CHAPTER VIII

General Social Changes

The historic props of class rule, according to Professor Edward A. Ross, in his recent volume, "Social Control," have been force, superstition, fraud, pomp, and prescription. Our present seigniorial class makes use, with fine discrimination as time and occasion require, of each of these means of support, though unquestionably it sets the greatest value upon the last named. Force is employed less openly, less obviously; decreasingly by the direct imposition of the magnates, increasingly through their ingenious manipulation of the powers of the State. The superstition latent in most minds proves now, as ever, a means of ready recourse; but though supernatural sanction to the acts and authority of the magnates is cunningly deduced and volubly preached from a thousand pulpits, the prop fails somewhat as a constant and sure reliance. Even testimony so authoritative as that of President Baer to the effect that the Great First Cause had intrusted to himself and his co-magnates the control of the business interests of the country, has been flouted in a number of places. The notion of supernatural sanctions, as most people know, and as Professor Goldwin Smith has repeatedly taken pains to point out,

is losing its hold upon the reason of mankind; and though it still has, and will ever have, a certain potency, its best days are passed.

As for fraud, both of class against class, and individual against individual, attempts to practise it no doubt increase; but the tooth-and-claw struggle of the last generation has developed and sharpened the wits of the combatants, so that it tends to become a less profitable game. He would be a sharper indeed, according to the proverb, who among the Turks of the Negropont, the Jews of Salonika, or the Greeks of Athens could cheat his fellow: each knows by heart all the tricks and devices of which the others are capable. Matters are not yet at such a stage in free America: great frauds, both of the group and of the individual, are still practised. But the almost infinite possibilities of other days have been sadly restricted by the operation of those natural laws which tend to fit beings to their environment. Pomp, too, is less a factor of control than in past times. It has a powerful grip on the imaginations of the poor, as the columns of our "yellow" journals, which devote so large a space to the ceremonies of the great, amply attest; but though it charms the more, it deceives the less. It interests, it delights; but it does not overawe or subdue.

I

It is by prescription — by a constant appeal to the sanctity of custom, a constant preaching of the validity of vested rights, and of the beauty, order, inevi-

tability, and righteousness of things as they are — that the magnate class wins to its support the suffrages of the people. Other influences aid, but this one is dominant. As Professor Ross pertinently writes: —

"Those who have the sunny rooms in the social edifice have . . . a powerful ally in the suggestion of Things-as-they-are. With the aid of a little narcotizing teaching and preaching, the denizens of the cellar may be brought to find their lot proper and right, to look upon escape as an outrage upon the rights of other classes, and to spurn with moral indignation the agitator who would stir them to protest. Great is the magic of precedent, and like the rebellious Helots, who cowered at the sight of their masters' whips, those who are used to dragging the social chariot will meekly open their calloused mouths whenever the bit is offered them."

The magnates, as has been shown, brook small interference with prevailing customs. Their near dependents, retainers, and "poor relations" think as they think, and feel as they feel; and the great majority of the professional moulders of opinion, drawing their inspiration from above, preach and teach as the magnates would have them. The general social passivity following the pressure of all these influences upon the public mind is as certain and inescapable as a mathematical conclusion.

II

A powerful auxiliary to the preaching of the sanctity of custom is the extolling of individual "success."

At the very time when socio-industrial processes are settling to a fixed routine and socio-industrial forms to a fixed status, — when day by day there is found less room at the top and more room at the bottom, — the chorus of exhortation to the men of the land to bestir themselves reaches its highest pitch. Meddle not with custom and the law, is the injunction; leave those to abler and wiser heads — meaning, of course, the present formulators and manipulators thereof. Meddle not with things as they are, but while your companions sleep, "toil upward in the night," and carve out a career for yourself among the stars. Put no faith in general social changes, except such as result from the combined effect of each unit concerning himself solely with his own material salvation. There is no social betterment without precedent individual betterment, it is urged. "You cannot make a bad man good by legislation," is the admonitory adage, and "You cannot make a poor man rich by legislation" is its twin. If certain persons hold to the theory that corrective laws have a definite reaction upon character, and that in every civilization worthy the name there are social institutions, founded in law, which are immeasurably in advance of the general average of sanity, sobriety, and honesty of the citizenship, such persons are but dreamers, and are not to be taken too seriously. So, too, with the dictum regarding the statutory enhancement of riches. There are those who insinuate that it is heard most often from the lips of the industrial magnates, the majority of whom are living examples of the fact that riches may be garnered by means of

tariffs and other privilege-giving laws; and from the *laissez-faire* tariff reformers, whose reiterated argument against protective duties is that they are law-given privileges by which the few gain wealth at the expense of the many. But persons who question this profound adage are unsophisticated. They fail to discriminate properly. The adage is one which, like a simile or metaphor, should not be stretched too far. It has its true and legitimate bearing only when it is applied to the very poor.

Personal endeavor toward the goal of "success" is the urgent exhortation. Scarcely one of the magnates who have recently entered literature, or who, avoiding that province, have on occasion unbosomed themselves to the interviewer, but takes pains to declare how numerous and how mighty are the possibilities in the path of the energetic. All that is needed, according to most of the seigniorial recipes, are brains and health; honesty, it is true, is often included as an ingredient in the compound, but its mention is possibly ironical, and need not concern us. Brains and health are thus the two things needful; and though pursuing Satan may gather in, with his drag-net, a vast army of the hindmost, the fortunate possessors of these two boons will inevitably forge to the front in the headlong race.

It is by no accident that this particular counsel from the magnates is heard now more frequently than any other. It is one that of course has been given in all times; but it has never been given with such frequency and unction as now. Consciously or subconsciously, it is an expression of class feeling

—a revelation of the community of interests and purposes of a particular division of our society. In whatever cases its utterance is prompted by a general social motive, that motive is the defence of class control. It is counsel that makes for the acquiescence of the lower orders and the increased security of the upper. "The heaving and straining of the wretches pent up in the hold of the slaver is less," writes Professor Ross again, "if now and then a few of the most redoubtable are let up on deck. Likewise the admitting of a few brave, talented, or successful commoners into the charmed circle above has a wonderful effect in calming the rage and envy of the exploited, and thereby prolonging the life of the parasitic system." This counsel of endeavor, promulgated by the few who have striven and "succeeded," is thus a social sedative of great efficacy.

The professional moulders of opinion take their cue from these exhortations of the magnates, improve, elaborate, and redistribute them. The professors, the editors, and the orators lead, and the hortatory pronouncements of the pulpit follow closely. The Carpenter of Nazareth, it is true, held other views of "success"; but his precepts would seem to have gone out of fashion in the fanes and tabernacles ostensibly devoted to his worship. With all ranks and conditions Success becomes the great god; and as though there were not already priests and votaries enough for his proper worship, a special class of publications has recently arisen, which serve as his vowed and consecrated ministers. These teach to the devout but unsophisticated followers of the great god the par-

ticular means best adapted to win his grace; how his frown may be averted; or, if his anger be kindled, by what penances and other rites he is to be propitiated. They chant the praises and recite the life-incidents of those who have been most conspicuously blessed, and to all the rest of mankind they shout, "Follow our counsel, and some day you shall be even like unto these." It is a glittering lure, and it is eagerly pursued. Sometimes, indeed, not without doubts and misgivings; for a recognition that "all the gates are thronged with suitors," that "all the markets overflow," and that the settling and hardening of socio-industrial processes has already begun, becomes more general, and leads many to essay the trial of fortune's pathway only as a desperate and forlorn adventure. But these are the exceptions; the majority are still to be caught by limed twigs. The gods denied mankind many gifts, and attached hard conditions to most of those which they granted. But for all their withholding of certain gifts and their tainting of others, they sought to compensate by giving an extra allowance of credulity.

III

Not only by the showering of precepts, by the encouragement of individual effort, and by the dangling of more or less illusory prizes before the wistful multitude does the ruling class maintain its hold. It invites, to some extent, a participation in the harvest. The growth of the shareholding class, of which mention has already been made, is by no means wholly

fortuitous. New companies of small initial capital, and with somewhat dubious chances in the great struggle, may be glad enough to market their shares wheresoever they can; but something of seigniorial grace and condescension, though not entirely unmixed with calculating foresight, is apparent in the opening of opportunities for small investment in the larger and more stable corporations. Mr. John B. C. Kershaw, in the *Fortnightly Review* for May, 1900, gives an interesting account of this fostering of share-investment in England. The industrial magnates, he says, saw that the best policy for preventing the growth of a public sentiment favoring the encroachments of labor would be to increase the number of *bourgeoisie* interested in industrial affairs. Accordingly they encouraged popular share-buying, with the result that "a large and increasing proportion of the general public is now financially involved in all industrial struggles, and our manufacturers feel assured that the danger lest the workers should be backed by a solid and enthusiastic public opinion in their demands for shorter hours or increased pay no longer exists."

As in England, so also here. The movement toward corporate ownership is probably more pronounced in the United States than in the older country, and it has been equally encouraged from above. Joint-stock concerns increased in England from 9344 in 1885 to 25,267 in 1898. In Massachusetts, the State in which the preparation of statistics most nearly approaches the methods of science, corporations are reported to have increased during the years

1885–95 by more than 77 per cent. As for shareholders, the nine principal manufacturing industries of Massachusetts for the same period show percentages of increase ranging from 13.87 in tapestry to 637.74 in leather, saddles, and harness. The entire country has shown a marked growth in the number of this class, and it would seem that no one is too poor to hold a share in some corporation. Indeed, to read the arguments of the legal retainers of the magnates in the Income Tax case, and in the various trust cases that from time to time arise, one would think that the main body of the shareholders of the nation was composed of workingmen, widows, and orphans. In no time since the prophet Ezekiel's day have there been uttered words of such tender consideration for the poor and needy, the widow and the orphan, and of such bitter denunciation for their would-be despoilers as were tearfully put forth in opposing the income tax.

A great number of shareholders in a particular company would seem, on first thought, to be something of a nuisance. Unquestionably they would represent a wide range of conflicting views and antagonistic purposes, all bearing upon the one problem of the proper operation of the company's property; and would thus give salient instances of that unwisdom which is too often found in a multitude of counsellors. At least this is the seigniorial argument against national collectivism — an argument which one might naturally suppose to be quite as applicable to the particular collectivism of the stock company. But it does not so apply; the solid advantages of diffused

shareholding in assuring general public sanction to the acts of the magnates outweigh the confusion and danger which are alleged to lie in public ownership.

The social and political effect of this general participation in the ownership of industries may be readily observed by all but the blind. "If the truth were known," wrote that keen-witted financier, Mr. Russell Sage, in a magazine article published last May, "concentration of wealth is popular with the masses." Partners in the great enterprises, the multitude of petty shareholders are led more and more to consider economic questions from the employers' standpoint. In the controversies between labor and capital ten years ago the average citizen was but an onlooker, sometimes a weak partisan of capital, but very often a neutral, with a strong latent sympathy for the "under dog." To-day, thanks to his holding of a single share in the steel corporation or of two or three shares in some street railway company, he is an employer, one of the men "to whom God, in His infinite wisdom, has given the control of the property interests of the country." He sees, thinks, and feels as a member, however humble, of the employing class; and what the magnates think and do is to him all the law and the prophets. "Bound by gold chains about the feet" of his feudatory lords, he is at the same time a sharer in their responsibilities and a faithful retainer in their service.

IV

It would be idle to declare that all the tendencies make toward acquiescence. Just as in the atmos-

phere a prevailing drift of the wind is accompanied by cross currents, flurries, and rotatory motions, so the dominant tendency discoverable in social industry is qualified by many complex processes. Of the cross currents here to be briefly noted, some are but trifling, while others undoubtedly reveal a certain force and constancy. A small part of the public is ever in a state of ferment over imputed social evils, and at rare times this ferment becomes general. Recurring labor troubles indicate that the spirit of resistance, if it really be dying, dies hard. Strikes of the magnitude of those at Homestead and in the Tennessee mines in 1892, at Chicago and other railroad centres in 1894, the several anthracite coal strikes of 1897, 1900, and 1902, and the steel strike of 1901 prove that organized labor has not wholly succumbed to the encompassing forces about it. The remarkable growth in numbers, these last two years, of the unions composing the American Federation of Labor, is confirmatory testimony. Radical political movements, furthermore, have not been wanting. The Socialists have increased their voting strength in the nation from some 2000 ballots in 1888 to upward of 130,000 in 1900. The Farmers' Alliance made tremendous headway in the election of 1890, and its political successor, the People's party, secured by fusion more than 1,000,000 votes in 1892 and nearly 2,000,000 in 1894. "Labor" mayors and even Socialist mayors have been elected in several cities, and the polling of 106,721 votes for Samuel M. Jones for Governor of Ohio in 1899 was a truly remarkable showing of the residual independence of the citizen-

ship. There are also general social movements to chronicle. Reform societies and clubs are occasionally heard of; arbitration movements have met with some favor; there has been a considerable growth in the number of university and college settlements; and anti-trust conferences and things of that sort have frequently met, talked, and dispersed. Indeed, all of us at times grumble and find fault with general conditions. Even Mr. Russell Sage, in the face of his exultant panegyric on the beneficence of combination, has very recently given to the press a statement denouncing the further consolidation of industry, and predicting, in case his words are not heeded, "widespread revolt of the people and subsequent financial ruin unequalled in the history of the world." Though only a few of us are irreconcilable at all times, all of us are disaffected sometimes — especially when our particular interests are pinched. We talk threateningly of instituting referendums to curb excessive power, of levying income taxes, or of compelling the Government to acquire the railroads and the telegraphs. We subscribe to newspapers and other publications which criticise the acts of the great corporations, and we hail as a new Gracchus the ardent reformer who occasionally comes forth for a season to do battle for the popular cause.

V

It must be confessed, however, that this revolt is, for the most part, sentimental; it is a mental attitude only occasionally transmutable into terms of action.

It is, moreover, sporadic and flickering; it dies out, after a time, and we revert to our usual moods, concerning ourselves with our particular interests, and letting the rest of the world wag as it will. The specific social reaction of the last few years has been especially marked. It has shown itself in the weakening or disruption of radical political movements, in the more hesitant attitude of the trade-unionists, in the decline of factory legislation, — in fact, of all legislation tending to the protection of the weaker and the regulation of the stronger, — and in a general feeling of the futility of social effort. The Anti-imperialists will have it that this admitted reaction is due to the South African and Philippine wars, to a lust of empire and a contempt for the rights of weaker peoples. It is a pretty theory, but unfortunately it has small basis in chronology. For the reaction had already become apparent before either war was waged. The date of its beginning may be variously guessed at; but it is probable that the time assigned to it in Chapter V — somewhere within the two years 1896–97 — is not far wrong. Before that time a very large part of the public could occasionally be interested in social measures and movements, and in social literature. Thousands of even the most hardened philistines read Mr. George's "Progress and Poverty," Mr. Bellamy's "Looking Backward," and Mr. Kidd's "Social Evolution." And as for that minor section of the public, the social reformers, there was then to be found among them a radicalism of belief, a definiteness of aim, an ardency and determination of spirit that are sadly wanting

now. Doubtless to every one of these, as he ruefully compares the two periods, there recurs the sentiment of the Wordsworthian recollection, —

> "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven."

While in the bosom of every devotee of Things-as-they-are there rises the sentiment of thankfulness that the mass of the people have learned the wisdom of letting well enough alone.

Political radicalism reached its culminating point in the election of 1896. Despite certain foolish and mischievous notions embodied in the two radical platforms of that year, the combined movement was yet a consistent and unified attack upon class rule. The elections of the next two years revealed a waning of Populist and Democratic strength, and in 1900 a fine sense of caution prompted the Fusionists to subordinate the industrial demands of their platforms to the issue of Imperialism. The Socialists, it is true, usually increase their vote; but the admitted fact of a great growth of Socialist conviction throughout the land makes these slight increases at the polls appear but trivial, and only further confirms the view that such radicalism is sentimental rather than potential. Anti-trust conferences are not without an element of humor; at least, they are the cause of much humor in outsiders; and the widely heralded arbitration court of the National Civic Federation breaks down on the very occasion when most is expected of it — that of the anthracite coal strike. Organized labor, despite its greater numerical strength, is far less ag-

gressive than of old; and except in isolated instances, it observes a caution which would have further distinguished Fabius. As for the growth of college settlements, the fact is only an added proof of reaction. They do a great good, unquestionably; but their basis is philanthropy and not social adjustment.

As a people, we have heard enough, for the time, about social problems, and prefer to interest ourselves in other matters. Professor Walter A. Wyckoff, who has recently changed the scene of his optimistic observances from America to England, has an article in the September *Scribner's* on the English social situation. "The condition-of-the-people problem," he writes, "lacks vitality for the moment because, as one shrewd observer remarked, 'the public has grown tired of the poor.'" We are feeling the same weariness here. Our benevolence somewhat increases, and we are willing to give, and more than willing that the magnates shall give freely; but we want to be troubled no more with remedial schemes. Rather, we are disposed to trust to seigniorial wisdom and virtue to set things right. Some of us will perhaps decline to go so far in our trust as a certain prominent Massachusetts lady who proposed to abolish working-class suffrage. "I think," said this lady in an address to a club of working girls, "many of the troubles between employer and men might be swept away if the men could not vote. If he felt that they did not stand on just the same footing as himself, that they had not quite so many privileges as he, the employer might have a chivalric feeling toward them." Some of us may hesitate at this project, but

withal we are willing to trust largely to seigniorial guidance.

Instead of the personal fidelity that characterized the older Feudalism, we are rapidly developing a class fidelity. History may repeat itself, as the adage runs; but not by identical forms and events. It is not likely that personal fidelity, as once known, can ever be restored: the long period of dislodgment from the land, the diffusion of learning, the exercise of the franchise, and the training in individual effort have left a seemingly unbridgeable chasm between the past and the present forms. But though personal fidelity, in the old sense, is improbable, group fidelity, founded upon the conscious dependence of a class, is already observable, and it grows apace. Out of the sense of class dependence arises the extreme deference which we yield, the rapt homage which we pay — not as individuals, but as units of a class — to the men of wealth. We do not know them personally, and we have no sense of personal attachment. But in most things we grant them priority. We send them or their legates to the Senate to make our laws; we permit them to name our administrators and our judiciary; we listen with eager attention to their utterances, and we abide by their judgment. When the venerable Mr. Hewitt, brought forth like the holy man Onias, in the Judean civil war between Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, to denounce the opposing faction, utters his anathema against the minions of Mr. Mitchell, we listen in awe and are convinced. A three-line interview with the chief of the magnates is read with an eagerness wholly wanting in our peru-

sal of an official pronunciamento by the most strenuous of Presidents. Our racial sense of humor, it must be confessed, saves us from the more slavish forms of deference; we jest about solemn themes and take in vain the names of great beings. Even the name of the great magnate is more or less humorously played upon; and our latest national pastime of "trust-busting" reveals a like levity, though an innocent one. It shows, moreover, how far we have reacted from our Puritan forefathers. For it is pursued not on account of the pain it gives the trusts, but for the harmless pleasure it gives both participants and spectators. But our subserviency, though less formal than that of old, is withal more real and fundamental.

VI

Current passivity has, however, a reverse side. To many persons a recognition of the changing conditions brings demoralization or despair. All are not won by the lure of "success." To an increasing number the dangling prize in the distance is but a mirage, and oppressed by a sense of the bankruptcy of life they seek an oblivious relief. There is a drift toward the twin dissipations of drink and gambling, and there is an increase of suicide. The greater drink consumption is a matter of common observation, and it is amply attested by statistics. Mr. J. Holt Schooling's figures in a recent issue of the *Fortnightly Review* show an increased consumption in the United States of 20 per cent for the years 1896–1900, as against the years 1886–90. The

percentage of increase is slightly less than that of those industrially exploited nations, Germany and France, but considerably more than that of Great Britain and Ireland. The annual figures published in the *World Almanac* for 1902 give more pertinent lessons. The unsettled and troublous year, 1893, witnessed an enormous increase in drink consumption; but the succeeding hard times of 1894 and 1895, when drink-money was increasingly hard to obtain, induced a greater sobriety. With 1896 drinking became more general, or at least more energetic; and except for a slight falling off in 1899, the consumption of liquors and wines has risen steadily, reaching the enormous total of 1,349,176,033 gallons in 1900. Much of this gain is confined to beer, the cheapest of alcoholic beverages; but there has also been a phenomenal increase in the consumption of spirits. From 71,051,877 gallons consumed in 1896 there has been a steady annual rise to the total of 97,248,382 gallons in 1900, a gain of 36.8 per cent.

The recent increase of petty gambling is still more noticeable. Playing for high stakes, a custom common enough in the late years of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth, has long been given over or transferred to the domain of "business." But what is colloquially known as "tinhorn" gambling has advanced, these last five years, by leaps and bounds. Doubtless the high precedent of our national Monte Carlos, the stock exchanges, is ample cause for much of it; but other causes are also in operation. With those persons that hearken to, but heed not, the seigniorial exhortation to bestir

themselves and conquer "success," petty gambling is an expression of unbelief. They know that the prizes advertised in the great industrial game are not to be won; they see nothing ahead but a dull routine of poorly remunerated labor, and they turn to gambling partly for recreation and partly for profit. With those, on the other hand, who not only hearken but heed, gambling is merely the application of their ambitious plans to the branch of industry which promises, however vainly, the most immediate returns.

Faro, keno, and roulette may have suffered some decline in favor. If so, statutes and the police, instead of a growing aversion to gambling, must be held responsible. It is one of those conventional puzzles which none can explain, that it is possible in our cities to restrict table and wheel gambling, but seemingly impossible to restrict certain other forms. Poker, for instance, maintains its hold, unawed by statute and unhampered by authority; while policy and race-betting, the special refuges of the desperately poor and the desperately fatuous, win new and lasting converts day by day. Indeed, the growth of race-betting is one of the striking phenomena of our time. It has become a habit, a disease; and its confirmed victims are held in as slavish a thraldom as are the victims of opium and hasheesh. One need not penetrate to a pool-room or journey to a race-track to discover evidences of its general diffusion. He may hear of it on every side, and he may find definitive proof in the daily journals. In nearly all of these the space given to the reports of races, the lists of betting odds and accounts of great winnings, is gen-

erous; and in some three or four of the metropolitan dailies the subject rises to the rank of a specialty. The flaunting advertisements of the "tipsters" in one of these newspapers rival in extent of space used and opulence of bargains offered, the announcements of the dry-goods merchants. The glittering lures dangled before the multitude by the seigniors seem trivial by comparison. Uncertain, and at best remote, they prove no match for the near-at-hand prizes to be won in gambling; and as a consequence tens of thousands pin their hope of "success" in this world to a series of fortunate winnings.

The meaning of the increase of suicide is clouded by a number of factors, and it is impossible to ascribe the tendency to one cause alone. Were we to accept the explanation of the pulpit, we should see in it the awful consequences of the decline of faith. Pathologists, however, while not denying this influence, enumerate many others. Racial and temperamental factors, drink and vice, are all concerned in the matter, and even climates and seasons are influential. But whatever the effect of these may be, the intensifying struggle for life these last few years, and what appears to many minds a darkening outlook for the future, must be acknowledged as powerful agents in increasing the rate of self-destruction. The rate is highest in the great industrial centres, where the struggle is fiercest, where the richest stakes are won and lost, where luxury is most flaunting and poverty most galling; and it is least where the struggle is in some measure relaxed. The recent census shows for the decade an increased rate per 100,000 of popula-

tion from 8.8 to 9.9 in the States where registration of deaths is required, from 11 to 12.7 in registration cities, and from 10.3 to 11.8 for the entire registration record. There are a few anomalies in the figures which are difficult of explanation; the workaday cities of Fall River and Allegheny have low rates of suicide, the residence city of Los Angeles a high rate, while San Francisco reveals the abnormal rate of 49 per 100,000. With all allowances, however, the rule holds good: the more distinctly industrial and commercial cities have remarkably high rates, the less distinctly industrial and commercial cities remarkably low rates. In the first group are Chicago, with a rate of 21.8; Milwaukee, 21; St. Louis, 19.1; Boston, 14.4; Cincinnati, 13.5; New York, 13.1; Philadelphia, 12.2; Baltimore, 12; Pittsburg, 9.3. In the second group may be instanced Atlanta, with a rate of 6.6; Denver, 6; Albany, 3.2; Hartford, 1.3; Richmond, 1.2. These suicides are the unfit, say the complacent philosophers of the day, and are quite as well off dead as alive; but they prove at least that some slight qualification is needed to Professor Sumner's optimistic generalization that "an air of contentment and enthusiastic cheerfulness . . . characterizes our society." The winners in the race are doubtless enthusiastically cheerful, and the great mass that keeps steadily on, fed by the delusion of ultimate "success," are at least cheerful without enthusiasm; but back of these are the losers and the many who have seen the hollowness of the world's promise, whose outlook upon life is one of intensifying despair.

VII

All of our general institutions reflect the changes in public thought, taste, and feeling consequent upon the changing conditions of the social régime. But on none of them are these changes writ more clearly or in larger characters than on the institution of letters. Along with the morganization of industry steadily proceeds the munseyization of literature. We are a free people, our politicians tell us, and are strenuously resolved to remain so. But if we are to be judged by our popular literature, the verdict can hardly be other than that we have reached an advanced stage of subserviency, and that the normal mood of the overwhelming majority is one of complacence with its lot. Our popular magazines regularly keep before us a justification, actual or inferential, of things as they are; and though it is couched in less argumentative phrasing than that of the newspapers, it is, no doubt, for that very reason, a more plausible and effective expression of the plea. There are panegyrics on our captains of industry, tales of their exploits in the great industrial battle, descriptions of their town-houses and country-seats, — all, in fact, that makes for the emulation of their wisdom and virtues, and particularly of their faculty of acquisitiveness, — with a multitude of recipes for the winning of "success." Along with this is provided a vaudeville of idle entertainment: wonder tales, short stories, a gallery of pictures of stage-folk, who, whatever their merits may be, bear but a problematic relation to literature; and finally an amorphous compound of

sedative miscellany that not only charms the mind from serious thinking, but in time paralyzes the very power of thought.

Such of these publications as indulge in the gentle art of reviewing give further evidence of changing conditions. Reviewing, as now practised, studies the amenities of life, with a particular regard for the counting office, "wherein doth sit the dread and fear" of the publisher who has advertising to distribute. With a few notable exceptions the reviewing journals make it their business to be "nice." They do not damn, not even with faint praise; they commend or extol. It is not that they praise insincerely a bad book — reviewing is too highly developed a craft for such crudity. But in a bad book all that the widest exercise of charity can pronounce even passably good comes in for praise; and what is weak or poor, or inclusive under old John Dennis's favorite term of "clotted nonsense," is mercifully omitted from mention. So it is when the advertising publisher is a factor in the game. But a reviewing journal must uphold a reputation for impartial judgment, and must thus mingle blame with praise. Its opportunity comes when some inglorious Milton of Penobscot or Butte prints his verses at home at his own expense. A copy drifts into the reviewing office and effects a transformation. The angelic temper upon which so many and such large drafts are made becomes exhausted, and the humble poet is treated to the sort of thing which Gifford used to deal out to the Della Cruscans and the ireful Dennis to the poetasters of Queen Anne's time. It was perhaps

the last regret of the late J. Gordon Coogler, of Columbia, S.C., that instead of printing his amiable verses on his own press, he had not guaranteed the cost of their production, and secured their publication by a metropolitan firm.

The literary distinction of former days has taken wings. Whether or not Wordsworth was right in his lament over the state of England in 1803 may be questioned; but a like lament uttered for our own land and time would be in large part justified. We have the two extremes of exceedingly plain living and of wildly extravagant living; but high thinking seems to be the accompaniment of neither. For several years the only really salable books have been novels, and among these popular favor has centred almost wholly on the kind called historical — called so not because the stories bear any relation to history, but because in them the action is put in a past time. Lately, it is true, there have been signs of a reaction; but let none imagine that it is due to a growing taste for stronger meat. Rather it is an evidence that in our love of novelty we have tired of one trifle and now demand another in its stead.

For the recent indications of declining favor for the historical novel are accompanied by no signs of reviving favor for more serious works. The Huxley Memoirs, it is true, unexpectedly achieved the degree of favor usually given to a fifth-rate novel; but the work, despite its science, philosophy, and religious controversy, was yet an entertaining story, and won its way for that reason. No more in fiction than in other branches of literature is there promise of better

things. Even the "problem" novel, which, though often crude or hysterical, was yet an attempt to deal with some of the deeper facts of life, has been banished, and is not to be permitted to return. "Our publishers," says the well-known literary supplement of a New York daily newspaper, "are seeking on all sides for wholesome stories, dealing optimistically with life, and reaching happy conclusions." It is a true judgment, and reveals most clearly the present standards of public taste.

Our popular magazines most accurately reflect the public mind. Pictures and stories are the substance of its childish delight. Among periodicals we have nothing in any way comparable to the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Fortnightly*, the *Contemporary*, the *Athenæum*, the *Spectator*, the *Saturday Review*, or even the *Academy*. Whatever tendencies of late have seemed to indicate the future planting of such reviews on these shores, have very recently been extinguished. Of three publications in which articles of some thought and some importance were occasionally printed, two have recently found a monthly issue more frequent than the public taste required, and have accordingly transformed themselves into quarterlies, while the third has been forced to make concessions to the general demand for "lightness and brightness." For these are the qualities which pay. "Make it light and bright," is the order which the literary contributor hears in the editorial offices when he submits his wares; and though the terms may be variously interpreted, he understands what is meant: he must write down to the level of childish

minds and complacent natures. Accordingly, he writes so, to the best of his ability, and so, to that limit, do all his fellows. The collective result is seen in the character of the greater number of our books, our magazines, our Saturday and Sunday supplements. On all sides is poured forth a flood of print which deludes the hope or flatters the vanity of the mass, and which insures a state of mental subserviency, — the necessary requisite of the economic subserviency imposed by the ruling class.