr. Wells himself. He has

indeed adopted this term of Remington's and used it in his own person. In the ideas suggested above – the only novel feature in which is the mode of expression – may, I think, be found the most useful and promising point of departure for a survey of Mr. Wells' conception of the human mind. For the dichotomy between mental affairs of the *frontage* and those of the *hinterland* is integral. The essentially solid and solidifying character of the 'frontage' (its inveterate and unvarying tendency to stabilize and to fix) is totally incompatible with the fluid, and, in effect, disintegrating character of the hinterland; in this incompatibility is to be found the secret of so much that perplexes us; not alone in man himself (as an affair, that is, of 'pure' psychology) but in any attempted study of the social, and in particular political, activities and theories to which man gives himself.

The recognition of the existence of this 'hinterland' and of its secret, but so potent, influence as the background of consciousness is, besides being one of the most important principles of modern psychology, one of the great discoveries of the more modern novelists. The newer point of view has been so ably expressed by Mr. J. D. Beresford that I cannot do better than quote him: 'We are,' he writes, 'a trifle unwillingly coming to the conclusion that it is this other shadowed self that is responsible for all that is best and most permanent in literature. It is being associated with genius on the one hand, and on the other with the highest dexterity in games of skill. And is it not possible that, with our growing realization of this co-operation, the "education of the sub-conscious" – as Varisco the Italian

calls it – will proceed more rapidly? And to that end, unless it be that in the strange process of our earthly evolution this artificial shell of the conscious will be gradually broken and absorbed to reveal the single and relatively perfect individual that has been so steadily developing underground.’

The change in our conception of the real subject-matter of psychology (due to the change, as Dr. Burt has expressed it, from the ‘geographical’ to the ‘geological’ method of study) can be well illustrated from Mr. Wells himself. Stratton, his mind tortured by thwarted desire, writes of the psychology of his day (1900) thus: ‘It seems to me one of the most extraordinary aspects of all that literature of speculative attack which is called psychology, that there is no name and no description at all of most of the mental states which make up life. Psychology . . . is still largely in the scholastic stage, it is ignorant and intellectual, a happy refuge for the lazy industry of pedants – who with a sick soul would dream of going to a psychologist.’

Sir Richmond Hardy, twenty-two years later, with a sick soul, not only dreamed of it, but actually went; if, that is, Dr. Martineau, whose qualifications and methods are somewhat obscure, can be termed a psychologist. And later still Christina Alberta’s ‘father,’ alias Sargon, is put under the care of Dr. Devizes, another psychologist, who is far more definite in his diagnosis and his treatment. Psychological fact has now indeed become stranger than fiction, and many of our novelists – even those most ‘advanced’ would be hard put to it even to equal such stories as were told by the late Dr. Rivers and by Dr. Brown in

their records of the successful treatment of war-neuroses. Thus has the general background of psychological fact and fiction changed, and it is a change that has altered quite finally all our conceptions of mental function.

Accepting then this dichotomy of 'frontage' and 'hinterland,' we may first proceed to an examination of the former. As early as *The Island of Dr. Moreau* we find Mr. Wells experimenting with the idea. The creatures, products of Dr. Moreau's inhuman vivisection, 'had certain Fixed Ideas implanted in their minds, which absolutely bounded their imaginations . . . they had been told certain things were impossible, and certain things were not to be done, and these prohibitions had been woven into the texture of their minds beyond any possibility of disobedience or dispute.' To meet such cases as those in which the old instinctive cravings were most powerful, and to Moreau most inconvenient or even dangerous, a series of propositions called 'the Law' was ingeminated; 'this Law they were ever repeating - and - ever breaking.' In this gruesome fable is to be discerned the germ of what afterwards becomes a more fully worked out criticism of the superficial, standardized, and intellectualized type of mind. Though one might well hesitate to interpret, or to apply, what is primarily a romance, it seems impossible to escape the conviction that there is here intended an allegory and a criticism of education.

In *The Wheels of Chance* we are more surely upon the level of human life and experience. Moreau's creatures are abortions, products of a perverted scientific genius; Hoopdriver and Miss 'Beaumont' are real people yet of

them the same story is told. Hypnotists of all sorts – pedagogic, pulpit, book – and newspaper-writing hypnotists had been at them, and so the implanting of ideas had gone on, until ‘when we open the heads of these two young people, we find not a straightforward motive on the surface anywhere; we find indeed, not a soul, so much as an over soul, a zeitgeist, a congestion of acquired ideas –’

And again, to move forward over twenty years, we find that excessively modern youth Peter, discussing social affairs with Oswald his guardian, telling him how necessary it is that the Fixed Ideas upon which our Social system rests should be, even at the cost of a smash-up, shaken up, and shaken loose.

‘Oswald surveyed his ward. So this was the young man’s theory. Not a bad one. Fixed Ideas.’

‘“There’s something to be said for this notion of fixed ideas,” he said. “Yes. But isn’t this ‘I’m a rebel’ business, isn’t that itself a Fixed Idea.”

‘“Oh, certainly!” said Peter cheerfully. “We poor human beings are always letting our ideas coagulate. That’s where the whole business seems to me so hopeless.”’

So far as education addresses itself to the ‘frontage’ (and to what an alarming extent it does so has often enough been pointed out!), it reveals itself as a mere training in ‘things as they are,’ an acquiescence in tradition, the worship of the *status quo*. It is, as Trafford expressed it, ‘a training in contentment . . . in keeping quiet and not upsetting things,’ and as we have already seen, in the



Farrs and the Winkles we have a predominatingly intellectualized type of mind, enormously developed as to frontage,<sup>1</sup> but with an extreme poverty of 'hinterland,' so that the most vital factors in mental life become atrophied. That this is far from being an abnormal state of affairs Mr. Wells affirms in *War and Future*. 'The normal mind,' he there writes, 'craves for decisions, even wrong or false decisions rather than none. It clutches at comforting falsehoods.' In other words, the normal tendency is to remove disquieting doubts from the hinterland into the comfort and the peace of the region of infallible truth – the only place where infallible Truth can safely reside, in the 'frontage,' where all is certitude, and metaphysical speculation the mere ramblings of idle minds. In Pascal's words: 'La, où finit le raisonnement, commence la véritable certitude.'

The self-behind-the-frontage is the *real* personality – such personality as we may possess – the greater issues of life are determined by it, and the ostensible self exists 'as feeder and agent for the greater personality behind.' It struggles against the influences that would suppress or abort it, and 'accumulates disturbing energy.' It is 'a far more essential reality, a self less personal, less individualized, and broader in its references.' Remington it drove to a change of party, and ultimately to exile and to the sacrifice of a great career. For Trafford it developed a whole series of perplexities, to resolve which he made his flight to Labrador. 'But if Trafford was a faithful husband, he ceased to be a happy and confident one. There

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Walpole Stent, p. 101.

grew up in him a vast hinterland of thoughts and feelings, an accumulation of unspoken and largely of unformulated things in which his wife had no share. And it was in that hinterland that his essential self had its abiding place. . . .'

This hinterland can be confined by neither creed nor party – it is in a continual minority of one – the ideas 'go on,' and thus 'the reality of progress never comes to the surface,' it remains a power in the deeps, the seat of that 'obscure inner necessity' of Conrad's, of which we can give no account, of which we see but the final and tangible results. It plays in the life of the individual the part played by philosopher, artist, and scientist in the life of the race.

There seems a fatal attraction in the project of separating mankind out into types; psychologically we have a vast range of suggested differentiation ranging from James' 'tough' and 'tender' minded, to the much more detailed and 'scientific' differentiation of Jung's *Psychological Types*. Mr. Wells has been unable to resist the siren-call, and here we have foreshadowed a very obvious distinction as between such a type of mentality as 'seems to keep, as people say, all its goods in the window,' and that other type that maintains behind the frontage offered to the world a full, rich, and active hinterland. And it is to the former type that the world *now* belongs and the sovereignty thereof; but in the hands of the latter type is the shaping of the future; and between these types is everlasting enmity. Of the former type the completest specimen is what is, somewhat vaguely perhaps, termed 'the

official mind.' The elder Walpole Stent is a case in point. His mind was, William Clissold tells us, 'like some great furniture depository, safe from fire, corruption or admixture, nothing seemed to happen in it, and nothing ever got lost in it, and he could, with every appearance of pleasure, reproduce the most commonplace facts at any time, at the fullest length, and in the completest detail.' And the younger Walpole Stent was bred true to type. The distinction of type is undoubtedly crude, but none the less real; psychological problems of great complexity would be involved were one to push the inquiry even one step forward – were one to inquire, for example, what is the exact significance and character of this shadowy no man's land that lies behind the spot of light we call our consciousness. But, crude though it be, it must for the present serve our purpose; it is enough for our present purpose if we recognize the distinction drawn, for it is obvious that if we wish to penetrate to the springs of motive, we can never do so if we confine ourselves to the study of the fixed ideas, the dogmas and the creeds that loom so large. If, as educationists, we aim at developing individuality, then there is a deeper level that, somehow, we must reach; we must realize that a pupil may very well pass from our hands without ever having been influenced by us; even without ever having been really known to us; it is, in short, possible that the pupil may grow up to affirm, with Mr. Bernard Shaw, that his schooling merely 'interrupted' his education.

To look at the matter in the broadest light, we find that it is man's own intellect, his supreme trust in his own

intellect, that have stood in the path of true progress; his religious organizations that have militated against religion, his educational institutions that have prevented education. The weapons he has contrived – religious, educational, social, political, have been turned against him; the idols he has fashioned have failed him in his need. He has forged chains with which he might have hitched his wagon to the stars; they have become chains to bind him to the earth. He has sought freedom, and found it – in an ignoble servitude, mental and physical; he has sought peace, and found it – in a fool's paradise precariously hung between abysses of terror. And so we are brought to Remington's 'Riddle for the Statesman' – a riddle to which no answer has yet been found – which is just this: How can the necessarily organized and systematized institutions, that modern complex social life demands, exist compatibly with the unconscious, spiritual development that is the real medium of progress? Or, since our purpose is educational, let us say, how can we so devise our educational machinery that, along with the inescapably rigid organization of schools and studies, we may yet leave free and untrammelled, and unobscured by mere intellectualism the spirit of man? There is a case for the institution, and Mr. Wells has put it;<sup>1</sup> there is a case for individuality, and Mr. Wells has put that;<sup>2</sup> the task for the educationist is the practical solution of a theoretically inescapable dilemma.

When, in the *World Set Free* by the atomic bombs, the 'King' discusses what is the real seat of sovereignty,

<sup>1</sup> e.g. *First and Last Things*, 1918, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. See Chapters VIII and XI.

Holsten puts the case for Science, and the president for Democracy – ‘Sovereignty resides,’ he said, ‘with the people.’

“No,” said the King, “the sovereign is a being more subtle than that. And less arithmetical. Neither *my* family, nor *your* emancipated people. It is something that floats about us, and above us, and through us. It is that common impersonal will and sense of necessity of which science is the best understood and most typical aspect. It is the mind of the race. It is that which has brought us here, which has bowed us all to its demands.”’ Out of common ideas – without which there cannot even be peace – out of an awakened world conscience, will be born the World State of the future. The *mind of the race* is something much more than a mere consensus of opinion – a sort of super-general-election majority – more extensive even than the sum of individual wills and intelligences. Trafford, in Labrador, seeking the realities of life of which he had, in the trying complexities of his social life, lost grip, sees that there is in man ‘something struggling to exist,’ and ‘some day – presently – man shall stand upon this earth as upon a footstool, and reach out his hand among the stars . . .’ And so he comes to his final act of faith; ‘There *is* a collective mind,’ he said, ‘a growing general consciousness – growing clearer.’ For this the world waits. Its faith in its dependence upon a transcendent Intelligence, a beneficent and benevolent Providence has been rudely shaken, and can hardly survive; and although there seems around us record of little more than the chaos of failure, though ‘many men are still taking the

world as they find it, being their own unmitigated selves more than ever,' Mr. Wells (with Mr. Huss, Remington, Trafford, the impish but fundamentally serious Boon, and Benham, and Mr. Britling) maintains his faith in this conception of a developing World-mind. Of this faith and of the question as to whether it is an inescapable and logical development from the preceding psychological principles we shall need to say more later.

For the present let us ask Whence comes this 'World-Mind'? Where shall an evil and an unregenerate race look for a sign? It comes, no one knows how, out of that hinterland; out of 'scraps of impulse,' and random benevolence; it flashes out in brief snatches of brilliance wherever one human being in kindness and in true sympathy aids another; it lights the scientist in his laboratory; the artist in study or in studio; the philosopher among his books; the teacher who comes to his work in the spirit of Froebel, of Pestalozzi; and they all become, not men, but Man thinking and working 'for the whole race.'

This small but growing minority, this divinely activated and active body of disinterested workers, 'constitutes that part of life which knows, and wills, and tries to rule its destiny. This new realization, the new psychology arising out of it, is a fact of supreme importance in the history of life. It is like the appearance of self-consciousness in some creature that has not yet hitherto had self-consciousness.'

A large part of this is, the sceptic may object, mere rhetoric, high-sounding but vague, too scantily documented and substantiated to serve as a guide for that

uncompromising person, the 'practical man,' too high-flown for our humble working world that lives from day to day, and not in some far distant future. Well, it may be so; it would have been quite as easy to tone down this exposition, and confine it to the plane of more rigid fact, but this would by no means have done justice to the essential psychological views of Mr. Wells, nor even would a true impression of these have been given. For, rhetoric or no, there is much in contemporary thought that marches well with such ideas of an 'over-mind,' a racial as distinct from an individual consciousness. William Clissold (whom we may, for once, despite the protestations of his author identify with him) meets Jung in a London flat, and discusses precisely this idea with him. 'Jung said it was entirely sympathetic with his views.' And in the talk it is demonstrated how some such idea - whether it take the dialectic shape of an Overman, a Superman, or of the 'Superior Person' of Confucius - has appeared and reappeared in Western, as in Eastern thought. 'Jung made it clear that I had not been following up that track alone; I had been running beside and responding to contemporary thought. One meets a phrase here and a suggestion there, and they incorporate themselves with one's own ideas. I had thought myself original.' But so far as Mr. Wells himself is concerned - it was William Clissold then speaking - when one takes into consideration the earliness of his first exposition of his 'world-mind' idea, the claim to originality may very well be upheld. Original or derived, however, it is clear that we are not dealing with the unreasonable and rhetorical

claims of an isolated faddist, but with a principle which is being amply substantiated by modern psychological and philosophical inquiry. It is at this point that the present examination meets the examination made in the previous chapter, and forms the point of departure for the succeeding examination of Mr. Wells' ethical speculations.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Ethics and the World State

'The broad direction of conduct follows from belief. The believer does not require rewards and punishments to direct him to the right. . . . To believe truly is to want to do right.'

★

THE study of ethics has been profoundly affected by modern developments in psychology – so profoundly as to necessitate a reconsideration of the whole field of motive and action. There are, from the more modern point of view, at least two methods of ethical speculation: the first being to deduce the principles of conduct empirically from human nature itself, the second to pursue the study along political lines. A typical example of the first method is to be found in Mr. C. E. M. Joad's *Common Sense Ethics*, and of the second in the essay of Mr. H. Sturt's from which I quote below. In the former of these may be seen the process of transforming ethics into psychology, as in Dr. McDougall's *Social Psychology* may be observed the contrary process.

Mr. Wells' relation to these broadly differentiated methods can soon be made clear. For the traditional ethics of Hedonism, Perfectionism and so forth he has found no use. Nor has he made any attempt to deduce the rules of conduct from the *facts* of human nature;<sup>1</sup> although, seeing that his beliefs about motive and conduct alike are expressions of his 'impression of the world,'

<sup>1</sup> 'I make my beliefs as I want them. I do not attempt to distil them out of fact as physicists distil their laws.' See *First and Last Things*, 1917, pp. 38-40.

there may be an effect of scientific relation between his psychology and his ethics; whereas the fact is they are made 'thus, and not thus exactly as an artist makes a picture so, and not so.'

There remains then the method I have termed 'political.' As a preliminary, and vitally important, principle it must be noted that men do not (as suggested in the *Social Contract* of Rousseau) *make* communities; they are born into them. Communities rise and evolve in obedience to some 'obscure inner necessity' of which we can give no reasonable account; the deepest and most pregnant social events are usually quite unnoticed at the time; the reality of social evolution escapes us. All that the philosopher can do is, as Mr. Sturt expresses it, 'to discern the principles which are just beginning to be adopted by the men who are actively engaged in the business of the world.' In brief, therefore, the political method amounts to this: it is impossible to consider virtue as purely an affair of private individual conduct; we are born into a highly evolved political and social environment which has to an overwhelming extent shaped our minds, an environment in which man is inextricably bound to man, and in which each man in all his actions affects, and is in turn affected by, the whole complex social body. It is impossible to forecast the consequences of any action. 'The business of the moralist is to explain the nature of virtue and the conditions of the virtuous life. Now the social and political system within which a man lives has an immense influence upon him morally. . . . We cannot say what a good life is until we have made up our minds what sort

of state is good.<sup>1</sup> Thus is suggested the necessary 'setting' of any consideration of ethics along the lines to which our inquiry points. The final issue is, obviously enough, that, in the ideal State, socialization results in the complete development of individuality; and conversely that the full realization of one's individuality necessarily brings one into complete harmony with one's fellows, and ensures a life lived, not only from the standpoint of ethics, *well*, but at the same time abundantly. And this is the state of affairs in the Utopia of *Men Like Gods*.

The question of ethics presents therefore a dual aspect: the individual and the social. We can find this excellently exemplified in two clearly marked and divergent conceptions of education. On the one hand, there are those systems which aim at the development of individuality considered, in extremest cases, apart from any other factors and with a corresponding distrust of all government and control, and receiving much support from the more advanced theories of the psycho-analysts. On the other hand, there are those systems which tend to regard education as a process of regimentation in the interests of a stabilized social order, or in the interests of any corporation, religious, economic, industrial and so forth, sufficiently powerful to effect such regimentation. We here touch upon a problem as old as philosophy itself; the problem of securing at one and the same time such liberty of the individual as may leave open the path of social progress, and, on the other hand, of securing such institutional organization as may stabilize and consolidate the

<sup>1</sup> Sturt: *Human Value*.

ground thus won, and facilitate the passing on of traditional culture. 'The problem of combining progress with political stability had never been accomplished in Utopia before that time [i.e. before the establishment of the World State] any more than it had been accomplished on earth.'<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the community that solves the problem is thereby constituted, in virtue of that solution alone, Utopia.

The line of inquiry thus opened, as has been suggested, involves the formation of prejudgments (if indeed such things *are* formed, or do not come rather by the light of nature, as, that is to say, 'intuitions')<sup>2</sup> as to the political system and the social life regarded as 'good;' it necessitates a clearly formed and definite view of life and its tendencies; not only the backward glance over the communities of the past, but the forward glance to the ideal of the future. Good conduct is thus, in its simplest terms, conduct that advances such purpose as one may find in life, and bad conduct, conduct that militates against that purpose.

By now it will appear that we are as far from Kant's 'Moral Law Within' as from any ethical code which, whether associated with religious doctrine or not, imposes controls based upon *a priori* reasoning. Thus, 'I have decided for myself,' writes Mr. Wells, 'that the general business of life is the development of a collective con-

<sup>1</sup> *A Modern Utopia*, Chapter IX, to which the reader is referred as integral in this discussion.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ante, p. 94. Also the present writer's *Education and the Spirit*, Chapters. III and V.

sciousness, and will, and purpose, out of a chaos of individual consciousnesses, and wills, and purposes.' This then is the first step in ethical theory; we know the 'general business of life.' From this we may proceed to a more definite statement of principle, but upon this belief everything rests. Mr. Wells was in his earlier work suggesting, under the title of the New Republicanism (and later much more definitely, in the order of the Samurai) the formation of a voluntary aristocracy, charged with the government of the community. So far as the *conduct* of these aristocrats was concerned 'the determining frame of their ethics, the more spacious scheme to which they will shape the schemes of their individual wills, will be the elaboration of that future world state to which all things are pointing.' The idea of the *organization* Mr. Wells has since abandoned, but not the essential ethical principle involved. As Benham put it, 'We who are self-appointed aristocrats, who are not ashamed of Kingship, must speak to one another - we can have no organization because organizations corrupt -' In Remington, Stratton, Trafford and Benham we have attempts 'to present [the] idea of a "Believer" in action.' These men were all, more or less, failures; and 'their disasters,' Mr. Wells himself says, 'derived from their failure to realize that the impulse to serve mankind comes from a source outside of, and greater than, one's individual good intentions.' From this point to the point reached in *God the Invisible King* is but a single step, and so we leave the realm of ethics proper and find ourselves in the domain of the theologian. But our business lies, for the present, upon a less exalted (but

not less difficult) plane. For, as the stories of the Believers<sup>1</sup> will tell us, there is a whole wilderness of distracting and distressing detail to be explored between that intuition of life's essential business and the daily journey towards its fulfilment, the transformation of the ideal into mundane material.

Life will always present these individual problems; no code of law, no system of ethics, nor system of habit, custom or taboo, could ever hope so to regulate and control conduct as finally and completely to eliminate them. 'But,' as Mr. Britling said, 'priests and schoolmasters and bureaucrats get hold of life and try to make it all rules, all etiquette and regulation and correctitude. . . .' Such a state, if attempted (as by Confucius, and in the early Hebraic code), would inevitably prove unprogressive; this, with *our* experience of progress we need not stress; but (and this can scarcely be denied) 'Beings are unique, circumstances are unique, and therefore we cannot think of regulating our conduct by wholesale dicta.' And, as for Mr. Wells, there can be no reasonable alternative to 'progress,' that factor also must be included.

The religious aspect demands separate treatment and so for the present must be left. The more detailed consideration of problems of conduct does not vitally concern the educationist *quâ* educationist. His primary business is to secure a fundamental ethical foundation for theory, upon which may be based a practice that works towards the creation of a mental and moral framework of habit and control which will serve as the basis of the 'good'

<sup>1</sup> Remington, Trafford, Stratton, Benham.

character, having regard, needless to say, to the primary conception of the Wellsian 'World State' – or whatever other primary conception we may form. Thus Herbart, for whom the end of education was an exclusively ethical one, arrived at five 'moral ideas' which embodied this fundamental ethical basis for his educational theory. We may therefore continue the line of Mr. Wells' ethical principles in the following generalized statement: 'The outward duty of those who serve God must vary greatly with the abilities they possess, and the positions in which they find themselves; but for all there are certain fundamental duties; a constant sedulousness to keep oneself fit and bright for God's service, and to increase one's knowledge and powers, and a hidden persistent watchfulness of one's baser motives, a watch against greed and lust, against envy, malice and uncharitableness.'

Further, and arising directly out of these considerations, 'virtue' is not a negative but (conformably with its derivation) a positive affair; for that virtue which is in effect mere abstinence Mr. Wells cannot profess any admiration. On the contrary, 'abstinence for its own sake,' he has written, 'is evil,' and right conduct is a nice adjustment between extremes of defect and excess. 'If I were a father confessor, I should begin my catalogue of sins by asking, "Are you a man of regular life?" And I would charge my penitent to go away and commit some practicable saving irregularity. . . .' Beside which affirmation might suitably be placed that of Samuel Butler: 'When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness that he committed, and doeth that which is neither quite lawful

nor quite right, he will generally be found to have gained in amiability what he has lost in holiness.' And 'holiness' is a quality for which neither Butler nor Wells show much respect. Holiness is a profoundly anti-social quality – egotistic and mischievous. The 'holy' man would, like Ibsen's Brand, and like his Gregers Werle, wreck the happiness and safety of the world for the sake of fanatically held principle. The easy path of rigid adherence to a set and final code of prohibitions, and an ensuing conception of education as a training in 'Thou Shalt Not,' is therefore closed to us. The child has to be trained with a view to its ultimate participation, active and enlightened, in the 'business of life;' and we have already seen what that business is, and its extensive demands upon the individual.

'To-day the spirit of humanity is lost to itself, divided and dispersed, and hidden in little distorted circles of thought . . . our fundamental business is to develop the human spirit.' What is the main principle underlying the phrase 'the development of the human spirit'? The older answers of traditional ethics are, we have agreed, of no avail. Nor can this 'human spirit' exist, politically speaking, *in vacuo*. And so here we pass over from the individual to society. The manifestation of this 'human spirit' so far as any ethical principle that can avail the educationist may be concerned, is in the corporate life of man. This sounds suspiciously like a typical pedagogical platitude; but, indeed, it strikes at the very root of a question that is of all questions the most profound and the most vital. At the present time this corporate life is a vast and complicated tangle of evil and foolishness; to select that particular



aspect of its insufficiency that our inquiry illumines, we find that 'classes are intolerable to classes, and sets to sets, contact provokes aggressions, comparisons, persecutions, and discomforts. . . .'<sup>1</sup> The school, naturally enough, does not fail in its duty towards this state of affairs: 'In too many cases the community we let our schools and colleges teach to our children is an extremely narrow one; it is the community of a sect, of a class, or of an intolerant, greedy, and unrighteous nationalism.' Our schools are 'centres of malignant political infection,' teaching the 'most rancid patriotism.'

Under such circumstances it seems quite useless to talk about the 'development' of the human spirit; our first task seems rather to lie in measures of mere enfranchisement; that is to say in what is (in effect) the negative duty of removing such influences as are inimical to its free growth, and thus escaping from an environment in which every one grows up 'with a crippled or thwarted will, hampered by vain restrictions, or misled by plausible illusions.'

'There are,' William Clissold tells us, 'no real positive obstacles to human progress, but only negative ones, - ignorance, obstinacy, habit, doubt and superstitious fear which vanishes before the light.' But the light is so flickering and feeble - it has hardly effected more than to make the darkness visible, but even that is one step in the right direction.

If, therefore, any one thing must be singled out, somewhat invidiously perhaps, as the fount and origin of our

<sup>1</sup> As I revise these words the whole life of our community afford a melancholy and striking commentary. May 1926.

national and international failures it is just this refusal of what Mr. Sturt has termed 'Human Value' in favour of all sorts of fictitious and unreal values (economic, social, national, racial, sexual and so forth) that debase and enslave the mind of man, poison the springs of conduct, and dry up at its source that human sympathy that must be the animating principle in any enlightened social organization.

There is only one way out, only one way in which the human spirit can be untrammelled and thus set free and 'flying swiftly to unmeasured destinies through the starry stillnesses of space;' and that way lies through sympathetic understanding of the significance of humanity, undistorted by artificial barriers set up in such social environments as raise these barriers, and thus are favourable to that polarization of sympathy upon one's own particular class that Mr. Galsworthy has so strikingly exhibited in *Loyalties*. There are those who, even to-day, have 'that gift of sympathetic imagination that releases a man from the subtle mental habituations of his upbringing;' but such men are rare. The greater part of mankind carries the evil burden to the grave. So the ideal state (and it is unnecessary to pause to point the educational moral) is one in which these 'subtle mental habituations' are such as will bring a man into ready sympathy with his brother man, irrespective of, and unconditioned by, any adventitious and accidental differences whatsoever; a sympathy broadening out to that world-wide brotherhood, for which (at least as Mr. Wells has told us) 'all history bids us hope.' And so, once again we are brought to a Pisgah-sight of

the promised Utopia – and once again turn back into the wilderness. ‘If people cannot be brought to an interest in one another greater than they feel to-day, to curiosities and criticisms far keener, and co-operations far subtler, than we have now; if class cannot be brought to measure itself against, and interchange experience and sympathy with class, and temperament with temperament, then we shall never struggle very far beyond the confused discomforts and uneasiness of to-day, and the changes and complications of human life will remain as they are now, very like the crumbings and separations and complications of an immense avalanche that is sliding down a hill.’

Thus, from the ‘general business of life,’ to this conception of the development of the human spirit, stretches the path Mr. Wells has traced for us through the ill-mapped domain of ethics. He has digressed often; frequently set off in the exploration of by-paths; on occasion sought, the unkind critic might say, theological chimeras that have proved but the insubstantial ghosts of long-departed heresies; nevertheless the path by which he has arrived at his later views is a recognizably continuous one. And the end of that path – so far as end there can be – brings us to this: in its final analysis the success of civilization is the success of sympathy and understanding. ‘To realize the unacceptable evil in a thing is to begin its cure.’<sup>1</sup> To understand, to *see* an evil is to abolish it, and Mr. Wells is not the only English novelist who has thus tried to provide sight to the blind – was not Dickens called the best public servant England ever had? – and thus, in a ‘collective

<sup>1</sup> William Clissold.

mind,' world-wide, enlightened, and permeated with goodwill and actuated by undistorted sympathy lies the secret of 'not only the cures of war and poverty, but of the general form of all a man's duty, and the essential work of mankind.'

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A Preliminary Survey

'What is humanity as a whole thing? What is the nature of the world process of which I am a part? Why should I drift from cradle to the grave wearing the blinkers of my time and nationality, a mere denizen of Christendom, accepting its beliefs, its stale antagonisms, its unreal purposes?'

STRATTON, *The Passionate Friends*.



IN the three previous chapters we have surveyed those ideas of Mr. Wells that may be said to have a special interest from the educational point of view; and the method chosen has been the obvious one of sorting these out into the three fields of biology, psychology and ethics. But to deal with them thus, by what might quite justly be termed an artificial act of abstraction, is to obscure the essential unity of Mr. Wells' theme. That theme is human life; the mighty drama of its past, its present, and, above all, of its future. To move towards the restoration of unity is therefore the purpose of this chapter; it is an attempt, partial at least, to suggest Mr. Wells' answers to the questioning of Stratton which heads the chapter, and to draw together the threads of an argument, so far left floating in the air.

There is no such thing as man's moral nature as distinct from his intellectual; there is no such thing as a mental life as distinct from a physical; there is no such thing as an individual life as distinct from a racial. We make these distinctions to suit ourselves, convenient subdivisions of a subject too wide for consideration apart from some such classification. It is the philosopher's business to survey, in

the broadest way, the whole field, and to find what clues there may be for the solution of life's perplexing problems.

While our task has thus far been comparatively simple, we find, when we lift our discussion to this plane, that it becomes infinitely more difficult. To lay down the main lines of Mr. Wells' *Weltanschauung* necessitates a bird's-eye view of a range of material appalling in its extent. 'What a world the man must survey,' writes Mr. J. C. Squire, 'who attempts to review the work of Mr. Wells . . . short stories, essays, Utopias, novels, political pamphlets, scientific treatises: the range and variety is amazing.'

It is here we must take account of that distinction between artist and thinker; that long development from *The Time Machine* to this present; all the factors indeed that occupied our second and third chapters. Again, so long as Mr. Wells is definitely talking 'about' education (in his later work he is always talking 'about' something, even in his novels) we are on moderately safe ground. But, when he is talking about some other topic – imperialism, New Republicanism, marriage, lunatic asylums, or whatever it may at the moment happen to be – and we, with our educational purpose in view, seek out the general views contained in this extensive material, we find ourselves upon sands that seem very much like drifting sands at the mercy of wind and tide.

To make a definite statement about any of Mr. Wells' ideas is to lay oneself open at once to a refutation from his own work. If one says that Mr. Wells ignores individuality, it can at once be shown that he is fully alive to its

importance; if one makes this latter statement it can be shown that he ignores it.

But we do not want, we do not seek, an orderly and systematic philosophy of life. Life is so infinitely various, the vagaries of human idiosyncrasy so bewilderingly diverse; that disturbing element, the human soul, enters so disconcertingly into the most serious essays in speculation, that any writer as keenly sensitive to all those primary and essential qualities of life as Mr. Wells is, a writer who has, in addition, so masterly an art in their portrayal, can scarcely be expected to present a clear-cut and definitely formulated body of doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

There are, nevertheless, certain more or less definite principles that may be laid down as fundamental, and from our previous discussions the following are the main contributory factors that have emerged. Our conception of human life must be formed undistorted by adventitious values placed upon it by that stratification imposed by social and economic conditions. Man is undoubtedly infinitely variable in whatever quality we choose to take, but this fact must not be made the excuse for the arbitrary and unjust imposition of hereditary pains and penalties, nor on the other hand for the granting of hereditary honours and benefits. For each individual there is a place and a task, and the faith of the New Age will be that 'no existence, even if it is an existence that is presently

<sup>1</sup> And it must not be forgotten that 'In practice a metaphysical system, whatever may be its initial pretensions to pure thought and to absolute rationality, is always, in the end, one particular man's personal vision of the universe.' - F. C. Schiller.

entirely erased, can be needless or vain.' On the mental side we have seen that the intellectual faculties of man are no more than the surface features of an individuality that reaches far down into a 'hinterland' of hidden processes, in which there reside not only that intelligence and that will that are destined finally to emerge, and to form the basis of the world-mind of the future, but also active reminders that we are not ten thousand generations removed from that ancestor which we share with the ape. And, following directly from these considerations is the ethical principle that in relation to this foreshadowed merging of the individual into the aims and purposes of the world-mind, all conduct must be judged.

The crux of the whole argument is precisely this: Mr. Wells believes in the future of mankind, in the coming of the World State. It is an essentially pragmatic belief; and, as he has said, 'though my beliefs are arbitrary, each day they stand wear and tear, and each new person they satisfy, is another day and another voice showing they do correspond to something that is so far fact and real. This is Pragmatism as I conceive it; the abandonment of infinite assumptions, the extension of the experimental spirit to all human interests.'

The particular belief with which we are here concerned, that belief in the world state of the future, is a belief that, since the day of its adoption has been exposed to much wear and tear; how has it stood it? It has never been abandoned, that at least may be said of it. But how does it fare when dealt with in an 'experimental spirit'? The experience of Benham is here most pertinent, for he of all



Wells' heroes was the one who most determinedly and most disinterestedly applied himself to the unravelling of the vast tangle that we term civilization, and sought the key to the riddle of the future. He starts out with the intention of achieving that 'aristocracy' that the new order demands and of influencing his fellow-man in the direction of that order. He finds that his purpose is not easily to be achieved; he dies without having seen more than a glimpse or two of light. If he would conquer the world he found that he had first to conquer himself, and to rise above the limitations of the flesh. 'Only by the conquest of four natural limitations is the aristocratic life to be attained. They come in a certain order . . . of fear and my struggle against fear I have told already.' And then follow in due succession, physical indulgence, jealousy, and finally prejudice - 'Family Prejudice, National Prejudice, Race Prejudice, War, Class Prejudice, Professional Prejudice, Sex Prejudice.' It is as much the aristocrat's business, Benham discovers, to free himself from these complicated prejudices, as it is to free himself from the much more elemental limitation of fear. And Benham found these limitations increasingly difficult to overcome, and his task, failing some other principle that he had yet to discover, became, in the end, impossible. But before the final tragedy he had seen a gleam of light. He failed; but his message is passed on to us, and it is this: without the conception of some larger synthesis into which one's little life can be absorbed, without the reference of one's life 'to ends and purposes beyond oneself' there can be neither value nor meaning in life.

The conclusion is inescapable. The comparison of Mr. Wells' ideal presentation of the life of the future, with life as it actually is lived, here and now, reveals a gulf which can only be bridged by a conception of some agency outside man, and yet at the same time within, by the aid of which human nature can be raised to the level that aspirations so high demand. If you subscribe to Mr. Wells' fundamental beliefs, and assent to his interpretation of human nature and of human history, then you will have to go the whole way with him, the way that leads to *God the Invisible King*.

If one assents to a definite view as to the purpose of life, the educational problem becomes merely one of ways and means. In reviewing a previous work of mine a writer in the *Church Times* observed: 'We maintain when it comes to the question of the final end of education, that the Catholic Church gives the only satisfactory definition of the "end of man," and that the Catholic Church has a long experience of educating her children to that final end.' There is no more argument about such a proposition as this, than there is about the propositions of Mr. Wells. It is no good objecting that the results of two thousand years of Catholic endeavour do not bear out this claim; the 'final end' is not upon this earth at all; the 'results' are beyond man's inquiry; and the claim therefore stands unassailable. One indubitable fact is witnessed to both by Mr. Wells and by the reviewer whose words I have quoted, and that is, that ultimately any discussion of the end of education will bring you to religion, for they are but different aspects of the same great question.

It is true that Mr. Wells claims for his faith the validity of appeal to experience; so does the Catholic. Mr. Wells may claim that it is based upon the facts of man's nature; that it is witnessed to by the proper interpretation of history; he may claim that it *works*; and to each claim the Catholic makes an equally confident counter-claim, with equal justice, with an infinitely wider experience, and supported by something that Mr. Wells cannot claim (and does not want to claim), an ancient and a living tradition.

In fact it appears, on theoretical grounds, that Mr. Wells is approaching somewhat perilously near to the putting forward of ideas that in their naked simplicity (unadorned by persuasive rhetoric and delightful pictures) must excite the horror of every true educationist. He has seen the Light, and by all the arts of which he is master he seeks to lead us to it. His eyes turn (as do the eyes of all who, like him, know the *right way*) towards the school, and he tells us in plain words what the school exists for. He *knows* what he wants, and so the curriculum must be rigged (if that be not too hard a term) accordingly.<sup>1</sup> His practical proposals towards this end are dealt with in the succeeding chapter, and there more fully criticized. For the present we must note that, however high-sounding, reasonable, or persuasive, his proposals are, they are *au fond*, propaganda. 'Such a creative conception of a human commonwealth can be *fostered*, in exactly the same way

<sup>1</sup> To use a figure of his own he would bombard us with ideas of the World State just as the giants would bombard with 'the food of the gods' the little insufficient men of the world they lived in.

that the idea of German unity was *fostered* behind the dukedoms, the free cities, and Kingdoms of Germany. . . . ' If this is not propaganda, then at least it is not education. It would be comforting to feel that the way is at last plain, made straight through the desert of aimlessness in which we now wander, but . . . can we indeed be so sure as Mr. Wells would have us? Can we afford to subordinate what we term *educational* principles in favour of this conviction? More pertinently still, can it be done? Can we find, either in the records of history or in the contemplation of contemporary life, anything that may seem to warrant us in accepting Mr. Wells' interpretation of the necessary trend of social progress? As witness to the contrary, take Mr. Wells himself. He writes: 'Priests, schools of thought, political schemers, leaders of men, have always slipped into the error of assuming that they can think out the whole -- or at any rate completely think out definite parts -- of the purpose and future of man, clearly and finally; . . . and, experiencing the perplexity, obduracy, and evasions of reality, they have taken to dogma, persecution, training, pruning, secretive education, and all the stupidities of self-sufficient energy.' In short it seems that 'wisdom before the event,' is as vain and unproductive of good as is the much more common 'wisdom after the event.'

The educationist has a feeling that the school exists for the education of children; he is inclined indeed to be somewhat obstinate about this. He may not be very clear in his own mind as to what 'education' means, but he is quite willing to examine the meaning of the term -- if,

that is, he is worthy of the name educationist, and is not a mere journeyman or quack – and he has a feeling that the School should be organized in obedience to *pedagogical* principle, and that the child should leave the school, if not educated, then at least with feet firmly planted upon the right road. He looks with well-founded and healthy suspicion upon all people who seem desirous of using him and his school for some purpose of their own; the suspicion has been bred in him by unscrupulous persons who have ulterior motives, scarcely concealed, that he does not respect and even regards with loathing.

Here seems the due place for a further examination of that 'progress' of which we have been obliged to say so much. For, be a philosophical system as complete and self-contained as one can wish, there is, Mr. Wells has repeatedly affirmed, something which escapes system, that eludes logical grasp. After all has been said about the various aspects of social, economic, political or educational evolution, we find ourselves brought back, in the end, to this solid and irrefutable principle: the reality of 'progress' is just this: 'Things Happen.'

Our pre-war system of currency and finance was never planned, never 'scientific.' Like Topsy, it just 'grewed;' it was 'a chancy and insecurely experimental system of conventions and assumptions' – a fact of which we were soon (this was written in 1909) to be made unpleasantly aware. The novel was just as unpremeditated; again, 'nobody planned the British estate system' said Mr. Britling, 'nobody planned the British aristocratic system . . . it came about.' And as Mr. Wells himself says,

'Few of the important things in the collective life of man started out to be what they are.' To put it somewhat extremely, we are adrift in the current of circumstance, and Heaven alone knows whither we are ultimately to be carried. 'We fuss about,' said Trafford, 'with our movements and jobs and lectures and stuff – and *things happen.*'

Now this is an extremely unsatisfactory state of affairs; it distresses the man of orderly mind, it seems so obviously a wasteful and haphazard fashion of getting things done; it has resulted in set-backs and disasters innumerable, so that the curve of progress instead of being a harmoniously rising one is a mere affair of alternating crests and troughs, in one of which latter phases we now find ourselves. We may take it as adequately enough demonstrated that this method has not been attended by any very signal success. It has possibly produced some fine things – the Golden Age of Greece, the Augustan Age of Rome, our own 'good old times' – but critical examination is apt to take the gilt off even these, and leave a common life in all ages deplorable, differing from age to age not in degree at all but merely in kind; for mankind never rids itself of tyrants, but merely changes a tyrant of one sort for one of another. So, at least, we learn from Anatole France.<sup>1</sup> And the *Outline of History* hardly tells a better story. 'En effet,' said Voltaire, 'l'histoire n'est que le tableau des crimes et des malheurs.'

Is this the best of which man is capable? Is there no other method of progress? The fundamental idea upon

<sup>1</sup> 'Satan conquering, would become God.' Cf. *The White Stone* (Eng. Edition), p. 64.

which Socialism rests is, Mr. Wells tells us, 'the denial that chance impulse and individual will and happening constitute the only methods by which things may be changed.' But while the 'things happen' principle has brought much evil, has it not brought any *real* progress at all? Mr. Wells has admitted a vast improvement in English life, and attributed it to the operation of an entity he calls 'good will.' But this he holds, is not sufficient; it must be *organized*, and wills not good bent to the common weal. The final query, the essential problem, is this: Can we, by taking thought, by foreseeing and planning, seize hold of the reins of the process and make ourselves its master? To begin with, the mere idea of taking thought is repugnant to many worthy souls, those ardent spirits the *gawdsakers*<sup>1</sup> who 'want to plunge into action or controversy or belief without taking thought.' There is, in fact, a very prevalent tendency to look with deep suspicion under anyone who dares to maintain that it might be as well to look for awhile at the basal assumptions that underly our conception of life, and our practical endeavours; a tendency to regard such an one as a hopeless and impractical visionary – a fiddler while Rome burns. On the other hand, however, there is that liberalism of defective moral energy that is *all* system, *all* grandiose plans.

This is excellently typified in the pot and tongue valiant 'artilleryman' of *The War of the Worlds* with his imagina-

<sup>1</sup> 'He is the person who gets excited by any deliberate discussion and gets up wringing his hands and screaming "For Gawd's sake let's do something *now!*"' – Trafford, in *Marriage*.

tive brilliance, his far-reaching schemes for the reclamation of his world, his theoretical enthusiasm, which are so strangely allied to his disinclination towards hard work and practical endeavours. "One can't always work," he said, and in a flash I saw the man plain . . . now that I was beginning to understand something of his quality, I could divine the stress he laid on doing nothing precipitately. . . .'

By all means let us foresee and plan, and end this sorry reign of unbridled individualism. But none the less individualism has its case, and a very strong one. Mr. Wells has himself put one aspect of it.<sup>1</sup> In the *Outline*, speaking of the hoped-for religious revival necessary to the salvation of civilization, he makes the following very significant admission: 'Great movements of the racial soul come at first like a thief in the night, and then suddenly are discovered to be powerful and world wide.' *Things*, that is to say, *happen!* And, if I read aright the history of the emergence of the Utopia of *Men Like Gods* from the Age of Confusion, it seems that even that was not entirely foreseen and planned; *it* also stole upon mankind '*like a thief in the night.*' So here is the making of a very pretty dilemma. We must undoubtedly take thought, foresee and plan; but, as for these 'great movements of the racial soul,' how are these to enter into our 'best laid schemes'? Are they amenable to system and prevision? It is of course the old dilemma of *alter* and *ego* obtruding itself in a new guise—that dilemma that will obtrude itself in any discussion of practical politics. As Mr.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. *First and Last Things* (1918), 99-110.



Harold Laski writes of J. S. Mill, 'The thing for which Mill was concerned was that the citizen should be given the full chance to be himself at his best. That, at bottom, is the meaning alike of his emphasis upon the importance of diversity and upon the fact that *there are reserves within the human mind into which organization cannot, and ought not, to enter.*'<sup>1</sup>

The discussion, having reached this *impasse*, there is no more to be said before we have examined in some detail Mr. Wells' practical proposals. All such theoretical dilemmas (and there is no problem that cannot, if one so wishes, be set out in dilemma form) show themselves amenable to practical solution, and this is particularly true of education. We have gone as far as is safe along theoretical lines, and so we turn now to the schools of the new age, to resume the discussion when we have seen what these are like.

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, Introd. by H. Laski, xviii. (Italics mine.)

## CHAPTER NINE

### New Schools for Old

'Now that the apostolic succession of the old pedagogy is broken, and the entire system discredited, it seems incredible that it can ever again be reconstituted in its old seats upon the old lines . . . the opportunity of the new education . . . is assuredly the greatest of all.'

★

In his essay on *The Schools of a New Age* (1924), Mr. Wells presents in outline a vision of the village school of the future as forming, with reading room and theatre, the central architectural feature of the village community, a centre around which the intellectual and political life of the community revolves and from which as a unitary centre radiate out the paths of higher education, leading *via* the district schools, the greater high schools, art studios, theatres, and laboratories, to the University with which every considerable town will be provided. Agricultural and industrial life will be linked up with technical research, and the business and financial world will be in intimate and fruitful *rapport* with the scientific and technical world; the banker will be a professor of economics, the iron-master a metallurgist, and so forth; and in general the wolf of high finance will dwell with the lamb of academic thought; the captain of industry will work in amicable co-operation with the non-commissioned officer of technical and scientific research; and the 'earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.'

Within this spacious and broadly sketched outline a vast amount of detail has to be filled in; but when we leave the broad impressionist sketches at which Mr. Wells (like,

dare we say, his own Artilleryman) is so good, in which he is so happy, and descend to this detail, we shall find our ease of movement restricted, our ways become darkened, and our thoughts, as 'Vernon Lee' has expressed, it 'in a prodigious welter, curdling into currents by no means easy to follow, and eddying round certain reefs, with or without beacons.' The education of the future must be universally accessible, spacious and varied, working in an atmosphere of efficient criticism, and general intellectual activity. So far, so good; but, take one step further, and there you will find yourself immediately in a quandary, or perhaps, more truly, in a whole series of quandaries opening out one from the other in bewildering ramifications. For, from the proposals of 1901, we learn that the school must be so conducted ('efficiently' of course!) that the individuality of the pupil shall be neither impaired nor distorted, and that all his leisure should not be taken up; these two necessities being intimately connected the one with the other, inasmuch as it is in this leisure time that the purely personal leanings of the pupil, freed from the direction of the teacher, will find the requisite liberty.<sup>1</sup> Come now to the proposals of 1920, and we find that the school must contrive at the manufacture of potential citizens of the Wellsian World State, fitted not only with a made-to-measure and necessarily stereotyped view of man and the world, but with an equally stereotyped world religion;<sup>2</sup> products of an education conceived on so broad

<sup>1</sup> e.g. *Anticipations*.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. *Outline of History* (1920 Ed.), p. 754.

a scale that it is difficult to see how any leisure can be left at all, either for pupil or for teacher.

The difference suggested above is significant; there is no resolving the contradiction; we may suggest a reason – indeed that is implicit in all that has preceded – but it is a contradiction which we have to accept, and to make the best of. The contrast is mainly that contrast between the artist with a keen eye for the infinite complexity of life and for the significance of individuality, and the scientific investigator who deprecates the tragic wastefulness due to the dreadful casualness of human progress, and who longs to take it all in hand and tidy it up.

In two books Mr. Wells has laid down a more or less systematic view of education, so far as curriculum is concerned. They are *Mankind in the Making* (1903) and *The Salvaging of Civilization* (1921). For convenience in reference I here place these schemes in parallel columns, so far as is possible.

The earlier is the left-hand column.

A. Direct means of understanding and expression.

- 1. Reading.
- 2. Writing.
- 3. Pronunciation.
- 4. English as a culture language: origin, development, vocabulary.
- 5. Prose and verse composition.
- 6. As much mathematics 'as one can get in.'

7. Drawing and Painting, not as 'art' but as appreciation of form and colour, and of the means of expression.

A. To speak, read, and write the mother tongue well. As ancillary:

- 1. Latin Grammar.
- 2. Elements of Greek.

Arithmetic, Algebra, Euclid:  
 'To a conception of form and quantity far more subtle than that possessed by any but a few mathematicians and mechanical geniuses to-day.'  
 Good training of eyes in drawing and manual work (added later - 1924 - music).

B. Foreign languages demanded by circumstances of time.

C. The acquisition of knowledge (and the art of acquiring knowledge) necessary to participate in contemporary life and thought.

'As for botany, geology, history and geography, these are far better relegated to the school library and the initiative of each child.'

'Two subjects . . . are of very doubtful value in training the mind . . . these are history and geography.'

B. Two or three other languages (later four or five) from

French

German

Russian or Czech.

Arabic.

Turkish.

Hindustani.

Spanish.

C. History and Geography.

Geographical teaching is at present good (therefore 'carry on'). But 'upon this question of History I am a fanatic.'

A fairly sound and comprehensive review of the whole known past.

To this later programme certain things must be added. For in *A Year of Prophesying* he writes: 'We need a world-wide common education of which the history of life and the sciences of life and matter are the two main divisions, in which drawing, mathematics, and living languages are studied as tools and methods of expression and not as subjects in themselves, and in which music is properly utilized in the development of æsthetic perception.' Phonetics finds an advocate in *What is coming?* and the claims of metaphysics and philosophy are urged in *First and Last Things*<sup>1</sup> and by Mr. Huss.<sup>2</sup> And further there is the question of education in sexual matters, and the broader question of religion in relation to education.

The differences thus exhibited are great and fundamental. In any case it must be noted that we are dealing with a scheme of education that is *universal* in application; there is to be no question of primary, secondary and so forth, it is to be an education for all, pursued to the fullest extent to which the individual is capable of benefiting by it, and in every case to the minimum age of sixteen. Theoretically this simplifies our problem; practically it enormously complicates it, for, in the administrative realm, the problem of all problems is the contriving of means whereby the gulf fixed between the varying types of education may be bridged or (to use the common metaphor) the contriving of a real 'educational ladder' in place of the shaky and inadequate 'ladder' of the present. This, however, we must assume to be effected. The

<sup>1</sup> Page 9.

<sup>2</sup> *The Undying Fire, passim.*

earlier curriculum is primarily the suggestion of an *educationalist* thinking first of the pupil, anxious that he should realize to the full his latent possibilities. 'The pressing business of the school is *to widen the range of intercourse. It is only secondarily . . . that the idea of shaping, or, at least, helping to shape the expanded natural man into a citizen comes in.* It is only as a *subordinate necessity* that the school is a vehicle for the *inculcation of facts.*'<sup>1</sup>

Later the propagandist usurps the place of the educationalist, and the curriculum is intended to produce citizens educated, not for themselves, but in the interests of the State, holding the progress and the welfare of the State as a far more important thing than the welfare of the individual. That the 'State' concerned is an enlightened state of future development may in the eyes of some mitigate the apparent Hegelianism of such a bald statement; but it can scarcely mitigate the fault in the eyes of an educationist. The pupils are to be educated because without educated people the World State will never arrive; and so, in looking around for the knowledge which will most economically and efficiently achieve this result (the old question of Herbert Spencer 'What knowledge is of most worth?'), Mr. Wells singles out History, because without common historical ideas there can be neither prosperity nor peace; languages because they are one of the main bars to international understanding; sciences because they serve to give a perspective for the viewing aright of human affairs and provide the means of material progress;

<sup>1</sup> *Mankind in the Making.* Italics are mine.



and so on. The first programme works towards, and ends with, the conception of the 'citizen;' the second begins with the preconception of an imaginary 'citizen-mould' into which the pupil must be pressed; to become a citizen, not of our own state, but of some state of the future, a state that Mr. Wells has himself imagined. The difference may indeed be expressed in many ways, but in general it may be said that the earlier outline presents a curriculum built up upon carefully examined theoretical bases; its psychological aspect is 'training the mind,' its philosophical aspect is 'widening the range of intercourse.' The later proposals have an unmistakable air of mere 'assemblage;' of being hastily thrown together under the stress of an all-powerful obsession, and of a general spirit of urgency; and this is foreshadowed in the very titles of the books. About the phrase 'four or five languages' there hangs a suggestion of putting one's hand at random into a bag containing the possible subjects of the curriculum, and fetching up a miscellaneous handful.

In 1903 Mr. Wells was adversely criticizing a regrettable tendency displayed by many worthy – and other – persons to utilize 'the gathering together of children in the schools for purposes irrelevant to education proper, but for some *real*<sup>1</sup> or fancied benefit.' In 1914 an intermediate stage is reached in which 'our schools exist for no other purpose than to give our youths a vision of the world and of their duties and possibilities in the world.' Finally, as we have seen, the position becomes completely reversed and the school appears as the chief contributory factor in the

<sup>1</sup> The Italics are mine.

developing new consciousness underlying the future World State. And here must be particularly noted the qualification 'real' in the first quotation. We appeal, if not from 'Philip drunk to Philip sober,' at least from the modern Wells to the Wells as yet unobsessed by importunate visions of the World State, the Wells who had not, as yet, constituted himself the physician of his age, nor succumbed, in Mr. Mencken's phrase, to the 'messianic delusion.' The benefit he expects from his later usage of the school may be 'real' enough; it may be a demand for the simple truth; but he has a large task before him before he can persuade the educationist to sacrifice all his theoretical prejudices and go 'all out' for the World State. To however great an extent our sympathies may be with Mr. Wells (and he invites, and perhaps at times even compels, sympathy), candour demands that we should view his proposals for what they really are in principle; and on this point there is little room for doubt. Mr. Wells' proposals of this immediate post-war period may as justly be termed the apotheosis of propaganda as may Dickon's conception of education as a mere preparation for the work of the advertiser be termed the apotheosis of advertising. 'The only use I've got for schools now,' said he, 'is to fit people to read advertisements. . . .'<sup>1</sup> And the only use the Mr. Wells of this period had for schools was to make citizens of his World State. His demands may seem – particularly to the teacher – somewhat too wide for actual practice; the phrase 'the overloading of the curriculum' is often enough heard to-day, and hints at a real

<sup>1</sup> *The World of William Clissold.*

enough danger; to some these demands may well seem outrageous, in a very definite sense a denial of real education; but before we leave this subject his most outrageous demand is yet to be considered. 'The key to all our human disorder,' he wrote, in *The Salvaging of Civilization*, 'is organized education. . . . The watchword of conduct that will clear up all our difficulties is, *the plain truth.*' And, the advertisement being displayed, there come the purveyors of all the 'one and only' true religions the world knows; eager-eyed and vociferously eloquent (Mr. Polly's 'shoveacious cult'), each suspiciously eyeing the while the outrageous and palpable falsehoods offered by the others. Here are the hundred and one educational faddists; political enthusiasts from extreme right to extreme left, and even beyond - the ultra-violet and the infra-red. Here is the representative, fully accredited, from the aristocratic camp demanding that the children of the poor be kept in their place; from the industrial camp demanding 'hands,' and from the commercial camp demanding a 'simple and efficient commercial training.' And they, one and all, offer us just this: the Plain Truth. But, just as the golden rule is that there *is* no golden rule, the plain truth is that there *is* no plain truth. How is Mr. Wells himself going to fare in this motley crowd he has convened? Imagine Mr. Wells in a denominational primary school daring to teach *his* plain truth!

On the question of method Mr. Wells has comparatively little to say, particularly in recent years. We need not blame him for this; nor would much purpose be gained

by summarizing such practical hints as he himself has so lucidly given in *Mankind in the Making*,<sup>1</sup> which book, I venture to repeat, remains despite its 'dating' a solid, reasoned and reasonable contribution to the theory of education. It is rather to the more modern Wells that I would devote attention, for, in one instance, his proposals are so illuminating and throw so searching a light upon his more recent pronouncements, that we cannot afford to neglect them. The teacher of the new school must be, he tells us, born, not made. He must be a man capable of writing a novel, making a contribution to educational thought, or capable of producing 'illuminating criticism.' A good teacher requires a peculiar temperament and distinctive aptitudes. But 'I doubt very much, even if you secure the services of every human being who had [these] natural gifts - you would command the services of more than one passable teacher for a hundred children, and of more than one really inspired teacher for five hundred children.' Mr. Bernard Shaw has delivered himself to much the same intent, so presumably there must be something in it. If it be so (and I, for one, do not intend to dispute the point), we are undoubtedly up against a formidable difficulty. Teachers we *must* have. 'The literature of educational reform is always assuming . . . teachers of limitless energy and capacity.' Hence the failure (the criticism is Mr. Wells') of such literature to effect, to

<sup>1</sup>With which may be compared the early education which Cossar contrived for his three sons brought up on the 'Food of the Gods.' Cossar had obviously read *Mankind in the Making*, and been greatly impressed thereby.

any very striking degree, the reforms at which it aims.

Now how are we to surmount the difficulty? First, Mr. Wells suggests, by providing ample material in the way of books, maps, diagrams and pictures, and (for language teaching) gramophones and records. Second, by the preparation and systematic development of all the lesson notes required. 'All the ordinary lessons in schools have been taught over and over again millions of times. Few people, I think, realize that . . .'<sup>1</sup> (But of that few, the greater part would certainly be teachers!) So, in the new school, the teacher with a lesson to *deliver* (this would no doubt be the appropriate term) goes to the map-diagram-picture store, and to the card-index which contains the record of the requisite didactic material, and having collated it all, sets off fully armed and minutely prepared.

Criticism is hardly necessary, but two points may be suggested. A student teacher, giving a lesson before an Inspector of Schools, with notes carefully and methodically prepared, had not progressed very far along her set lines when she discovered that certain knowledge, upon which she had reckoned, was lacking, and that there was, accordingly, a point that demanded dealing with before she could usefully proceed. When the end of her allotted time was reached she had just finished her digression, and

<sup>1</sup> And, Mr. Wells might have added, all the ordinary lessons (to say nothing of some extraordinary ones) have been *learnt* over and over again millions of times, by generation after generation. What a pity it cannot all be done once, and for ever!

turned (no doubt with dire forebodings) to the Inspector to apologize for her failure. 'Don't apologize,' he said, 'your digression was the best and most useful part of the lesson.'

Again, if you take an average staff in, say, a primary school, and survey it *de haut en bas*, collectively and superficially, it will possibly appear all that Mr. Wells has said it is – ill-trained, ill-educated, and so on through the whole melancholy catalogue of the Wellsian symptoms of *pedagogitis*. But if you become more or less intimately acquainted with its constituent detail, with due regard to the value of individuality, and with eyes open to the presence of special faculty, you will be surprised to find what wealth of aptitude can be hidden beneath a common exterior. You will find a very real, even if unstated and perhaps concealed, love for their charges, a very real sense of the significance of their task. Pressure of circumstances has forced the teacher (I am speaking more particularly of the primary school) to exhibit himself in his least favourable light – as the Oliver Twist of the professions; and the general public usually only hears about him, or cares to hear about him, when some question of money is concerned. Is it not surprising that, in a system of education so bad – as Mr. Wells has said it is – with teachers so ill-equipped and ill-trained, so much real good is being done? Would not the lay reader of Dr. Ballard's *Changing School* rub his eyes in wonder as to whether Dr. Ballard was not writing of some foreign country? It is surprising; so surprising, I submit, as to warrant some inquiry into it. Has not Mr. Wells neglected some essential factor in the

situation? Here, once again, let us appeal from the thinker to the artist. Sarnac in *The Dream*, despite his strictures on the material side of his 'education,' says of his teachers: 'There was in particular a gaunt dark man with a cough who took the older boys, and a little freckled woman of thirty or so who fought with the lower children, and I see now they were holy saints.' An allowance of two such teachers in a single village school must (if we are to believe Mr. Wells) have been a most extraordinary coincidence. So, whatever the explanation of these surprising achievements may be, it will certainly be the fact of the teacher's individuality that will be a main item in it, and Mr. Wells' demand for machine-made method, for the teacher who is among other equally mechanical things 'the honest assistant of the real teaching instrument - the gramophone,'<sup>1</sup> is likely effectively to remove from the practice of education its chiefest asset; and it is unnecessary to add to this any speculation as to the *quality* of the teacher, or the *type* of the teacher that such a system would attract. Let us pass as quickly as possible from this picture of schoolmasters reduced to the 'last extremity of usherdom' as Mr. Wells' ideas, just as surely as Dickon's idea of education as organized advertisement, would have them - 'mere conductors on his omnibus to knowledge . . . they would just turn on the loud-speaker and stand about and mark registers.'<sup>2</sup> We cannot have it both ways; if we want live teachers we cannot impose a dead system; for that is

<sup>1</sup> He is, of course, in this instance speaking of language teaching.

<sup>2</sup> *The World of William Clissold*.

what Mr. Wells is advocating. The fiction that the system of notes and so forth is to be a 'developing system' is a fiction indeed. The very constitution of the system would militate against development. The teacher of whom we have written above – the novel-writing, critical, philosophical teacher – would soon be seeking a field in which his qualities would find fuller scope – would in fact do precisely as Mr. Wells himself did, get out before he was flung out. But against this must be put Mr. Wells' picture of the elementary teacher under Socialism – a much brighter and certainly much more attractive one (*New Worlds for Old*, Chap. XIV, p. 1). But the dates must be compared – the latter being written in 1908, the former in 1921.

'Finally,' as William Clissold tells us, Mr. Wells 'settled down to a sort of propaganda of Sanderson of Oundle, whose chief claim to immortality is that there never was a man in control of a public school so little like a schoolmaster.' He has told his story as *The Story of a great Schoolmaster*, and there would be little point in subjecting it to any very detailed criticism. Sanderson appealed to Mr. Wells as 'beyond question the greatest man I have ever known with any degree of intimacy,' and as one who was pushing far towards realization 'all the educational possibilities that I had hitherto felt to be unattainable dreams.' Sanderson had, before his untimely end, 'come to a vision of the school as a centre for the complete reorganization of civilized life.' The main principles of Sanderson's work, with which Mr. Wells here identifies himself, were briefly these: the replacement of the old



'ideal' of competitive incentive by the ideal of natural interest; the enlargement of the curriculum<sup>1</sup> so as to provide ample opportunities for individual preferences; the introduction of scientific group work of a research character, and the extension of this to geographical and historical work; dramatic methods and the production of plays; the re-establishment of relations between school and reality; the whole being illumined by a conception of education as a definite training towards creative work, and as the stimulation of the spirit of inquiry, of service, and of mutual co-operation, the school being a model of the world, and a *working* model.

By now the attempt to lay down anything approaching an orderly statement – concise and systematic – of Mr. Wells' proposals towards the education of the future, is seen to have become impossible. This scheme of Mr. Sanderson's is much more truly a development from the earlier Wells' theme than are Mr. Wells' own later suggestions. The wheel is indeed revolving, and might seem to be coming full circle. There are factors in educational method, forgotten in the immediate post-war period, coming again into their own (e.g. 'to provide ample opportunities for individual preferences,' 'natural interest,' and so forth) – the *educationist*, temporarily ousted by the propagandist, returns.

<sup>1</sup> The curriculum at Oundle ultimately comprised: Mathematics, physics, chemistry, mechanics, biology, zoology, anthropology, botany, geology, architecture, classics, history, literature, geography, archæology, economics, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Eastern languages, art, applied art, handicraft, and music.

So, in the absence of this system (an absence which I personally am not inclined to deplore) all that remains is to survey a yet later development of these ideas, involving a temporal journey of some two thousand years, and a spatial journey through the fourth dimension – but we are inured to such dizzy adventuring by now! In *Men Like Gods* we see the Wells-Sanderson ideal carried out to something approaching a final development, and see it operating against that cultural background that it is intended to contrive and maintain.

Lion, upon whom fell the task (and what a task!) of explaining Utopia to the Earthlings, tells how the beginnings of the new order 'were in discussions, books, and psychological laboratories; the soil in which it grew was found in Schools and Colleges.' The struggle of the educationist against the class of 'irresponsible rich people,' against 'greedy, passionate, prejudiced and self-seeking men' went on for nearly five centuries; more than a million martyrs died for it; but point by point he won; 'a time came when Utopia perceived that it was day, and that a new order of things had replaced the old. . . .' The children of the new age grew up uninjured by such ignorance and such evils as 'cripple the growing mind of an Earthling.' Each child was born of healthy parents, in healthy conditions, trained by the subtlest educational methods to the fullest possible measure of its possibilities, hand, eye, and mind given every chance. 'All its desires are made fine; it learns . . . to lose its solicitude for itself in love . . . its curiosity flowers into scientific passion, its combativeness is set to fight disorder, its inherent pride

and ambition are directed towards an honourable share in the common achievement. It goes to the work that attracts it, and chooses what it will do.' The opening stages of education are carried out upon large educational 'estates' (in *The Dream* 'gardens'), 'education up to eleven or twelve seemed to be much more carefully watched and guarded and taken care of in Utopia than upon earth.'

Before passing on to make acquaintance with Crystal, the Utopian schoolboy, we may pause to consider the main points that emerge; it must again be emphasized that it was out of the school and the college that the new order emerged; again, the main factor in this education is the question of 'background,' which not only merely *guards* the developing mind, but actually fosters all the finer qualities of the mind, and transforms base instincts into beneficent motive. The Utopian youth accordingly grows up quite naturally into those attributes that make men like Gods, and at the same time achieves the fullest development of his own individuality. The problem of *ego* and *alter* seems at last to be solved.

So far as Mr. Barnstaple could gather from Crystal, the Utopian youth of some thirteen years of age (and therefore, mentally, about on a level with him, Mr. Barnstaple being a rather exceptionally intelligent Earthling), Crystal's education, subsequent to his delivery from the educational 'preserve,' consisted of a training in mathematics, inter-related to physical and chemical work, history which aimed at presenting the development of Utopia out of the Age of Confusion, and some other form of training that 'seemed to turn upon refinements of

expression,' and was, we may infer, some sort of æsthetic training. Languages of course no longer figure in the curriculum. Crystal now moves about among grown-ups, and is 'full of explicit information,' that he is quite ready to unload upon Mr. Barnstaple, and he is not far, if the truth must be told, from being rather an insufferable little prig. He was 'proud of his *savoir faire*.' Mr. Barnstaple asks him a question:

'But you - you do not make love?'

'I have had curiosities,' said the boy, *evidently saying what he had been taught to say*; 'but it is not necessary nor becoming to make love early in life . . . it weakens youth to become too early possessed of desire. . . . It spoils and cripples the imagination. . . .'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Barnstaple himself had his doubts about this so early sophisticated youth, for when Crystal lets fall the remark that 'Rentier classes are not a permanent element in any community' he found it necessary to satisfy himself by a few questions that Crystal really *knew* what a rentier class was! Needless to say, he knew.

Now the underlying idea in *Men Like Gods* is the creation of a background against which certain honoured and reputable figures of earth may disport themselves, and show themselves for the fools they are; a device that Mr. Shaw has used in *The Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman*. The book approaches perilously near to farce (particularly at page 170, where the bounds may be said to be passed), develops into parable (page 186) and back again to farce at page 191. In brief Mr. Wells was not, on this

<sup>1</sup> Italics are mine. Again the 'inculcation of ideas.'

occasion, out for Truth, but out to castigate Mr. Rupert Catskill and his kind, and any stick is good enough for such a purpose as that. The Utopian background is sketched in so deftly and so persuasively as temporarily to blind the judgment. The educational ideas are thrown in to assist in the creation of the general atmosphere of liberality and enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> Their chief value to us lies in the fact that they point to a moderation of the ideas of the immediate post-war period, and confirm us in the opinion that Mr. Wells' views upon education (perilous as such a statement may well seem) are, if not set, then at least as completely developed as they are ever likely to be; and finally that *Mankind in the Making* is, in the whole, a truer index to his real views upon the school than is *The Salvaging of Civilization* or the associated works of that period.

If the ideas of William Clissold are any index to those of his creator we may in this latest book of Mr. Wells find additional evidence of the complete passing of this intermediate stage in the development of his more general educational ideas. 'The idea that society had been shattered and would need rebuilding was very prevalent in 1915. Everything was going to be rebuilt, fairer, juster, happier; that went without saying. . . . By 1916 this had become a standard promise for all the optimists. . . .' But, in the educational world in particular, the promise

<sup>1</sup> As evidence I offer the suggestion that the obsession with the past - with the Age of Confusion - evinced by Crystal is rather a novelist's necessity than an educationist's considered view.

has proved unfulfilled; teacher, lecturer, and don alike failed lamentably to take advantage of the 'opportunity of the new education.'<sup>1</sup> In Sanderson's work Mr. Wells saw abundant promise; but Sanderson died, his work hardly begun; Oundle, it seems, reverts to type; and in any case Sanderson was, as Clissold puts it, 'a complete abnormality.' And so Clissold, repeating in epitome all the familiar complaints about our existing 'education,' is at last driven to say, 'I do not so much want to alter and improve the schoolmaster as induce him as gently as possible . . . to get out of the path of civilization.' And the Mr. Wells who wrote *Mankind in the Making*, confronted with the wellnigh illimitable claims of the Mr. Wells who wrote *The Salvaging of Civilization* might well have commented in very much the same way. The schoolmaster who is alive to his own limitations, alive to the fact that schooling is after all a very small part of education, will not be unduly perturbed at this later inclination to take a more reasonable and less exigent view of his powers, his duties, and his responsibilities. He will be quite content to obey William Clissold, and get out of the way — and, for once, let some one else take from his overburdened but patient shoulders a little of the blame for our present discontents.

However stimulating and persuasive Mr. Wells' constructive proposals may be, there are factors that render them quite unamenable to that orderly and systematic presentation that the mind nourished upon educational text-books would naturally enough require. I am far from

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter heading.

offering this as an adverse criticism of these proposals. So unregenerate, in this matter of system, am I, that I rather offer it as a recommendation. The urgency and haste in which some of his later proposals seem to have been 'thrown off,' their sketchiness, their internal contradictions, even their very bulk, all combine to defeat (even should it be sought) systematic presentation; added to which is that inescapable defect inherent in their primary quality of timeliness – now that the time is past. For as Mr. Wells himself has said, by the time one reform is effected, the next is actively struggling for recognition; the 'perpetual discomfort of mankind.'<sup>1</sup> So, beyond referring the reader to the appendix in which I have collated the main portions of Mr. Wells' work which contain ideas of a specifically constructive character, we may here take leave of them.

<sup>1</sup> *Select Conversations with an Uncle*: 'Man never is, but always to be blest.'

## CHAPTER TEN

### The Ultimate Reality

'Religion is the first thing and the last thing, and until a man has found God and been found by God, he begins at no beginning. he works to no end. He may have his friendships, his partial loyalties, his scraps of honour. But all these things fall into place, and life falls into place only with God.'

MR. BRITLING

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'We must all agree,' wrote Mr. Wells in *God the Invisible King*, 'that religion is the crown of the edifice [the educationists] build.' And again, echoing the words of Jesus ben Sirach, he tells us that 'to find God is but the beginning of wisdom,' for that is the final act which not only gives meaning and direction to our individual lives, but is the point from which all enlightened ethical principle must start. These views are so far common to most educational theorists, that we may safely regard Mr. Wells as, in this matter, little more than expressing his general agreement with them. Our survey would not, however, be complete without some consideration, however summary, of Mr. Wells' religious views, so far as they affect education.

It will not be necessary to follow him into the theological bypaths – into 'the gloomy and o'er-darkened ways' of controversy – associated with those works of the period of *God the Invisible King*. Our only concerns are, first, what is Mr. Wells' conception of the nature and function of religion; and, second, what part he considers it has to play in education. It is inevitable that he should have criticized current ideas and current practices. For the organized Christianity of the Churches (and particularly for that of



the 'old second-hand mackintosh, the Church of England') he professes little respect, and sees little value in it. But the *idea* of a Church is a useful one. 'The theory of a religion may,' he has written, 'propose the attainment of Nirvana, or the propitiation of an irascible Deity, or a dozen other things, as its end or aim. The practical fact is that it draws together great multitudes of diverse individualized people in a common solemnity and self-subordination, however vague, and is so far, like the State, and in a manner far more intimate and fundamental than the State, a synthetic power.'<sup>1</sup>

He has spared no words in the expression of his hatred for such types of religion as that professed and practised by the Frapps of Chatham, nor for the revivalistic orgies associated with it. Not in any accepted form of Christianity has he been able to discern any practical attempt to carry out the personal teachings of Christ; teachings for which, as he has pointed out in the *Outline*, the world was not in Christ's own lifetime ready, for which, indeed, the world is not ready even to-day. Christianity has degenerated into a 'theological' religion, based upon and completely circumscribed by its creeds, upheld not by faith but by belief; and 'excessive strenuous belief is not faith.' In brief, his criticism of modern Christianity is, reduced to its simplest terms, precisely that of such critics as Dean

<sup>1</sup> But, to take the opposite side (the other horn of the dilemma), Mr. Britling said, 'Organized morals or organized religion or organized thought are dead morals, dead religion or dead thought. Yet some organization you must have . . . the unorganized side of life is the real life. . . .'

Inge and Dr. L. P. Jacks, namely, that we find ourselves left with the lifeless shell of something that was originally vital and dynamic; that during the age-long repetition of creed and formalized doctrine, this vital element has somehow evaporated from them. Religion, before the days of *The World Set Free*, 'had percolated away from the temples and hierarchies and symbols in which man had sought to imprison it.'

But the spirit of man had moved on, along what Tchekov has pointed out<sup>1</sup> as the divergent paths of religion and culture, and to-day the hope of the world is not in what passes for the former, but in the latter. 'A nation of Socrates,' Mr. Bernard Shaw has said, 'would be much safer and happier than a nation of Wesleys; and its individuals would be higher in the evolutionary scale. At all events, it is in the Socratic man and not in the Wesleyan that our hope lies now.'<sup>2</sup> The progressive development of the human spirit could as little be contained within narrow religious moulds as it could in those other, equally narrow academic moulds. A whole world of thought and movement (of which Mr. Wells may serve as a supreme exemplar) has arisen independently of either, and it is in this newer world, breaking through the outworn and outgrown

<sup>1</sup> In writing of the independence of culture and orthodox religion, he said: 'Modern culture is but the beginning of a work for a great future - a work that will go on, perhaps for tens of thousands of years in order that mankind may . . . come to know the truth of a real God - that is, not by guessing, but by perceiving clearly as one perceives that twice two is four' - Letters (Dec. 30th, 1902).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also Matthew Arnold's 'Hebraism' and 'Hellenism.'

shell of creed and unchallenged tradition, that the Utopia of *Men Like Gods* was born. Thus we have to rediscover the lost spirit of religion (in Dr. Jacks' phrase, 'The lost radiance of the Christian religion'); and thus, practically, to reunite the paths of religion and culture that have so disastrously diverged. All this is very familiar, not to say well-trodden, ground.

For Mr. Wells the essential conception behind religion is that 'Some synthetic idea is needed to harmonize one's life, to give a law by which motive may be tried against motive,' and which brings with it an effectual peace of mind. And the attainment of this synthetic ideal is *Salvation*. Though it is obvious that so vital and intimate a thing as religion cannot, any more than education, be confined within a single inclusive formula, we do gain something by adopting as a basis for discussion some such formula. This of Mr. Wells points us to three main considerations. It emphasizes in the first place the 'intellectual' element in religion - or in other words its philosophical basis - and in the second its essentially personal character - it is 'ultimately, an affair as between individual man, and God alone.' And, of far greater importance still, it disposes of any conception of religion that aims in some sort or other at 'cutting off some part of oneself' and at finding 'a tranquillizing refuge in the remainder.' With this point we have already dealt; just as in discussing the question of ethics we saw that no life short of the fullest could be regarded as good, so in this, the broadest aspect of our inquiry, we see that it must be laid down as axiomatic that our individual contribution to the communal

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life can be nothing less than the completest and fullest expression of which we are capable.

The earlier New Republicans, the later Samurai, and the heroes of the Believer series of novels, are all 'essentially and inevitably' religious men; religion is not, however, with them any question of creed or belief – they are, judged by those familiar standards, essentially *irreligious* – but is, at bottom, a conviction that the 'Universe is one and systematic,' and a corresponding denial that it is a casual aggregation. Salvation for them means the revelation of one's personal significance in and duty towards the scheme of things, and this is the knowledge of God. How, in personal cases, this 'salvation' is attained has been often and variously enough told; by Jeffries in *The Story of My Heart*, by Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus*, and by Mr. Wells in (among other places) *The Passionate Friends*.<sup>1</sup>

With the question as to the means whereby the gulf fixed between a *philosophy* of life and a *religion* may be bridged (that emotional or spiritual factor that raises ideas out of the intellectual plane and makes of them vital and pregnant convictions) it is not necessary here to deal.<sup>2</sup> What remains to our immediate purpose is simply the consideration of the part that the educationist can play in the religious development of the child. It is obvious that a religion so essentially sophisticated, based upon intel-

<sup>1</sup> Particularly Chap. VII, § 6. And of course one can hardly avoid mention of James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*.

<sup>2</sup> The two books of Mr. Wells most to this present point are, perhaps, *The Research Magnificent* and *God the Invisible King*. Cf. also *ante*, Chap. VIII.

lectual ideas of such breadth and extent, and so obviously adult in character, cannot be taught. The child has indeed 'no capacity for an idea [i.e. of God] so subtle,' nor does God the Invisible King 'clamour for the attention of children.' Children 'do not naturally love God;' mainly for the reason that in their lives, sheltered, guarded, and easy, they cannot realize the necessity for this God who is essentially a God of battle against the evil of the world. 'Children,' wrote William Clissold, 'believe that in heaven and on earth alike there is order; they do so naturally and of necessity, and most young people and many people through life retain this early assumption that there is justice and benevolence behind and sustaining the law, that laws and customs are really wise and good.'

There are, as Mr. Wells tells us, many people who seem to be able to believe that religion can, like history or geography, be got into daily lessons of an hour 'and adequately done by any poor soul who has been frightened into conformity by the fear of dismissal.' On these main grounds, and, as will readily be seen, in logical conformity with his essential views on religion, Mr. Wells has argued against the inclusion of 'religion' as a subject, while at the same time affirming more than once that the school has a definitely religious purpose.

Regarded in this, the broadest aspect, the work of the educationist is a mere prelude to something infinitely too great, and too intimately personal to prove amenable to any attempt at inculcation or dictated method whether this be the bludgeoning of authority, or the subtler and in effect more harmful, infiltration of well-meant propaganda.

Mr. Wells' motto in regard to the religious education of children is therefore 'leave them alone.' There is no argument possible, nor do I propose to offer anything in the way of criticism. But here is an expression of a directly contrary view: Dr. Crichton Miller,<sup>1</sup> after pointing out that the question as to whether we want religion taught or not is a needless one, because whatever we think about such teaching it is in actual practice always going on, writes: 'It is useless to deceive ourselves into thinking that we can evade responsibility, and that by means of a strictly secular education we are setting our children free to seek their own religious weal. . . . The father who tries to bring up his son on the principle of "Let him choose when he grows up," is apt to find that when the son does grow up no choice remains to be made.'

But for Mr. Wells there is no such distinction as between religious and secular education, and the best and most succinct presentation of his views that I have seen is to be found in *A Living Universe*, by Dr. L. P. Jacks. The author has asked a head master where in his timetable 'Religion' appears. 'We teach it all day long,' he answered. 'We teach it in arithmetic by accuracy. We teach it in language to say what we mean - "Yea, yea; and nay, nay." We teach it in history by humanity. We teach it in geography by breadth of mind. We teach it in handicraft by thoroughness. We teach it in astronomy by reverence. We teach it in the playground, by fair play. We teach it in kindness to animals, by courtesy to servants, by good manners one to another, and by truthfulness in all

<sup>1</sup> *The New Psychology and the Parent*, Chap. IX.



things. We teach it by showing the children that we, their elders, are their friends and not their enemies.'

And, finally, from Mr. Wells himself, we have this, than which there is no more to be said. Bishop Scrope <sup>1</sup> ends his confirmation address (that culminating point in the disintegration of his traditional beliefs) thus: 'That is the real thing you seek to-day, to give yourselves to God. This is your spiritual coming of age, in which you set aside your childish dependence upon teachers, and upon taught phrases, upon rote and direction, and stand up to look your master in the face. You profess a great brotherhood when you do that, a brotherhood that goes round the earth, that numbers men of every race, and nation, and country, that aims to bring God into all the affairs of this world and make him . . . the King . . . of a united mankind.'

<sup>1</sup> *The Soul of a Bishop.*

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Conclusion

“The word “system” has done extraordinary mischiefs not only with Socialism but in the whole field of political and social discussion. Its peculiar treachery is the insidiousness with which it imputes deliberate order to entirely unorganized things.’

WILLIAM CLISSOLD

★

OF Mr. Wells' critical-destructive ideas, as of his critical-constructive, we have formally taken leave. There remains that third, and in bulk and importance most considerable, portion of his work, which consists of that mass of speculation which may be termed, in so far as it aims at laying a foundation for a review of human nature and of the conditions of modern life, philosophical in intent. In these ideas may be found both his theory of the end or purpose of life, and his views upon its conditions. Now these are not the same thing. They are necessarily connected one with the other; the former derives from the latter; the latter is conditioned by the former, but, just as it is possible to accept Schopenhauer's philosophical system (his theory of *conditions*) without assenting to his pessimistic conclusions (his theory of the *end*) so it might prove quite possible to profit by the picture Mr. Wells has drawn of the world in which we live, without subscribing to his theory of the trend of social evolution, or to his theories of the future state. In the study of education there is the *purpose* of education to be considered, and this is a matter of philosophy; there is also the question of the *material* with which, the *conditions* under which, education is to be carried on; and this is the 'science' of education.

So wide, and so penetrating has been Mr. Wells' examination of modern life that no attempt could be made to summarize it here. Thus, for our final survey we are left with this theory of purpose, and it is the ultimate, the all-important problem, for it determines the answer to the question *What is Education?*

With Mr. Wells' faith in the coming World State, in the reality of a communal- a 'world - mind' that will swallow up all the petty egotisms of mankind in its one great purpose, there is no arguing. William Clissold affirmed that this idea 'is great enough, I feel, to comprehend the utmost scope and outlook of my life and to rationalize its motives and relationships.' For Mr. Wells it is a real faith; for him the theory works, and provides a touchstone by which affairs may be tested, a guide to conduct, and a motive to service; and, so far, it finds its justification. It is his gospel, and as such to be propagated. But we may nevertheless examine some of the bases of this faith, and test the validity of the scientific principles that are its intellectual aspect. For, like all faiths, it is also a theory;<sup>1</sup> one theory out of many, a theory rendered incalculably more real by the artistic skill of its propounder; a theory that accordingly takes on at times an air of demonstrable validity, an air of being logically deduced from the facts of life, but in effect an entirely subjective conception that assumes an air of objective reality.

It cannot be refuted; as I have already quoted from Pascal, so again it may be said: 'La, où finit le raisonne-

<sup>1</sup> And, in addition, 'Every religion pretends to rest upon facts and statements, but no religion really does so.' - William Clissold.

ment, commence la véritable certitude.' But there are a few general considerations that may serve to show it in clearer perspective – or, to use the term of Oliver Wendell Holmes, to 'depolarize' it. Mr. John Freeman has pictured Mr. Wells as engaged in an industrious and wide-ranging scratching of the surface of life. With the reservation that some of the scratches have been fairly deep ones (and the deceptive *patina* of reasonableness is all the better for a little disfigurement) the phrase is apt enough, has justice enough, to serve our present purpose. Modern life is undoubtedly infinitely complex, and presents an irritating appearance of a vast and meaningless confusion, and to the surface features of that confusion Mr. Wells has bent the searching gaze of an acute, scientifically trained mind. To such a mind it must seem that, could the complex tangle but be straightened out, could the disordered web but be unravelled – and woven into the beautiful pattern it should so obviously make, man could scarcely fail of happiness, and life would find its meaning. But life offers problems far deeper, far more obscure than this; problems that could never be solved by a mere rearrangement of material conditions. The advent of the World State would still find the philosopher asking the age-long questions: Why are men born? To what end do they live? And what escape does Mr. Wells offer from *l'ennui commun à toute âme bien née*? The projection of the good life to some far-distant future can never solve the immediate problems of human life. As the Irishman so pertinently inquired, 'What has posterity done for me?' Our problem (and particularly is this true of the educationist) is here, and now. For

Anatole France, for example, life in the ideal World State of Mr. Wells would be just as devoid of meaning, just as much a spectacle to be regarded with irony and with pity, man would be just as much the plaything of fate, as in the Roman Empire, in Ancient Greece, or in any other political and social organization, real or imagined; and the Ancients of Mr. Shaw's *As Far as Thought Can Reach* are still adventuring forth into the unknown and incalculable future; adventuring forth, not in quest of some future *state*, but in quest of individual *destiny*.

When therefore Mr. Wells offers us the World State of the future, he is offering us, not a solution of the enigma of life, but a way out of the tragic and unreasonable disorder of modern conditions. It is admittedly a way that must be found, and the only point for consideration is, is this way of Mr. Wells' one that promises any greater success than the many paths that man has already explored in his age-long search for that which shall satisfy the insurgent spirit within. The material out of which the new state is to be built is human nature, the secret of that impulse that leads man on lies hidden in his mental hinterland, in his innermost soul, and here we return to the discussion of the principle of individuality opened in Chapter VIII.

It could easily be shown how Mr. Wells has been both an exponent and an opponent of this principle; but on examination it will be found that the contradiction suggested is merely due to the fact that he has used the term in two very different senses. It means for him alternatively mere idiosyncrasy, the essential uniqueness of the

individual man, or it means that unbridled and aggressive egotism seen perhaps most strongly developed and most active in the Captain of Industry. For idiosyncrasy Mr. Wells the artist has the keenest eye; it is a fact that even the thinker can scarcely deny, even if it may be suspected that if he could he would like to. Mr. Raymond Mortimer, for example, has complained that Mr. Wells 'appears to detest variety,' that he, a man himself of 'limited tastes,' would like to see mankind more standardized, more amenable to those far-reaching Utopian schemes of his; and there are certainly ample grounds for that complaint. How far true of Mr. Wells himself is that avowal that George Ponderevo made? 'I don't like things so human,' he wrote; 'I don't think I'm blind to the fun, the surprises, the jolly little coarsenesses and insufficiency of life, to the "humour of it," as people say, and to adventure, but that isn't the root of the matter with me. . . . I'm in earnest, warp and woof. . . .' On the whole, however, one would say that Mr. Wells, until he begins to write about the new civilization, is certainly not blind to any of these things.

As for that so-called 'individuality' which is in essence mere egotism, what can one do but detest it wherever and however it raises its evil head? Any advance towards whatever ideal state one may conceive, must necessarily involve its total elimination or (a miracle that the psychoanalyst tells us can actually be performed) its sublimation into altruistic social motive. Thus Dr. Devizes<sup>1</sup> tells us that the new religion is to be based upon the idea that 'our race has reached, and is receding from a maximum of

<sup>1</sup> *Christina Alberta's Father.*

individuation. That it turns now towards synthesis and co-operation. . . .’ There is little difficulty therefore in agreeing with Mr. Wells upon both counts; idiosyncrasy we cannot avoid; extreme egotism we cannot have; it is an evil and profoundly anti-social quality.

At times, too, as we have already seen, there flashes across the pages of Mr. Wells’ works a hint, a passing gleam (at times, perhaps, more than a mere passing gleam) of something transcending mere idiosyncrasy, something incomparably finer than egotism, something indeed that is definitely *opposed* to egotism, something that cannot enter into even the most wisely and carefully laid schemes for social betterment, for the reorganization of society. But the idea takes, in the *philosophy* of Mr. Wells, no abiding root, and the inadequacy of that philosophy lies in precisely this fact. ‘It is,’ writes Van Wyck Brooks in his incisive study of Wells, ‘still the world that matters to Wells – the world, the race, the future; not the individual human being. And if, relatively, he has become more interested in the individual and less in the world, that is because he is convinced that the problems of the world can best be approached through the study of individuals.’ And when one looks upon the Utopians in *Men Like Gods* dispassionately, and sees them stripped of the glamour their world throws around them, one is inclined to see men, not like Gods but rather men like some kind of super-Robot, women like inhuman automata,<sup>1</sup> and boys

<sup>1</sup> The only female Utopian (Lychnis) who retained any human qualities of sympathy and pity was, from their standpoint, a failure.

suspiciously like prigs. Of their boasted individuality one sees nothing – they merely did different jobs. Even idiosyncrasy had been reduced to a minimum – were they not eugenically bred? Mr. E. T. Raymond regards this Utopia indeed as a ‘well-ordered mortuary’ – a criticism somewhat exaggerated, but not altogether false in effect. Mr. Barnstaple was completely carried away; but he was an intelligent man, and it might be interesting to know what he really thought about it all when his ideas had finally shaken themselves down.

As a defect in Mr. Wells’ art this does not concern us here; but, as a defect in his philosophy, it is a vital one. The defect is as clearly seen in *In the Days of the Comet* as in any other single work. The essential inadequacy in that otherwise fine work (a work that in places definitely achieves beauty) is the remarkable way in which, after the comet’s impact, the characters lose every shred of individuality they may once have possessed, and become mere mouthpieces for the expression of very fine, noble and stimulating altruistic sentiment; this, I fancy, Mr. Wells himself suspected, for he writes at the close: ‘In a manner [the change] had dehumanized the world, robbed it of . . . its inconsistencies, its humour. At the end . . . I felt his story had slipped away from my sympathies altogether.’ . . . And so, too, it tends to slip away from the reader’s.

We know so little about life, about man, and, in our blind groping towards some clue as to his destiny, we stumble so badly, that we should be all the more ready to seize hold of any clue, slender though it may be, that can guide us in the formulation of educational theory, and



serve as an inspiration in the practical work of teaching. The theory of individuality is an active principle to-day, alike in theory and in practice. As a theoretical principle it has received an adequate and interesting statement at the hands of Dr. Nunn;<sup>1</sup> as an inspiration in actual practice it is of so wide an influence as scarcely to need reference.<sup>2</sup> The modern emphasis upon the sanctity of individuality does not merely mean a demand for the development of idiosyncrasy – the man with most clearly marked idiosyncrasies is most often a case for the alienist; nor does it mean a demand for the unbridled exercise of egotism; the most egotistical man may quite well be the least individualized, because he has arrived at that state by subordinating whole tracts of his personality to one predominant purpose – to the pursuit of money for example. Peer Gynt, it may be remarked, was painfully surprised to find that after being his 'very own self' for so many years, he had to go back into the melting pot as so much undifferentiated human material. Nor is there anything in the claim for the doctrine of individuality antipathetic to the ideals of Dr. Devizes – 'synthesis and co-operation.' The claim for individuality comes to this; it is an affirmation of the inalienable right of every man 'to conduct life's adventure in his own way, and to make the best of it.'<sup>3</sup> It affirms that all the good that we know, all the progress we have achieved, has been the result, never of organiza-

<sup>1</sup> *Education: Its Data and First Principles*. Cf. also the present writer's *Education and the Spirit*.

<sup>2</sup> But see Ballard, *The Changing School*.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Nunn, *loc. cit.*

tion, of government, of obedience to tradition, of the deep laid schemes of human calculation, but the result of the operation of that spirit in man that comes we know not how or whence, and which we deny at our peril. And in support of this affirmation you will find abundant material in Mr. Wells' work; some of which has already been dealt with.

Now the final upshot of the matter is this; so far as Mr. Wells has touched the deeper problems of life – and in spite of much criticism to the contrary he *has* done so – you will find him quite definitely moving towards individuality; so far as he is concerned with the re-shaping of the future along the lines of his personal tastes and prejudices, and along lines of order, system and progression towards some clearly foreseen plan, you will find him just as definitely moving away from it. To take a quite definite case, in *Boon* you will find him arguing out one aspect of this question with himself in the persons of Boon and Wilkins the novelist (with a third Wells in the person of Dodd the rationalist acting the part of advocatus diaboli). And in the *Undying Fire* the biological aspect is, as we have seen, argued out by Mr. Huss and Dr. Barrack. This latter aspect indeed is illuminating. Forecasts of the future tend to move in one of two directions: they either concern themselves mainly with the evolution of society (and assume men fitted into it), or they concern themselves with the nature of man, and leave society to look after itself. Of the first type is *Men like Gods*; of the second is Mr. Shaw's *As Far as Thought Can Reach*; and the vast difference between these two works is due (the difference

between the two writers being set on one side) mainly to the very different biological principles upon which they rest. For Mr. Shaw (and the quotation I have given on page 95 from Mr. J. D. Beresford may here be compared) the drama remains centred upon the nature of man; for Mr. Wells' biological evolution has stopped, except in so far as man himself may step in and deliberately, and in pursuance of some foreseen end, determine its course; and with the extreme hollowness of this claim I have already dealt. What further progress may be possible lies, Mr. Wells tells us, mainly along lines of social reconstruction; and the individual that doesn't 'fit in' must be kicked out. Now there is a multitude of facts that can find no place in such a theory; facts for example of special faculty - the individual who is three-quarters a pianist before he has ever seen a piano, or wholly a mathematician without setting pen to paper. There are, in short, whole chapters of biological and psychological fact and principle for which the philosophy of Mr. Wells can find no place.

In his treatment of history we may find the same thing exemplified. The appreciation of the drama of the past rests upon two factors, factors often enough confused; there is the historic *sense* (that vital sense of humanity that serves to give *meaning* to the facts of history, that is concerned primarily with *life*) and there is historic *perspective* (which serves to give a wide and comprehensive view of the time process, of historical movement, and of the relation of part to whole). These two factors may conceivably exist apart; it is possible that a man may have a

vivid emotional grasp of the realities of life, a vital sense of humanity, and yet not have a very complete or adequate sense of time. It is possible, that is to say, that Mr. Wells' girding at the classical scholar for whom history begins about 500 B.C. and ends about A.D. 69 may be somewhat wide of the mark, for such a man might have a far keener historic sense than Mr. Wells, for whom history has neither beginning nor end. It is possible for a man to view history in correct perspective and yet to be deficient in the historic sense. The difference between them is the difference between the philosophy and the science of history; it is the difference between the man to whom the deeper problems of life appeal, and the man who is content with what may be seen upon the surface – or at all events, not far below the surface. Perspective Mr. Wells undoubtedly has. He approached human history with eyes adapted to the vast reaches of geologic time; if he has any fault it is not myopia, but hypermetropia. It has been objected that the *Outline* lacks perspective; but when one considers its purpose one must admit that the perspective is at least right enough to correct the major fault – the myopia of nationalistic and ignobly patriotic propaganda.

But when one comes to ask whether Mr. Wells has the historic *sense*, our answer must be more carefully qualified, more in doubt. However adequate may be his presentation of the movements of the past, we find him strangely at sea when it comes to a comprehension of the immediate present. A single example must suffice, trivial perhaps, but suggestive; and by no means an isolated case. In

*What is Coming?* after commenting on the fashion-ridden girl of 1913, and on the fact that in 1916 'the fashions have floated away to absurdity,' he writes of this girl: 'She makes her stilted passage across the arena upon which the new womanhood of Western Europe shows its worth. It is an exit. There is likely to be something like a truce in the fashions throughout Europe for some years.'

One does not necessarily prefer the sardonic aloofness of Anatole France, his conception of the eternal feminine, his extreme pessimistic scepticism; he is as definitely a non-combatant as Mr. Wells is a combatant. Mr. Wells, with his finger upon the pulse of popular feeling, alive to every movement of the popular mind, the 'super-man-in-the-street,'<sup>1</sup> the greatest journalist of his day, has his own distinctive gifts; and we should be ungrateful indeed if we lamented the fact that these gifts were not other than they are. But when one compares the spirit of *The White Stone* (that book that Arnold Bennett incomprehensibly termed 'inferior Wells') with the spirit of Wells, one cannot but admit that he lacks a power that Anatole France had to a superlative degree, that so far as Mr. Wells is concerned the root of the matter is not in him.

Thus it comes about that, for Mr. Wells, history as a school subject presents itself primarily as the necessary

<sup>1</sup> In *The War that will end War* Mr. Wells writes: 'I am just running as hard as I can by the side of the marching facts and pointing to them,' an expressive phrase that gives a clue to much of his writing.

intellectual groundwork for the new world consciousness; for Anatole France, if history has any use at all, it is that we may by its study comprehend humanity, achieve an understanding of the human soul; it is far more æsthetic, emotional in character than it is intellectual; to be approached in a spirit of 'irony and pity' not a spirit of cold and detached scientific examination. From this point of view one is rather inclined to agree with the earlier Wells who would see History relegated to the school library and to individual initiative, than with the later Wells, the 'fanatic in this matter of history,' with his intellectual and utilitarian views of its functions. But neither conception provides the last word upon a very complex and a very important question, and it is arguable that the lesson of universal brotherhood is just as likely to be learnt in the one way as in the other.

To pin down Mr. Wells' ideas to any clearly formulable body of doctrine is, I repeat, impossible; as impossible as trying to pin down the legs of a centipede – as soon as you get one segment safely confined, another is vigorously and defiantly in movement. And in this fact is to be found Mr. Wells' chief value; he acts as a constant stimulant; he simply defies discipleship; to ask, Do you believe in Mr. Wells? is as fatuous as to ask, Do you believe in the Bible? If as a practical teacher you want some one to tell you what to *do*; if as a theoretical student you want some one to tell you what to *think*; then it is useless recommending to you the works of Mr. Wells. But on the other hand, if one wants to attain to some grasp of this world in which one lives; if one wants to understand the stage upon which the

drama of education is to be played, then in these works one will find an incalculable benefit. 'There is no thinking man of Mr. Wells' generation,' writes Mr. J. C. Squire, 'or the generation immediately younger, who is not deeply in Mr. Wells' debt.'

That debt is essentially this: you may take just so much from Mr. Wells' theoretical and practical ideas and suggestions as seems to you reasonable and practicable, and leave the rest; that, either way, is not the major point. But, in the discovery of what *he* thinks about, and hopes from education, in the assessment and criticism of his practical proposals, above all in the contemplation of his essays in futurity and the comparison of these with the life we live to-day, you will have arrived at one very important and very practical result; you will have discovered what you yourself actually think and believe about education. Your ideas will have been shaken up; your mind will have *reacted*; and in effecting this positive and vital *reaction* lies Mr. Wells' chief claim to be considered a modern prophet of education. This *reaction* is a far different thing from the passive reception of ideas, and from the unintelligent and unquestioning acceptance of the thing that is. A theory questioned is a theory well on the way to being comprehended. Practice examined is practice becoming enlightened. Whatever be the line of 'progress,' Mr. Wells is upon that line, and with him all those who have tried to understand what he has to say. The future may be far different from any future *he* has imagined; it probably will be; some would go so far as even to *hope* that it will be; nevertheless, whatever it be,

it will to no small degree owe its shaping to the influence of Mr. Wells; for that influence, recognized or unrecognized, is beyond any doubt one of the most vital and most stimulating factors in the educational thought of to-day.



## APPENDIX A

### *A Chronological Bibliography of Mr. Wells' Principal Works.*<sup>1</sup>

- 1895 Select Conversations with an Uncle.  
1895 The Time Machine.  
1895 The Wonderful Visit.  
1896 The Island of Dr. Morean.  
1896 The Wheels of Chance.  
1897 The Invisible Man.  
1898 The War of the Worlds.  
1899 When the Sleeper Awakes (1911 The Sleeper Wakes).  
1900\* Love and Mr. Lewisham.  
1901 Certain Personal Matters.  
1901\* Anticipations.  
1901 The First Men in the Moon.  
1902 The Discovery of the Future.  
1902 The Sea Lady.  
1903\* Mankind in the Making.  
1904 The Food of the Gods.  
1905\* A Modern Utopia.  
1905 Kipps.  
1906 In the Days of the Comet.  
1906 The Future in America.  
1907\* First and Last Things (Revised 1917).  
1908\* New Worlds for Old.

<sup>1</sup> Those marked \* are of special interest to the educationist. I have omitted the various volumes of short stories that Mr. Wells has from time to time published, but included his own selection in *The Country of the Blind*.

- 1908 The War in the Air.  
1909 Tono-Bungay.  
1909 Ann Veronica.  
1910 The History of Mr. Polly.  
1910\* The New Machiavelli.  
1911 The Country of the Blind.  
1912 Marriage.  
1913\* The Passionate Friends.  
1914\* An Englishman Looks at the World.  
1914 The World set Free.  
1914 The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman.  
1914 The War that will end War.  
1915 The Research Magnificent.  
1915 Boon.  
1915 Bealby.  
1916 Mr. Britling sees it Through.  
1916\* What is Coming?  
1917 God the Invisible King.  
1917 War and the Future.  
1917 The Soul of a Bishop.  
1918 In the Fourth Year.  
1918\* Joan and Peter.  
1919\* The Undying Fire.  
1920\* The Outline of History.  
1920 Russia in the Shadows.  
1921\* The New Teaching of History.  
1921\* The Salvaging of Civilization.  
1922 The Secret Places of the Heart.  
1922 A Short History of the World.  
1922 Washington and the Hope of Peace.

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- 1923\* Men Like Gods.
- 1924 The Dream.
- 1924\* The Story of a Great Schoolmaster.
- 1925\* A Year of Prophesying.
- 1925 Christina Alberta's Father.
- 1926\* The World of William Clissold.

## APPENDIX B

*Brief notes on some works of Mr. Wells of special interest to the educationist.*

### MANKIND IN THE MAKING

See pages 28, 134 and 151 of this essay.

### FIRST AND LAST THINGS

A statement of the metaphysical, ethical and 'personal' groundwork of Mr. Wells' philosophy. Contains no specifically educational ideas, but valuable not only *quâ* statement, but also as the statement of one trained, so far as these philosophical subjects are concerned, along educational lines. Mr. Wells studied for the diplomas of L.C.P. and F.C.P., and he writes: 'These courses . . . set me thinking and reading further.' This book is to a great extent the direct result.

### NEW WORLDS FOR OLD

A 'compact exposition of modern Socialism.' Like the preceding contains little of direct educational value (except the picture of the elementary school teacher under Socialism, Chap. XIV, sec. 1), but valuable as a reasoned and temperate discussion of the immediate problems of social reform, approached from the socialist point of view. The 'sociological' complement to *Mankind in the Making*.

### AN ENGLISHMAN LOOKS AT THE WORLD

Chap. 16. *The Schoolmaster and the Empire*.

A plea for schoolmasters of 'insight and creative intelligence,' a criticism of the modern schoolmaster who is merely a decorous, evasive and thoroughly sterilized and

safe subscriber to tradition, the 'zealous and grateful agent of the powers that be,' with a dread of 'idiosyncrasy, of positive acts and new ideas.' 'Boys who are to be free, masterly men must hear free men talking freely of religion, of philosophy, of conduct. They must have heard men of this opinion and that, putting what they believe before them with all the courage of conviction.'

Also indirectly useful:—

Chap. 19. *An Age of Specialization.*

Chap. 24. *The Ideal Citizen.*

#### WHAT IS COMING?

Chap. VII. *The New Education.*

The expression of a hope that Oxford and Cambridge, after the disorganization due to the war will not again 'pick up and resume upon the old lines,' that the old University is dead; and of a hope that an attempt will be made to seize the opportunity offered for rebuilding it upon certain suggested lines. A foreshadowing in part of the educational programme of *The Salvaging of Civilization.*

#### JOAN AND PETER

The sub-title of this work is *The Story of an Education*, and (more or less) it lives up to it. A vast storehouse of ideas on education (and numerous other subjects), but rather weak on the constructive side. Plenty is said about inefficient and bad schools, but little, for example, about the education at Caxton under Henderson—possibly the late F. W. Sanderson.

## THE UNDYING FIRE

There are indications that Mr. Huss owes some part of his material history (if not his theoretical speculations) to the influence of Sanderson. An exceedingly stimulating and valuable work, and essential to the student of Wells.

## THE SALVAGING OF CIVILIZATION

Contains the fullest expression of Mr. Wells' educational ideas as they were directly affected by the War.

Chap. IV. *The Bible of Civilization*, Part One.

„ V. „ „ „ „ Two.

„ VI. *The Schooling of the World*.

„ VII. *College, Newspaper and Book*.

(Also contains *The Project of a World State*.)

## THE STORY OF A GREAT SCHOOLMASTER

'A plain account of the life and ideas of Sanderson of Oundle.' Valuable as one of the few instances in which Mr. Wells has 'given himself away' in a positive direction.

## A YEAR OF PROPHESYING

XXI. *The Mandarins at the Gate: The Revival of the Old Learning*.

'At no time in the world's experience has the need for a creative education been so manifest as it is to-day,' and, therefore, Mr. Wells notes with dismay and 'bitter derision' the signs of a revival of classical teaching – not only in Great Britain but in France – and states the basal needs of the new education.

XXIV. *A Creative Educational Scheme for Britain: A tentative Forecast.*

Brief in comparison with its theme, but suggestive.

XLI. *Blinkers for Free Youth.*

The chief activity of the University seems to be 'to get youth apart from the world and conceal the forces of change from its curious and intelligent eyes.' A plea for recognition and guidance of the 'rebellious vitality in our youth.'

XLIII. *The Shabby Schools of the Pious: Drains and the Odour of Sanctity.*

A contribution to the non-provided school controversy.

XLVII. *The Schools of a New Age: A Forecast.*

Not so constructive as its title would imply.

Mainly an expression of his faith that the school must be the centre of the new civilization—its place of birth.

## APPENDIX C

*A list of Mr. Wells' teachers: not including governesses, etc., nor university lecturers, demonstrators, professors.*

Asst. Master.	Bladesover School An,	Tono-Bungay
Beldame, Mr.	Visiting Math. master at the School of St. George and the Ven. Bede	Joan and Peter
Bonover, Mr. George	Head master, Whortley Proprietary School	Love and Mr. L.
'Broomie'	Head master: 'rots' a little boy whose father writes 'stuff' about flying	World Set Free
'Buzzy'	Master at Caxton	Joan and Peter
Clavier, Miss Beeton	Head mistress of Wim- bledon School at which Lady Harman was educated	Wife of Sir I. H.
Corner, Cecily	At Mr. Britling's. Study- ing for London B.A.	Mr. Britling
Dunkerley	One of Lewisham's Col- leagues	Love and Mr. L.
Flack, Mr.	City Merchant's School	New Mac.
Gambard	Sir Isaac Harman's old head master	Wife of Sir I. H.



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Gardener	Former head of City Merchants	New Mac.
Garvace, Miss	Fellow Student of Ann Veronica	Ann V.
Gates	Head of City Merchants in Remington's time	New Mac.
Gould	Probationary Assistant at Iping	Inv. Man
'Head master'	Of George Ponderevo's School	Tono-Bungay
'Head master'	of Harbury	Wife of Sir I. H.
'Head master'	Of Minchinghampton	Research Mag.
'Head master'	With whom Oswald Sydenham has interview	Joan and Peter
Henderson	Of Caxton	Joan and Peter
Henson	Master at Harbury	Pass. Friends
Hinchcliff, Mr.	Given the apple from the Tree of Knowledge	'The Apple' (Plattner Story)
Huss, Job	Protagonist of 'The Undying Fire'	Undying Fire
Jarvice, Miss	Siddermorton school-mistress	Wonderful Visit
Jevons, Miss	Head of Highmorton	Joan and Peter

Kahn	Assistant of Mainwearing (q.v.)	
Klegg, Miss	Fellow Student of Ann Veronica	Ann V.
Latimer	Sixth-Form master at Harbury	Pass. Friends
Lewisham	Hero of Love and Mr. L.	
Lidgett, Mr.	Principal of Sussexville Preparatory School	Plattner Story
Mackinder, Mr.	Head master, White Court Prep. School	Joan and Peter
Mainwearing, Mr.	Head master, High 'Cross School	Joan and Peter
Maltby-Nevers- son, Miss	Head mistress of the Taverner's School	Ch. Alberta's Father
Marcus, Hetty	H. M. Smith's first wife	Dream
'Master'	Mathematical: at High- morton	Joan <sup>2</sup> and Peter
Mergle, Miss	Former Schoolmistress of Jessie Milton (Beaumont)	Wheels of Chance
Merrick, Miss	Teacher in H. M. Smith's (Sarnac's) School	Dream
Mills, Miss	Miss Murgatroyd's Ju- nior Assistant	

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Moffatt, Miss	Mistress ('history and moral inst.') at Ann Veronica's school	Ann V.
Murgatroyd, Miss	Head mistress of the School of St. George and the Ven. Bede	Joan and Peter
Noakley, Mr.	'Noser,' Asst. at High Cross	Joan and Peter
Overtone	Of Hillborough. One of Sydenham's 'examiners'	Joan and Peter
Plattner, Gottfried	'The Plattner Story'	
Ratten	A new head of City Merchants	New Mac.
Remington, Mr.	Grandfather of Richard	New Mac.
Remington, Mr. Arthur	Father of Richard	New Mac.
Roddles	History master at Minchinghampton	Research Mag.
Rowton	Head of Pinner	Love and Mr. L.
Sandsome, Mr.	'The Phases of Mr. Sandsome'	Certain Personal Matters

'Schoolmaster'	Of Hoopdriver	Wheels of Chance
'Schoolmaster'	Young German. Killed woman and baby	Mr. Britling
'Schoolmaster'	Of Hardy, Capable, Sane, etc.	Secret Places of Heart.
Schoolmasters	Three - Science - at Har- bury	Pass. Friends
'Schoolmis- tress'	National Sch. at Otfield (under Lady Charlotte Sydenham)	Joan and Peter
Siddons, Mr.	Tutor to Stratton	Pass. Friends
Smithers, Mr.	Mainwearing's first Asst.	Joan and Peter
Snooks, Mr. E. K.	Hero of 'Miss Winchel- sea's Heart'	Twelve Stories
Stent, Walpole, Jr.	Selected by Clissold as typical of the Public schoolmaster	William Clis- sold
'Teacher'	Male: in H. M. Smith's first school	Dream
Topham	Master at City Merchants	New Mac.
Winchelsea, Miss	See 'Snooks'	
Woodrow, Mr. Geo. Gor- don, F.S.Sc.	Kipps's head master at the Cavendish Acad- emy	Kipps

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