THE CONTEMPORARY REVIEW

VOLUME LXV. JANUARY—JUNE, 1894.

NEW YORK
LEONARD SCOTT PUBLICATION COMPANY
231 BROADWAY
LONDON: ISBISTER & CO. LTD.
1894

THE ETHICS OF DYNAMITE.

I HASTEN to reassure Mrs. Grundy as regards all her anxieties. I am happy to say, even at the cost of a dull article, that I am wholly orthodox on this question of villainous dynamite. I detest dynamite, my dear Madam, for your own excellent reasons, because it is most treacherous, cruel—I should write scatter-brained, but some ingenuous person might accuse me of trifling with the English language—and altogether abominable; and I also detest it for other special reasons. I detest it, because I look upon it as a nineteenth century development in the art of governing, and of that worthy art the world has had quite sufficient developments already. There is no occasion for adding one more experience to the long list. Perhaps I ought at once, for the benefit of some of my friends who are inclined a little incautiously to glorify this word "governing" without thinking of all that is contained in it, to translate the term, which is so often on our lips, into what I hold to be its true meaning: forcing your own will and pleasure, whatever they may be, if you happen to be the stronger, on other persons. Now, many worthy people are apt to look on dynamite as the arch-enemy of government; but remembering this definition, remembering that undeniably the great purpose of government is the compulsion of A by B and C to do what he does not want to do, it is plain that such a view fails to distinguish essence from accident, and to appreciate the most characteristic qualities that inhere in this new political agent. Dynamite is not opposed to government; it is, on the contrary, government in its most intensified and concentrated form. Whatever are the sins of every-day governmentalism, however brutal in their working some of the great force machines with which we love to administer each other may tend to be, however reckless we may be as regards each other's rights in our

efforts to place the yoke of our own opinions upon the neck of others, dynamite "administers" with a far ruder, rougher hand than even the worst of the continental bureaucracies. Indeed, whenever the continental governments are reproached by some of us liberty-folk for taking possession in so peremptory a manner of the bodies and minds of the people and converting them into administration material, they may not unreasonably remark—if they happen to be in a philosophic mood—that the same reproaches should be addressed, with even greater pertinency, to their enemy, the dynamiter, who dynamites us all with the happiest impartiality on the off-chance of impressing somebody or other with some portion of his own rather mixed views. Indeed, a touch of what is almost comic is introduced into the lurid matter by the fact that the views of the dynamiter, to which we are so unpleasantly sacrificed, are, as his best friend must admit, as yet very imperfectly arranged in his own consciousness. Although I am somewhat deficient in sympathy with most governments, yet I must confess that it is a little hard either for them or for us, the public, to be dynamited for not having already embraced theories which are still, intellectually speaking, in a half-born, unshaped condition,—such as, for example, let us say, the gospel of anarchistic communism. Foreign governments have, however, as I think, an unavowed reason of their own for not loving the dynamiter, independent of any philosophical objections they may feel to the intellectual incoherences on his part. Conscience makes cowards of us all. Deep down in their consciousness lurks a dim perception of the truth, that between him and them exists an unrecognised blood-relationship, that the thing of which they have such horror is something more than a satire, an exaggeration, a caricature of themselves, that, if the truth is to be fairly acknowledged, it is their very own child, both the product of and the reaction against the methods of "governing" men and women, which they have employed with so unsparing a hand.* Poor old Saturn, as he nods upon his seat, begins to feel that things are not quite so comfortable to-day as they were yesterday, that his family are not altogether at one with him, and that his own power has been suddenly brought face to face with a new power, which possibly may prove the stronger of the two. Our good rulers are right to have their misgivings. We live in an age of active evolution, and the art of government is evolving like everything else round us. Dynamite is its latest and least comfortable development. It is a purer essence of government, more concentrated and intensified, than has ever yet been employed. It is government in a nutshell, government stripped, as some of us aver, of all its dearly beloved fictions, ballot-boxes, political parties, House of Commons oratory, and all the rest of it.

* The two things often run into each other; each generation, for example, being both product and reaction in its relation to the preceding generation.

How, indeed, is it possible to govern more effectively, or in more abbreviated form, than to say: "Do this—or don't do this—unless you desire that a pound of dynamite should be placed to-morrow evening in your ground-floor study." It is the perfection, the *ne plus ultra*, of government. Indeed, if we poor liberty-folk, we voluntaryists, who are at such intellectual discount just at present, and at whom none is too mean to fling his stone—if we, who detest the root idea at the bottom of all governing—the compelling of people to do what they don't want to do, the compelling of them to accept the views and become the tools of other persons—wished to find an object-lesson to set before those governments of to-day which have not yet learnt to doubt about their property in human material, where could we find anything more impressive than the dynamiter, with his tin canister and his supply of horse-shoe nails? "Here is your own child. This is what your doctrine of deified force, this is what your contempt of human rights, this is what your property in men and women leads to."

About the actual character of those who throw bombs there are two very different versions. To some persons they simply represent a childish, theatrical, vain type of men and women, who, endowed with more than their share of animal ferocity, and having exhausted the pleasures of living, wish to flutter some small bit of the world before they leave it. The *Times* correspondent wrote (February 26): "Ravachol was a . . . . brute, resembling a hyæna rather than a man; . . . . Vaillant an odious malefactor, impelled by hatred and passion for notoriety." To their own friends the bomb-throwers appear in a very different light. They are heroes, devoted to their ideas, equally ready to sacrifice themselves and everybody else to those ideas. A correspondent writes:

"Vaillant was a real student. His authors were Darwin, Spencer, Ibsen, &c. During the short time between his arrest and his trial he devoured no less than seven solid scientific works. When will 'society' understand that these acts of warfare are almost invariably undertaken by persons of exceptional mental power and moral grit; never by the ignorant rough, the commonplace assassin, the homicidal maniac, or morbid sentimentalist, desirous of posthumous notoriety? The thought which, at a certain stage, and conditioned in a given way, issues in this action is far away too big and all-powerful for minor motives and selfish considerations. One hears it said, right from a full heart, now and again: 'Though nothing but infamy cover my name now and for all time, yet let me do the utmost that I can.' They are none of them moral cowards."

Continuing, about Ravachol, my correspondent writes:

"I thought all that vilifying by the newspapers of one of the finest, tenderest, most social creatures might be allowed to go for what it is worth. This is what his personal friend ——— says of him: 'Chivalrous to women, infinitely, pitifully loving to children, an honest, steady workman, a brave

struggler against the unemployed difficulties, and, at last . . . . a soldier against what he had bit by bit come to see as the root cause of his fellows' 'misery.' He hated no person. They never do. His throttling of the aged usurer was almost an accident. He meant to have his stolen money for . . . . propaganda expenses. . . . . The old chap surprised him at his appropriation . . . . and he stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth; and as he was ninety, he was too old to bear the gagging."

Some of us might remark that if you undertake to gag old men of ninety—well, well, we will let the writer continue:

"Ravachol had not homicide in his mind or direct purpose ever, only protest and seizure (for moral use) of stolen money. Ravachol was at one time an ardent Christian, seeing in that doctrine social hope and a message to the poor. He kept his principles, but changed their form. One day Ravachol was walking with ——— through the slums of Lyons. A little neglected baby sat barefoot in the gutter. Ravachol stooped, lifted it up, pressed it to his breast, like any mother, and the tears came. 'Can any revolt,' he said, 'be unjustifiable against a society that treats its little children in this way?' He then became taciturn and absent-minded through the rest of the walk."

There are the two pictures as regards the character of the men. We must each strike the balance for ourselves. For myself, I have no hesitation in saying that men may have great devotion, and may possess the most admirable qualities, whilst they serve their causes with the most detestable weapons. History crowds its pages with illustrations of this truth: Marcus Aurelius, who permits the Christian persecutions; the chivalrous Louis IX., who considers "three inches of steel" the best method of converting heretics; Sir T. More, who superintends the ghastly torture-chamber. But when we have admitted in the frankest way this truth, there is another greater truth to be placed by the side of it. All this use of bad weapons is one of the most fatal curses that afflict the world. No good cause—however good in itself—is worthy of bad weapons. If ever the world was presented with a saying of the highest wisdom and deepest truth, it was when we were told not to do evil that good might come. All the fighters, from the unscrupulous politician of a low type, who consents to trick or flatter for the advantage of himself or his party, up to the dynamiter, who seeks to terrorise society for the sake of views of which he himself has but a slight understanding, are all fighting together in one vast army to render true progress impossible. Progress can never be won by the weapons of trickery, flattery, or terrorism. The use of all such weapons only means the wearisome passage from one set of evils to another.

There are some reformers by dynamite who imagine that they are on the side of Liberty. Poor Liberty! As if Liberty, that moves by the path of moral evolution, that moves so slowly, just because she cannot be created out of hand by those forms and systems which are established to-day and swept aside to-morrow—Liberty, that depends

upon inward processes in the consciousness of men, upon the gradual recognition by every person in every other person of his inherent inalienable right to be himself and lead the self-chosen life—as if Liberty, in this one true sense, could have anything to do with a tin canister filled with blacksmith's nails and flung into the midst of a body of old and middle-aged gentlemen, industriously playing at the nineteenth century game of inventing rewards and devising restrictions for their fellow-men, or of peaceful citizens sipping their coffee! Friends of Liberty! No. Even the most clear-headed of the believers in St. Dynamite understand as little of Liberty as they understand of themselves. Inventors of improved and expedited processes of government perhaps they may be; or avengers they may be, avengers as fungi are avengers, when we establish the conditions that favour decay; or as disease may be, when we recklessly depart from the conditions that maintain health; but don't let them dream of themselves as friends of Liberty. To be a friend of Liberty is one thing; to be a half-automatic reaction from a bad system is another thing. It was necessary, it was written in the Sibylline books, it was predestined of long ago, that they should presently appear upon the world's stage; it was inherent in the order of things that the offence should come; and—we may add, as of old—woe to them through whom the offence cometh! How could you build up these lawless, irresponsible, all-grasping governments, and not expect to see some dark shadows, some grotesque imitations, some terrible caricatures, begotten of them? How could you deify force in one form before the eyes of all men, and not expect sooner or later to see other deifications set up at its side? And now that at last in the fulness of time the thing, which was to be, is amongst us, that the rival force-deity has appeared and is fighting for his throne, it is hard to restrain a somewhat bitter smile, as Europe looks on in utter bewilderment at what is to it a very ugly as well as a very unaccountable phenomenon.

In truth, the new deity is not in the least unaccountable. He is only too easy to account for. Both his moral and his physical genesis lie at the door of the European governments. To almost all of them, we may in turn say: "Tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin." In their different degrees they are, nearly all of them, alike; for long years they have ploughed and sown and harrowed the soil; and lo! the crop is here. If any government thought that it could indefinitely go on turning men and women into administration material, fastening its grip closer and closer on their property, their lives, and their beliefs, until the chief purpose of human existence became—half-unconsciously, perhaps—in the eyes of these governmentalists, to supply a State revenue out of blood and sweat, whilst, fed and nourished by this State revenue, the grandeur of the governments was ever

growing and growing, with officials magnified into creatures of a semi-divine order, and a splendid and highly exciting game carried on by means of all this annexed property, and all these annexed lives, against other governments, equally engaged in playing the same splendid and exciting game—if they thought that this life of the gods ruling at their ease in the empyrean would flow on for ever in a happy and unbroken stream, that nations, made of living men and women, might be turned wholesale into low forms of government property, without some strange phenomena, without some startling products and reactions breaking through the calm of the surface, we can only say of them, that, true as ever to the bureaucratic tradition, they were not in contact with the realities of flesh and blood,—that they were, in an old phrase of Mr. Gladstone, "living up in a balloon." Two things were sure to arise, and they have arisen. In the moral world some men would begin to look at these gigantic structures of power, to ask questions about them, to finger them, and to probe deep to see on what moral foundations they rested; whilst in the world of daily life some men, less patient than their fellows, would be maddened by the close painful grinding of the wheels of the great machines, left wholly to the control of officials, and would become the right stuff for the wildest counsels to work in. Let us first take the moral genesis of the dynamiter.

In old days few questions were raised about power. The hurly-burly was universal. Whoever could get power got it, and those who could not went without it. But, in the due course of things, the time came when, with many flourishes of trumpets, the people were invited to take part themselves in this thing called power, to build it up with their own hands, and to look upon it—at all events on political platforms—as their own special property. Then came a great development of government—popular government it was called; and government undertakings and departments sprang up in their multitude, just as we have seen on occasion bubble companies spring up on all sides, when some wave of financial excitement ran through society. But the devil, as usual, drove his trade in the night season. He came and sowed just one of those little seeds, which for a time seem so utterly insignificant, and yet out of which grow in their season such big consequences. How much of this devil's seed was sown by Mr. Herbert Spencer, with his almost unique power of seeing the whole where other men see only the part, by Emerson, by Mill, by W. Von Humboldt, by Buckle, by Bentley, by Dumont, and by other fellow-labourers; how much of it was sown, quite unconsciously, by Darwin, who shattered the idea of artificial protection; how much of it was sown, at least in its potentialities, by a long line of predecessors of these writers, running back, if we choose, to Milton himself, it is not for me to inquire

here; it is enough that the seed did get into the world after the fashion of all other devil's seed, and the consequence was that a time came when the well-known phrases, "the power of the people," "the will of the people," "the will of the majority," which had so often been spoken *ore rotundo*, with a real sort of thunder of their own, when directed against things still more unreal than themselves, began to ring a little hollow, and to provoke critical inquiry into what was the true substance underlying these mighty oratorical expressions. What is this power? it was asked by the critical philosophers. What are the foundations on which it rests? What are its limits? Are there then no rights, no moral conditions, superior to this voting power; or is this power a sort of divinity come into the world, supreme beyond all question and challenge, illimitable in its desires and its will, before whom all men are to fall down and worship? Do individuals, then, come morally naked into the world? are they without choice and will as regards their own faculties, without authority and power of consent as regards their own actions, in presence of this vague, half-known, shifting, impalpable thing—the will of the majority? Have they ever consented to render this fealty? Have they ever affixed their seal to a charter—a charter of lost rights—signing away possession of body and soul? And what sort of a philosophical doctrine is this,—that numbers confer unlimited rights, that they take from some persons all rights over themselves, and vest these rights in others? Are not rights,—things equal, universal, immutable, as long as their own conditions are preserved? How, then, can the rights of three men exceed the rights of two men? In what possible way can the rights of three men absorb the rights of two men, and make them as if they had never existed? Rights are not things which grow by using the multiplication table. Here are two men. If there are such things as rights, these two men must evidently start with equal rights. How shall you, then, by multiplying one of the two, even a thousand times over, give him larger rights than the other, since each new unit that appears only brings with him his own rights; or how, by multiplying one of the units up to the point of exhausting the powers of the said multiplication table, shall you take from the other the rights with which he started? Now look a little more closely at the matter, continued the philosophers. What are these rights which—as we must assume, if the world is not to be given over to a blind, trackless, moral confusion—each possesses? Must they not be rights, in the case of each person, over his own body and mind? Is it possible to suppose, without absurdity, that a man should have no rights over his own body and mind, and yet have a $\frac{1}{100000000}$th share in unlimited rights over all other bodies and minds? If he does not begin by possessing rights over himself, by what wonderful flying leap can he arrive at rights over others? yet, if he once possess these

rights over himself, how can he ever be deprived of them, and become the statutable property of others? and again, where can a crowd of individuals get rights from, unless it be from the individuals themselves, who make up the crowd? and yet, if the individuals possess these rights over themselves, as individuals, what place is left for rights belonging to the crowd, as a crowd? You may appoint a committee, a government, or whatever you like to call it, and delegate to it powers already possessed by the individuals, but by no possibility can this delegated body be seised with larger powers than those possessed by the individuals who called it into existence; by no possibility can the creature possess greater authority than those who created it. It is easy to understand that an individual can delegate full powers—powers of life and death—over himself; but how can he delegate powers, which he himself does not possess, over another individual? You may give your own rights away, but you cannot possibly give away, however generous your mood, the rights of your fellow-man. If, however, you persist in attributing such powers to the delegated body, please say exactly whence—from what human or superhuman source—it has drawn them, since it is plain that it has not drawn them from the individuals. Nor is it possible to escape from the difficulty by denying human rights, and declaring that rights are only imaginary things, for, in that case, government itself has no rights. By such sweeping and reckless denial of rights you make of government the very outlaw of outlaws. All that it has done or is doing would then be absolutely void of moral foundations. All its regulations, its takings, its compulsions, would then simply rest upon what is convenient in the opinions of some persons, and what could be enforced by their superior strength; and, therefore, of course, it would be liable, as the mere product of convenience, to be removed in any way, or by any weapon, that is convenient and superior to itself in strength.

The war was also carried on from other less abstract points of view, and in less internecine fashion. The nation is divided, say, into two equal halves; can it, then, be maintained, it was asked, with due respect to mental sanity, that "the odd man"—that most remarkable production of Parliamentarism—should be competent to assign all lives, all property, to one half or the other? Moreover, if the majority is the chosen vessel of power, if it is the instrument of human redemption, if rightly it holds the minority in the hollow of its hand, still, as a matter of fact, it is hardly ever the majority that does govern. Majorities are great, sluggish, inert bodies, made to be tricked and captured by enterprising spirits, and necessarily moved and directed by minorities within themselves. Moreover, the tendency of modern governments is more and more to fall under the rule of these active groups, one group fetching and carrying for

another group, on condition that it shall be fetched and carried for in its own turn.

It must be frankly admitted that the liberty-philosophers only acted directly upon a small group of minds outside themselves. Popular government was a new plaything in the world, and to an immense number of persons of very various kinds, who were pursuing very various objects, it offered almost irresistible attractions. But the ferment of new ideas works in strange and unexpected ways. Whilst the mass of those who enjoyed playing the great game, as a sort of perpetual boat-race or cricket-match *in excelsis*, and the still greater mass of those who hoped to better their condition in life by employing the huge hundred-handed machine, with its inexhaustible resources, to do services for them, refused to consider what right three men possessed to take over by some voting process the lives of two men and convert them into their own property; still "the divinity that doth hedge" a State was shaken, and the revolutionary forces no longer simply consisted of those who wished to turn us into a condition of all-State, but also of dissidents who believed in the unorganised individual, and without any clear definition even to themselves of their own views, wished to make a clean sweep of the State as it exists to-day. The liberty-philosophers had but slightly affected the rich, and the more or less well-to-do classes, or the mass of the workers, but their word had fallen into patches of revolutionary soil, and the crop was growing strongly and quickly. The revolutionists have their function in this world equally with the rest of us—although it is seldom what they themselves believe it to be—and it was in their case, as in other cases, to force upon the attention of the world a truth, a deeper, wider truth than their own, with which, at all events until the stimuli became slightly painful, our governing friends had very little intention to concern themselves.

Of course answers were made to the philosophers who had attacked the moral foundations of power. It was asked in reply, which was most fitting, that three persons should govern two, or two should govern three? To which pungent question the philosophers again replied, that in all ordinary matters there is no right on the part of the three to govern the two, or of the two to govern the three. Both must be content to govern themselves. Self-ruling, not each-other-ruling, was the goal in front of the world. It is merely, as they contended, one of the assumptions of governing pedantry to suppose that the whole five ought to be made to walk in the same path and wear the same intellectual uniform.* In this world our function is

* Of course the difference between two separate groups of cases should be clearly seen. Where there is a bit of property which belongs to the five collectively (the five agreeing to regulate it on the majority principle) and which does not belong to the five separately, as individuals, there, in such case, the rule of majority and minority is devoid of injustice. It may be a harsh rule, which hereafter we may see our way to soften and modify, but it calls for no moral lightning directed against its head. A bit

not to make people do, but to let them do—especially, be it said, by removing impediments of our own clumsy invention. Next it was urged in defence of power that the part which falls to discontented minorities is to turn themselves into majorities. The remedy has the slight defect of drawing upon an imagined future and ignoring a real present. I am walking along a road, and some one stronger than I knocks me down and begins to cudgel me about the head. I call to a passer-by to help me and to drag the villain off. He stands, however, with his hands in his pockets, and cheerfully tells me that it is all right; that I ought not to object. If I only practise the use of a cudgel myself with sufficient zeal for a month, or perhaps a year, I shall then be in a position to cudgel my assailant quite as effectively about the head as he is now cudgelling me. I reply that I don't believe in cudgelling heads, whether it is my head or the head of somebody else. The passer-by, however, merely shrugs his shoulders, by way of telling me that it is idle to object to what is so excellent a custom, and one which is universally practised in the district. Thereupon I find nothing more to say, and have to endure my cudgelling as best I can. Of course, the retort, however good as a bit of rhetoric, is of small value as regards its logic, for, in addition to the pleasant irony of telling an insignificant section, who are aggrieved, that they are presently to govern the country, there are many injuries which the majority of the future, however much it may approach to omnipotence, can with difficulty redress. It can hardly unhang a man, or wipe out of existence the weeks he has spent in prison, or give back property that has been taken from him and spent, or build up some great voluntary institution which has been destroyed, or invent redress for restrictions placed upon the faculties of an individual during the best years of his life, or remove the twist it has given to national character by unwise and harsh measures.

Then came the national-life or national-unity argument, and we were told in a rather vague and specious manner that we were all bonded together in one society, and that it was needful that the one society should grow together in the same way and under the same influences, which perhaps it might not do, if we did not freely compel each other. That argument was more flowery than convincing, since in all the other forms of daily society men live together fairly well without establishing a system of compulsion, and no one had yet ventured to get up and propose that, for the sake of improving the general good temper and happiness, we should

of common property must be dealt with on some plan; and for the moment the minority and majority system, even if it have certain defects, may serve. But the usual application of the majority and minority system is for the purpose of dealing with the faculties and property of individuals, which, except so far as the *whole* body of individuals, as individuals, consent, by no moral process whatsoever (the great process of force-appropriation always excepted) can be made to fall under the control of the majority.

vote upon the practices and habits which make up the daily life of each of us. Moreover, it was pointed out that it was the spirit of respect for, and concession towards, each other, not the minute regulation of innumerable acts, which made life pleasant and enjoyable. Let a man keep the unwritten law, Emerson had said, if he really desires to fulfil his duty to his neighbour. It was, however, a truth taught by Mr. Herbert Spencer that most effectually withered the rhetorical foliage of this particular argument. When he wrote "progress is difference," he wrote the doom of many pretentious State undertakings, whether systems of religion, education, trade, poor relief, insurance, or any other member of the same unprosperous family. In those three simple words, a revolution, mental and material, lay enfolded; and it would be hard, I suspect, to place by their side any other three words in our language that have ever been so charged with deadly force, as regards the human institutions into the midst of which they have been flung. Those three words always seem to me a very fine example of the dynamite which it is worth while carrying in your coat pocket and chucking about in the midst of society. Then there were the State-morality people, and they were nearly as flowery in their language as the unity people. The State was father, mother, or goodness knows what, controlling with its superior wisdom the rash impulses of the children. It was replied that the State was not father or mother, but it was only one rash set of the children—and perhaps not the best set—controlling for their own purposes another set of the children; that there was nothing very moral in controlling other people—the worst rulers had always been glad to perform that office for others; that what was moral was self-control; and that there was no possibility of the compelled man becoming a moral man, for he was reduced to the position of a person with his hands tied, from whom had been taken the power of choosing the good thing for its own sake. In fine, that as you extended the area of compulsion, the practice ground of morality shrank in proportion, until at last morality itself, or the free choice of good and the free rejection of evil, would become as extinct as the iguanodon. Then there were the *laissez-faire* objectors. They cried, half in contempt and half in exultation, "Poor *laissez-faire* is dead." It seemed enough to reply, *Si quæris rationem, circumspice;* to ask what profitable material thing, what invention, what addition to the comforts and refinements of the race, what work of art, what scientific discovery, what moral idea, what destructive criticism, was a product of the governments and not of the individual; what improvement in their own work had not been forced on the governments from outside, or borrowed from some example given by free enterprise; and what would be the prospects of the race, if the governments could no longer count upon the services of those brains which had been formed in a free world,

but must wholly depend upon the brains formed in the petty and contracted world of their own official departments? Then the deadly waste of compulsion was insisted on. Which was most profitable, it was asked, to employ one-half of the race in perpetually tying the hands of the other half, or in leaving all hands free; which was the most hopeful process, to leave every man uninterfered with to do his own work with his whole heart and soul, or to make each man the supervisor of his neighbour's work? Next came the short-cut men, the hard-headed, practical men, as they rather ostentatiously called themselves, who were for doing what was wanted with the easiest instrument that came to hand. In reply to their appeal to dismiss all discussion as regards theory, and to push on with the work itself, it was pointed out that what educated men and developed strong qualities of character was the doing of a thing rather than the thing done, that the doing of a thing by free men and women, without compulsion, without officialism, with much experiment and comparison of method, so that the better methods gradually disclosed themselves out of the resulting failure and success, with strong interest evoked on all sides, and with friendly co-operation and friendly ties created between those directly and those indirectly concerned, formed the true education, intellectually and morally, of the individuals of a nation. Apart from this practical education, all progress would be partial, lop-sided, disappointing, and even dangerous; that the very ease with which official power created huge systems was an evil and not an advantage, since they were created with insufficient discussion, experience and knowledge, as well as insufficient effort on the part of the individual, and each huge system so created not only involved terrible financial burdens but stood in the way of the future introduction of better systems. About this stage, however, of the argument, the good Giant Power's temper began to grow a little short. "Why should he argue any more," he asked with much logic, "when the fact was patent to all that he was Giant Power?" and in his impatience with the philosophers and their questions he dashed his great club on the ground. Unfortunately the club landed on his favourite great toe which was just recovering from one of those attacks of gout to which well-fed giants are subject, and that exhausted the last remnant of his patience. Then I am sorry to say he took to using strong language, crying out in his pain: "What the —— does it all signify? What do you want reasons for? I am Giant Power, and that's reason enough. I choose, and you must."

Then it was, as we may fondly imagine, that took place the clarifying of certain minds. Then it was that all verbiage and rhetoric were thrown on one side, and it was plainly said: "We, the majority, intend to govern. We care nothing for abstract reasoning or imaginary human rights. We are the strongest, and in virtue of

that fact we will govern just as we choose. There shall be no law except our will," then it was that the gathering mental reaction against governments came to a head, and the dynamiter with his creed of unorganised force against organised force was born. Then it was, whilst the great mass of the modern world waked and slept, toiled and feasted, in their unconsciousness, that the pains of travail began, and a new thing, hideous and terrible, came to the birth. From that hour, and thenceforth, the governments of Europe were face to face with a rival who should dispute with them their rights and their powers. The new claimant for the government of men was not impeded by any diffidence or modesty of temperament. He saw no reason why he should not rule as well as any other Giant Power. With a hideous leer upon his face, he turned to the governments and said:

"You govern, you do what you choose, you take possession of body and mind, you wring from this subject human material all that you imagine that you want for your own purposes, you send men hither and thither to be shot for the quarrels that it amuses you to make, you burden them with all the restrictions and vexations that in your belief can add some little thing to your own security or convenience or dignity, and you do it just because you are strong enough to do it—because you have discovered and perfected the trick of the majority. You say that you have a majority on your side—that this majority is strong enough to inflict its will upon all others. Let it be so; I make no pretence to possess a majority; a minority is good enough for me—a small minority of desperate reckless men, believing in their ideas, and not caring much for their lives. But such as we are, we, too, have power. It is not like your power, disguised under innumerable forms and ceremonies; it it just what it professes to be—power, brutal, naked, and not ashamed. Come now, let us reason for a moment together. Where, after all, is the difference between us? We both of us are believers in power; we both of us desire to fashion the world to our own liking by means of power. The only difference between us is in the form of the power which we each make use of. Your power depends upon clever electioneering devices, upon tricks of oratory, upon organised wealth and numbers; mine is the power that can be carried in the pocket of any ragged coat, if the owner of the ragged coat is sufficiently endowed with courage and ideas. We are both seeking to govern. Why, then, do you turn your faces from me, flout me, and disown me? I am your brother, younger, it is true, than you, a little down in the world and disreputable perhaps, but for all that, child of the same family, equal in rank, and claiming by the same title-deeds as yourselves. True, I am not magnificently equipped as you are; I have no court as you have, no army, no public institutions, no national treasury, no titles, no uniforms resplendent with decorations; I have only a few fanatical followers; and yet, perhaps, as regards the true test of power, I can command the fears of men and possess myself of their obedience quite as effectually as you can. Let us greet each other and shake hands, even if we are opposed. Believe me, though you shrink from recognising me, I am in very deed your own brother, your co-equal, flesh of your flesh, and spirit of your spirit. Henceforth from to-day we divide the government of the world between us. You are the force of the majority; and I am the force of the minority."

On some such wise, morally speaking, was the birth of the

dynamiter. We need not inquire how many of the party had studied Herbert Spencer, had found a corner for "On Liberty" in their book-shelves, had made extracts from Emerson in their note-book, or were penetrated either by the subtleties of Proudhon or the passion of Bakounin. It was sufficient that the philosophers had scattered their devil's seed, and the wind had carried it, as it listed, to the highways and byways of the world. A disintegrating influence was in the air, and the State superstition—if I may speak so irreverently of what most of my friends so industriously cultivate—was powerless to resist it. A search had been made for the foundations on which the State power and its dominion over the faculties of men rested, and unless it were the bare material fact that a majority of three men were stronger, more capable of imposing their will, than a minority of two men, no foundations were forthcoming. But the moment that this truth—that no moral foundations for unlimited and undefined power could by any intellectual ingenuity be discovered anywhere—that if the world rested upon the elephant, and the elephant upon the tortoise, still the tortoise rested only in space—the moment that this truth was grasped in all its significance by the quick perceptions of the nineteenth century, the moment that all rhetorical sophistries were swept aside, and it was seen that, morally speaking, three men had no better right to govern two men than two men to govern three, then at once it became open to any revolutionary section of the minority, who considered that war was to be met by war, and were not impeded by any moral scruples as regards the use of means, to equalise or reverse the conditions of power by finding some new agent which had "governing force" in it. This new agent was supplied by dynamite, and from that day it has become war—war between those who govern openly by majorities and those who govern secretly by dynamite. I am content to undertake the defence neither of the one nor of the other.

As regards the material genesis of the dynamiter, few people in this country—where we are only at the beginning of bureaucracy—realise what the working of the great official machines has been—the pedantry, the cruelty, the maddening influence. Take a few stray examples from France that occur to me as I write, not collected with any care, but mere samples drawn from the bulk. Do you remember the terrorism that existed a good many years ago in a well-known provincial town, where some men personated officials, and a number of women—*not daring to protest*—fell into their hands? Have you ever read Guyot's account of the Police of Morals?—heaven save the mark! Or to pass to much less serious examples, do you remember the graphic account given in the *Times*, perhaps three years ago, by a lady who, recovering from an infectious disease, was sent to a special hospital in Paris—the filth, the discomfort, the no

responsibility, the no management? There would be a long chapter to write about the State hospitals of Europe; let us hope some day, for the good of the world, it may be written by one who has not learnt to look at these things with official eyes. I will give only one experience. A well-known English surgeon visited a famous hospital in —— and found a certain operation being performed upon a woman. It is a very painful operation, especially when certain precautions are not observed, and, according to some English surgical ideas, it is an obsolete operation, which ought never to be performed. In this case it was being performed without the precautions that would have rendered it less painful, and without chloroform. Why? Simply because there was a classification of operations, and this operation was not considered of sufficient dignity to be placed amongst those for which chloroform was used. The wretched woman was shrieking and imploring help from all the saints, with the effect upon the Englishman that, *unused as he was to pain in his own hospital*, he could with difficulty remain through the operation. Take the case of the religious sisters driven out of the French hospitals, as was distinctly stated, against the wishes of the medical staff, for the mere sake of a bit of odium anti-theologicum, and the patients handed over to an altogether inferior set of nurses. Take the exemption of officials from ordinary jurisdiction as regards their official acts.* Take the theatrical bullyings of the accused in court, or the extortions of confessions in the prison cell, or the power of the magistrate to examine the accused "personally, and in private," and to send him back "into solitary confinement for an indefinite number of times," recalling him for examination when he chooses; ". . . . there are said to be cases of prisoners wrongfully confessing to a charge in order to put an end to the worrying torture of private examination" ("Paris Law Courts," pp. 4 and 5). Take the system of ubiquitous official spying, constantly on the edge, as it is believed, of provocation to crime; or take again the case that lately excited such unfavourable comment in England—the two Englishmen wrongly accused of picking pockets on a race-course, arrested, and not allowed to communicate with friends; or the account that was published by an Englishman in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of his arrest

* Professor Dicey writes ("The Law of the Constitution," p. 184): "If we take France as the type of a Continental State, we may assert with substantial accuracy that officials—under which word should be included all persons employed in the service of the State—are, in their official capacity, protected from the ordinary law of the land, and subject in many respects only to official law administered by official bodies." Speaking of our own country (p. 183), he writes: "With us every official, from a Prime Minister down to a constable or a collector of taxes, is under the same responsibility for every act done without legal justification as any other citizen." So in "The Paris Law Courts" (p. 2), Mr. Moriarty writes: "In France, these actions (to which a government official is a party) are tried in special administrative courts, and by special administrative rules," and he adds later (p. 7) "that these courts have a strong official bias, and actions laid by private individuals against State officials rarely succeed."

and imprisonment in Paris, with the little incident, that reads as if taken from last century, of the rats and mice that shared his cell—an incident that one is the more inclined to believe from the facts which were reported in our English papers, and which, if true, reflect very unfavourably upon prison management, that one of the first outbreaks of cholera in the suburbs of Paris in the recent attack took place in one of the prisons; and again that typhus broke out last year, not in one, but in several Paris prisons (*Westminster Gazette*, April 8, 1893).

No fact, however, that I know tends to show more vividly the official contempt which grows up in bureaucratic countries for the accused, and the official cynicism and arrogance with which the law is administered, than certain facts recorded in the book from which I have already quoted, "The Paris Law Courts." This book, which has been translated by Mr. Moriarty, is written by different writers who each take a special part of the subject. Speaking of civil cases, the writer says:

> "There is hardly a lawsuit in Paris, even among those classed as summary proceedings, which does not last a year. For ordinary cases a much longer space of time must be allowed. . . . . I know of few which have not lasted for two or three years. In the first chamber of the Tribunal one must no longer count by years but by lustres" (p. 17).

But, grave as is the condemnation of the civil side of the system contained in these words, a far darker shadow rests upon the administration of the criminal side. There are three grades of criminal courts: (1) The court of simple police, where infractions of police regulations (legal peccadilloes) are tried, or, if tried is an inappropriate word, are at all events punished. The fines range from 1 franc to 15 francs (or five days' imprisonment). The defendants often do not appear. "In the majority of cases the delinquents prefer to suffer judgment by default," which is hardly to be wondered at, since, "as a rule, the court of simple police decides cases summarily without listening to any defence" (see p. 140 *et seq.*), despatching them as if "by electricity." There is but one police court (*i.e.*, court of the lowest grade) for the twenty arrondissements of Paris. About 200 cases are taken at each sitting, which lasts "from an hour and a half to three hours. This only gives about one minute per each case" (p. 141). This lightning-like or electrical despatch of business is secured by putting the delinquents into batches, according to the nature of their offence. (2) Next come the Correctional Courts, in which misdemeanours are tried. In these courts, again, the same vicious principle exists. In one of these courts we are told that the President pushed through seventy-four cases in two and a half hours (p. 152). In another of these courts, "between noon and five o'clock sentence is passed upon a herd of 108 wretches arrested by the police,

some in one place, some in another." "They are brought into the dock in batches of ten, taken at random" (p. 164).

It is not, however, simply in criminal matters, it is almost everywhere that you find examples of official arrogance, cruelty, and incapacity, not arising, as I hold, from bad intention, but from the corrupting effect of power which is uncontrolled—all power, remember, being necessarily uncontrolled where the area of officialism is large. It is plain that, just as this area of official management is extended, so all effective control on the part of a busy public must necessarily grow weaker and weaker. I call to mind that many years ago the *Daily News* published (from an occasional correspondent, I think—not its own) an account of how stray dogs in Paris were destroyed after being captured. They were simply thrust on to great hooks, which pierced the throat, and were so left to die as they could. The thing impressed me a good deal as a young man, and, having to go to Paris, I saw a gentleman who was interested in the matter, who told me, rather despondingly, that they had not succeeded as yet in getting it changed, and spoke but doubtfully of their being able to do so.* There, in miniature, is the exact picture of the bureaucratic State. In this instance, dogs; in the next instance, men and women. Any cruelty, any stupidity, any incapacity, may go on indefinitely, just because there is no living, acting public opinion to scorch the thing up into tinder. There can't be such public opinion where people are unceasingly administered. There may be revolutionary forces smouldering at the bottom, but the living, healthful opinion of every day, acknowledging its responsibility for what is officially done, cannot exist among the timorous, compressed self-distrustful human particles who live under the heel of the officials. Now take other matters, none of them, perhaps, in itself inflicting a grievous burden, but still expressing significantly enough the oppressive and vexatious whole of which they form a part.† Take the ludicrous prohibition about sea-water. An unfortunate seaside resident may not go and dip his bucket into great Father Ocean and carry off water for his bath, as such liberty might

* I cannot, of course, say that the matter was reported correctly and without any exaggeration. The *Daily News'* account seemed to me, at the time, simply and circumstantially given. I mentioned the affair to a French Minister, who was good enough to promise to inquire into it. The latest exploit of the authorities, in tying a number of dogs to posts in order to rehearse upon them the effect of such bombs as are used by the dynamiters, is another example of the stupid cruelty which we have gradually learnt to expect from those who believe that they civilise—well, if not themselves, at all events the public—by their methods of thinking and acting for it.

† The cases which I have quoted I think are accurately given; but it is very easy to miss changes in the laws or in the administration of another country. One has also to bear in mind that, in the rapid provision of daily news, facts cannot be always quite correctly reported by foreign correspondents, and wrong impressions once given are not always subsequently corrected. Being away from home, and not in possession of my notes and papers, I have been obliged to trust to memory, and I have not given the dates of the cases referred to; but I could do this later in almost all, if not all, cases to any person desiring it.

interfere with the revenue derived from salt. I would commend this fact to any innocent-minded land-nationaliser as a trifling but significant example of the spirit in which governments deal with so-called national property. So, too, if I am rightly informed, no ordinary person is allowed to fish in the sea within the three-mile limit—that ordinary right of the citizen being turned into a bit of State property and reserved for special classes of persons; again I bespeak the attention of the innocent-minded land-nationaliser. So also notice the petty tyranny which forbids a child being called by a new name, requiring, I believe, that the name given should be one that has been already in use; or the stringent rules affecting joint-stock companies, rules which, in the opinion of the *Economist*, would in this country prevent the best men from acting as directors; or the vexatious formalities that have surrounded public meetings; or the perfectly absurd extension of the law of libel—already most absurdly exaggerated with us—under which, for example, a Paris firm that retailed a newspaper published in America was recently held responsible for the contents; or the liberty of the press itself, which is occasionally conceded in moments of indulgence, like sweetmeats to a child, then snatched away again by the rude hand of the State. Referring to this matter, Professor A. Dicey writes ("The Law of the Constitution," p. 256): "To sum the whole matter up, the censorship (of the press) though constantly abolished has been constantly revived in France, because the exertion of discretionary powers by the Government has been and still is in harmony with French laws and institutions." The recent exaggerated and unreasoning legislation passed in a panic after the bomb explosion in the Chamber is a striking example of this tendency to fall back into the arms of Government and to renounce vital rights whenever there is public alarm. In another passage Professor Dicey says, that notwithstanding recent legislation in favour of a free press, the notion (in France) seems still to exist that press offences "require in some sort exceptional treatment." To continue the list of petty vexations—the suppression (before trial in court) of an ingenious person who discovered a way of cleaning and renovating playing-cards, his machinery being seized, and his trade stopped, because he might have diminished the profits arising from the card-tax; or the harassing proceedings lately instituted against aliens; or the law under which persons who have been detected committing adultery (*in flagrante delicto*) may be haled off by the police before the Correctional Court; or the disregard of truth in official matters, and the suppression of inconvenient facts, such as those relating to the existence of cholera; or the quite incredible official persecution, resembling a legend imported from Timbuctoo, of a most eminent man like Leroy Beaulieu—it was fully described in the *Times* and the facts are given in a

special pamphlet—because the Government were afraid of his entrance into the Chamber; or the panic-begotten law that was lately passed, making it a crime to disturb confidence in the Government Savings Banks; or the still worse mixture of timidity as regards free speech and blind belief in punishment which led—on the charge of defaming the army—to the imprisonment of a man for declaring that the army was a school of licentiousness and most corrupting to young men in its influence; and the last piece of quite unnecessary intolerance which compels those preparing for the priesthood (I think it was also reported as regards those who had actually become priests) not simply to serve in the ambulance corps but in the ranks. Well, this is but a part, a small part, of the black list which might be drawn up against official France, as indeed it might be drawn up against official Germany, Austria, Italy and Spain—I need not perhaps include Russia or Turkey. I could myself extend it to many pages, and those who know France really well could extend it so as to fill a volume. Is there any occasion for wonder at such a state of things? It will always be so, say we liberty-folks, wherever the spirit of administration, the spirit of officialism, takes strong root in a country. Like the rest of us, the French people have their faults—their grave faults—but left to themselves, freed from this vexing and maddening rule of the officials, they would be, as I believe, a gay, friendly, bright-tempered people, charming Europe with their quick perceptions, their ingenuity and resource, their strong family instincts, their love of the bright side of things. But officialism is destroying that pleasant side of their character. It has entered like iron into their souls. It has developed envy and jealousy and fear and hatred of each other, whilst it makes of their country the dangerous explosive spot in Europe, because passions are so strong, and self-control—the child of liberty—is so slight.

What I have said of France might be said, with the necessary difference, of other European countries—each country being vexed and harassed by its bureaucrats, and each being affected in its own way according to the genius of the people. But in each country the general effect is the same. Almost every European Government is a legalised manufactory of dynamiters. Vexation piled upon vexation, restriction upon restriction, burden upon burden, the dynamiter is slowly hammered out everywhere on the official anvil. The more patient submit, but the stronger and more rebellious characters are maddened, and any weapon is considered right, as the weapon of the weaker against the stronger. It matters little that a great deal of what is done is done in the alleged interest of the people themselves. I myself have seen in England a clever industrious workman driven to the edge of revolt by the persecuting character of our education laws, and changed from a man ready to fight within the law to one who was

almost ready to fight outside it. There are men, not bad parents, who have passed from town to town to avoid this persecution; these are families who have broken up their homes and lived as they could, in their detestation of it. It is time that we laid aside this odious weapon of compulsion. More and more bitter will be the fruit of it as the years go on. Compulsion everywhere is a brutalising weapon. The English, with their faults—and there are plenty of them—are, I think, the most tender-hearted people anywhere on the earth. That tender-heartedness, both to each other and to animals, arises, as I believe, mainly from their past free life. They have never as yet been officialised; they have never as yet been turned into government material. Recently we have been reversing our traditions; but it is not yet too late to step back from the mire and the slough which lie in front of us. As yet we have only soiled our ankles, where other nations have waded deep. We inherit splendid traditions of voluntaryism, which hardly any other nation has inherited; and it is to voluntaryism, the inspiring genius of the English character, that we must look in the future, as we did in the past, for escape from all difficulties. If we cannot by reason, by influence, by example, by strenuous effort, and by personal sacrifice, mend the bad places of civilisation, we certainly cannot do it by force. Force is the very weakest and most treacherous of all human implements. The history of force is the history of the continuous crumbling away of every institution that has rested upon it. The irony of history has never faltered for a single generation. It is no mere paradox to say that to be strong with the world's strength is to be weak. Whatever on the one day looked to the eyes of men as if it could defy all attack, towering above subject things in its magnificence, and resting on what seemed its immovable and almost eternal foundations of force, on the morrow has gone to pieces as if it had been wholly built of rubble and clay. It would seem as if every institution possessed of overweening power—material power—has been pitilessly selected for destruction. The jealous gods have hated it, and ever since the days of Horace have aimed their lightnings at its head. There has been a curse pronounced against force, as force, which knows no exceptions in any country, in any time, or as regards any cause. The only thing that lasts through it all, that endures whilst the other perishes, is moral force—the word, the conviction, which attempts to bind no hands but acts only on the soul. As Emerson said—I don't remember his exact phrase—there is only one victory worth winning, the victory of principle, the victory over souls. To that belief we have to return, if we have ever held it; or to ascend to it, if it has never yet been counted amongst our intellectual possessions; and blessed, thrice blessed, will be the dynamiter, with all his cruelty and with all his insanity, if in his distorted features we learn to see as in a mirror a reflection of our own selves, and thus are compelled to

recognise the true character of the odious force-weapons with which we have warred against each other. If we cannot learn, if the only effect upon us of the presence of the dynamiter in our midst is to make us multiply punishments, invent restrictions, increase the number of our official spies, forbid public meetings, interfere with the press, put up gratings—as in one country they propose to do—in our House of Commons, scrutinise visitors under official microscopes, request them, as at Vienna, and I think now at Paris also, to be good enough to leave their great-coats in the vestibules—if we are, in a word, to trust to machinery, to harden our hearts, and simply to meet force with force, always irritating, always clumsy, and in the end fruitless, then I venture to prophesy that there lies before us a bitter and an evil time. We may be quite sure that force-users will be force-begetters. The passions of men will rise higher and higher; and the authorised and unauthorised governments—the government of the majority and of written laws, the government of the minority and of dynamite—will enter upon their desperate struggle, of which no living man can read the end. In one way and only one way can the dynamiter be permanently disarmed—by abandoning in almost all directions our force-machinery, and accustoming the people to believe in the blessed weapons of reason, persuasion, and voluntary service. We have morally made the dynamiter; we must now morally unmake him.

AUBERON HERBERT.