

CHAPTER VI

RUDIMENTARY HUMAN WAR

Man's Relation to the Lower Animals.

Man, lord of the primates, differs transcendently from the lower animals, more especially in the range and capacity of his mental nature. Physically a weak animal, his great superiority lies in intelligent power to modify his immediate environment, and the experience gained in exercising this power reacts in the development of his moral or spiritual nature.

Possessing freedom of choice in a greater degree, his power therefore carries greater capacity for disaster, when error overtakes him, than in the case of the "beasts that perish."

Although intelligence has evolved and diversified upon instinct until the latter has almost become submerged, man is by no means infallible, and intelligence, like instinct, can blunder. Religion can decompose into superstition.

We know that man's intellectual attributes do bear some relation to the instincts of the lower creation, and that these attributes must also exist in conformity with, and be governed by, the same laws of Nature.

We know that in common with the lower animals, which blunder by the aberration of instinct, man can also fall intelligently in similar ways, in similar circumstances.

The Survival of the Atrocity.

Those of us who have seen a fellow-creature affected by a sudden seizure accompanied by a struggle, or caught in a natural trap such as a fall of rock, and heard the shriek for help, will have vivid recollections of the sensations occasioned.

There is undoubtedly a violent impulse to attack something endowed with life and motion like ourselves, and this instinctive emotion, especially in youth, is quite difficult to

control. Upon reflection, we have been surprised at the actions of ourselves and others at such times, and wondered why we were so rough in our first aid to the victim.

The emotion is of momentary duration, because our reason corrects it, and we soon proceed, after some experience, to render useful aid immediately.

Although intelligence has corrected involuntary error in such cases, there is yet a survival clinging to the skirts of inexperience. We see the evidence of this survival in the unreasonable behaviour of people in street accidents, when an injured person is not infrequently hustled in a good-intentioned desire to rescue on the part of the crowd.

In moral crises it is, however, more than a survival.

For example, when, owing to not easily ascertainable causes, a father or a son has been suddenly overwhelmed by financial disaster, or a daughter has committed a social indiscretion, although the more intelligent, but not necessarily more tender-hearted, members of the family will almost immediately give substantial evidence of goodwill, others, normally good-natured, will attack the victim with very considerable ill-will, to the great astonishment of disinterested spectators.

Hatred is due to the Perversion of the Intelligence.

"Hatred," says George Eliot, "is like fire—it makes even light rubbish deadly." Hatred, we know too well, will steel the mind of the irresolute and indolent and cause them to act atrociously.

Those who hate are mentally deranged, and are unconscious of the injury they do themselves, so long as they believe they harm the object of their hatred. The hater mistakes the feeling of revengeful lust for one of the highest purpose, subordinate to any material gain; yet this deluded visionary especially resents the goodwill of others as "idealistic nonsense," or as a pitiful exhibition of what he believes to be deplorable weakness.

That hatred proceeds from ignorance, or lack of creditable knowledge, cannot be doubted by anyone who has seen the depravity which hates in the proportion of benefits received, or hates because it is enraged by high example. There are natures which have become so unhappy as to

know no enjoyment so keen as the satisfaction of a long-cherished grudge. Superstition battens upon malattributed or imaginary grievances.

Under the influence of this mind-imprisonment, haters see enemies everywhere, and frequently in vivid expectation they attack friends in false-seeing anger. "One of the biggest dangers we have got to face," said a Christian gentleman, after the fall of Power and Might in Germany, "is the extraordinary friendliness of the German people."

The prisoners of hate are in a prison of which they alone possess the key, because no one can convince another of error. Conviction comes from within, not from without, and this after a critical examination of facts, assimilating the true and rejecting the false. Persuasion can only induce the mind to open—can only promote good-nature.

It is well to have a rough-and-ready perception of moral values.

Good-nature, Goodwill and Ill-will.

Good-nature is the normal animal attribute of the open mind, possessed more especially by unspoiled children and other noble barbarians. No one, however, is entirely without it, for it is the manifestation of the social instinct, or the love and sympathy everyone feels for oneself and one's fellows.

Goodwill is good-nature enlightened and therefore elevated by creditable knowledge, which is religion. Ill-will, or hatred, is the decomposition of good-nature, and is a reaction produced by defective credence, which is superstition.

Goodwill discriminates between the act which results in evil consequences and the mistaken doer of the act, while ill-will is directed more particularly against the sufferer.

Ill-will is frequently induced by the past harsh domination imposed by others. It is a familiar fact that oppressed persons wish in turn to dominate their fellows. They attempt to enslave and distort the minds, therefore, of innocent children by unfair presentation of facts.

In obstinate mood they invariably suffer reprisals, and they rely upon the ready sympathy of good-nature for cruel wrongs they have suffered, or believe themselves to have

suffered. Reprisal may be followed by counter-reprisal in small and, to the spectator, almost unnoticeable deeds of unkindness. The effect is cumulative, the whole moral atmosphere surrounding them becoming charged with hate.

This is why, in a family, an insignificant exciting irritation will start off a perfectly alarming state of affairs, so perplexing to the outsider.

The Deterioration of Family Life within the enveloping Hostile Environment of Social Injustice.

Many unpleasant phenomena of ill-will, thought to be due to inherent faults of character in members of associations like families, are in reality collateral or symptomatic, and caused by enveloping harmful environment, the consequence of decaying and obsolete social institutions.

For instance, it is apparently Nature's intention that the family shall break up to form nuclei of new families, just as the seed-pod upon the plant, as it ripens and dries, is stressed until it bursts suddenly and the seeds are scattered in all directions. Anything, therefore, which acts so as to constrain this natural tendency creates a feeling of hostility. This is discharged in ill-humour, which would never take place were the members of the family free to carry out their destiny.

The Effect of Imprisonment upon Human Beings.

The effect upon, and the behaviour of, human beings in captivity resembles that of the humbler species of animals. They lose their health and fall victims to disease. They become alternately delirious and listless, possessed of highly coloured hallucinations on the one hand and the grisly phantoms of neurosis on the other. Finally reason forsakes and merciful death releases the prisoners.

While the moral sense of captives tends to become blunted, so that prisoners of hitherto irreproachable character tend to become debased, it is noteworthy that those of religious convictions are the last to succumb, and up to a point may be refined by their incarceration.

It is important to distinguish between culture, which means the possession of superficial physical and mental

accomplishments, obtained by imitation and persuasion, and religion, which, on the other hand, appertains to man's moral and spiritual nature by conviction.

Erudition may assist in the building of a perfect character, but it can also be turned into an instrument for its debasement, and towards the establishment of a platform of thought and custom in which tyranny and hatred flourish. A knowledge of reading, writing or music may assist expression, but it does not necessarily cause a man to behave creditably towards his fellows.

It is also important to correct the common error that the motive of self-interest is immoral and should be repressed. Those who seek to "better" themselves also tend to raise their neighbours through natural emulation. Persons obsessed with the desire to self-sacrifice in season and out of season are, in common with those inspired with the desire to dominate their fellows, the victims of superstition.

There is a selflessness or apathy which is not less abnormal than the exaggeration of ego we call selfishness. The former is accompanied by the constraint exercised by the latter, and each immoral extreme can be exemplified in one and the same individual.

Goodwill is promoted when self-interest is given the fullest freedom compatible with the like freedom of others. Self-interest so contained is the truest unselfishness, and in effect neither selfish nor selfless. Any interference with this legitimate self-interest produces moral enclosure. It is in both extremes of unreason that hatred finds a source: in selfishness on the one hand, and in neglect of self on the other.

The Pursuit of Happiness and the Struggle for Existence.

In the freedom of the open air, a race or other competition is enjoyable and health-giving to all taking part. Self-interest is directed into the pursuit of happiness for each and every competitor, as all revel in the superabundance of fresh air.

But is this any longer true when the competition takes place in restricted enclosures?

Before the hundred and forty-six persons were imprisoned in the Black Hole of Calcutta, they had been

kind and gentle towards each other, and knew what happiness meant; but in the terrible dungeon they entered into competition for the artificially restricted fresh air, which came from one small opening.

Self-interest was not directed into the pursuit of happiness by any of the captives who in this terrible environment struggled murderously for existence, as they selfishly disregarded each other's interests.

In any prison, whether moral or physical, self-interest is inflated into egoism or depressed into apathy. All are subject to derangement of intellect, and it is in this environment that men are degraded into savage brutes or sink into despair, while women are filled with hatred, willing to descend to any profligacy for self-preservation. All are compelled to enter into cut-throat competition to the death for life alone, and the consequences are harmful for all, including the survivors continuing to prey upon each other. It is WAR.

Some Examples of Adventitious Enclosure.

Azara's story of the wild horses on the Pampas is paralleled by what took place at the coronation of Nicholas II at Moscow in 1894.

The people were offered a free feast of beer, brandy and buns, and when the hungry crowd proceeded to the place where these things were being distributed, a crush ensued. Those in front were knocked off their feet by those behind, and in turn these were crushed by people yet further back. No one seeing what was happening in front, they all kept pushing and pressing each other on.

The weak were overthrown by the strong, and then the strong ones themselves, suffocated by the crush and want of air, also fell to the ground, and were trampled by those who were pushed from behind and could not halt. Several thousand persons, old and young, male and female, in this way met their deaths or were injured.

After the tragedy, people began to argue as to where the blame should be laid. Some said it was the police, others the organisers, while many blamed the Czar for initiating so silly a device for entertainment. They thus accused everyone but themselves, and yet it is clear that, in order to obtain

a handful of cake and a pot of beer before their neighbours, the tragedy was due to those who rushed selfishly forward hustling and trampling their fellows.

The panic which took place in a picture palace at Deptford on April 26, 1917, is a good example of rudimentary war produced in a confined enclosure.

Upon this occasion, while the pictures were being shown to the sightseers, mainly composed of children, an alarming noise was made, caused by a stone having been thrown from outside into the fan of the ventilator.

The panic-stricken children made a rush for the exits, and passers-by, infected by the panic, raised the cry of "Fire!" The attendants did all they could to calm them, but amid their screams, and the shouts of the people from the street, many of them parents trying to force their way to the rescue, little could be accomplished. In the wild struggle for the exits, blocked by the rescuers, four children were crushed to death and ten others were seriously injured.

At the inquest, one of the fire-brigade officials said he thought the deaths of the children were owing, in a great measure, to the ungovernable way in which those people behaved who were trying to effect a rescue.

These typical examples, which might be multiplied indefinitely, serve as illustrations to show that like causes produce like effects among mankind as among the lower animals, "which have not understanding."

Wars and Civil Commotions are not "caused" by Frivolous Incidents.

It has frequently been alleged that in times of popular excitement the discontented mob has been provoked to violence by some irritating action, such as the missile thrown into the midst of the crowd by an *agent provocateur*, arranged at a time to suit the convenience of the police and military forces, who are popularly believed to keep law and order. The latter are then presumed to be justified in the use of weapons to scatter the enraged people, who menace the public peace, or at any rate spoil the "repose" of authority.

It would be a narrow view to take, that the thrown missile was the cause of such a tragedy as civil rioting. The true cause lies deeper in the retention of archaic institu-

tions which generate the discontent. For this the mob, owing to their mental blindness, are as much to blame as anyone.

In similar manner, by means of some pretext diplomatically arranged, it is alleged that governments, supposed to control the destinies of civilised countries, have upon occasion started violent action between the armed forces which are believed to preserve the freedom of the seas and the dry land. The use of terrible engines of war is then presumed to be justified in the manifestation of temporary insanity which subsequently takes place.

But it would be absurd to see in these frivolous episodes the fundamental cause of war, which must be referred back to some cherished superstition of which the nations are for the moment insensible. Defective credence is what enslaves nations as well as individuals.

The Hope that War may end War.

It has been somewhat thoughtlessly said that "War is a relic of barbarism." Far, however, from being a "relic," war becomes increasingly more frightful and extensive. Nevertheless, it would be equally erroneous to ascribe war to its being a concomitant of civilised progress and to say that it is a product of culture.

Wars in the early stages of what we have hitherto known as civilisations are more frequent and smaller, but they tend, as these cultures develop, to become bigger and more destructive. This is of course owing to the fact that increasing knowledge in chemistry, physics and other branches of science is at the service of those who hate each other. Emulation is directed towards developing means of killing into more effective shapes.

In proportion as wars become increasingly insensate and gruesome, it is not surprising from our new point of view that "glory and honour" in them increase, having regard to the highly deranged reason or intelligence which motives them. Those taking part believe they are fighting for, or to preserve, their freedom, let disillusionment afterwards be what it may.

That war may be rendered so deadly that men will refuse to fight is in the nature of things improbable, to say

the least. All experience goes to show that such a hope is doomed to disappointment, and it is well, from the right point of view, that it should be so. We shall learn; it is unthinkable that the human race is to perish in a cul-de-sac, and equally incredible that humanity is to remain an irredeemable slave within the flimsy barriers of superstition.

The Inconclusiveness of War.

Speaking in the British House of Commons upon the 1919-20 Estimates, General Seely, referring to the first air fight which he had witnessed, said: "I remember Sir David Henderson saying to me the same day, 'This is the beginning of a fight which will end in great battles in the air, and in which hundreds of thousands of airmen will be engaged'; and I said to him, 'Is it possible that human endurance and human courage will be equal to that stupendous task?' He thought so, and he was right. . . ."

"Since that one air combat which I witnessed in September 1914, we have this astonishing fact, that during the war just under 8,000 enemy machines were shot down by our pilots in all theatres of war; 2,000 of our machines were missing, and most of them were similarly shot down. When one comes to think of what these figures mean—probably 40,000 or 50,000 desperate battles in the air, sometimes far away in the enemy territory, and occasionally right away over wide stretches of sea, where the failure of an engine at any moment would have meant certain death—I think we can only bow our heads in respectful admiration to incomparable valour."

Human Nature vindicated.

Futility and senselessness could not be more highly idealised, but it is consoling to reflect that the sane patriotism and devotion inherent in humankind are not less splendid. The belief that war was ineradicable from human nature has been a cause of sorrow for those who looked beyond the glittering Pomp and Circumstance which masks the squalid reality of the intoxication of Patriotism.

It may be humiliating to conclude that war is due to an aberration of intelligence caused by superstitious enclosure

but there is hope on the horizon from our point of view, which is better than fatalism. The stigma upon human nature has vanished.

What we have to discover.

Our field of investigation has been narrowed down considerably. We have to discover the nature of the now invisible restraints in society which produce the frequently recurring inflammations and eruptions.

These slaveries may be many and various, but we do know that they can be considered under two heads, e.g. personal, or direct, and impersonal, achieved indirectly by the restriction artificially of our immediate environment.

Having ascertained how mankind can enslave themselves, the remedy should not be far to seek. Obviously freedom is the cure for captivity.