

ARNOLD TOYNBEE

A REMINISCENCE

BY
LORD MILNER, G.C.B.

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PREFACE

TO THE FIRST IMPRESSION

THE following brief reminiscence of Arnold Toynbee, which does not pretend to be even a summary of his life, was written as an address to the members of Toynbee Hall, and delivered at that place on the 27th November last. It was not my original intention to publish this address. The most ambitious course which I, in the first instance, ever contemplated, was to print it for private circulation among Toynbee's friends. Since its de-

livery, however, I have received many evidences of the extent to which Toynbee is still remembered beyond the circle of his immediate friends, and of the keenness with which any trace or impression of his striking personality is sought for and cherished in many unexpected quarters. I have, therefore, somewhat reluctantly agreed to publish this very inadequate sketch of him, not with any expectation of its interesting the general public, but in order that all those who still reverence his memory, and who, as I now see, are more numerous than I at first thought, may be able to read my words, if they wish to do so.

The address is printed exactly as

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it was delivered, without any alteration or addition except the note on page 56.

ALFRED MILNER.

47, DUKE STREET, ST. JAMES'S,
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ARNOLD TOYNBEE

It is no mere rhetorical prelude when I say that I have a difficult task to perform to-night—a task, in approaching which I need all your kind consideration and patience. For what is it I am trying to do? I am trying to recall to those of my hearers who knew him, to present for the first time to many others who did not know him, the image of a man who has been dead for nearly twelve years, whose life was short and uneventful, who never occupied any conspicuous public position, or was associated with any great achievement, and whose remaining writings—not without merit certainly, but inconsiderable in amount, and fragmentary in form—convey

a most inadequate idea of the personality of their author.

His name, indeed, is commemorated in this Institution, nor could he have a worthier or more characteristic memorial. But even here there can hardly, from the circumstances of the case, be a strong living tradition about him. I should be happy indeed, if I were able to give to such tradition as there is greater fulness and vitality. I am impelled to attempt this, because I knew him so well, esteemed him so highly, because, in spite of the lapse of years, his thought, his aspirations, his manner of speech, yea, the very expression of his countenance and the tone of his voice, are so vividly present to me, and seem to me still, though I am long past the age of illusions, no less noble and inspiring than they did in the radiant days

of youthful idealism, when we first were friends. I feel I should confer a great boon on any man whom I could help to realize Arnold Toynbee. But, at the same time, I am painfully conscious that all I say may seem a mere string of words, and that I may not at all be able to call up the picture of a living man.

Yet the attempt must be made, and the best thing I can do is to speak of him as I knew him myself. But first of all, to clear the ground, let me give you—it will not take five minutes—the chief landmarks of his life, as you might find them in a biographical dictionary.

He was born in August, 1852, and died ✓ in March, 1883. He had a strange solitary, introspective youth, for he was never long at school, nor had he—despite his courage and high, if somewhat fitful, spirits

—the love of games, the careless mind, or the easy sociability which make school life happy. His real education he got from his father—a man of great gifts and original character, who died when Arnold Toynbee was still very young—from a few older friends, and from his own study and reflection. When little more than eighteen, he went away by himself, and spent nearly a year alone at a quiet seaside retreat, reading and thinking, his whole mind possessed, even thus early, with a passionate interest in religion and metaphysics and in the philosophy of history. A year or two later, having by his father's will a small sum of money at his command, he resolved to devote it fearlessly to the completion of his education, and after much pondering over the how and the where, finally turned to Oxford.

Toynbee went to that University in the spring of 1873, and practically never left it. Of his ten Oxford years, he spent the first half, down to June 1878, as an undergraduate at Pembroke, and afterwards at Balliol; the second half, from October 1878, as a lecturer and tutor at Balliol. There was a great contrast in the character of his life during these two periods. His career as an undergraduate was retiring and unambitious. Profound as was his influence even then upon the small circle of his friends, he took no active part in the traditional contests of the place—whether physical or intellectual. Delicate health, and the necessity of avoiding the fatigue and excitement of competitive examinations, made him eschew the race for honours. He took an ordinary pass degree, though the quality of his papers was such

as even-examiners in the Honours School but rarely encounter. But when, contrary to all precedent, the modest passman found himself, almost immediately after taking his degree, appointed lecturer and tutor at the foremost Oxford college, and intrusted with some of its most important work, the life of secluded study and meditation and intimate converse with a few chosen friends—that life which in his inmost soul he ever preferred—was converted, in obedience to an inner as well as an outer call, into a career of intense educational and social activity.

A student, indeed, he always remained, a most laborious and careful student, as well as an untiring thinker. But he was now also a lecturer and teacher, putting his whole soul into the instruction of his pupils, not only in the class-room, but on

all the occasions afforded by the easy intercourse of college life. At the same time he threw himself, with true civic enthusiasm, into the cause of social and religious reform. He was a Poor Law Guardian, a Co-operator, a Church Reformer. He followed with intense interest and practical sympathy the development of Friendly Societies and Trades Unions. He was in the thick of every movement to improve the external conditions of the life of the people—better houses, open spaces, free libraries, all the now familiar objects of municipal Socialism, which were then still in their first struggle for public recognition. Stirred to the very depths of his soul by the ideal of a nobler civic life, he lectured to great popular audiences, first in the northern cities, then in London, on the social and economic questions, of which

the air was full. I own that I was often agghast in those days at the multiplicity of his efforts (which were never superficial), at the intense strain of his life, combining as it did a constant inward wrestle with the deepest problems of existence and an outward activity, as teacher and citizen, which would have exhausted the capacities of a dozen ordinary men. And the strain killed him. If ever a man wore himself out in the service of mankind, it was Toynbee. More of that presently. For the moment, I only ask you to notice the bare facts. The kind of life I have been describing occupied the years 1879, 1880, 1881, and 1882, till his final break-down and death in the spring of 1883.

There is only one other circumstance I need mention in this outline of his history. Early in his life, as a teacher at Balliol,

Toynbee married. The intense activity of his later years would probably not have lasted even as long as it did if he had not had the support of a happy home life—a life of the greatest simplicity, but of perfect refinement, in the companionship of a wife who sympathized deeply, though calmly, with all his ideals, and who was as devoid as he was himself of mean ambitions or petty cares. That is a subject too delicate to be dwelt upon, but it had just to be mentioned, if this brief chronicle was not to be incomplete in an essential point.

I have said that I was about to speak of Toynbee as I knew him myself. What follows may strike you as egotistical, but the apparent egotism is inevitable if my account of him is to be life-like. Toynbee's strength lay in the extraordinary impression which his personality made upon those

with whom he came into contact. That kind of power is not to be described by general phrases. It can only be realised from the personal testimony of those who have felt it. If I tell you what my feelings were in his company, it is not because I attach importance to them as being mine, but because they are representative of similar experiences on the part of many others. I must take a typical case, and I naturally take the case with which I am best acquainted.

My friendship with Toynbee must have begun in February or March, 1873, during my first term at Oxford, which was also his first. Though we were both only freshmen, I knew him well by reputation before we ever met. It is strange how rapidly any individuality, or even the semblance of one, makes itself felt among

those impressionable lads, who are sensitive to the exciting atmosphere, caught up at once into the stirring life, of an intellectual centre like Oxford. The world to them is simply brimming over with interest, and above everything else they are intensely interested in one another. Before a few weeks have passed, A's prowess, B's scholarship, C's wit, D's bumptiousness are in everybody's mouth—the common property of their young contemporaries. Now Toynbee, although, as I have said, he had not at first a large circle of friends, enjoyed from the outset, and always retained, a reputation of a perfectly unique kind. Youth, as we all know, is the age of hero-worship. No man, in after life, is ever so much admired as the schoolboy or the undergraduate who excels in any of the qualities which young men are agreed

to canonise. But it was not so much admiration which Toynbee's personality inspired as veneration. His friends spoke of him with affection, certainly, but also with a kind of awe, which had its comic aspect no doubt, like all our youthful intensities, but which was not without real significance. When, therefore, at the mature age of nineteen, I first came across him—my senior by about eighteen months—I was fully prepared to meet a personage. My attitude, as I well remember, was one of intense interest, not without a touch of defiance.

But in his actual presence any such antagonism was soon swallowed up in love and respect. I fell at once under his spell, and have always remained under it. No man has ever had for me the same fascination, or made me realise as he did the

secret of prophetic power—the kind of influence exercised in all ages by the men of religious and moral inspiration. Not that my attitude towards him was an unquestioning or purely receptive attitude. I could never bring my thoroughly lay mind quite into step with his religious idealism, and in politics I was certainly far more conservative and far less optimistic than he. We differed on many things; we disputed; with all my regard for him, I did not always feel that I had the worst of the argument. But I looked up to him no less on that account. Alike in difference and in argument, in seasons of physical weakness, when ‘his light was low’ and his speech ineffectual, no less than in the glowing hours when he was most eloquent and most convincing, he always seemed to me of nobler mould than other

men. His intellectual gifts were great, rare and striking, but they were not, by themselves, commanding. What was commanding was the whole nature of the man—his purity, his truthfulness, his unrivalled loftiness of soul.

And here, while I am speaking of first impressions, I cannot but refer to the remarkable harmony between his physical, his mental, and his moral gifts. He had a noble and striking countenance, combining the charm of boyish freshness with the serene dignity of a thoughtful manhood—a face of almost Greek regularity of feature, but with a height of brow and a certain touch of aggressive force about the mouth, which distinguished it from the conventional Greek type. When he spoke, and especially when he spoke with fire, the directness of his glance, the fine carriage

of his head, fettered attention. His language, when thus moved, was of extraordinary eloquence—indeed he was the most eloquent man, *in conversation*, that I have ever met. Even on the ordinary topics of every day he always spoke, with perfect simplicity, it is true, but with a singular purity and refinement of expression. His avoidance of every ugly and vulgar turn of phrase was effortless and instinctive. He owed this, no doubt, in some measure to the nature of his studies. His reading had not been very extensive, but the great masters of English style, and especially of stately English, had been his constant companions from childhood. The Bible, the Elizabethan poets, Milton, Gibbon, Burke, Keats, Shelley, and, among novelists, especially Scott and Thackeray—these were the writers with

whom he lived on terms of no ordinary intimacy, and such converse unconsciously affected his own utterance. But, after all, the chief cause of this purity of diction, which yet was never pedantic, lay in the purity of his mind, in his constant pre-occupation with great themes, his absolute aloofness from all that was mean and paltry, his invariable innate elevation of thought and aim. It has been said of a great writer that he touched nothing which he did not adorn. It might be said of Toynbee that he touched nothing which he did not elevate. Truly astonishing was his power of raising the tone of any discussion in which he engaged. Thus everything about him, his personal appearance, his bearing, his language, his moral attitude, combined to invest him with an air of indescribable distinction.

Need I say more to explain the extraordinary influence, not wide at first but deep, which Toynbee exercised upon the thoughts, ay, and upon the lives of those of his fellow-undergraduates who came to know him intimately? He became naturally, inevitably, the centre, the idol, the model of his little world, and certainly no leader of ardent youth was ever more devotedly worshipped by his immediate followers. Undergraduate society tends to divide itself into sets—each circling more or less round some central luminary. Of the sets of my Oxford days there was one, the members of which—and the present Home Secretary was perhaps its most prominent figure—were, intellectually at least, quite on a level with the disciples of Toynbee. But I doubt whether there was any set that could for a moment

compare with the latter in moral fervour, and certainly there was none in which the central personage was so inspiring or so dominant. It was this unique position of Toynbee among his own friends, which led one of the most brilliant and independent of his and my contemporaries to dub him, half in admiration and half in antagonism, 'the Apostle Arnold.'

No doubt the Toynbee group had, like all young transcendentalists, their eccentricities—let me say their absurdities. There was the Ruskin road-making craze, for instance, and there was another very funny incident, which dwells in my recollection—a crusade against the system of perquisites, which was regarded as very demoralizing to the college servants. The only result of this was that the crusaders lived for some time largely on

dry bread and rather stale cold meat, to the great but, let us hope, not permanent injury of their digestions. But if there were some fads, there were, on the other hand, many novel enterprises of a serious and useful kind, destined to be fruitful, especially in their later developments, some of which I see around me. Of this nature was the work undertaken in visiting the workhouses and in charity organization, or in the instruction of pupil-teachers in various branches of higher education. For it was a distinguishing mark of those who came under Toynbee's influence, that they were deeply impressed with their individual duty as citizens, and filled with an enthusiasm for social equality, which led them to aim at bridging the gulf between the educated and the wage-earning class. In this respect he and

they were pioneers—apt to be forgotten afterwards, like all pioneers—in a movement which is one of the most important and characteristic of the present time.

What I have just been saying applies especially to the earlier years of Arnold Toynbee's undergraduate career. As time went on he lived less exclusively in the small circle which was entirely in sympathy with his own ideals, and made friends more widely, and with men of the most various types. It was somewhat remarkable that, with all his absorption in a strongly-marked line of thought and conduct, he yet got on so well with companions of totally different characters and interests. There was certainly no undergraduate of my generation who commanded more general respect among his fellows. At the same time he had begun

to form some very strong friendships with older men. Conspicuous among these was the late Master of Balliol. With his un-failing eye for every kind of excellence, Jowett had taken note of Toynbee almost from the moment of his arrival in Oxford, and had been at considerable pains to get him transferred from Pembroke to Balliol—not without a severe brush with the authorities of the latter college. And having once brought him to Balliol, he never lost sight of him. The interest which he had felt from the first gradually ripened into cordial friendship. It was charming to see them together. Toynbee never suffered from the shyness which in a greater or less degree overcame nearly all Jowett's pupils in the presence of 'the Master,' and reduced many of them, who were not usually bashful, to almost abso-

lute silence. On the contrary, he was always himself, full of a graceful deference to the older man, yet giving free vent to the rush of his ideas, his deepest convictions in philosophy and religion, his glowing visions of a better future for mankind. And Jowett would always listen kindly, not uncritically indeed—for when was he ever uncritical?—but without the least inclination to repress or discourage these outpourings of youthful enthusiasm. Perhaps in his heart he had even more sympathy with them than he ever allowed himself to show. Hostile as he was to all exuberance, intellectual and moral, he had too fine a knowledge of human nature not to feel the difference between Toynbee's idealism, so genuine, so ineradicable and so fertile, and the highflown sentiments of the commonplace emotional young man.

In dealing with Toynbee, no unkindly or sarcastic word ever fell from his lips. Indeed, as time went on, he leant on him in many respects, and rested his hopes on him in forecasting the future of the college, to which he was so absolutely devoted.

Time will not allow me to dwell on all Toynbee's acquaintances with older men, though many of these would afford matter of some interest. But there are two names which I cannot but mention, and which possess for all old Balliol men, especially in their conjunction with Jowett and Toynbee, a peculiarly mournful interest. I refer to Thomas Hill Green and Richard Lewis Nettleship. If the intimacy between Jowett and Toynbee might at first excite some surprise, that of Green and Toynbee was the most natural thing

in the world. For between these two men there existed a strong spiritual affinity. They had arrived, by very different roads, at an almost identical position in religion, philosophy, and social questions, and if there was any one among his older acquaintances to whom Toynbee especially looked up as a guide and master, it was Green. With Nettleship, on the other hand, who, though his senior, was nearer his own age, his relations were more those of ordinary comradeship. The bond of union in this case was not similarity but rather dissimilarity. Each found in the other qualities that were a supplement to his own. Toynbee admired Nettleship's scholarship, the subtlety of his intellect, his fine faculty of speculation. Nettleship felt the need of a stimulus such as

Toynbee's intensity of conviction and missionary zeal supplied.

With the men I have named, and with others of similar position, if not of equal stature, Toynbee, while still an undergraduate, conversed on terms of easy friendship. Not a few of his ideas must have seemed to them crude and immature. His want of experience in many directions was obvious. Yet I doubt whether there was one of these older friends who did not feel that Toynbee gave him more than he could return. There was a freshness, a glow, an impetus, about his thought, which more than made up for any want of critical judgment or of knowledge of the world—defects natural to his age and temperament, which he himself acknowledged with a ready modesty.

The relations in which he thus stood to

leading men in the University explain the fact, which to outsiders seemed at the time extraordinary, that he had no sooner taken a pass degree than he was made a lecturer at Balliol. This again was Jowett's doing. I well remember 'the Master' telling me, soon after I had left Oxford, how anxious he was to ensure Toynbee's permanent presence at Balliol, and how highly he rated the influence which his personality was bound to exercise upon his pupils, and upon the college. The work, with which he was immediately intrusted, was that of superintending the studies of the men who, having passed the Indian Civil Service Examination, came up to Oxford for a year or two before being sent to the East. The idea was a happy one, for Toynbee's knowledge of history and economics, and his

high conception of the greatness of our Eastern Empire, and of the responsibilities which it involved, were precisely the qualities best calculated to inspire his pupils with the right attitude towards the noble, but arduous career which lay before them.

His tutorial supervision extended to all the work of the Indian students, but the subject on which he lectured to them, and to others, was Political Economy.

This may seem a strange choice of a profession for a man of his temperament and interests. When Toynbee came to Oxford, his mind was absorbed in thoughts of religion, but the later years of his life were devoted to the study and teaching of economics. It is very significant of the change which had come over both religion and economics, since the days when

Newman and Ricardo seemed to represent the opposite poles of human thought, that this transition was, in Toynbee's case, no violent mental conversion, but a natural and almost inevitable development. Profoundly religious, indeed, he always remained. Incredulous of miracle and indifferent to dogma, he was yet intensely conscious of the all-pervading presence of the Divine—'the Eternal *not ourselves* that makes for righteousness.' That 'here have we no continuing city,' that 'the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal'—such utterances of devotional faith were to him expressions of the deepest truths of existence. The world of sense was but a dream fabric. The only true reality lay in the world of ideas. Conscience and the sense of duty, man's conception of

an ideal goodness, his aspirations after an unattainable perfection — these were fundamental facts which materialistic philosophy could neither account for nor explain away. But the more transcendental his faith, the greater seemed to him the necessity of a life of active usefulness. Idealism such as his, he always felt, could only justify its existence by energetic devotion to the good of mankind. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Nothing was more abhorrent to him than an apathetic mysticism. He would have repudiated the name of mystic. His faith, however transcendental, was a rational faith, and he would prove it by being as sober, as practical and as effective as any so-called Rationalist or Utilitarian. He would not be behind the Positivists in the service of

man, because he embraced that service for the love of God.

But the service of man required something more than zeal and devotion. About this time, at the end of the seventies, there were signs on all hands of a great, though gradual, social upheaval—new claims on the part of the toiling multitude, a new sense of responsibility on the part of the well-to-do. Toynbee's sympathy was always with the aspirations of the working-class. He was on fire with the idea of a great improvement in their material condition, not indeed as an end in itself, but as opening up possibilities of a higher life. But the practical common sense, which was the constant corrective of his generous idealism, compelled him to recognise that such improvement was not to be attained by uninstructed

enthusiasm. There was plenty of energy and goodwill already. What was needed was guidance, and guidance could only come from those who had studied the laws governing the production and distribution of wealth, and knew how, and how far, the blind forces of competition and self-interest might be utilised by corporate action for the common good. It was from this point of view that he approached the study of Political Economy. For the sake of religion he had become a social reformer; for the sake of social reform he became an economist.

It would take me too far to attempt to discuss the conclusions to which Toynbee was led by the economic studies pursued with so much industry and ardour. He never framed for himself any complete system. On many important points, as

is evident from his published writings, he was still only feeling his way. Yet the general drift of his speculations was clear enough. (In the region of economic theory, as in the practical sphere of social politics, he occupied a middle position.) (For, despite his enthusiastic temperament, his intellect was calm and judicial.) Fair-mindedness was instinctive in him, and so was reverence for the past. Therefore his sympathy with the new ideas, which no man of his time did more to diffuse, never tempted him to depreciate the old economists. Too much has been made of a single unfortunate phrase of his about Ricardo. As a matter of fact, few critics have had a juster appreciation of the strong points of Ricardo, as his published fragment on the subject shows. Neither did he despair of economic science, because the

first attempts to systematise it had broken down. The so-called laws of that science, dogmatic generalisations based upon a comparatively limited range of observation, might be imperfect or altogether misleading. But the science could be reconstructed—though perhaps not immediately—on a broader foundation of historical inquiry and sociological observation. Even the admitted failures of the older economists were not so much positive errors as partial and temporary truths, erroneously represented as of universal validity. To be fully appreciated, or fairly judged, they must be examined historically. The facts of economic history and the theories of economists should be studied side by side, and thus studied, they would throw light on each other. Adam Smith, Malthus, Ricardo, should be interpreted by a know-

ledge of the industrial and social conditions of their time.) This was an essential feature of Toynbee's projected work on the 'Industrial Revolution.'

The 'Industrial Revolution' was a magnificent conception, and would, if Toynbee had lived to carry it out, have been a great book. (On the literary side of his economic activity, as distinct from his practical work, this was undoubtedly the enterprise for which he was best fitted. He was never meant to write a treatise on political economy, like Mill or Marshall.) The logical exposition of a system was not his strong point. (He arrived, by a sort of intuition, at great central truths, and often expressed them in striking aphorisms.) Moreover, with his wide command of economic facts, he could illustrate these truths in an impressive way. But conclu-

sions, however apparently just, supported by illustrations, however brilliant, are not enough to carry conviction. As a matter of logic, it is the intervening stages, the *media axiomata*, which are all-important. Now Toynbee was probably himself not conscious of the processes by which his mind had arrived at the main ideas which he grasped so clearly, and expressed so forcibly. It is certain that he was never able to explain his logical method to others.

But, on the other hand, he had simply all the qualities required for writing a great economic history. He had historical imagination—the power of vividly realising the conditions of the past, and of sympathising with the thought and aims of bygone generations. Yet this vividness and rapidity of imagination never carried him away, or caused him to take the

✓ smallest liberty with facts. (His accuracy was unfailing. If he referred to a figure, he was right to a unit. If he quoted an author, he never altered or misplaced the least important word. In describing any incident of the past, he was careful to be correct in the minutest detail. (And he had one other great and rare gift in a historian—the gift of picking out, from a mass of materials, the one picturesque fact which made the dry bones live, and revealed, like a searchlight, the outlines of a past condition of society.) Those of my hearers who are familiar with his public addresses will easily understand what I mean. It is not the theory or the exhortations which, to my mind, constitute the chief interest of those addresses. It is the graphic pictures, scattered up and down them, of the life of different classes

of workmen at different times. Yet in this as in other respects the addresses are but faint echoes of his conversation, but imperfect indications of what he might have accomplished had he lived to weave these luminous threads into a completed story.

Thinking of his capacity for such work, now for ever lost to the world, I know that some of his friends have deplored the diversion of his energies from the study and the lecture-room to the exhausting labours of Committees and Boards and Congresses, and to the excitement of the platform. Yet in some respects he was admirably fitted to play an active part in social movements. His ready sympathy with men of different classes, his charm of voice and manner, his great practical common sense in practical questions, his

firmness of character, all marked him out as a leader of men. But his delicate frame and sensitive nerves were ill-suited to the rough business of the world. His physical strength, but his physical strength only, was unequal to the struggle, and, as a matter of fact, there is no doubt he shortened his life by attempting too much in the field of social politics, or at any rate by taking too much to heart whatever he did attempt. But in his own conception and scheme of life this combination of social activity with study and reflection was essential. The great danger of the democratic upheaval of the time appeared to him to be the estrangement of the men of thought from the active leaders of the people. His ideal was to be a student indeed, but a student in touch with practical affairs, standing as an impartial, public-spirited

mediator between the conflicting interests and prejudices of class and class.

And I am not sure that he was wrong. Had he followed the other course, had he confined himself to literary work and an academic life, he might himself have accomplished more, but would he have inspired so many or originated so much? To his own immediate friends, to whom the man himself was so much more than all his doctrines and all his schemes, the loss has been, of course, irreparable. But for the world the permanent value and importance of Arnold Toynbee lie in the impulse and direction which he gave, at a most critical moment, to the newborn interest of the educated in social questions, and to the aspirations of men of all classes after social reform. And this impulse and direction would not have been given, if he had

restricted himself to the rôle of a student. It is true that much of what we owe to him will never be associated with his name. But that, after all, is a small matter. The world has reaped the benefit. There are many men now active in public life, and some whose best work is probably yet to come, who are simply working out ideas inspired by him.

It is no small matter to have, even for a brief space, such a hold on Oxford, and especially on young Oxford, as he had during his later years. The old Universities are no longer sleepy institutions outside the broad current of the national life. I do not go so far as to say that what Oxford thinks to-day England will think to-morrow; but certainly any new movement of thought at the Universities in these days rapidly finds an echo in the press and

in public opinion. Now the years which I spent at Oxford, and those immediately succeeding them, were marked by a very striking change in the social and political philosophy of the place, a change which has subsequently reproduced itself on the larger stage of the world. When I went up the *Laisser-faire* theory still held the field. All the recognised authorities were 'orthodox' economists of the old school. But within ten years the few men who still held the old doctrines in their extreme rigidity had come to be regarded as curiosities.

In this remarkable change of opinion, which restored freedom of thought to economic speculation and gave a new impulse to philanthropy, Toynbee took, as far as his own University was concerned, a leading part. The effect which he may

have produced, by his direct action, in the outside world, I am less competent to estimate. Large audiences of working men listened with rapt attention to his addresses, strange mixtures as they were of dry economic discussion with fervent appeals to the higher instincts of his audience. For my own part, I never quite shared the admiration which many of his friends felt for these efforts. It is true that he was an impressive figure on the platform. He had dignity, perfect command of expression, and a powerful and melodious voice. Moreover, on the platform as everywhere else, he carried that weight which transparent sincerity and conviction never fail to give. But there was something in the necessary constraint of oratory, something perhaps also in the mere physical exertion, which prevented

his attaining that height of spontaneous eloquence which he constantly touched in conversation. It may be, however, that I was unfortunate, for I never attended any of his meetings except in London, where he was not so happy or successful as in the Northern or Midland cities. But at the best the effect of those lay sermons, however great at the time, can, as far as the body of his hearers went, only have been ephemeral. More important were the friendships which sprang out of them with many leading men, both masters and workmen, in the great industrial centres. The extent of his influence on those with whom he thus became associated it is at this distance impossible to gauge with any accuracy. All I know is that, as time goes on, the best thoughts of earnest and impartial men, who are in touch with the

problems of our complex industrial life, seem to flow more and more in the channels of the social philosophy of which Toynbee was so eloquent an exponent.

Was he a Socialist? That is a terribly big question to ask at the end of a long and, I fear, wearying discourse. Some day I may perhaps attempt to answer it with greater fulness than is possible tonight. But in that case I shall first have to define Socialism—that most vague and misleading of all the catchwords of current controversy. If by Socialism you mean Collectivism, the abolition of individual property; or if you mean Social Democracy, the paternal government of an omnipotent all-absorbing State, then Toynbee was certainly no Socialist. But, on the other hand, he was convinced of the necessity of social reorganisation. The

Industrial Revolution had shattered the old social system. It had left the industrial life of this and of the other great civilised countries of the West in a state of profound disorder. And society left to itself would not right itself. Salvation could only come through deliberate corporate effort, inspired by moral ideals, though guided by the scientific study of economic laws. The central doctrine of Individualism, the doctrine, as he tersely put it, that 'man's self-love is God's providence,' was in his judgment simply untrue. The pursuit of individual self-interest would never evolve order out of existing chaos. But on the other hand there was no simple plan and no single agency by which such order could be built up. All panaceas were delusions, all sweeping remedies absurd. Time, patience,

the co-operation of many powers, the combination of many methods, were necessary for the solution of a problem of such infinite complexity. (He hoped much from the action of a democratic state, controlling the excesses of competition, and laying down normal conditions of labour and exchange, subject to which the spirit of individual enterprise should still have free play.) He hoped even more from the action of municipalities, ensuring to all their citizens the conditions of healthy life—air, light, water, decent dwellings—slowly acquiring great public estates, and multiplying great public institutions, the common heritage of rich and poor. He hoped most of all perhaps from voluntary associations of free men. He recognised the immense service which Trades Unions, Friendly Societies, the Co-opera-

tive Movement had already rendered in checking the tendency to social disintegration. But his mind was full of schemes by which one and all of them might be made more potent instruments, not only for promoting the material welfare, but for aiding the moral development of their members. For the end of all social organisation, of all material improvement, was the higher life of the individual. In this spiritual ideal lay the profound difference between his point of view and the materialistic Socialism which threatens to work such havoc on the Continent, and is not without its adherents among ourselves. With Socialism of that type Toynbee had a double quarrel. He charged it with having no higher ideal than the diffusion of physical comfort, and with seeking to attain that object by merely mechanical

means. In his view nothing that tended to discourage self-reliance or to weaken character could possibly lead even to material well-being; and if it could, the object would be dearly bought at the price.¹

¹ There is an interesting fact which I may mention here, and which shows how far Toynbee was prepared to go in the direction of Socialism, yet without abandoning what was best in the teaching of the old economists. During the closing months of his life he was much occupied with the question of Old Age Pensions, and the duty of the State in relation to it. Almost the last time I saw him he expounded to me, in much detail, a scheme for supplementing the Pension Funds of Friendly Societies by State contributions, which greatly resembled, alike in its general outline and in its underlying principle, the plan lately shadowed forth by Mr. Chamberlain. On the one hand Toynbee had a great dread of anything that could weaken thrift or undermine the independence of the Friendly Societies, the services of which in encouraging self-help, and the habit of social co-operation, he considered no less valuable than the material benefits which they have bestowed on the working-class. On the other hand, he was deeply impressed with the difficulty, and in some cases impossibility, of an ordinary wage-earner, exposed to the normal accidents of illness and want of employment, saving a sufficient sum out of his earnings to provide him

1. Red Employment

Socialism

Such, in briefest outline, was his social philosophy. It is clearly impossible to label it with any epithet, to cram it into the strait-waistcoat of any single formula. He died too soon, in any case, to construct a system. But if he had lived a hundred years he would still have remained an eclectic. He was the apostle, not of a scheme, but of a spirit. No wonder that he was the despair of all extremists. Here was a man, whose glowing fervour, whose absolute unselfishness, whose whole-

with even the most modest competence in old age. His idea was that, when men had really done their utmost to provide against old age by their own thrift and self-denial, the community was bound to ensure the provision being adequate, and that not as a matter of charity, but of right. And he believed he saw his way to accomplish this end, without weakening individual effort, by State subsidies to the Friendly Societies. Whatever may be thought of the idea, it is very characteristic, not only of his economic eclecticism, but of his position as a pioneer of new social movements. Toynbee was full of the subject of Old Age Pensions at least six or eight years before it had become a matter of general discussion even among experts.

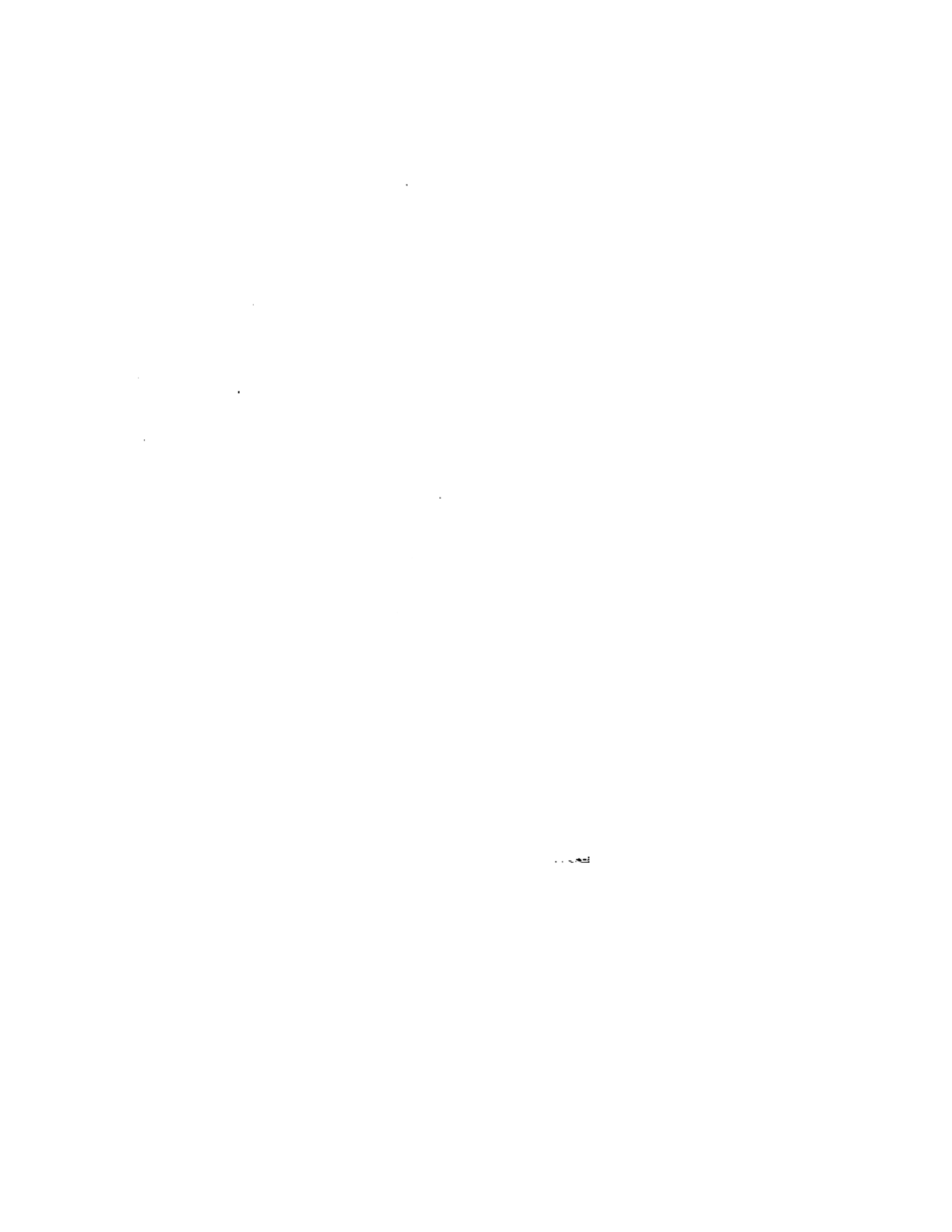
hearted devotion to the cause of social progress surpassed that of any fanatic of them all. Yet he was absolutely devoid of fanaticism. I have sometimes come across the idea, among those who knew him only by hearsay, that he was a noble but unpractical visionary, of fervent soul but unbalanced intellect. No conception of him could be more ludicrously wrong. While health lasted, no man had a calmer judgment, or imposed the dictates of that judgment with more indomitable will upon his own ardent temper. There is some truth, I fear, in the charge frequently made against social reformers, that the greatest energy is shown by the men of the narrowest views. Enthusiasm is often blind. Wisdom and experience are apt to blunt the edge of action. But Toynbee had the moral genius which could wed

enthusiasm to sobriety, and unite the temper of the philosopher with the zeal of the missionary. No bigot, possessed with some one scheme for the regeneration of mankind, was ever more enthusiastic for his panacea than Toynbee could be for the most humble and unambitious reform which seemed to him to make to the right end, and to be inspired by the true spirit of sane but strenuous progress. And that is the last, though not the least of the lessons which I shall attempt to draw from the example of his noble and devoted life. It is a lesson which, however we may differ from him in opinion upon this point or upon that, I think we can all agree to lay to heart.

Now I have said enough, and it only remains to thank you for the sympathy you have shown me in the performance of

what has been a labour of love certainly, but also a delicate, and in some respects a painful task. May I, without impertinence, conclude this address by the expression of a hope? It is the hope that these walls, which bear Toynbee's name, may ever be instinct with his spirit; a meeting-place for men of various education and antecedents; a home of eager speculation, ever learning from experience, and earnest controversy, untinged with bitterness or party prejudice; the headquarters of a band of 'unresting and unhasting labourers,' not in one, but in many fields of social endeavour, united by a common faith in the efficacy of such endeavour to elevate their own and others' lives.

THE END



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