THE OBLIGATIONS AND PRIVILEGES OF CITIZENSHIP—A PLEA FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

I

PREJUDICES AGAINST THE STUDY OF THE CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL WELL-BEING

REMINISCENCES

A LITTLE more than six years ago, in this Hall, I had the honour and the responsibility of making the first plea for the study of Philosophy in your new Institute, then being dedicated. You made my task very easy. It was in an atmosphere charged with sympathy that I tried to speak of the things which seemed to me to matter most. I invited you to no new problems, but I had no final solutions to offer: Philosophy can boast of no such possessions. But still your interest was sustained and your good-will was not spent; for the problems of philosophy are the problems of life, and are therefore new as well as old, always being set and solved though no solution is ever final. We were engaged

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1 Three lectures delivered at the Rice Institute, November 27, 28, and 29, 1918, on the inauguration of the Sharp Lectureship in Civics and Philanthropy.
Obligations and Privileges of Citizenship

upon the supreme duty of man, which is to try to know himself. And we were enjoying man's unique privilege; for man's knowledge of himself is the condition of his well-being. Nay, more: it is the structure of his own soul that gives him the clue to the nature of the world in which he lives; for his soul is the medium in which the world breaks into truth, beauty and ultimate worth.

I shall never forget the occasion of our first coming together nor cease to prize it. Before we parted, as you may remember, the level rays of the sinking sun, far flung across the vast and silent prairie, struck through the windows of the Hall, and tinged the walls all around and the very air with colour: the movement of the fans stopped, and there passed into our minds a strange sense of silence and quiet—we felt that passing touch of the fringe of the garment of a peace that is permanent. I thought then, and I know now, that all was well; our unadorned, secular and unassuming service in the Temple of Truth—which this Institute must ever be—seemed to be accepted, as a thing in harmony with purposes that cannot fail. In its own good time there would follow the fitting benediction. The day would arrive when you would give to Philosophy, the mother of the sciences, a place amongst her own daughters. Mingled with their testimony to the diverse aspects of the world without, would be her witness to the world within, and to the wholeness of the Universe and the molten harmony of its many voices. In the meantime, in your organized work in Logic, Ethics and Education you have accorded Philosophy a cordial welcome. And to-day we are here to welcome as cordially the arrival of one of her younger handmaidens. *The Lectureship in Civics and Philanthropy*, which we are inaugurating, will contribute to sound citizenship and wise charity precisely in the degree in which it
Obligations and Privileges of Citizenship

faithfully expounds and fittingly applies the fundamental laws of the life of man, which is the central theme of Philosophy.

AND CONGRATULATIONS

It is a little difficult for me to-day to repress the personal note. I should like to tell you how glad I am to be with you once more, how grateful for the renewed experience of your abounding kindness, and how much I value the duty you have placed in my hands to do. But I venture instead to congratulate you on your new academic venture. And, first of all, I would congratulate the donor of the Lectureship, on the munificence of her gift and, still more, on her insight into the profounder needs of her time and the wisdom of her provision of the means of meeting them. Few men, if any, will question the statement that the most urgent problems to-day, the most heavily laden with consequences for the civilized nations of the world, are the problems of social life. These, as Mr. Huxley once said, are "the true riddles of the Sphinx, and every nation which does not solve them will sooner or later be devoured by the monster which itself has generated." But our ways of meeting the demands of our social environment are not ruled and guided by assured knowledge. We treat them as a rule by the bungling and most costly methods of opportunism. Our only resource is the groping empiricism which blunders first and learns afterward—if it ever learns at all. But the Trustees of the Rice Institute in accepting Mrs. Sharp's gift and founding the Lectureship are introducing into one part of the immense social field the serene and severe and secure methods of philosophic enquiry.

I am not able to regard the event as insignificant or this day as ordinary. No one can do so whose creed is the same
as mine—a creed of one article—that human well-being depends on human right-doing, and that doing what is right depends on knowing what is true. You are launching an expedition whose object is to explore the region of issues which are ultimate. You desire, by means of this Lecture-ship, to begin to find out, and to explain, the forces which make and maintain the structure of human society. You would follow the laws of the working of these forces so faithfully that the Social Sciences shall rival the Physical Sciences in validity and use. It is a great enterprise: possibly the greatest which the Institutions of Research and Learning can ever undertake. It is also very difficult. But I venture to hope that to the teachers and students of this University, as to men of enterprise, the combination of greatness and difficulty in the theme will prove a challenge and an inspiration.

The subject of the short course of Lectures intended to launch your venture is "The Obligations and Privileges of Citizenship"; and I have come to the conclusion that the best service I can render is to deal with some of the causes which confuse our sense of these obligations and obscure the privileges. For I have no doubt that, in your country as in my own, even good citizens are often perplexed as to the claims which their country has a right to make upon them, and as to the nature and value of the opportunities of a good life which they can demand of it. The nature of the political State—which in this context "our country" means—and of its relation to its own members and to other States, is but imperfectly known even to those who have enquired. But "the many" have never sought to know. And, so far, men have not realized the marvel of their interrelated life, nor heard the music to which "the Living Temple" of "a World of States at peace" is from age to
age slowly but, I believe, surely a-building. The story of the rise and fall of States is to them but the noisy confusion of clashing sounds—its "fury signifying nothing."

I am reminded of one of the inspired passages in Wordsworth's "Excursion" when I think of the true attitude to the slowly evolving history of man.

"I have seen [he says]
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell,
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the Universe itself
Is to the ear of faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow and ever-during power,
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation."

Let us consider some of the perplexities which prevent the ordinary good citizen from hearing and believing these spiritual tidings, and from finding power and peace at the heart of the endless agitation of his own and his country's history.

Man is never so completely perplexed or so hopelessly bewildered as when some assumption on which he has habitually acted, and which he trusts as a matter of course, breaks down. And our life as citizens is full of such assumptions. It would lead us too far afield to show the extent to which
our beliefs and our behaviour, our inner life and our outward conduct, depend upon ideas which we have adopted we know not when, nor how, nor why, and which we have never thought of examining. Indeed, we do not know that we have ever had some of these ideas in our minds at all. Most men are as little aware of the deeper motives which give to their conduct its main direction, and to their disposition and character their unique qualities, as they are of the cells, fibres, muscles, or physical and chemical changes by means of which they eat and drink and go about the business of their daily life. The “springs” of the inner life are less obvious, more hidden, more complex and more numerous, and the marvel of the movement of mind is far greater than the mystery of the movements of the living body. It would puzzle the most learned of Physiologists to say what different fibres, cells, or nerves of the tongue, or what different use is made of them, when the word “Autocracy” is pronounced instead of “Democracy,” or “Capital” instead of “Labour”: it would puzzle the Psychologist and the Social Philosopher still more to give an account of the change in the mental activities which results in supplanting the authority of the former in favour of the latter, and its command over a man’s sympathies.

Psychology has its own descriptive uses; but it shoves the problems of inner life out of sight rather than solves them when it professes to trace tendencies to a “subconscious region”; and “instinct” is a mere name for the terminus ad quem of its explanations. But nothing is “subconscious” so long as we are entitled, or able, to speak of it, and anything may be “subconscious”—say the number of one’s toes—if it has never been the object of our thought. Everything that we can know must cross the “margin of consciousness” and it must cross it back again when we think of something
Obligations and Privileges of Citizenship

e else. But "region," "margin," "crossing," "threshold," are all metaphors that mislead, and there are no such enti-
ties as ideas passing in or out of any "field." It is better
to recognize, simply, as the plain man does, that both the
objects of our thinking and the elements which enter into
the operation of thinking are wonderfully complex, capable
of being progressively known, and well worth the labour,
than to be the victim of words.

As it is an error to divide mind and its contents into
regions "conscious" and "subconscious," so it is an error to
divide our convictions into those which we owe to "tradi-
tion" and those which we owe to "reason," or those which
we have made ourselves and those which we have borrowed.
Mr. Balfour, in a delightful book, tells us that "Reason"
has but little place and power in our lives as compared
with "Tradition." He has done injustice to both. It is
Reason which forms and transmits and adopts Tradition—
nothing but Reason can do these things; and Reason is help-
less without some Tradition with which it can agree or dis-
agree and thereby make a starting point for new discoveries.
Both Reason and Tradition are ubiquitous in man's ex-
perience, and they can act only when they act together.

An easy experiment, which any man can carry out for
himself, will show how far we are inheritors of traditions,
the validity and value of which we have never examined.
Your daily habits, your eating and drinking at table, your
ways of dressing, your social courtesies, your methods of
doing business, your market manners, the tools you use
and your handling of them, show that you have adopted the
ways not of Turks or Chinamen but of your own country.
When did you summon these items before your mind, com-
pare them each to each and adopt the wiser? You have
had little more conscious choice in these matters than you
126 Obligations and Privileges of Citizenship

have had in the colour of your hair. Not that they belong
to the "subconscious region," or that you have adopted them
without the use of your reason and the exercise of your
will, but simply that you have never attended to these men-
tal activities.

Now, the kind of furniture you have in your houses, the
chairs you sit on—instead of mats and cushions—the size
and shape of the pipe you smoke and the head-dress you
wear, are not more your inheritance from your people than
are the graver matters of your moral customs and religious
creed. When, for instance, and for what reasons did you
conclude that Christianity is a truer form of religion than
Buddhism, Protestantism than Catholicism, and Calvin-
istic Methodism (say) better than the whole of them put
together? I venture to say that when you adopted the reli-
gious creed, the ethical code, the manners and customs of
your country, age and hearth, you did it as naturally, nay,
as inevitably as you breathed your native air. If you have
rejected them since, you have done so with their help, turn-
ing them in criticism upon themselves. And the rejection
or transmutation, nay, the very criticism of them has been
costly. For beliefs and habits are not things which we can
put off and on as we please, like our clothing; they are
part of the fabric of the soul, and as truly the conditions of
rational actions and existence, as the nerves, cells, fibres,
muscles and bones are of our bodily life.

It is not a matter of choice whether we shall or shall not
borrow the material of our own experience from the com-
munity in which we are born and brought up—and bor-
row without criticising. We must have experience before
we can examine it, make assumptions before we can test
them, live before finding out how we live or what for, and
we form a character before comprehending the principles
which, being honoured, make it the best, being violated, make it the worst of all things a man can own or be.

What is true of the individual is true of nations. They also live upon assumptions, act upon principles whose truth and practical value they have taken for granted, and at the time when they are making their history rarely if ever know what they do. They bring about results they had not intended nor foreseen, and they often find purposes they desired and attained to be empty, and consequences they feared to be invaluable. Alexander did not forecast the results of his conquests, nor did Cæsar intend to prepare the way for the spread of Christianity. Louis the Fourteenth did not know he was helping to make Britain a great Empire; Napoleon did not intend to create the spirit of the Modern Nation, nor did Germany by her ambitious world-conquest aim at the “permanent peace” of a brotherhood of free nations. Did any nation ever guess what it was doing when making history? The spirit of history operates among the deeper necessities of human nature. Nations, like men, act first and reflect afterwards. There are ages when their spirit is young and full of adventure, and there are periods of reflexion, when they try to gather the meaning of their adventures and to harvest their values. What they garner they leave as traditions for the ages which follow, and their dead selves become “stepping-stones” for the better times and peoples which learn from their experience. Thus do the ages of mankind, in the slow course of its civilization, climb successive headlands, command wider views of a new country whose character they learn as they travel through, and understand, if at all, when their journey is ending.

In this way, too, does man’s experience of the past enter into his present. It is in the light of the truths and errors which he gathers from the past that he interprets the new
context into which time has carried him. More precisely, the "now" of an individual or a nation is a very complex affair. It is the moving point in which the echoes of their past deeds are converted by them into the calls and cries of the future and into the duties and the opportunities of the present. Man is always reminiscent when he acts: his past lives in him whether he knows it or not; and, on the other hand, he is always expectant—making forecasts, anticipating effects, forming purposes and applying them to what stands around him. He never acts except with a view that a result shall follow. His motive springs from what is not as yet, from a good that has to be brought about. But whether that good be real or seeming depends upon his interpretation of himself and of his wise or foolish, wide or narrow experience in the past. Man's history is thus continuous through constant reconstruction, even as natural life is. And if the light falls on his path only from behind, so that he always walks in his own shadow, still he has somehow travelled in the right direction, and the distance he has come since the days when he dwelt in caves and lakes is very great.

But, it will be urged, if it be true that man finds his way though relying blindly on assumptions, why should he endeavour to bring them to the surface and examine them? I answer that most probably if his assumptions proved inevitably valid in every new circumstance he never would examine them. So long as his anticipations turn out true and that occurs which he expects, he goes on his way complacently. But the most placid life changes as it grows old and makes new demands, and the world of circumstance never quite repeats itself. He himself differs subtly from day to day and so does the material on which he works—hence even the things that are true in principle must suffer
change if they are still to guide. The tradition that remains unchanged, the assumption that remains unconscious in its operation, becomes inapplicable, and expectations are falsified. And when the unexpected happens and the expected does not, man stands perplexed. He is forced back for the cause of his disappointment and seeks it in himself. He has made some error: he has omitted some item, overlooked some element, misinterpreted and misused some fact. The blame was somehow his own: for outward events, he knows, take place just as they must do. Until he discovers what has misled him, or which of his opinions were wrong, he is helpless. He refrains perforce from acting, or acts most timidly. An adventurous and progressive life, a life that has in it assault and onset and is not merely on the defensive, which creates rather than repeats and imitates, implies confidence both in itself and in the world which it manipulates. Nothing great was ever done without faith. Faith can move mountains, we are told; but doubt is held to be a sure sign of weakness, and the self-scrutiny that ensues on doubt has been deemed to be a symbol of disease, whether in an individual, or a society, or an age.

"The healthy society," says Carlyle (in one of the earliest of his essays condemning his times), "does not stop to scrutinize itself; to say, How well I perform, or Alas, how ill. Man is sent hither not to question but to work; 'the end of man,' it was long ago written, 'is an Action, not a Thought.' In a perfect State all Thought were but the picture and inspiring symbol of Action: Philosophy, except as Poetry and Religion, would have no being." "The mere existence and necessity of a Philosophy is an evil. Ages of Heroism are not ages of Moral Philosophy. Virtue, when it can be philosophized of, has become aware of itself, is sickly and beginning to decline." What is self-conscious is
artificial, and what is artificial is always inferior. "We have an artificial Poetry and prize only the natural: so likewise we have an artificial Morality, an artificial Wisdom, an artificial Society. The Artificial Society is precisely one that knows its own structure, its own internal functions: not in watching, not in knowing which, but in working outwardly to the fulfilment of its aim, does the well-being of Society consist." *(Characteristics.)*

Carlyle's remedy for the disease of Doubt and Self-scrutiny was action. Faith, Conviction, as he tells us, "were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into Conduct. Nay, properly, Conviction is not possible till then; inasmuch as all Speculation is by nature endless, formless, a vortex amid vortices. . . . Doubt of any sort can not be removed except by Action. . . . Let him who gropes painfully in the darkness or uncertain light lay this precept well to heart: 'Do the duty which lies nearest thee. . . . Thy second duty will already have become clearer.'" *(Sartor Resartus.)*

If we can recognize the calls of our station in life, fulfil the obligations of our social environment, all is well. Provided the "Kindly Light" falls on the next step of our journey, we need not mind the "encircling gloom." The enviable man and the happy and prosperous nation, and the Golden Age, are so little occupied with themselves, and so far from being morbidly aware of their ill- or well-doing, or from examining their own constitution that, with the healthy servant maid, they say, "Constitution! I have no Constitution."

Now, I readily admit that it is possible for a man, and perhaps for a people also, to be unwholesomely occupied with themselves. And wantonly to excite or foster doubt, whether in himself or in others, can be no man's duty. Even those who by conquering doubt have acquired a larger and
Obligations and Privileges of Citizenship

a firmer faith must hesitate to disturb the peace of the innocent.

"O thou that after toil and storm
May'st seem to have reached a purer air,
Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form,

Leave thou thy sister when she prays
Her early heaven, her happy views;
Nor thou with shadowed hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days."

(In Memoriam.)

By all means let those who can follow Carlyle's lead do so. "Here on earth," he says, "we are soldiers fighting on a foreign land, that understand not the plan of campaign and have no need to understand it; seeing well what is at our hand to be done, let us do it like soldiers; with submission, with courage, with a heroic joy."

But supposing that the one thing which we cannot see is "the duty at our hand to be done," supposing the soldier, fighting in a foreign land, is ignorant not only of the plan of campaign but of the cause and country he is fighting for? Supposing that so far from comprehending the plan, and trusting his commander, he finds no evidence anywhere that any plan exists, or any commander, and sees in the whole struggle nothing but a confused, purposeless, execrable welter? We have seen of late good men in that extremity. Momentous happenings within the inner life of a man—a great success or failure, a deep sorrow, a devastating sin, a consuming hate or disappointed love—may not only disturb old values, and rearrange the order of priority amongst life's aims, but destroy all values.

Not only may man's natural life become meaningless, and
his days “pass away as the swift ships,” but the moral world itself may cease to matter, and right and wrong be terms not to be used of such a being as he is, a wisp tossed about by homeless winds. “If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain? If I wash myself with snow water and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.” (Job ix, 29, 30.) Shakespeare was acquainted with deeper doubt and darker despair than Carlyle. Othello, so far from knowing his duty, when Iago poisoned his soul with doubts of Desdemona, bade farewell to the tranquil mind: “Farewell content! Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars! . . . Othello’s occupation’s gone!”—the most pathetic line in Shakespeare, it has always seemed to me.

The problem or the doubt which has serious import for a man, or a nation, or an age leaves us with empty hands. It is not the break up of a more or less superficial set of theoretic opinions, but of principles which not merely guide or rule behaviour but are to the real self or living character as the life-blood that beats in the arteries. No man can live except in virtue of some faith: not even the sceptic. He may be paralyzed by “doubt,” and as little capable of adventure in the world of thought or practice as a cripple confined to his bath-chair; but he is not void of all trust, for he is alive. Every man, however simple, or blunt, or “plain,” and however free, as he believes, from all theorizing, and guiltless of philosophy, and willing to wait upon experience and “use his common sense,” has his own antecedent set of dominating assumptions. His beliefs may be mutually inconsistent, not worthy for a moment to be called a “system,” yet they ordinarily act as if they were a system and give him his varying criteria of truth and value. Every man stands at some angle of observation from which he con-
templates life, and he assumes some "attitude," as we say, towards its opportunities and necessities. However irreflec
tive he may be, he has his Weltanschauung, and has been philosophizing, as well as speaking prose, from early child-
hood onwards. His attitude or outlook has meant for him what his hypothesis means for a man of science. A hypo-
thesis that is false, falsifies everything it pretends to explain; and a change of hypothesis demands the re-interpretation of every one of the facts. So, when a man is gripped by one new truth,—"repents,"—all his old life values are upset. He begins again.

It is evident that such a practical hypothesis, or faith, or background of belief, is by far the most important of all a
man's possessions. It may not be his conscious creed, but it is his working faith. It defines the relation of his ends,
determines the ranks of his needs, decides the contests of his desires. It is the interpreter of his circumstances and it arbitrates upon their claims. What coheres with it he calls true, what consists with its purposes he calls good. Moreover, it breaks into his conduct, and not in the way of interfer-
ering, now and then. On the contrary, its power is consist-
tent and dominant. A man can respect himself in so far as he is loyal to it: it is his deeper self. And while a creed may be a dead dogma, a faith that is thus ultimate is, for man or nation, all-powerful.

Now, when such a faith proves false, the cure suggested by Carlyle is both ineffective and inapplicable. Doubts which can be cured by plunging into action are shallow; they are not removed or cured, but silenced. And all doubts which are not faced fester. Moreover, deep doubts leave a man incapable of action: they "paralyze," as we say. Bunyan, in his incomparable way, teaches us a better truth than Carlyle, and offers a better remedy. When Evangelist
Obligations and Privileges of Citizenship

finds Christian in the fields just outside the City of Destruction, distracted with fear “lest the burden on his back should sink him lower than the grave,” he says to him, “If this be thy condition, why standest thou still?” He answered, “Because I know not whither to go.” When Christian reads in the parchment roll, “Fly from the wrath to come,” he asks, “Whither must I fly?” He could not see the wicket gate even when it was pointed out to him; but he thought he could see some glimmering of a distant “shining light.” “Keep that light in your eye,” said Evangelist, “and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.”

Bunyan understood the matter better than Carlyle. When an individual or a nation finds that its past has been spent in the pursuit of a false good, that it has put its trust in error, its first need is truth. In fact, honest doubt is the outcome of a soul’s need of a united experience, and usually implies that a new truth is already seeking a place within “the Universe of Belief,” and working its way into the system. Convictions are already on their trial when doubt comes, and enquiry is inevitable. Doubt is the soul’s struggle for light and air.

Such a discovery of a false faith has been made, in the light of the war, by the civilized nations of the world. They have had convincing evidence that the basis on which their civilization has hitherto rested is insecure. Some fatal error has crept into their methods of dealing with one another. They are groping for new methods, and they recognize that the necessity is urgent: they must either find a better way or perish. Men are everywhere, in the degree of their earnestness and insight, as they stand awed and hushed looking at the wreckage, seeking the means to secure that never more
shall the nations, in their dealing with one another, so lose their way as to find themselves straying with blood-drenched footsteps in the fields of war. They recognize that, in the future as in the past, nations will rise, decline and fall, and that successive forms of civilization shall grow old and pass away even as individuals are born, grow and die: it is so written in their structure. But it is not believed that the nations must always live to prepare for battle, and then die at one another's hands. Nevertheless, for the first time in the world's history, it has come to seem possible that by their very inventions the civilized peoples of the earth may bring upon themselves universal ruin: possible in the eyes of everyone, probable in the eyes of many men versed in man's history, certain in the eyes of those who reflect on the motives that make history, unless the spirit of envy, greed, and ruthless self-assertion perishes and the nations learn the meaning of mutual reverence and regard. Human life is always tentative, its principles are, at best, hypotheses under the constant strain of test by circumstances; and modern circumstances are such that the nations of the world are too closely intertwined to live the isolated life of selfishness. They must live for one another or perish.

These alternatives never before stood plainly confronting each other before the eyes of men. It needed the flare of the flames of war to show the nations whither their path of self-seeking led; and its illimitable sorrows to awaken the sense of their need of one another. Hitherto our politicians, nay, our Statesmen and Foreign Ministers, the Watchers on the Walls of the State, rarely looked beyond the borders of their own country for the conditions of its well-being. It was enough if the horizon of their patriotism extended beyond the interests of their party, or class or constituency. Positive care for the well-being of other nations was held
to be international knight-errantry and the wildest Quixotism. But now, the man who calls himself "plain" and "practical," meaning that he has an unusual stock of common sense, and is not a theorist,—the very last man to learn from experience,—even he has been disturbed. He shares the universal distrust of the ancient ways, so far as to be glad that the means of perpetual peace are being considered. But he thinks that he can go about his business in the old way; and does not realize what averting the possibility of war in future may entail, nor what possible amendments, even in his own manner of going about the petty business of his obscure life, may be required. For the "League of Peace," in which the different states have with such unanimity shown themselves willing to be bound, is significant only if it is much more than an instrument, or a set of regulations limiting armies and navies, reducing armaments and instituting judicial ways of settling differences of opinion and of dispensing justice. These are valuable and necessary as implements. But the founding of the League of Nations will prove one of the greatest events in history only if it is a true symbol of a change of mind on the part of the nations. They have, it must be hoped, adopted—though only in part and hesitatingly and timidly and only half-consciously—a new political principle as the basis of their statecraft. The old assumption as to the way to national well-being having proved false, they are now "faintly pursuing" a new light. Having up to the present founded their behaviour on an individualistic faith, each seeking an exclusive good and at best and highest only refraining from injuring one another, they are now bound, in this one matter of ending war, to positive care of one another. They have become partners in the pursuit of a well-being that is common.

It is customary, and I think right, to regard Germany as
mainly, or even solely, responsible for the war. It was premeditated, planned in detail by its rulers, eagerly desired by its military and triumphantly entered upon by the whole nation. Their crime was the outcome of their political creed. They were living out the assumption on which their national life was based in that methodical, thorough and persevering way which is characteristic of that gross and somewhat slow-witted Teutonic people. They were splendidly loyal in spirit and their patriotism would have been magnificent, had it not been worse than blind,—a loyalty to a false, treacherous, and impossible "good."

But, on the other hand, I must say with equal frankness that the assumption which led the German people to seek their country's good by the way of war, has been the assumption on which Great Britain has led its political life. Were I an American, or a Frenchman, or an Italian, I should say the same thing of them to them. You will not find in the history of the nations of the world any concern for one another's good, except in so far as it might be instrumental to their own. It has always been indirect, subservient to their egoism. The Nations of the Earth have been unashamed individualists. Not one of them would have hesitated to ask with all the indignation of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" They lay smug and complacent and in perfect peace, wrapped in their self-seeking faith, too comfortable to fight. It needed the crude thoroughness of Germany and the terrible tragedy of the war to expose the insecurity of the foundation that national selfishness offered to the civilized life of mankind. So far as I can remember, no politicians or statesmen of any country, on any side of politics, spoke or thought of "Reconstruction" in the sense of changing the principles of political life or revising the basis of international relations.
I do not mean that the better principle was inoperative. The pursuit of a common good, as distinguished from a private and exclusive good, is much older than Christianity. It is as old as morality. It is implied in every union of men, from the most primitive family onwards. The history of the growing power of this principle is virtually the history of the gradual building up of all the institutions of civilization, which culminate in the Political State. In quite recent times there have been examples of designed and deliberate, as well as of unconscious attempts to overleap the boundaries of states and nations, and that not merely on the part of religious enthusiasts. Literature, Music, Science, Industrial enterprise, Methods of economic exchange, the ambitions both of organized Capitalists and of organized Labour, have found these boundaries to be obstacles. But they were regarded as obstacles only because they seemed to stand in the way of their own personal or class advantages. The question of the good of another nation than their own was not raised, except in an incidental and secondary way.

Again, the conception of a permanent world-peace is by no means new. But the prevalent, if not the only form in which it presented itself in the past, was that of the inhabitants of the earth lying tamed and adoring at the feet of some autocratic superior. Germany aimed at that kind of peace. Once Germany was "über alles," and all the nations had put on the livery of its Kultur and learned to rejoice in the service of this Teutonic breed of supermen, there would be no more war—unless it had every now and then to be kindled in order to fan the fighting spirit of heroes into flame, and avert the degenerating effects of a perpetual peace!
Obligations and Privileges of Citizenship 139

Perpetual peace is now sought on a wholly different principle. The grip of that principle on the part of the leagued nations is pitifully loose; and the range of its application for a long time to come will be contemptibly narrow. The Economic World, it is understood, is held together by the principle of mutual service, but there is no clear evidence that that principle operates as a chosen purpose in the minds of men, lending moral splendour to their service. On the contrary, the self-seeking of the economic world is undisguised and unashamed, and the opposite principle is recognizably impractical and absurd! There is no talk, so far as I know, of "reconstructing" the industrial and economic world, say, on the model of the family. I have seen no signs that the weapons of economic war, not always more merciful, though often more deadly to him that wields them than those of the battle-field, are to be scrapped, or that the spirit of the "Professions" is to rule the "Trades," or that the reward of service is regarded as a deserved wage. We are not "brothers," nor have we a common "Father," except metaphorically on Sunday. Peace! Where in the economic world is there Peace?

Nevertheless, recognizing clearly the long road that reluctant mankind must yet learn to travel, we can hail the coming of a new light upon its way. The principle of mutual regard, mutual respect, and (in some measure) mutual responsibility amongst the nations is sound. "The nature of things" is at its back. It is invincible. Henceforth the personality of every state, however feeble, will be theoretically held to be inviolable, its rights sacred, its wrongs the concern of the united nations; and practice has to follow theory in the end, however lame it may be on its feet. It has been driven home into the minds of politicians and
lawyers—ordinarily the last men to believe in adventurous moral enterprises—that it is not safe for a nation to be alone and that political selfishness does not pay. I admit that this mutual respect for sovereign rights and mutual resolve to maintain them, that the whole attitude of mind as to international obligations, does not, even yet, rise much above the *laissez-faire* level. The only positive functions assigned to the League are those of the policeman, judge and executioner. Its motives are preventive and punitive. The moral relations between the different states are so elementary that their international authority, the League, can only say “Don't” and frown,—the method of the mother to the child when it is too small to understand the doing of anything. The nations are not aiming, as yet, at the interchange of those multiform positive services which constitute the main activities and all the virtues of good citizenship within a state. The international code of morals is still “Sinaitic.” “Thou shalt not” has not been raised to “Thou shalt”—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour, even a little.”

An examination of the contents of the ideal as expressed in the proposals of the League would make plain how rudimentary the creed of international conduct is at present, how moderate its aims and how tentative, how little we dare expect the nations to attempt for one another, what coercive securities have to be invented in order to attain that little, and we know already how liable national self-seeking is to limit the range, or frustrate the common purpose. It has taken the nations long to recognize theoretically the ideal which should rule their mutual dealings; there is still to come the conversion of the ideal first into a principle of action, and then into stable custom and
Obligations and Privileges of Citizenship

consistent mode of life,—into a "habit," which virtue always must be.

But the pursuit of a good aim, even when it is imperfectly understood, is moral gain at every step. Mere negative respect for one’s neighbour’s rights naturally grows with the practice of it into regard for his personality, a desire to benefit and serve, and finally into love. The level at which one nation says to another, "I shall not harm you, not because I think it wrong but because to harm you would hurt me," has got its analogue in the founding of crude village communities, if not even in the "instinctive" or semi-brutal love of primitive man for his offspring and his endurance of a fellow savage for the sake of defense: given æons in which to exercise and grow, it will finally become the fairest reality in this world of ours, namely, the self-forgetting love of the dedicated life.

We should not consider it a great achievement on the part of the inhabitants of a village, or of workers in the same shipyard, or even of boys in the same school, if they formally agreed not to attack or rob one another, nor to allow anyone else to attack or rob them. But for some reason which I cannot find, the level of mass-relations is always low, and the lower the greater the mass. The widest communities of all are the nations and states, and "the leavening of that lump" is slow indeed.

Nevertheless, I return to the ground of my confidence. The recognition of the principle of mutual reverence and mutual responsibility between the civilized states of the world is one of the greatest events in man’s history. Every stage in the growth of a plant, or animal, or man’s soul has its indispensable value, but the planting of the seed and the rebirth of the soul are the most arresting and significant,
especially if the new or reborn life be immortal, as, I believe, moral principles are. There is no final "fall from grace" according to the most rigorous of primitive theology. And our great poets agree:

"There shall never be one lost good! What was shall live as before. . . .
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more."

The wickedness of man is not going to have the victory over the goodness that has endowed him with a rational nature: some rift or another, were it that which death makes, will let light into his soul. Had past civilizations perished utterly they would not now be a memory, and a regret, and a warning.