

# METROPOLIS

**FIRST PUBLISHED in 1980**

# METROPOLIS

or

## The Destiny of Cities

by

PAUL BANKS



LONDON: THE C. W. DANIEL COMPANY  
Forty-Six Bernard Street, W.C.1

**MADE AND PRINTED  
IN GREAT BRITAIN**

# Introduction

DISCUSSING one of the contentions of this book, that London receives an excessive proportion of the actual income of Great Britain, a friend asked if I had worked this out statistically. I replied that statistics would be less convincing than the look round which the book was intended to give. If the London School of Economics has finished its survey of the poor of London—which appears in no degree designed to cure the poverty of London—before London is sacked by an invading people, it may then devote itself to the following proposition: When the rent of any piece of land increases above a certain datum line, on that piece of land it is possible to collect an excessive proportion of the income of the locality of reference.

This book originated as the result of my journeying about England, and my involuntarily contrasting the drawn and worried faces of all classes, including employers and employed, which I met there, with the gay irresponsibility I meet in London, in spite of the financial difficulties in which much of London's industry, productive and non-productive, is involved. It seemed to me to augur ill for the country's

future that economic disaster should not be evident in the metropolis at a time when it was strangling many boroughs and industries in the country. Bankrupt farmers apparently made no difference to the prosperity of Covent Garden. Immense strikes produced no effect on London, which, I realised, had no real sense of its responsibility as metropolis to the community as a whole. From that I looked round at other things.

During the last two weeks, while making another journey across the South West and West of England it has become plainer than before that this book is certainly not guilty of over-statement. Signs of prosperous activity were almost limited to the places chosen as car-"parks" and charabanc stations, which are practically new suburbs of London of the worst type. Here perpetually moving metropolitans of all classes as regards wealth, and apparently of one class as regards culture, are supplied with corner-house pastries or intoxicants in imitation West End establishments thrown up by the wayside. The country is thick with them, so that the whole land appears to have been annexed by London as a vulgar fun-fair. The visible population appears to have been degraded to menials disciplined by anticipation of tips from metropolitans, giving, as a vision of the future human standard, the London taxi-cab driver and waiter. The roads are thick with metropolitan motor-cars, and the air with the smell of petrol, the whirring of engines, dust, and

the noises which metropolitans with leisure regard as the music of gaiety. Everywhere the most vulgar metropolitan standards exercise dominion over the otherwise deserted country-side.

Professor Rostovtzeff recently asserted that culture was an aristocratic monopoly, and blamed the democratization of Rome for its downfall. The Roman Empire, he said, resulted from the alliance of the lower classes with the bourgeoisie, as the French Republic followed the French monarchy. Later the Roman aristocracy was almost annihilated, the motive of Claudius being to set up a democracy of city business-men, who would wield power throughout the Empire. These produced a plutocracy and an individualism which destroyed culture, and hastened the downfall of the Empire.

We find in history the reflection of our own minds. Whether Rostovtzeff accurately diagnosed the cause of the fall of Rome or not, he certainly projected an accurate reflection into its history of some of the causes of the wretchedness of Europe in general, and of Great Britain in particular. Whether culture is necessarily an aristocratic monopoly or not, England has been governed too long on the principle that the powerful have no duty but to increase their own wealth, which inevitably benefits everybody. "It's everyone for himself and God help us all, as the elephant said when he danced in the chicken-run" has proved itself a mad principle for the conduct of a community. Excessive taxation

does not prove oppression of the rich; it merely proves bad creation and distribution in the past of taxable resources. England badly needs a new body which will contemplate the future of the nation as an integral part of the world, not from the point of view of imperial dominion, but from that of folk-well-being and world function. It is this aristocratic affirmation of communal responsibility which matters most now. The renewal of culture, if it is not the same thing, would be an effect. As no existing corporation, group, or party, shows itself adventurously responsible in action, the affirmation will have to be made by influential individuals. Otherwise England is far advanced in decline, and her necessary internal readjustments will be made violently.



# Contents

	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	5
(I)	
THE CITY AND THE EARTH . . . . .	11
(II)	
THE SOUL OF MAN IN THE CITY . . . . .	29
(III)	
THE SOUL OF MAN IN THE COUNTRY . . . . .	51
(IV)	
THE DESTINY OF METROPOLIS . . . . .	68



# METROPOLIS

or

## The Destiny of Cities

(I)

### THE CITY AND THE EARTH

It is a modern convention that everything exists for the metropolis. Public opinion, articulate views, all circulate from the "centre." That human evolution by foresight which optimists allege is to replace the blind groping of life, is directed, as far as it has gone, by minds dedicated to the city, for which the countryside is at best an afterthought. Culture, in short, is identified with the metropolis, to the extent that everything not "metropolitan" is "provincial." To call anything provincial, as Mr. Belloc called the mind of Mr. Wells, is to look down on it.

Without analogy being strained, the metropolis can be ideally regarded as under obligation to fulfil in the community the function of the central nervous system in the individual. In return for the sustenance drawn from the labour of countryman and sea-farer, the metropolis ought to respond to their needs, and

to pay in direction, culture, and the general raising of civilisation. London, the central nervous system of the English community, has grown beyond the physical strength of the community to support it. Metropolitan life is carried on with a disregard for its dependence on earth and sea both foolish and cruel. All that a metropolis should do for the people on whose work it lives, London omits to do, or does badly. As a civic and moral example, in the employments to which it puts the cleverest and most educated persons, and by its frivolous waste of the wealth drained from the country, London saps the nation's vitality; and, instead of doing something to renew it, impoverishes and demoralises its victims. In short the English metropolis is a cancer on English civilisation, which it threatens to destroy.

Hardly a metropolitan newspaper, politician, or even philosopher, realises that as long as one "provincial" is left, the metropolis has failed to spread its culture in exchange for the country's goods. The Metropolitan prefers, indeed, to be unconscious of the countryman. He regards a cry from the country as a breach of city peace comparable with a strike of transport-workers. He accepts the tribute of the whole world as a right, and gives no sign of care what happens to the world so long as the tribute flows freely. Londoners are a fortuitous concourse of persons lacking all human bonds with the world outside, with the earth, or with one another. A phrase commonly heard in London is

that one has no neighbours. Bernard Shaw's test of religious sincerity—whether the holder lived every minute in the assumption that his religion was true—applies also to citizenship. In a town of moderate size the citizens feel and think civically. They reflect on their town's municipal policy, not merely as business-men anxious to cut down the rates, but as citizens eager that theirs should not be a mean city. They take an interest in the conduct of public-health, their town's parks, art-galleries, waterworks, tramways, hospitals, and sanatoria. The people know one another and hold one another responsible. The man who chooses to go to hell must do so under criticism. In many towns of a hundred thousand to a quarter of a million population, and in a few cases in bigger towns, the citizens are corporately sensible of a right to be proud of their municipal wealth. The Londoner does display a certain kind of pride in being a Londoner; a superiority somewhat similar to that of the little man who once shook hands with a duke. Of civic pride he shows no trace, as may be seen at the London municipal elections, interest in which is treated almost as provincial *naïveté*. There are in London doctors who do not know what authority controls the isolation of scarlet-fever patients. There are thousands of grown-up persons who discuss politics, and yet would have to ponder to answer in what borough they reside. The London County Council is associated in the majority of minds with ugly but necessary trams which "do not pay."

A peer of the realm lately protesting against increased taxation pleaded that the hospitals would suffer from the greater monetary stringency thus imposed on the London wealthy. He apparently had not noticed, in spite of the familiarity of the scene, that the hospitals of London have already long suffered so much that the medical students and nurses, in addition to studying medicine and nursing, have to perfect themselves in the profession of street-beggar. In the fabulously rich city of London there is more reluctance and difficulty about caring for the sick, the helpless, and the poor—the last of whom are more numerous—than in moderate sized, and in proportion less wealthy, towns.

London consists, of course, of several cities and boroughs. It includes many nationalities, each of which has its "quarter." But it has another division. In the suburbs reside the well-to-do business-men and their better paid managers and clerks, a fringe of the not quite so well paid hanging on for a variety of reasons, including fresh air for their children and quiet at night. In the centre and to the West lie the town houses of the richest members of the middle-classes and the aristocracy, looking out upon or very near the "open-spaces" which are the "property of the common-people." To the east is a swarming mass of human-beings whose lives, impoverished materially and spiritually, render the claim of London to be a community the most fantastic element in the metropolitan nightmare.

In the very centre of London, in its proudest streets, round almost any corner, one may suddenly walk into the heart of a slum. Most of the people who live in those overcrowded slums are not "slum-folk." They also have reasons for living at the centre, including occupational necessity. Such of the work of London as has true wealth producing, or wealth distributing, value is mainly done by these dwellers in the East End and the central slums, the direction and organisation of whose usefulness occupies only a fraction of the middle and upper classes of London. Any morning a walk through Covent Garden Market, by the way of which much of London's fruit and vegetable food is distributed, will disclose wretched old men and women sorting the rubbish heaps for something to eat. In spite, however, of the hosts of poor in London, the wastage of food between the land and sea in which it grows, and the man about London for whom it is gathered, is estimated at over thirty per cent of the total.

While food and fish are wasted and ill-distributed in rich London, the countryman and the fisherman live in want and the fear of famine. Transporting their goods to the city, paying an agent there, supporting a horde of inefficient merchants and retailers, in far too many shops, they are robbed without scruple, so that, when everybody else has been paid, the man who persuaded the earth or sea to deliver this food has nothing for himself. It costs so much to put food into the Londoner's

mouth that it discourages the farmer from growing it.

For the sake of Metropolis, not only English land has been misused, but the planet. It would be foolish to pretend that more than a very small portion of the enormous increase in productive-power of the last 150 years has been consumed in the country or even in the smaller towns, which are much as they were apart from mere multiplication of inhabitants. As regards the quality of what is consumed outside the metropolis, the people are in many ways worse off. The spinner and weaver of fine worsted suitings would have despised himself had he worn anything inferior as little as thirty years ago. Now he cannot afford to wear the work of his hands, unless he weaves on a handloom in the attic after his day's work is supposed to be done. There are, up and down the country, village centres of handicrafts under ancient conditions of craftsmanship. But the villagers cannot afford the products. The middle-classes can afford a few of them only as luxuries and because they are determined or persuaded to support the cult. Americans and Europeans take their surplus over their living expenses to New York, London, Paris or Berlin. Through the agency of the Press the meaning of each country for the others is the capital. France means Paris, America means New York, England means London. For these cities no form of natural wealth has been secure against criminal squandering.



That precious mineral, coal, has been used in the most wasteful way, doing as much to blacken the city inhabitants' lungs and sky as to warm their bodies and do their work. The very sea, the purifier, has been polluted, poisoning the fish and starving the birds. Earth is being stripped of its forests to provide paper for the circulation of city advertisements. Most of this has been done by men for whom honour has meant no more than to become rich in their own life-time, without a thought for the future. In the worst possible interpretation, the cities have taken no thought for the morrow. They have considered neither the lilies of the field nor the fowls of the air.

The morass in which English agriculture struggles is due to the urban course of civilisation during the last century and a half. The oppression and depression of the cultivators of English soil, from master-farmer to labourer—or their enforced desertion of the land—has been brought about by competing against them with the first crops of virgin-soils in newly developed countries. On land that requires tact because it has been tilled for possibly a thousand years, they have had to stand against the combined forces of new continents, without education, without the amenities of civilisation, and without capital. The true reason for the backwardness of agriculture is not the stubborn conservatism of farmers against new ideas as is often alleged; that where it exists is one of the consequences. The land

of England has been starved of capital because its development did not immediately guarantee as high a percentage of interest on investment as could be gained from the national monopoly of manufacture. If the manufacture of Brummagem idols for South Sea islanders promised five or ten per cent on capital, and the intensive cultivation of land gave an ultimate prospect of only four per cent, such is the effect of patriotism and business-instinct combined that the islander was certain to have his idols whether or not Englishmen grew corn. Capital—so runs a rule of the imaginary science of economics by which city men absolve themselves from social responsibility—flows in the direction of maximum reward; so that the breeding of Pekingese dogs for idle and childless city ladies may be prosperous while the agricultural labourer's children have only one covering of patched clothes. The city motor-car may not be able to move in the streets because of the host of other motor-cars in the way, while the farmer is sold up because he cannot immediately meet the bills of the city agent.

In London and its environs about one in seven of the people of Great Britain live and earn a living. London is a great port through which flow, to and from abroad, vast quantities of merchandise, some of which is collected or distributed over the whole country. London is also to some extent a factory, where things are made for other than Londoners as well as for Londoners. But altogether

London's service, commercially and spiritually, is not worth the toll it takes of the national income. Why should the provincial doctor have more faith in the magic of his bed-side manner if part of the fees of his patients, instead of going back to one of them for a suit, pays the excessive ground rent and expenses of a Bond Street tailor? The country contributes ridiculously to city incomes through falling under the spell of metropolitan advertisement. Some lady teacher in Warwickshire feels more confidence in her superiority over the parents of her pupils if her georgette came by mail order from London. There are country-gentry who imagine that they rise in their guests' esteem by announcing that their tea and coffee, rice and sugar, curtains, carpets, and clothes, came, not from the village grocer and craftsman, but from the London big shops.

A great proportion of the enormous incomes of the London well-to-do, from the city stock-broker to the millionaire ground landlord, is paid by the tillers of the fields and directors of factories outside London. The fortunes of city merchants, stock-exchange speculators, bankers, advertisers, civil-servants, are mainly a tax on the useful labour of the grimy-handed, crooked-backed, hard-bitten men up and down the land who make things. More and more this central maelstrom swirls everything with it, so that the country as a whole becomes its lackey. During the period since the war industries have

tended to concentrate round about London, and to leave their traditional centres in the wider country, as if it were not inevitable that, in the long run, to crowd all the work and the people into one corner would bring about disaster. The increasing rapidity of transport and communication, instead of enabling the English people to plan the whole country's organic usefulness, has caused them to cluster on the rich metropolitan's doorstep for his orders, and to blot out more gardens with industrialism. Almost as fast as invention and organisation in production reduce the labour necessary, "middleman" London adds to the labour of selling. Every occupation which a community trying to apply common-sense to the task of feeding, clothing, educating, and humanising, its people would cut down to the minimum is expanded in London religiously as a source of revenue from useful labour elsewhere. The transport industry alone in London is one of the farces of economic history. In spite of the post, telegraph, and telephone, all the headquarters of the banks and insurance companies have, from some quaint gregarious motive, to herd together. The clerks and typists required to tot and copy travel each morning anything from three to thirty miles. London bridge at half-past eight in the morning is a procession of Robot human-beings comparable only with an invading swarm of locusts. In the evening the procession is the same, but moving in the other direction. At the start and finish of the working-day

London is a holocaust of rushing human-beings. In spite of the enormous traffic facilities, of trains, omnibuses, tramcars, private motor-cars, and taxicabs, the would-be traveller on the public conveyances has to fight for his place; if he be male and foolishly harbour still some vestige of ancient chivalry in his heart, his best policy is to knock the women off the step of the conveyance, and give up his seat to one of the lucky ones after he has won it. Let any visitor to London be advised to avoid the trams, tubes, and buses, in the rush-hours; they are wholly required for the metropolitan white-slave traffic. This enormous transport industry, organised, directed, and manned, by a host in itself, merely moves people about. Always tens of thousands of them require, for business reasons, to be somewhere other than where they are, and have to take their bed and their pleasure miles from where they work. A girl who files letters in the City of London may spend from an hour to two and a half hours of every working-day of her life waiting for, fighting for a place upon, and sitting inside, a public conveyance. To go to a place of amusement she may spend another couple of hours in travelling and any length of time waiting in a queue. On Saturday or Sunday, if she can afford it, she may go for a bus-ride. It is her confirmed habit to be on the move, and her pleasure is to be on the move without the agile figure of Time chasing her with his scythe as in some dreadful dream, of which London life largely

consists for a million or two of persons. Not only in transport, but in many industries, London expands where common-sense would either contract or, by spreading out and organising, would reduce futile effort and increase leisure. Thirty years ago the correspondence required for a vast amount of business was written by hand. Tables of statistics, government correspondence, all manner of recording, was done in manuscript, often in a truly beautiful calligraphy as pleasant to read as typewriting. Totting, dividing, and multiplying were also done laboriously in the clerk's head, not on a high-speed comptometer tapped by a little girl. At that time comparatively few women outside the working-class were employed, although working-class women had to work at some productive occupation, skilled or unskilled, or in domestic service, up to marriage. Now the metropolis is the life-focus of hosts of typists, women secretaries, women clerks and girl filing-clerks, who work far more quickly than the manuscript workers of the past. These masses of women of the London insurance-houses and offices, of all kinds, are paid finally out of the productive labour of the provinces, out of the worn hands and feet of the women in mills and factories and machine shops. The more labour is saved in the workshops, however, the more is created in the offices. An examination of the cost of production of almost any article offered for sale in comparison with the price to the consumer demonstrates that this merchant

and counting-house metropolis is far too expensive a burden on the community.

That every idea for the direction of the country should have to pass through the sieve of the London publicity men's mind before it can be considered is a grave hindrance to the re-organisation required; since the London mind regards London as a god in itself. Great power is wielded by the proprietors and staffs of London newspapers over the minds of men and women throughout the country. These newspapers—and the London financial houses—are staffed almost entirely by men who, after education at a public school or university, went straight to their stools in Fleet Street and Lombard Street, to give counsel to Parliament about an industrial system of which they have had no experience; a national state of affairs which no chemical manufacturer or engineer would dream of establishing in his works.

This separation between the metropolis and the provinces results in all affairs of communal gravity being disposed of according to book rules and mob precedents, possibly up-to-date when they were original, but out-of-date when they are published as remedies. During the General Strike of 1926, observation of the people of London was depressing. Their conversation displayed ignorance of everything on which their totting of figures and calculation of rates depended. They talked as if the miner had committed a sin in so much as drawing attention to

himself. A miner seemed to some an ogre whose increasing discontent arose out of malice, and who gained a beastly, sadistic delight from hindering his betters from obliviously continuing to tot, draft, and talk. None of them had ever seen a miner, none knew how he lived, what struggles he had, or risks he ran, and when somebody falsified statistics to show that crossing a London street was more dangerous than mining, it was obvious to them that the miners' "grievances" were much ado about nothing.

They did not know that the miners on strike were the same men as had mined Messines Ridge. They did not know that, when a crowd of these men are asked for a dozen or twenty volunteers to risk their lives in an unsafe pit in the hope of saving one of their entombed fellows, it is usual for the lot to offer themselves. They did not stop to think whether, in an organic economy, the reward of labour would be left to supply and demand, whether organised or not; or whether, if the whole nation had to go short the miner would not joke, as he tightened his belt, with the best of us.

Those metropolitans who expressed their newspapers' views so earnestly in their clubs, and spoke so vehemently of "the blow to trade," knew next to nothing of production or producers. With only counting-house or shopkeeper minds, they knew nothing of the history of the mining industry; of women and children, prematurely aged, killed



rendered ugly, and animal. They knew nothing of the protective legislation with which the more humane citizens had had to save the helpless breeders of the race from the wealth-seekers. They knew nothing of the miners' seventy years' fight for organisation to destroy the sub-human conditions in which their industry had developed, and had threatened to become fixed. They did not know that under the leadership of a few staunch, mainly self-educated men, miners had gradually emerged from an animal to a human estate, with growing interest in those pursuits of art, learning, and philosophy, which distinguish human consciousness even more than fire, tools, and technique. The ascent of man as represented by the miner is tragic in its achievement in spite of its being a miracle of spirit and persistence. By the time that it was decided in London to deflate the post-war currency regardless of the effects on particular industries and groups of workers vast numbers of miners had become new men, and the movement of all of them was away from the old "barbarisms." The old dirtiness and drunkenness, which, of course, the metropolitan had heard about, had largely departed in favour of an eager desire to develop the children beyond the attainments of the parents. Miners denied themselves bare amenities of life they might have had so that their children might compete for scholarships, and advance themselves out of the mining population into professions, especially the teaching profession, instead of helping

to ease, at the earliest possible moment, the family load. The metropolitan knew nothing of this, nor the miner's despair when its complete undoing was threatened, and his future suddenly became again as black as the pit-mouth.

For the people of London strikes are little more than rumours. Fifty or a hundred thousand productive workers in the midlands or in the north locked out or on strike figure less prominently in the news than family quarrels. London feels the effect of strikes about as much as it feels war in China. True, the holder of shares in the affected industries may try to dispose of them, and thus help to reduce the Stock Exchange quotations, or he may denounce the strikers for not stabilizing or increasing share values by going on working at the same or lower wages. But a stoppage in one of the basic industries, from agriculture to ship-building, is not an experience to impress London as a whole. Nothing is brought home. Nobody has to do without a suit or a loaf. The shops continue as full, and not for a long time after injury to the community as an organic whole does the Londoner realise that he is finally dependent on this labour, direction, and organisation of basic industry, in which his own city is deficient. Even the wholesale merchant is not seriously disturbed although the strike may cut off his supplies; he simply buys abroad. In a serious strike the government protects London, far more than it protects any other town, from an experience that might be

salutary. It opens a milk distribution depot in Hyde Park, and the middle-class clerks, so numerous in London, have a gay change from their office stools by driving motor-lorries laden with meat from the docks to Smithfield. These young men largely regarded the General Strike of 1926 as a break in their monotonous lives, as a pleasure-trip. They were no more conscious of society as an organic whole at the end than at the beginning.

Since the war the City and much of the West End of London have been re-built. While the community has been in disorder, helpless amid conflicting counsel, taller and more numerous banks and insurance offices, more luxurious, more imposing, have been erected on the sites of the old. While the manufacturers of the country hardly know which way to turn, their days and nights passed in effort and worry, the London moneylenders and middlemen have riches to squander. In the West End of London theatres and cinemas arise as mushrooms; shops bigger than were ever known, decorated palaces with every luxury and service, spring up to give the customer more and more attention in consideration of her fewer purchases. Every merchant in the land finds it necessary to have his headquarters in London. Even the factories in the provinces, for some reason possibly known to economics, but foreign to common-sense, have mansion-like offices in London as big as the factories they represent. That all this bank-building, carpeting,

office-furnishing, and shop-fitting, make work for people who would otherwise be unemployed may also be sound economics; but common sense claims that it makes no wealth for people to use. It merely increases the toll on productive industry exacted by finance and commerce. It exemplifies a civilisation in which slick metropolitans prosper by their wits and provincials starve for their service. After a long period of trade depression in the basic industries of the country, in which men who bore the responsibilities of citizens during the war have had a drab subsistence-level existence, there is no sign in London's social life of anything being seriously wrong. While producers and farmers go down in anguish to bankruptcy and their labourers to poverty, misery, and suicide, London whirls round gaily, irresponsibly, without knowledge or care. Durham and Glamorgan might be in another world.

## THE SOUL OF MAN IN THE CITY

FOR the development of man, his education as a possible citizen of the world, his attainment of consciousness in philosophy, religion and art, cities were necessary. The excuse, the only excuse, offered for the maintenance of London is that culture and refinement can be attained there, and nowhere else in Britain to as high a degree; that the greatest experts and teachers, the genius of English culture, are collected in London; and that, if one would come within their aura, there one must go. All the disadvantages, it is argued, have to be set aside because the flower of an epoch blooms in the Metropolis. That it continually turns out human waste, that it forces a multitude of destitutes into an outcast neighbourhood, for some ungodly reason, usually to the east, fails to absorb a mass of unemployed ability far in excess of its running requirements, and fosters in multitudes only wealth-desire at any cost in spirit, all this must be borne, it is contended, for culture's sake.

If the Londoner had any corporate spirit, any sense of social responsibility, he would be ashamed

of the cost of his civilisation in human misery. He would recognise that the West End and prosperous suburbs of London have a human—which includes political, economic, and moral—responsibility for the East End. As it is one may live all one's life in the well-to-do parts of London without knowing of the East End except as a rumour, or as a sort of mythical region that furnishes the characters, wicked and comic, for detective stories. Apart from this human question, however, and in regard only to the custodianship of culture, London's culture is worn out, and its people are exhausted of the power to renew it. London, along with other metropolitan cities, is kept going on stimulants. People who dwell in cities are assaulted by a thousand discordant flashes and noises at every instant. They lose their sensitiveness to anything that might make a lasting impression; that might, in other words, shape them. It is an old newspaper that is a day old. Many a Londoner buys a newspaper a few minutes after each horse-race. The average Londoner reads newspapers in tube, office, and home, until his mind can be no better than a funnel sieve through which pass innumerable particles of unrelated information, signifying nothing. What the London feminine mind becomes as a consequence of shop-window gazing, the male mind becomes through newspaper reading.

One of the boons of a long power strike is the temporary suspension of electric-light advertisements.

Those lights are not meant to illuminate. They appear only at the crossings and squares already best illuminated. They are intended to bite through exhausted eyes and imprint suggestions on exhausted brains. The tired Londoner cannot go home from his useless office without being mobbed by the merchants of Europe and America with dazzling commands to buy a thousand things he cannot afford, or does not want. It is as if an electric needle were used to burn them into his brain. In his half-somnambulist state after a day of exhausting work he is an easy victim. It is a rule of advertising that for fifty thousand pounds so powerful a suggestion can be given that buyers will ask for the commodity advertised to the extent of returning the expenditure with a profit; and the dupes who respond have no suspicion as to how they were brought to do so. By final law those sky-signs are as criminal as rousing an overwrought woman from sleep to tell her that the making of omelettes requires the breaking of eggs.

It is almost impossible for the Londoner to defend himself against these assaults on his senses. The simple act of crossing the road requires him to be sensitive to hundreds of different objects, to fix their position, direction, and speed, for his life's sake. He gradually becomes so habituated to having his senses tickled, shaken, and rattled, that he cannot keep awake without it, and cannot sleep either. It is a condition afflicting tens of thousands,

which might fairly be described as metropolitan neurasthenia. The victims are exhausted, and the only thing to prevent their falling down is that they should keep going. They are dependent on sensual stimulants, which they must have in increasing doses until their annual sea-side holiday, which is a fortnight in a sort of asylum.

Under the influence of the crowded, hustling metropolis, the individual tends to degenerate to a bundle of automatic reflexes with five, or less than five, senses. His one hope of salvation is in a continual fight against becoming this bundle of reflexes. He sees so many people that he tries to avoid noticing them, so that outdoor life in London is reduced to tolerance without distinction, or "the good-humoured crowd." In tube, bus, station, the Londoner does not raise his eyes from his newspaper or the ground lest he spend the night reciting the verses in which all kinds of products, from meat-extract to toothpaste, are advertised. In the city the sense of sight and hearing are of great biological importance, for which reason they have to be kept awake. If the sense of smell were equally important, and scents could be kept separate as sights can, and as sounds can to some extent, the Londoner would be bombarded with advertising odours as he is dazzled by lights at every cross-road, and treated to a bar of gramophone music, or to an isolated phrase spoken through a loud speaker, from every other shop-doorway.



The metropolitan, however, loses his sense of smell, as he loses all discrimination of palate. Though his eyes have to be alert for danger—while at the same time he tries to protect himself against seeing what is not dangerous, for example, London's architecture, statuary, and people—and his ears attuned for hearing telephone speech while cutting out the competing pandemonium, his nose merely has to cut out petrol fumes and the cooking of other people's food. It renders practically no other service. He can bolt his food with his eyes and mind on a newspaper or a detective-novel, without being aware that he possesses either taste or smell. It is comparatively easy to serve a Londoner with meat long past its prime. It has to be very bad indeed for him to notice it. Some time ago the members of a middle-class staff of a large London office asked to be provided with fresh English meat in their dining room. It was served without their being told that the change had come about. They protested that it was not tender enough, since tenderness for men whose minds are on something else is a necessity. So foreign meat and placidity returned together. During the long period of 1926 in which coal production was suspended, wood-cutting came back into its own again in the country, and storm-broken branches, of no use as timber, became worth the labour of sawing and chopping. "All day long in the wood house is the smell of newly-cut wood, a smell to be counted with such delights as the smell

of apples in a loft, of wood smoke, of earth newly turned to the sky, and rotting leaves on an autumn day." Thus Pamela Hinkson described it, and before the metropolitan has finished reading it, he should know whether he has lost earth and his sense of smell beyond recall, or whether the sap could still rise in him.

Recourse to the physical stimulant of alcohol—with its attendant soporific effect on the nervous system—is a trifle, possibly even a safeguard, by comparison with the widespread craving for ever-growing variety and blatancy of sight and noises. There is a moral in the story of the man who, having removed into the country after having lived several years near the Elephant and Castle, set a long and loud alarm clock ringing each night, because in the eerie quietness he could not fall asleep. Between beer with conversation and nothing less stimulating than London's "amusements," possibly the healthier impulse would choose the former.

The metropolis is almost a cemetery for art. Its galleries and museums are mainly mummy-shows. Concentrated in a few square miles of London, in the British Museum alone, is a mass of work of all ages that ought to be spread over the land for the cultivation of others besides the city student. The people of London as a whole, including the educated and self-esteeming middle-classes, rarely, if ever, enter these places, where the art, whether dead or

immortal, of the ages is gathered. The London National Gallery is better known to provincial visitors who have spent their savings on coming to see it than to the mass of Londoners. It is possibly London's most degrading feature that its mummified art has no effect whatever on its people and its life. Many of the art-students to be met within the galleries look forward to using their developed artists' minds merely to create selling ideas for shopkeepers.

Much of the art recognised in London merely serves to record the extermination from Nature of landscapes, lovely bodies, clear complexions and skies. It was significant of the metropolitan obliviousness to the fundamentals of earth-life that a visitor to the Royal Academy 1930 could not find a single head of cattle in the place, and more significant that not one of the press-men who wrote criticisms of this exhibition announced the absence of cattle. It is probable that not one of them noticed it.

As surely as a play with some relationship to men's responsibilities is produced in London, the audience consists mainly of those lonely souls who feel acutely the insulating gulf between London and the sources of life; of those, probably, who left the countryside for the will o' the wisp of culture on the hub of the Empire; who feel in the whirl and swirl of London that everything is journalism, which Nietzsche defined as made in a day to last a day; who cease-

lessly look about them in the dwindling hope of finding some sign of solidity, character, and lasting shape, some value other than riches. The earnest artist cannot live in London. He is first attracted thither; when he has found it out, he has to go away again, to Lincolnshire, Devonshire, Italy; anywhere out of London. When O'Casey's "The Plough and the Stars" was presented in London the acclimatized Londoner cursed the would-be benefactor who sent him to see it. The audience which welcomed possibly the greatest play of this generation consisted of people for whom the metropolis is exile—not by any means Irishmen only—and the same audience foregathered again and again.

What "pays" in London, what attracts the wealthy business-men, has nothing to do with art or culture. It is a recognised feature of the London theatre that the manager should think out what will most allure "tired business-men." The answer is agreed to be musical comedy or revue (with the exception of Mr. Cochran's, which is a criticism of metropolitan institutions for sophisticated people not yet tired out). Revue, with its bizarre, fleeting scenes, its separation from every social or religious reality, and its momentary impressions acts only as a sensual stimulant. It is frequented by those who are at the same time too jaded and too tense either to give continuous attention or to sleep; by those impotent to pursue any sequence of thought for the contemplation of any kind of art; by, in fact,

the typical and more prosperous city man, whose only alternative dramatic diet is the least worthy and most revue-like comedy, farce, and detective-thriller. This disablement of the individual for the appreciation of creative art is recognised by the Court. A list of "Shows" collected by Mr. George Jean Nathan to indicate how the English Royal Family had distributed its patronage of the theatre is an amazing confirmation of the corrupting and vulgarizing influence of metropolitan civilisation.

The plight of music in the metropolis is worse than that of drama, in spite of the fact that almost every drama that even the benevolent critics would call artistic fails financially. To prevent the Queen's Hall from being turned into a cinema it had practically to be nationalized. The Albert Hall is a sort of white elephant. It is used at certain times for music, but is mainly known as the arena of the great prize-fights. One Opera House, after lying idle for years, was converted into a combined cinema-theatre and variety show. The remaining one, Covent Garden, is closed for the greater part of the year, opera in London being a twice-weekly affair under almost impossible conditions at the Old Vic theatre. There is music of a sort everywhere in London, and that of the street organs is not quite so bad as that of the restaurants. For several years some of the favourite pieces played to excuse diners from frankly confessing to one another that they have no conversation—in the marble restaurants as

in the imitation marble—have been concocted of phrases from fifty or so popular tunes, songs, hymns, bits of opera, all strung together so as to run into one another. According to a programme note on such a piece of work played to the audience at the London Coliseum, the arranger thought it clever to show how these tatters could be hung on end. This *magnum opus* is applauded. It is not considered demoralising. It is not perceived to be the ramblings of a spiritual anarchist, in whose mind rubbish is so entangled that it can be dragged out as a chain. Each phrase covers the duration of the audience's capacity for interest in any continuous theme. The swift changing of the tunes makes the audience at home, inasmuch as it corresponds with life in the streets, and keeps up the noise which the metropolitan finds necessary for his mind's ease. Such a rag-bag as this piece of music reveals the revue mind, the newspaper mind, applied, if application is a term that can be used, to music.

Thus it is with nearly every city institution, the worst of all being the Press. There is scarcely a Londoner who is aware how bad the London Press is. A cultivated mind could not bear a newspaper if not habituated to it, and, as a result, blind to its tone, taste, and intentions. In an alleged democracy governed by public opinion expressed at elections in which almost every man and woman over twenty-one years of age may vote, the "intelligence bureau" is both consciously and unconsciously corrupt. Scarcely

a piece of news of importance is not coloured to a degree that renders it false. In the full glare of the mighty organisations for spreading information, only disarming and disabling trivialities are broadcast. England's relations with foreign countries, the attitude of the colonies, the desperate plight of some of her industries for several years, have been kept more secret than would have been possible before the Press was developed. This industry of manufacturing public opinion continually lulls the people into a condition of optimism that every journalist in Fleet Street knows to be false. Newspapers, to adapt a famous definition of speech, are devices for hiding the news.

The newspapers of London do not draw the major part of their income from their readers, to whom naturally, as their proprietors would confess at their clubs, they do not give the major part of their service. Their purpose in selling newspapers to the public, about whose enlightenment or instruction they care absolutely nothing, is to swell out their circulation figures because they have persuaded advertisers that circulation is the test of the worth-whileness of advertising. Newspapers are designed so that the reader's eye, glancing over the news and views will be arrested by an advertisement; that he will buy the article advertised; and that in so doing he will pay for his newspaper by returning the cost of the advertisement. There is no conceivable trick for intruding goods on the possible customers'

attention which is not adopted, and thinking out new tricks is a highly specialised profession.

In the pursuit of circulation the Press of London, whose leaders describe it at public dinners as a medium of adult education, reduces the minds of its readers to a disorder corresponding with that of rag-bag music composer. The relation of the words in a cross-word puzzle—perhaps the chief newspaper diversion—to one another is precisely the same as that of the tunes in the patchwork music. Neither “composition” has any significance. Most of the cross-word puzzles for which entrance fees are collected and prizes distributed are practically lotteries. To learn the contents of any newspaper which boasts of its circulation figures, it is not necessary to refer to it. It will be a snappy, vulgar, playbox of trivialities, most of the illustrations being advertisements. Such a newspaper as *The Times* has a mighty tradition from which it inherits its character. In some respects it is still solid, its reports being fit for intelligent persons to read. Yet *The Times*, in spite of its fight against the flood of metropolitanism, is swept with it. Advertisement takes pride of place and dominates the paper, filling more than a third of the space, with sport and the money-market covering nearly another third. The most superficial of all the writings in *The Times* are the leading articles, which ought, of course, to be thoroughly well-considered essays. But the only essay which appears in *The Times* with unfailing daily regularity



is that of Callisthenes' on the Worship of Selfridge, or why a man should have greater pride in being a servant of the greatest store in the Metropolis than in being a citizen of Rome. Some of the newspaper critics who condemn the cinema for "plugging" songs—which means repeating them every few minutes for advertisement—are quite aware, and a few even ashamed, that their own salary is derived from the "plugging" of commodities as bad as the songs by their own newspapers.

London as a market for commercial products has trodden every other aspect of life underfoot. Artists and other persons of culture have found it difficult or impossible in London to serve the tastes of connoisseurs directly and have become the employees of merchant shop-keepers. Pictorial art has been bought by the railways, under- and over-ground, and the emporium proprietors. The poster threatens to become the only sort of picture except the portraits of the men who order posters. In the magazines the best illustration work accompanies the advertisements, not the stories. From the time when a bonny boy chose to blow bubbles only from one firm's soap, the day has rapidly approached when the condition of selling any picture will be that the picture sells something else. Concerts are organised by music-publishers to stamp their rubbishy songs on the minds of the audience; so that those who hum them accidentally will give those who do not know them a feeling of inferiority for not being up-to-date.

Articles are used on the stage, even to the extent of breaking the continuity of the play, so as to advertise them. The reader cannot tell of any newspaper contribution, including the news, whether insertion was paid for, or whom the writer who recommends this or that preparation is paid to serve. The present day slogan of culture in general might well be "Art for Salesmanship's Sake."

The aesthetic education of English women voters is not provided by the National Gallery Trustees. It is delivered to them by the shopkeepers of Oxford Street, who purchase it from artists who have no other god but salesmanship. Art is window-dressing. Beauty itself, of feature, figure, and deportment, nourishes itself by wearing new gowns under the critical eye of the prospective purchaser—who has to remind herself that her purpose is not to appreciate the mannequin, but to see herself in the gown. Not only is past art divorced from present-day life by being collected in museums. Present art, instead of being immanent in the quality of the commodities which the people buy, is—perhaps the mercantile magnate would say—transcendent on hoardings and in the devices for making them buy. The commodities must cost as little as possible; it does not matter what the selling devices cost if they succeed.

A generation or two ago commerce was looked upon as fit only for those born to nothing better. Slaves and promoted slaves were permitted, since

their souls were predestined for the third class even in Heaven, to be ambitious for riches, and to soil their hands trading for it. Along with Jews, damned eternally as no class, these upstart organisers, merchants, manufacturers, and moneylenders were at liberty to accumulate wealth, and reckon themselves as fine fellows as they pleased provided they did not seek acquaintance with their betters. No gentleman was free to buy or sell. He might hunt, fish, swim, make the Grand Tour, or go to war; entertain other gentlemen, and receive the rents which were his due by law and custom whereof the memory of man runneth not back to the contrary. He could do very nearly what he liked so long as he refrained entirely from business competition, and lived as a man would naturally dream of living if exempted from the curse of Adam.

Not even gentlemen remained proof against envying accumulated fortunes greater than they had inherited. The ideal has turned over. Commerce has become primary. The man who remains outside it fails in patriotism, and, whatever his birth, has to be ready with a certificate from his doctor if questioned. A man—women are included—need not manufacture goods or provide services; indeed, his doing so rather embarrasses the others. But buy, sell, or lend, he must, if he would be considered for State honour or public merit. All the pride that once dwelt in leisure is now fiercely occupied in work, the supremely dignified task being salesmanship. The widow of a

deceased peer creates very little comment by entering commerce as a saleswoman.

Salesmanship differs considerably from craftsmanship. The latter, indeed, is a trifling accomplishment more easily taught to village boys than the filling up of forms. Craftsmanship, whether its object was shoes, wheels and harness for a horse, an oak ship, or a stone temple, was mere children's play, appropriate to the ignorant childhood of the race. But every bookstall is a college for the "Art of Salesmanship." For the highly evolved salesman the period between conception and flight will soon be longer than for doctors or lawyers. As Americans know, salesmen are born, not made. Their special qualities of supermanhood can be developed only in their special universities, where they must study not dead languages that make men sigh for Helen, nor even the needs of mankind, but psychology. They have to study the frailties of human nature, not to make men whole, but to make them buy. Not in the history of the world has such a *yoga* appeared as an up-to-date text-book for infant salesmen. The Holy Bible of Salvation is by comparison a haphazard collection of antiquated proverbial wisdom, a comparison settled by contrasting the lack of results produced by the Bible with the efficiency of the text-book. Under the *mana* of salesmen, multitudes have spent incomes they will never receive, incomes which will not fall due for ten or twenty years.

That the object of "production, distribution, and exchange," is to ensure a livelihood for all men, and to set them free for social, political, and religious life, so that they may follow their heart's desire in art, craft, scholarship, or vagabondage, was more clearly recognised before invention brought its assistance than it is now. The work required to supply all the wants of mankind is limited and almost calculable. The work apparently required to sell the limited quantity of goods already made is unlimited. In a few years we shall surely be regarded as lunatics.

The most modern architecture of London is the work of men who know in their bones, yet do not want to admit, that these commercial buildings require only naked utility, and that naked utility would expose the bareness of a city state given over entirely to commercial civilisation. Most of London's modern buildings appear to have had the decorative touches added after the design was completed. In that enormous residential block, Grosvenor House, the architect apparently having the price of a little material left over, tacked a little decorative dove-cote on the top. The unescapable impression from looking at London's architecture is that all the modern is dedicated to the creed that commerce is the whole life of man; while the older work whispers pathetically that at one time this was not so. The decorative additions which distinguish the mighty commercial piles from the edifices to be constructed

from a child's box of bricks betray the shame of the architect, and of the board which selected the design, that it should be so now. In the shops and commercial buildings it is as with the advertisements. Over their portals there is a motto that a little imagination may read: "Commerce is glorious, commodities do not matter." New houses have doors that shrink to let the draughts in, wall-paper that falls to bits when the paste is spread on it, and roofs that let the rain through. Boots tear, colours run, fabrics shrink. Woolworth supplies the people, while the palaces in which the accounts are totted up absorb the artist spirits and labourers who in a religious age might have built cathedrals and guildhalls.

Such serious art as is left, music, opera, drama, poetry, painting, and sculpture, is chiefly a protest in some form against metropolitan values and hideousness. Sometimes it is the work of a tortured soul which believes that, if London can be portrayed so that the blind may see its ugliness, a change will come about. At others it is the work of a secret church, a few whom the city persecutes and oppresses, and who join themselves into bands in the hope of reviving themselves a little with non-metropolitan values. They either let the metropolis proceed to its own damnation, or sooner or later are swept up in it.

Naturally not every metropolitan gives himself over completely to the city-whirl without some deeper uneasiness, some call of instinct and con-

science back to the roots of life. The individual city soul, held aloof from the community by mountains of ice which city life cannot melt, harbours wishes for re-fusion in the community prior to re-individuation. In short, the city cannot entirely stifle the will to be born again, and to suck new vitality from Mother Earth.

Most people have no doubt observed certain day-dreams common to city minds. The most common, of course, is the wealth fantasy. A Londoner noticing a stack of handbills asks his companion what he would do if they were pound notes. The metropolitan wealth fantasy is the chief foundation of the betting industry, from which newspapers, book-makers, and collectors in great numbers derive a considerable revenue. But there are other fantasies of a little less desperate significance. It is of interest in the Strand to observe one's companion pass by shop after shop filled with the manufactured products of the earth. Reaching at length one of the colonial agencies, its windows dressed by some seducer with a rich variety of colonial fruits before a background of a vast farm, he stops. He is caught for a moment by a spell, to dream his life afresh from adolescence, under other than metropolitan conditions. Forcibly, and with a sigh that is almost a sob, he puts the dream aside, to resume the tension of metropolitan life, with its obligations and commitments devoid of aesthetic joy.

At a time when the metropolitan had given

himself up less completely to drowning his spiritual poverty in high-speed diversion; before the sea-side "resorts" were made hideous by speed-boats which do not go anywhere, but merely supply "thrills"; before maniacs wanted to break speed records on, of all courses, Lake Windermere, there used to be much rather vague talk about a necessity "to get back to reality." The phrase is heard yet occasionally, though as a rule only from newspaper leader-writers and business men who want us "to get back" into the immediate past. Something constantly impels us back to reality, and treats us roughly if we decline to go. Now that the country-side has lost not only its folk-songs, but most of its folk, the metropolis has taken the folk-songs up. Exhibitions of folk-singing and folk-dancing are held in the great Albert Hall, so that the audience may escape from its city chains for an hour into the restfulness of group emotions. Some impulse commands people who are not completely isolated from the folk to seize hold of every particle of genuine folk-music, and vicariously to obtain through it a simple yet vital feeling expression. To the psychologist the fact that these folk-songs are arranged with ever-increasing complexity of orchestral decoration seems like a tragi-comedy, a dance by a city man and an agricultural labourer, both blindfold.

The last place to enquire for classes in country-dancing is the country. This and other allied recreations touch something in the heart of the city-



business-girl, who hastens with set face away from her office to undo the ill-effects of her life occupation. Community singing did not succeed merely because it was organised by newspapers for advertisement's sake. It represented the city in search of a soul. The *regime* of city life requires that none should have passions; that everyone should be all-tolerant, begging and granting pardon in public, and grumbling only in the family or the closet. Life refuses to allow passions and emotions to be wiped out. Community singing enables people to mingle their emotions freely for the time being with those of others. It is a kind of day-dream of being nursed by the tribal-mother.

It is not easy to imagine the ten thousand metropolitans who stand in the Albert Hall to sing compromising their dignity by dancing with the villagers on the green. Yet with lumps in their throats they sing of the earth, the sea, and the past. They do not know that it is the loss of worship in fellowship which makes them so easy to command under the newspaper-proprietor's baton; nor that their singing is a soporific against the conscience which their neglect of their citizens' problems should awake. The prompting felt by the gathered multitude to have a good cry puts them into the state of mind of the multitude that heard the Sermon on the Mountain. But no Sermon on the Mountain is read to them, so their community-singing does not attain the dignity of an event. The

people return to their houses, the same lost souls in the wilderness as when they came out.

In the metropolis the soul of man is swept along by its environment, as one's feet in the tubes and streets move willy-nilly at the same pace as those of the scurrying, time-table harassed crowd. The Londoner has no chance to become a person, with a shape of his own and an outlook on the universe. That measure of conscious peace for meditation is not to be had. A City dedicated entirely to the religion of commerce creates men and women who are no better than puppets of the same god. The final word on anything is the economics of it, so that the teaching of Jesus Christ is conditioned even in theory by "necessity" and "possibility" as defined by the London School of Economics. In practice, of course, it is totally forgotten, a Christian, as is true of the churches which block the roads, being a nuisance in a wholly economic civilisation.

## THE SOUL OF MAN IN THE COUNTRY

WHEN London was farther from the country in terms of transport, and nearer in terms of ideas, the country-woman used to speak with wonder about the doings of the fine folks in town; and there she left the matter, pursuing her duties as before. Now that the train, motor car, kinema, and newest, but not last, Radio, carry metropolitan civilisation, under the guise of enlightenment, to the remotest corners of the "provinces," cosmopolitanism insinuates itself into every mind. That mental impotence symptomatic of metropolitan life which makes people always to be catered for, and incapable of even amusing themselves, gradually takes hold everywhere, until the villager begins to suffer from that awful terror of solitude which makes London and its suburbs what they are. Man in the city has become the puppet of organisation and machinery, without which he is helpless. Man in the country moves in the same direction.

Under the influence of what the city calls education the folk-culture that made each valley a community has been nearly destroyed. The villagers anxiety to

be first in the street with the latest London or New York composition has thrown the folk-song into limbo. Instead of taking his songs from his grandfather and the village versifier who busked around the inns, the local comedian obtains his song from the *News of the World* or the entertainers of the B.B.C. The young girl with a good natural voice, instead of deriving from the metropolis the helpful tuition it is her right to receive, hears an operatic star on a gramophone or on the wireless; and when she has read the metropolitan advertisement falsely uttered as criticism, she feels her hopeless inferiority and is dumb. If she remembers in her despair some playmate who left the village for expensive lessons from the great masters in London, she does not sensibly condemn the emigrant for failing to return and teach her, but foolishly yearns to follow to the same artificial light. Thereupon she consoles herself by copying the London fashions from the picture-paper, or the fashions of cosmopolitan millionairessdom from the Hollywood film, and makes her ambition in life the reduction of her figure to that of an effeminate boy, in the belief that the newspaper mannequin pictures really spring from the spontaneous enthusiasm of cultivated journalists, vastly her superiors, for the portrayed forms. She is unaware that the city journalist is as dissatisfied with his job as she with her out-of-the-world feeling; that he probably began life with enthusiasm for literature and art, which the distractions of London and the

energy required to make a living there sucked out of him; and that the dazzling newspaper photographs were probably taken by a man whose soul had been turned inside-out, leaving him eyes and mind for only one kind of worth, namely, news-value; that is, capacity to startle a penny a day out of such as she.

Her brother, subject to the same mass-production of suggestion, is gradually emptied of his own emotions, and turned into an imitation Londoner. Soon he is indistinguishable in emotion, interest, or dialect, from a boy in any other village. Wherever he goes, from the infants' room in the village school—if there is a separate infants' room—to the "full London company direct from the West End" at the theatre in the nearest town, he comes into touch with nothing home-made. Every opinion, every topic of conversation, originated in London. He cheers the football team of the local town as if the town and the team had some spiritual identity; as if the football team was not a joint-stock company presenting professional entertainers for a profit. If there is still a local newspaper, it is probably on its last legs before the persuasive glibness exercised on the country women-folk by the metropolitan Press magnates' canvassers. The boy's tailor advertises Bond Street cut, whether it is or not. The village-hall tries to keep up to London with the latest Metropolitan dances, the sexual embraces of which are unnecessary stimulation to anybody but a neurasthenic metropolitan.

In the village club-rooms where men used to be linked in fellowship in their local friendly society, treating the local sick by rules of their own making, humanely applied, and as humanely broken, the tentacles of the City Financial State "administer" in strict accordance with the Orders in Council and the Regulations of the Commissioners, with assistance of a detailed code for the observation and detection of malingerers. The officers' accounts are not audited by their peers, chosen in fellowship for their character and merit, but are sent up to an official of the unseen bureaucracy, resembling the transactions of a branch of a multiple shop. The friendly society is no longer an aristocratic corporation, a guild of men and women, it is a dossier in the metropolis. England degenerates to complete spiritual, mental, and physical subservience and dependence. It becomes the tributary province of a Metropolitan State. The whole land seems to have fallen under a hypnotic spell, not to London's superiority in work of permanent value, but to mere publicity and tributary-financial concentration.

The men, women, and children, who danced in the village hall, produced an operetta in the village-schoolroom, or conversed intelligently, on the strength of a handful of classics and the Bible, in public-house and club, have lost this foundation of a full soul-life. Not many years ago villagers and people of the smaller townships were deeply interested in their local events, boxing, wrestling, the teams of

villagers, the flower-show, sheep-dog trials, and the village brass-bands and choirs. Round these centres of cultural effort lived a whole organic community. All this has been disgracefully neglected by the headquarters of culture, the Metropolis. All that those who remain behind in the villages have gained in return for what they have lost is the rank of herded and impotent spectators of the Press and Kinema Constellations, and the motor-omnibus to the nearest little imitation London. London has not merely neglected the country. As it takes and wastes its products, it takes and corrupts its people's offspring. Now it is the ambition of nearly every boy of talent to leave the village; not with the purpose of coming back afterwards to give the village the fruits of his greater lore, as the village parson, doctor, and lawyer used to do, but to bask in the millionaire-cosmopolitan limelight of London for the rest of his life. Every lad who can blow a cornet wants to give up playing Handel in the village market-place, and, instead of scoring new work for brass-bands, to set himself up in London blaring out American rhythms for diners who have no use for him but to drown the conversation at the next table, and preserve them from the solemnity of quietness. The boy with a mind for painting or sculpture does not add to the conscious tradition and history of his native place, he comes to London to sink or rise in its flood of commercialised talents. The country is left with its mediocrities, and a very

few rare spirits, who believe that the cultivation of the minds of men as well as the earth in their native places is work as good as any other; who have not yet succumbed to the metropolitan convention that nothing is for love, everything is to sell.

The countryman finds it almost impossible to escape from the dominion of London even when in revolt against it. A few Scots have begun a Nationalist movement for the political independence of Scotland, but they emphasise so strongly the need for a Scottish culture, native and distinct from English culture, that what they seem at root to be in revolt against is not England; it is London. Yet their writers have their books published and reviewed in London, where salesmen are concentrated. Success for Scots as for others, in any branch of culture, is success in London. The Scottish national players are regarded as having attained recognition when they have been presented in London. A team of Scottish amateurs which acted magnificently in London left at least one of its members there as a professional. To perform fine and beautiful work in Edinburgh, Manchester, Leeds, in spite of the honourable traditions of these places, is regarded as hiding one's light under a bushel. London is not the true centre of English or Scottish drama, music, or poetry; it is merely the place where commercial success brings the performer and author the greatest profit. Drama, for example, in the country has to be produced for love, or for about the



same standard of living as is enjoyed by the community in general. In London an inferior play may make several persons' fortunes. The Scottish players might, as the Irish players, for example, have produced half a dozen plays of native genius in their own country without any of them entering into the world consciousness by way of Mr. Agate of the B.B.C. and—without disrespect in coupling his name with Mr. Agate's—Mr. Hannen Swaffer. Mr. St. John Ervine suggested some years ago that provincial towns should band together, create chains of repertory theatres, develop their own actors, create their own plays and standards, and thus attain a true culture distinct from that of London, where Mayfair comedy and Blue Lagoon love will persist as long as metropolitan monotony requires compensatory day-dreams. It was a good idea. But the provinces dare not trust themselves. London overawes them, even when they sing psalms of nationalism and secession. When the Scottish Parliament is established it will meet in London to save the members' train fares home to Scotland. In all pursuits the countryman sees London as the great light, and cannot believe that anything he does will be seen of God and the world in any other light. He is hypnotised and overawed by it. He protests against it, but gives in to it.

In her adoption of the civilisation which London spreads over the countryside, the country woman follows the fashion of the town woman in forgetting

how to bake, brew, launder, and cook. It is no use to reply that these hard tasks of the past are now done by labour-saving devices in hygienic workshops. Canned food, synthetic beer, bakehouse bread, laundry tear instead of wear, are not labour-saving. They are merely material wasting, and the loss of some of them takes out of life some of its deepest and most conscious joy. As far as labour-saving devices set the country woman free it is to read bad literature, see bad films, and become gadabouts between the village and the town. It used to be asked of the nineteenth century atheist when his religious opponents could not answer his arguments, "What will you put in the place of religion?" The question is now acute for the savers of work. What do they propose to put in the place of it. Wherever they save it the relieved person starves, attaches himself to some parasitic function, or if he or she has an alternative source of income, falls into a nervous fear-boredom and cries out ceaselessly for new diversions.

Externally as internally, in the provincial towns and country-villages metropolitan black-magic can be seen at work. One after another provincial towns have been stampeded into throwing away all their natural expressions for the false pride of imitating London; or into panic-stricken efforts to dissuade their inhabitants from taking to London what little money they have to spend. Provincial market-places become ugly and uncouth under feeble

electric signs. Their shop-fronts and streets are re-built by architects and shop-keepers who imagine that a ludicrous imitation of Oxford Street may bring shoppers from neighbouring towns. A little way along the country lane leading from the cross-road that forms the foregathering centre of the village, one comes upon the village Kinema, and is met by the same pictures of bare-backed women throwing champagne bottles at one another as are depicted in Holloway Road or Lewisham High Street, with the same coarseness of colouring and wretchedness of draughtsmanship, under a 400 watt lamp. Such are the blessings which all-beneficent, civilised London, showers on the farmer, labourer, and other country and provincial workers to make them contented to feed, warm, clothe, and serve Metropolis.

Those missionaries and educators who believe that they can save the souls of the villagers as well as their own by carrying metropolitan civilisation into the country as if it were the wine and bread of life are well-meaning, but not in the end helpful. The countryman is not to be patronised by men and women who have come from London to cheer him up. He is not pitiable because he has to go out into the rain, midwife the lambs, rise early, and go to bed sleepy. He is not necessarily benighted because he has to make his own conversation or choose among darts, shove ha'penny, dominoes, and throwing rings into a pint-mug. It is the benefactor who is benighted when he comes not with quoits and bowls, ideas and

costumes for a play, Thoreau and Chaucer, but with a gramophone and fox-trot, and city diversions in general; in that he stays for too short a time for the folk to reach emotional touch with him; in that he has come from London, that he talks London, and often enough betrays that he wishes himself back in London. That he is a bird-of-passage at all disqualifies him for the work of cultivating the mind of the men who cultivate the soil. It is only when he has been long with these men, when his heart has been grafted on theirs, that his success genuinely begins.

The village kinema speculator actually believes himself an educator for arousing the farm man's "discontent"; not his anger at the betrayal of his industry, but his envy of the film-cabarets of millionaireism in New York, Paris and London. He pretends that the unsightly and ungodly mud hut he puts up adds enlightenment and magnificence to the village. What the farm men need—and want—besides the leisure and education on which autonomy of the spirit depends, is the restoration of worth to agriculture. To corrupt the farm man with unreal desires, namely, wealth-fantasies, and to make him lust for all the futile sensuality of cities that divide not day and night, makes of him a miniature cosmopolitan; in short, it breeds the wrong sort of discontent. It devalues what is well worth doing so that the man despises himself for doing it.

That the country-man is ignorant is an inference

from false values. Those metropolitans who have conspired to set up the city standard of culture, notwithstanding their colleges and universities, are the truly ignorant. From leaving school or college, most of them forget all they have learned, in an academic style, of agriculture, politics, and human nature. They rapidly become jarred networks of nerves discarnated from supporting bodies, and reacting mechanically without any will of their own, to environment. Just as many humane thinkers have suspected that a decree imposing on all men a period of service in the mines would make for economic progress, so a period of service among the clods of the field, who at present provide only comic types for superior city wags, would contribute to education and to art more than the occasional reading of a novel by Thomas Hardy. What metropolitan, walking hastily along Regent Street, ever realises that every shop implies a great tract of land with lonely men ploughing, harrowing, mowing, binding, or threshing; men manuring, or tending cattle; men, women, and children with hunched shoulders, heavy tread, and stunted minds? The dainty, half-draped fairy of the ball-room, with perfect deportment and resplendent face, is dancing, without knowing what she does, on the back of a serf chained to the earth. The city-man, fleeing to his cubicle in the suburbs, digging his garden for exercise, to plant geraniums for the envy of next-door is trifling with the salvation of his soul and his body

at the same time; absorbed in his pretty idyll in place of reality, genially calling his privet-hedge and rose-tree—which he trims while wearing a bowler hat and a collar—his cabbage-patch, he is living at the expense of men planting a field with wheat or turnips. Having dug for a little exercise he takes out his car, sits in it the rest of the week-end, and terrifies the real farmer's poultry while covering his fields with dust; and on Monday tells a funny story about a yokel at the inn where he had dinner.

It is not paradoxical that the urban man is more ignorant than the rural man. The countryman may be undeveloped consciously, but his instincts are potentially natural and healthy, in contrast with the painful consciousness of the city-man whose instincts are exhausted, and whose mind is so externalised that possibly nothing less than a life-threatening shock can bring him to his senses. His wits are inside-out. His mentality is a machine, his memory a gramophone record, which some of his educators mistake for ideal mentality. He cannot digest and transmute his learning, but becomes in some department or another a certified encyclopædia—of commerce, history, or literature. Under the very quantity of stimuli his reflexes become less purposively organic, and more automatic, unconscious, and externally controllable from centralised forces as if he were an electrical machine. That a city mentality can see a play, read a newspaper or even a book, and at the end of the activity be barren

of recollection apart from the feeling of having liked or disliked, is only part of its ignorance; that the city man feels something to be taken from him by a newspaper or a show, rather than given to him, is only part of his inorganicness. To by far the greater portion of his environment he is insensible. Observe a metropolitan showing his country-cousin round London; the metropolitan is obviously without zest. The country-cousin, all mind and eyes, rejoices for a time at the multiplicity of novel sensations; the metropolitan gazes vacantly round "just waiting" for his "provincial," and therefore interested, companion, even in the National Gallery. There is no response left in him.

There are metropolitans who have not in their lives seen a horse. They may have seen an almost superannuated beast of burden docilely dragging a dray over the polished and slippery London streets. Perhaps they may, on occasions of adventure, have seen the nervous creatures of the racecourse, but these are contemplated by city mentality not as horses so much as gold-bugs. What neither city-man nor city-child has seen, often enough, is the full-blooded entire whose majesty has thrilled every country child as the tiger thrilled Blake. Lacking only the articulateness of the city critic—too often a glib and repetitive articulateness—the country child, before being broken to the earth, has greater artistic possibilities and common sense than the majority of proud adult metropolitans. City

dwellers regard a horse as a tame animal, a cow as a wild animal, and a sheep as still-life for landscape decoration, connected only by remote logic with wool and mutton. Now that the disappearance of the horse from the London streets is within measurable distance, a generation of Londoners may soon exist from whose minds all but human life and machines is completely blotted out.

The city man withdrawing himself to the country discovers only a pretty landscape or a site for a park. For him the country *re-creates pictures*. Left to his own thinking he would sooner dream about the oil or coal thousands of feet below than about the green wealth a few inches below. When he meets a labourer he tries to mask his metropolitan snobbery under patronising questions, all justified by the assumption that a head whose inside is identical with a comptometer is superior, by the judgment of God, to a head whose inside reflects the universe. On the other hand the city man sentimentalises the country; idealises it, is reminded of a line by Tennyson or Wordsworth, and shudders himself back to city sanity by recollecting winter. Throughout he feels a root conviction that these people are not his people, neither kith nor kin. Their fortunes are neither made nor lost in a day. They are not the helpless mirrors of a vogue that cannot last more than a generation. But the city man, nervously wrecked or in danger of wreck, who has to go to the country for a day or two—when he renders back a



little of the plunder which the city takes of the country year in and year out—adds his bit to converting the country-man to the same type of wealth-conscious business-man as himself. In the act of fleeing for the time being from the nervous pressure of the metropolis for his life's sake, he takes it with him, and corrupts all he meets. By his pretence of inside political knowledge, literary culture, and command of the great world, he actually spreads his metropolitan standards, the worst of them farthest, while in asylum from them because of their injuriousness to his body and soul.

The delusion that wisdom and accomplishment are of the city, and that the countryman is an ignorant rustic is due to the difference in publicity given to the two. That Lady Fair walked along Bond Street shopping, and took coffee, is news; that Hodge walked along the furrows and sowed oats is comic, in the sense that an old man falling on orange peel, or a child bringing his toy hammer when his father's hammer has broken, is comic. Children bathing in the fountains of Trafalgar Square may have their photographs in the evening papers. Children bathing in a quiet stretch of clean river are of no metropolitan importance. Comic verses of a public-schoolboy taking his sister to Lords may appear in *Punch*; sincere work by some village boy may be read in the village club without unusual stir, except that somebody may advise him to send it up to London.

At a time when the number of people engaged in costing, counting, clerking, and selling, has vastly increased while the number of people engaged in producing has vastly decreased, a more bitter indictment of London is hardly possible than merely to repeat that the newest and most advertised colleges are raised up to teach the art of salesmanship; and that there are actually men of pretended culture who would set up chairs of salesmanship—that degrades all it touches—in the older universities. Is the intensification of this wasteful chaos of greater worth in any respect than the job of deciding, in conjunction with the sky and the Air Ministry, when to plough, sow, mow, and gather? Is the power to load hay in that beautiful symmetry which causes it to remain high on the wagon over a rough, jolting road, less cultural than the power to work out the price of a thousand gross of screws at a shilling a gross? The despised farm-labourer can manage a horse, plough straight and to the right depth; he can sow, harrow, mow, and bind; tend and milk cattle, and do a hundred other, inside and outside, making and repairing, jobs, any of which the City type would regard as an accomplishment if it could do one. Often enough the countryman has a medical-herbal and nature-lore, a knowledge of birds, fishes, animals, and their habits and minds, of far greater spiritual content, if only he could believe in its worth, than very many city quackeries. In the north country the farm labourer, with stones

all shapes and sizes, dug from the earth as if stones grew in it, can build, on the principle that once a stone is picked up it must be put down only on the wall, separating walls and buildings that stand long without mortar. What is wrong with the countryman is not his lack of skill. It is that the metropolis has all the limelight. The press photographer does not walk with his camera around barns and hayricks. Gold, dazzle, notoriety, London has the lot, and the deluded but useful and cultivated man outside London allows himself to subscribe to the myth that all life and laughter, all art and spirit, are there, too. Nobody ever tells him that of the six million people of London, five million nine hundred thousand are dissatisfied with life and their jobs, and that the remaining hundred thousand are boys and others too young yet to have found out how monotonous is London's variety, how life rushes by them. Both in the country and in the metropolis the soul of man is sick, whether sick unto death remaining to be decided by human acts.

## THE DESTINY OF METROPOLIS

A CHARACTERISTIC of the English, on which they set high worth, is that they resort to legislation only when forced, and leave as much as possible, social, economic, and moral, to what is called the free play of individuals. The degree of freedom attained in England, however, has been rendered possible by causes other than the *love* of freedom. During the early period of mechanical invention and the application of scientific discovery to industry, England was, if not so nearly a monopolist of ideas as is often supposed, the leading nation. Besides the temperament of her people and her climate, the unsettled condition of other European countries was in England's favour. Nevertheless for their contribution to the banishment of the fear of natural shortage and famine from the world, by means of machinery, transport, colonisation, and other aids, the British must ever be entitled to mankind's gratitude.

The outstanding human factor in the freedom and achievements of the English has not been the democratic free play of individuals, *individual-*

*istically*, as commonly assumed. It has rather been those aristocratic qualities which impelled their individual possessors to combine for social purposes which would otherwise have had to be fulfilled by the State. The "liberty of the individual" in England relates in an astonishing degree to his rights of spontaneous combination, and of resistance to compulsory organisation. It is as if the impulse to voluntary fellowship expressed in mediæval times in the craft and merchant guilds flowed through the English mind for all time, to a greater extent than among other peoples. It was possible, in short, for the English to have freedom because they organised themselves.

Not very long ago, Mr. Harold Cox suggested that the fittest people to administer unemployment insurance were not the officials of the Minister of Labour, but the trade unions and associations of employers who contributed the funds, and who would be as humane as, and more responsible than, the State officials. Mr. Churchill, following the Webbs, as one cannot help calling them still, has also referred to the possibility of setting up an economic Parliament to relieve the citizens' Parliament of congestion by dealing with industry as a devolved function, responsible to the citizens' Parliament. From time to time in the discussions of the British Medical Association a social impulse is apparent towards the formation of a gild entirely responsible for the health of the whole people. There is no

need to prove in detail so evident a fact as Britain's dependence on the capacity and character of her people for voluntary, responsible, organisation within the State, for socially useful ends. What has become significant now is that under the disintegrating influence of the metropolitan state many impulses towards socially valuable grouping have been frustrated, leaving the individual to be mechanically organised, where necessary, by forces outside.

It may, of course, be well that each individual should be responsible before the law for his crimes and misdemeanours, rather than to his fellow-members of the frith-gild, or to his family to prevent feud. It may be well for men and women to become equal before the law rather than for the woman to be a sort of ward of the man. Nevertheless the human soul appears so formed that life can be enjoyed only where a fundamental impulse to social fellowship is expressed, and where there are other human bonds than the single political bond of subjection to one state. In the metropolis even the bonds of the family rapidly decay. Many young people, after education away from home, take up posts in London, and are totally exempt from family responsibilities, as well as deprived of the emotional tonic of family life. In London the relationship of brother and sister, once the mother's apron-strings are untied, often ceases to exist. One's brother becomes a distant acquaintance. Young women

are eager to shake off the family discipline, and to go their own way in lodgings or boarding-houses. An evening with friends in London may cost hours of travelling, a strain which the link generally proves unable to support. The weakening of the marriage bond under metropolitan conditions has been enough deplored.

Social life for cultural ends is more difficult in London than elsewhere, and because perpetual activity is incompatible with emotional stability and repose, fellowship is rare. To produce amateur theatre work the enthusiastic few young men and women have to spend a large portion of their leisure and income on journeying to and from the place of rehearsal, a waste of spirit which is often too great to be borne. In sports and games the same obstacles are in the way. Gradually, since the impulse to enjoy fellowship dies hard, the place of employment becomes the centre of all social life, for sports, theatricals, concerts, art-clubs, chess, dancing, and every cultural and recreative pursuit. The temptation thus given to the business-house is too great. In a civilisation already over-commercialised, culture itself becomes subordinate to economics. Games become devices for advertisement, as when posts allowing plenty of spare time are found for experts in some branch of sport, that their achievements, individually and in the business-house team, may advertise the "house." As the business-house becomes the single focus of social life, the shadows

of those who control advancement become the valuers of all aims and efforts. If the head of the firm dignifies one of the activities with his person, the ambitious juniors choose prominence in that activity as their intermediate goal on the way to advancement. It is by no means uncommon to hear a business-man openly advocate this form of social organisation as "good for the business." But fellowship is not satisfying under such conditions. It is not spontaneous. The attitude of social life for the business's sake could come about only in a civilisation which had forgotten the very purpose of work and had set business in the place of religion and culture. It is a spiritual degradation for cultural and recreative pursuits to be regarded as proper devices for consolidating the merchant-financier state.

The final metropolitan is a granular type possessing thousands of acquaintances but no friend, ceaselessly striving to attain self-sufficiency, but invariably ending unsatisfied. Lacking human values and attachments this type comes in the end to assess all worth in terms of money—"the only objective standard," as a famous novelist and critic remarked anent literature. The final metropolitan sees evidence of genius only in the light of noughts and sterling signs; and most of all in an infinite capacity for buying low and selling high on the Stock Exchange. The type is as indifferent to the organisation, labour, and luck, reflected in "natural" stock fluctuations, as the backer of race-



horses is indifferent to the breeder of useful cattle or even of the horses he backs. Throughout London the fever to gain money by "study of form," intuition, and other useful human faculties uselessly directed, rages daily. A stock exchange or racing tip can disorganise almost any London business house from top to bottom any morning, the Puritan in regard to the racehorses being usually quite complaisant in regard to the shares.

The plight of religion in the metropolis is as bad as that of social life. "Six days for activity," Emerson asked, "is one for meditation too many?" For the metropolitan, activity is a chronic necessity. He is so far unable to bear his own or any company without perpetual motion that, after the exhaustion of six days of work, on the seventh day he can do no other than test his motor-engine, pass his neighbours' cars on the white racers' roads, or knock a ball with a club or a racket, in a mind-absorbing tussle with an opponent. If he should invite his sweetheart to recline at cushioned ease in a skiff on the beautiful Thames, far from the city hum, fresh words of love would be as impossible for her to listen to as for him to speak. Instead of her being able to gaze in enraptured repose on the beauty around them, when she alights from the car or motor-cycle pillion at the waterside, her impedimenta include a portable gramophone, that all ears for Nature and birdsong the length and breadth of the Thames valley shall hear only the discord of a score of tritely

worded songs, with American accents and jazz-rhythms, played simultaneously !

For the type of human being which this "externalising" metropolitan life develops religion, it may please the atheists, is a superfluity. It seems part of the service of religion to provide a focus for feelings which cannot be expressed, for wonder, praise, and gratitude, for misery and sorrow, and to keep them out of mischief until they can be re-absorbed by the soul, or expressed in art. In the unceasing change and activity of metropolitan life the soul's reservoirs of feeling are never permitted to fill. Emotion is discharged rather faster than it is renewed, which is the cause of metropolitan neurasthenia. In social life people pretend to express emotions which they do not feel, as is evident in the constant utterance, with obviously counterfeited surprise, of such superficial expressions as "How delightful, my dear," "How thrilling," and "Really." This absence of reserve emotion is probably at the root of the decline of poetry, and of the spiritual poverty of people whose interest can be aroused only by murder, sudden death, disaster, scandal, and "smartness." Without the recovery of full souls, London will grow more and more arid.

There are left, of course, metropolitan folk whose wells of emotion have not yet run quite dry; and who resist the vacuum-making force of their environment. In such as these the hungry group-soul is not appeasable merely by barren herding at organised

sensations, at boat-races, aeroplane, dirt-track, and dog races, or even advertisement community singing. Such people, if they have tried, have found wanting the desperate pursuit of hours of madness and bliss at dance and night-club; or their instincts may have been healthy enough to keep them outside without their wondering if inside hides a remedy for the emotional sterility due to metropolitan individualism. They do not require the gramophone or the wireless except as an adjunct to their own conversational, musical, and craftsman abilities. They still retain depths of feeling to be stirred by the solider plays, and still see not mere sunrise, but the dawn in russet mantle clad step o'er the dew on yon high Eastern hill. But these know in their bones that, as long as the metropolis in its present state has a grip on them, they are threatened; that they have to fight for their spiritual integrity against overwhelming forces; and that their battle is finally a losing one.

While on every hand in the metropolis spirit, brains, and effort, run to waste, and lost souls, cut off from their fellows, flutter from their useless counting-house work and commercial servility to compensatory excitements called "Life," the countryman's life has developed only "group-consciousness." Individual consciousness has been stunted. Indeed, without the co-operative effort and social adaptability which characterise fairly large clusters of folk living in "propinquity," working, conversing, and

thinking together, the outgrowth of individual consciousness, the consciousness of a responsible self in relation to family, community, world, and universe, is hardly possible. The peasant tends to become as rooted in his field as a tree. If the whirl of the city did not reach him at all, behaviour, attitude, and thought, would continue unchanging from generation to generation. To the agricultural labourer working much in solitude, his emotions attaching themselves to any feeling thing about him, a horse may become as friendly as a man, a dog as sympathetic a confessor. An earthy cruelty is sometimes alleged to perpetuate itself in such men, but it is rather a non-human indifference to suffering, which is regarded as a decree of Nature, to be borne uncomplainingly because it cannot be helped. From the peasant's almost inherited fear of famine may spring also a miserliness that prevents his enjoying even so much as Nature, with coaxing and organisation, serves. The spirit of the peasant suffers from emotional and physical *economy* as severely as that of the metropolitan suffers from emotional, and in some cases physical, prodigality. The soul of the metropolitan is empty but loquacious, that of the peasant is full, but dumb.

Yet precisely as the countryman's miserliness is usually for his family's sake rather than for his own, so in his leisure and at festivals his soul mingles with those of his kin and kind with a warmth that the metropolitan cannot imagine, even with alcoholic

aid. In the country, also, no man is a stranger. Among his own people the forces that went to his making are known. He is not only a carter, a wheelwright, or a smith. He is a Carter, a Wheelwright, or a Smith. He is not just a functionary, he is also a man. His professional code as doctor, lawyer, or clergyman, is no more than the framework through which his character, his human strength and weakness, are manifest. He is even more than a man. He is the present expression, in form and nature, of a family, with a past and a future. Whether he behaves ill or well, cowardly or heroically, it was to be expected from one bearing his name. In the country, character still precedes ability or efficiency as the standard of judgment of a man by his peers. In the city, ability far precedes character, both as an aim and as a standard. Thousands worship the clever rogue, and "business is business." The countryman, in spite of all his slowness, his provincialism, his crudities, and his simplicity of philosophy is worthy a better fate than corruption by envy of the confidence and superiority of the metropolitan into becoming an imitation of him, or into abandoning his farming to keep an unproductive London ledger, or to serve behind a London shop-counter.

It was surely the destiny of cities not simply to suck milk and food from the country until they exhausted it, but to bring to the countryman the amenities of civilisation and culture as return for his

labour and service; and thus to render both individual and group consciousness possible everywhere. It is undeniable that the efforts made to deliver to the country the opportunities of mind-growth made possible by city organisation have been at best half-hearted. They have been left to the conscience of individuals of little power; and by the community as a whole they have been almost entirely neglected. Never, as a result, was a land so ill-balanced between the countryside and the city as England. In spite of the disastrousness having been shown long ago, the desertion of the villages continues. As Sir Horace Plunkett recently wrote in *The Times*, government after government expresses "deep concern" for agriculture; but none begins to carry out a policy. Always a little tinkering is done, a handful of people are installed on land in some places while two handfuls have to leave it in others. For every effort to entice man into agriculture, there is vastly greater effort to attract wealth—which attracts men—to London. Soil is not less fertile, effort on it is not less repaid, in terms of produce, than when the keeping of cattle and the growing of corn prospered. Yet the lack of balance between countryside and city grows worse year by year.

There is no sign of enlightenment in London on this question of centripetal metropolitan force, which eats up forests without replanting them, taps every source of power without responsibility for replacement, and renders the countryside, on which its

belly finally marches, a desert. It is a terrible fact of so-called organised human society that agriculture the world over is a risky industry; and that no foresight can tell any farmer whether an "excessive" crop in some other country will not bankrupt him next harvest. In a city-ridden world in which the Malthusian "Law of Population" is preached as a gospel, nothing could be more ironical than the frequent destruction of crops, and the dropping of fertile land out of cultivation, to prevent the financial ruin of the cultivators. If ever the producers realise that they could starve cities out and live in prosperity themselves—as they easily could—the downfall of Metropolis is inevitable, since its wealth is derived not from services, but from the obedience of the rest of the world to unreal conventions. All things done in the past are but makeshifts. Village institutes, travelling shows, libraries, hardly take root in their village surroundings, and are largely the mere overflow of the tide of metropolitanisation. Broadcasting is dominated by the stimulus-demanding, jazz mind. The new factories just outside the London ring, built there to incur only provincial wages costs, are in the long run metropolitan expansion, and a sub-urbanisation almost as bad as urbanisation. The transfer of city types to the land creates exiles. In those villages in the Home Counties where disconsolate craftsmen have gone to live, the metropolitan problem is not solved. These village craftsmen have little or no

contact with the folk, who can neither afford their products nor understand their emotional complexities. The tendency is accordingly for such groups of craftsmen to become a separate middle-class of eccentrics and artists whose mind-focus is in London, to which they are ceaselessly "running up," for markets, exhibitions, and the sort of excitement they crave for. It differs only in this from self-immurement in religious communities, and is tantamount to abandoning mankind to its fate. In a publicity-ridden world it lacks even the power of example. Only great determination can keep these craftsmen away from the metropolis, whose people alone can buy their work, and in consequence they also become a kind of sub-suburbanites. Social esteem, all the standards by which the worth of their achievements is measured, are formed and applied in the metropolis. Finally, it would be no use whatever forbidding country youth to come to London, in the style of Mussolini, since they have as much right to come, if a livelihood is to be gained there, as those already there to remain.

In a country not averse to organisation for the purpose of extricating itself from a mess—England bore conscription during the war—something could, of course, be done for the country-side by guaranteed prices and organised marketing of agricultural produce. With government markets a price could be offered for any quantity of scheduled produce year by year. It would even be possible to tax city



ground rents for the capitalisation of farming. But all these, as long as the streets of London are relatively paved with gold, are not enough. As long as fortunes are to be made in London, as London journalists, accountants, office-workers, Civil-Servants, salesmen, doctors, lawyers, and every class of social servant, have better financial prospects, access to the recreations of central interest, and the feeling of being at the hub of the universe, every reform designed to secure a balanced economy and culture must fail.

There are in England approaching two millions of men and women ready to work if work were provided. Among them are sufficient varieties of skill and experience to run, with direction, a community. They have to be fed, clothed, and housed, since there is no provision for killing surplus workers off to feed the others, whether they work or not. There is also, which is at bottom a worse evil, a vast amount of enchained ability, cultural, artistic, and directive, among the young, educated men and women who, after equipping themselves to serve civilisation, are miserable because a contracting economy offers them so few opportunities. It is probable that this, more than anything else, is the origin of the sins of youth against which the old men of England stupidly declaim. The old men have made a mess of England; and they can neither clean it up nor lead others to do so; and they merely nag the youngsters for not being happy in the mess, for

not achieving great things amidst the political, economic, and cultural chaos which is the community's penalty for the old men's past individual successes.

But there would be no sense, unless the old men are beyond reason, in antagonising them. No division is so foolish as one between old and young. A sensible young man is a preferable colleague to an obtuse old one, while an enlightened old one is a better counsellor than a foolhardy young one. What matters is that England has available all the human and material means for the re-creation of a community in a manner which would far surpass the "Russian Five-Year Plan." No country has greater genius for such a policy once it bent its mind to the necessity, as the war, in spite of the unworthiness of destruction as an incentive, demonstrated.

Left to itself the farther future of London is unenviable. With every young Englishman who, feeling that the reward of productive and creative effort is not worth while, adds his brains to finance, accountancy, law, the Civil Service, and the whole superstructure that expands on inefficiency, disorganisation and dispute, the future of London will become blacker. Its position cannot but become dangerous where brains merely cudgel themselves to obtain the larger share of the product while leaving production to dolts and drudges. It is for English genius to set a poetic world example by the

internal re-organisation of a nation. It would be possible to re-build her cities and to build new ones, designed by artists, and spread over the country so as to be accessible to every countryman, as London is accessible to the home counties. Exiles such as Mr. Gordon Craig might be willing to live in England if, as well as designing a theatre and scenery, they were to co-operate in the planning of a city. Thirty or forty smaller, beautiful cities, modern and electrically run, would be well within possibility, and need disfigure the country less than the present cities or the white roads that bind them to London. There are no obstacles which could not be overcome. Instead of one centre of finance, opinion, publicity, and culture, there could be thirty. It could be made as worthy to sing, produce an opera or a play, hang a picture, or have an office, in any of these cities, which could be in close touch with farming and folk. The possibilities of modern telephones, transport, and electrical power, are such that in a country which would re-design itself in accordance with its enhanced capacities both individual- and group-consciousness could be realised by every person.

Parliament and the municipal councils are so hindered by the accumulation of rules of procedure over generations, and by the obtuseness of those whose principle of conduct is that nothing should be changed as long as they are "all right," that a ten year plan is not appropriate to be drawn up by such bodies. It requires a body of men, architects, artists,

literary-men, engineers, and others to accept voluntary responsibility for formulating a detailed policy, and for calling on Parliament to fulfil it. Those particularly irresponsible journalists, Mr. H. G. Wells and Mr. G. B. Shaw, for example, could here find a task worthy of their undoubtedly first-class brains and wide horizons of spirit.

Such a plan could not be the work of one mind. But to one mind it appears certain that England has either to effect such a plan, or suffer eclipse, if not also the spread of the Bolshevist experiment. Only by a grand-scale balancing of her internal economy, in terms of men, women, children, and capacity to give all of them a full cultural life, and not of obsolete bases of rights, can England give an example of entering into world function that will avoid future war, international or civil. The lead has to come from London, where ability is at present concentrated.

Societies for the rescue of country-landscapes from threatened defilement, a government department that cares for historical landmarks while other government departments destroy them, funds for the preservation of what is left of the beauty of Oxford—not a word about restoring beauty to South Lancashire—hundreds of appeals for the preservation of one thing and another, hospital students begging in theatre-vestibules and on the streets, decaying basic industries being patched up for a year or two, amending Acts of Parliament crowding on top of

one another—these are but random instances of the chaos of Britain from which the old policy of consideration after deadlock cannot retrieve her. Unless a body of mentally influential citizens, with far-seeing love of their folk as a whole, will constitute themselves the advisers of Parliament, and call directly upon the folk to insist on the application of their advice, there seems no prospect of Britain's attainment in the future world of the prestige it is her duty to attain. Britain's past, inventive and colonising, poetic and scientific, can neither damn nor save her. Her future depends on her future contribution. At present her Parliament is discredited, her people discouraged and in spiritual and economic disorder. The metropolis alone prospers, and to the present has given nothing to the smaller towns and countryside but paper admonition and suggestions which do not postpone their troubles to the day after next.

Is it more than can be expected of the metropolitan that he should realise his dependence on the earth? That he lives continually by the co-operative labour of mankind? That his clothes were once wool on sheeps' bodies? That his boots were once hide on cattle? That his newspaper was *not* long ago a growing tree? That his tea or coffee, bacon and eggs, chickens and caviare, represent the partly co-ordinated services of men and women the world over? So that a porter may carry a box of peaches from warehouse to lorry in Covent Garden Market,

fruit-farmers, ships and sailors, trains and the petrol engine, the great sun itself, had to be created and trained to work together. For the silk-robed lady who steps from her car to drink tea or coffee in the café there can be no one in the world black, white, or yellow, unworthy to be acknowledged as her relation, and for whom she has not some responsibility. The state of affairs in which metropolitan cities flourish and flow with milk, honey and wine, while countrysides ruin their cultivators, has to be ended; preferably, for culture's sake by an awakening of responsibility among metropolitans. Thus only could **Metropolis** gain a destiny and escape a fate.

# PURPOSE

## A Quarterly Magazine

Sixpence net; Postage 1d.; Yearly 2s.

Vol. I. Indexed. Cloth bound. 4s. 6d. net

### REPRESENTATIVE CONTENTS OF VOL. I

#### No. 1 JANUARY-MARCH

Will and Purpose

Alan Porter

The Purpose of Civilisation

M.B. Oxon.

The Purpose of England

Philippe Mairet

Has Nature a Purpose?

A. Rabagliati, M.A., M.D.

#### No. 2 APRIL-JUNE

Purpose—or Plan

V. A. Demant, B.Litt., B.Sc.

The Task of our Time

Winifrid E. Fish

Science, Life, and Religion

M.B. Oxon.

Freud *versus* Adler

D. Mitrović

#### No. 3 JULY-SEPTEMBER

The Future

M.B. Oxon.

The Significance of Jung

"Scribe"

Marx's Succession in Economics and Psychology

W. T. Symons

#### No. 4 OCTOBER-DECEMBER

Anglo-American Understanding

Maurice B. Reckitt

"As you Like It!"

F. Le Gros Clark

Marxism: A Doctrine and a Dynamic

Philippe Mairet

LONDON: THE C. W. DANIEL COMPANY

46 Bernard Street, W.C.1

# POLITICS

## A Discussion of Realities

Initiated by  
J. V. DELAHAYE

In Company with  
HILDERIC COUSENS      V. A. DEMANT  
PHILIPPE MAIRET      ALBERT NEWSOME  
ALAN PORTER      MAURICE B. RECKITT  
W. T. SYMONS

Paper covers 3s. 6d. net;      Cloth bound, 5s. net

The writers who have collaborated in this book are concerned not only to observe the impotence and cynicism of politicians and the political apathy of citizens, but to enquire into the causes, both personal and collective, and to suggest changes in the sphere of political and economic control, and in political and social institutions, with the object of redeeming the whole sphere of politics from indifference, and the citizen from that sense of powerlessness and despair of any real influence which are undermining the belief in democracy.

LONDON: THE C. W. DANIEL COMPANY  
Forty-six Bernard Street, W. C. 1