

That portion of mankind capable of receiving culture will disappear first in the great cities, then in the smaller towns, and finally throughout the country. There will be repeated what happened in Rome in spite of laws favoring large families, in spite of the wholesale adoption of children, in spite of importing barbarian soldiers, in spite of the numerous institutions established under Trajan for the free-feeding of children; — compare our free school lunches, — in spite of the Edict of Pertinax which granted the title to any abandoned farm to whosoever was willing to till it. Notwithstanding all these measures, by the end of the fifth century, although the palaces of the Cæsars were still occupied, the total

population of Rome had dwindled to that of a country town.

A gloomy enough picture! The only ray of light is the author's prediction that Western civilization will experience another apparent revival before it dies — a revival through imperialism or 'Cæsarism' — perchance Fascism! The old power of the sword and the cross, aristocracy and priesthood, will return to confront the active powers of the present age — plutocracy and the intellectuals. This coming Cæsarism will be accompanied by the 'secondary religiosity' already mentioned. Such is the unescapable course of events. 'We have no choice between this and an alternative; we must either conform to it or perish.'

HOW CIVILIZATIONS DIE¹

BY DEAN INGE

THE notion that civilizations grow old and die like individuals is untenable. There is no valid analogy between the life of an organism and that of a society. Some of the lowest forms of life, like the germ cells of animals, are potentially immortal; but Nature's plan for perpetuating a species is by births and deaths. There is no tendency for a species, or an organized society, to wear out like the body of an old man.

Nevertheless, history records the decay and disappearance of several civilizations. Some have been murdered outright. Such were the civilization of the *Arabian Nights* at Bagdad, where the Mongols left a pile of 800,000 corpses, and the indigenous cultures of Mexico

and Peru, where the populations were not exterminated, but violently expropriated and crushed under an alien yoke. Such crimes may be heard of again, if a nation can find room for its expanding numbers only by the massacre or deportation of a weaker race.

More interesting to the biologist and sociologist are instances of national decay which resemble death by disease. The salient example in European history is the practical disappearance of the ancient Greeks and Romans, the guardians of the culture which, after a long agony, may be said to have died in the sixth century of our era. Unfortunately the causes of this catastrophe have never been fully elucidated, though the symptoms have been enumerated by many historians. In Greece

¹ From the *Spectator* (London Moderate-Conservative weekly), May 10

the population which a mountainous country and a poor soil could support was rigorously limited, and the fields for emigration were cut off, after a time, by alien Powers. There is reason to think that the soil of the Mediterranean lands became steadily less productive, partly from unscientific tillage, and partly from the destruction of the woods for smelting minerals. The decay of the Romans is perhaps to be attributed to different causes, and above all to the economic parasitism which is the Nemesis of conquest and plunder. In any case, it is worth noticing that the disappearance of the old culture, with its traditions and religion, was the result of the disappearance of its guardians. The Olympians died with their worshipers; the barbarians whom Hellas had despised had no zeal for perpetuating Hellenism.

Civilization has always had its critics and its enemies. Primitive instincts rise in revolt against conventions. The town-dweller, if he can afford it, plays at being a savage hunter for two months of the year, or satisfies the nomad instinct by aimless traveling; after which he returns to his desk with 'emotions purged,' as Aristotle says. The poorer townsman suffers from a chronic *malaise* which he does not understand; it is possible that this is one cause of strikes. The young intellectual becomes a political agitator, or writes books on 'Civilization: Its Cause and Cure.' And now the anthropologist comes forward with a severe indictment of all human achievement during the last ten thousand years. From the time when man began to make tools and improve his environment, his intrinsic progress has ceased. His brain has ceased to grow; his natural weapons have atrophied; he has become a parasite of his own machines, and would starve if he were deprived of them. Natural selection has been displaced by an active counter-

selection, an 'elimination of the best,' which proceeds unnoticed in peace, and is from time to time accelerated by war.

Tools may keep a civilization alive through a long process of racial decay; but such a culture is likely to be both sordid and unhappy, and each generation will find the accumulating burden of artificialities more difficult to carry. The higher spiritual gains of civilization are likely to be the first to go, and an early symptom will be a reversion to superstition, sacerdotalism, and the lower forms of religion generally.

Popular education and the fusion of classes may disguise the advance of racial decadence by enabling a society to utilize hitherto untapped reservoirs of natural ability. But as each able and energetic family rises to the top it tends to be sterilized, and the supply must soon fail. Two centuries of dysgenic selection are enough to destroy the inherited advantages of the most gifted race.

Another danger which threatens modern civilization arises from recent political and social changes. A great nation can support without difficulty a comparatively small parasitic class at each end of the social ladder. When the privileged class becomes too extravagant and incompetent, as happened in France at the end of the eighteenth century, it may be swept away by a revolution. But it is a much more serious matter when the whole mass of the nation aspires to live beyond its income. In this country we have had for two generations a number of angry rhetoricians who repeat incessantly the parrot cry that our social and economic institutions are rotten, that the working class is exploited, and that almost any change must be for the better. In fact, the average income of a family before the Great War was about £145. If the whole of the national income could be pooled, the dividend per fam-

ily would have been much less than this, since part of the incomes of the rich appears a second time in the earnings of the professional men and others who live upon them. Inflation has, of course, increased the nominal wealth of the nation, as well as the average payment of labor; but we must add to the wages of the workman the vast amount which his class receives under the heads of free education, doles, pensions, and in exemption from the burdens of taxation. It is almost demonstrable that labor is now fully paid, especially when we take into account its diminished output.

The danger is that the new forms of election bribery which are euphemistically called social reforms are bringing into existence a type of workman who, whatever his individual merits may be, has no survival value. The British workman is notoriously an unwelcome immigrant in all the new countries, and we are now seeing a large invasion of workmen from Ireland, at a time when we have a million unemployed at home. The Irish who are flooding Lancashire and the West of Scotland with a most undesirable type of citizen are no doubt glad to flee from the blessings of liberty in their own island; but the English and Scottish employers are obliged to accept their services because they give better value for their wages, in all kinds of rough work, than the British trades-unionists. It is only a question of time when the Labor Party will take up Protection, in order to keep up an artificially high standard of living among the privileged workers. The residuum will be supported by income tax and rates as long as these sources of plunder hold out.

The difficulty of prophesying the course of a social disease arises from the fact that when a society is attacked by a dangerous malady it generates antitoxins which often not only cure the disease but confer immunity against it for a long period to come. This is almost always the case in revolutions, which correspond to acute invasions of very poisonous microbes, like those of typhus. When the patient is a body politic, it almost always recovers, and a period of wholesome 'reaction' follows. We may confidently expect this to happen in Russia. When the history of that unhappy country is fairly written, it will be proved that the ten years before the revolution was a period of rapid growth in wealth and prosperity, and of steady social reform. All this was swept away by the microbe of Bolshevism; but recovery is almost certain, and we may predict that for the remainder of the century no country will be so safe against revolution.

This consideration may justly allay pessimism about the future of our own country; there will undoubtedly be reactions against any sudden aggravation of our symptoms. But there are no antitoxins against slow decay. The body cannot expel the microbes of wasting disease. For this reason the enlightened sociologist will watch with more anxiety the almost unnoticed progress of racial degeneration than the wild explosions of predatory Socialism and Communism. Nevertheless, we may perhaps think that the chances are in favor of the patient, unless, as is only too possible, the weakening nation is attacked and destroyed by its neighbors.

A PEACE PROTEST FROM TOKYO¹

BY A JAPANESE EDITOR

The Great Pacific War, by Mr. Hector Bywater, will be long discussed in all parts of the world. It, in brief, depicts Japan and America at war in 1931; the war lasts for two years and results in a drawn fight. Japan, in the book, is awarded the rôle of aggressor and picks a quarrel with the greatest, richest, most powerful, and most advanced of the nations that are making their imprint on the civilization of to-day. The whole thing is purely imaginary, and in many an instance is utter nonsense.

For example, why should this Empire fight at all? If she must, why pick on the rich and powerful United States, which has friends all over the hem of the Pacific Ocean? Why commit economic suicide right from the start by quarreling with Japan's best customer? There are many other ridiculous assumptions, but to deal with them all is impossible because of the limitations of space.

This talk of an 'inevitable' conflict between the Rising Sun and the Stars and Stripes has been permitted too much latitude; and, strange to say, this talk has come mostly from war-torn and semiprostrate Europe, suggesting, it would seem, that the wish is father to the thought.

Three years or so ago, *The Aeroplane*, a British publication, had an article by C. G. Grey, editor of that periodical, which contained the following: —

'In the light of Japan's equipping

¹ From the *Japan Times and Mail* (Tokyo English-language daily), weekly edition, August 26

a great army and a great navy with adequate flying services, it is necessary to consider how and where they are likely to be used. The enemy is the United States, and there is never any difficulty in finding cause for war if the two nations are fated to fight.

'If a fight comes at all, it must come soon. The best opinion in Great Britain places the date of a Japanese-American war at the beginning of 1924, for by then the Japanese war-forces will be ready.'

That year was selected because it was supposed to be a 'fighting' year, popular superstition making out that Japan was fated to fight in every year which contained the figure four. These self-important alarmist publicists argued thus: Japan had a war in 1894; when 1904 came round she was fighting again; then in 1914 she declared hostilities against the Central Powers; so in 1924 she must again fight.

That year has passed; there was no fight of any sort, and the only talk of war came from unthinking jingoes and half-baked publicists. Now the latest date set by the great Hector Bywater is 1931. Perhaps the United States and Japan are going to be hectored into a war by a fighter on paper who, within the walls of a narrow newspaper-office, sees, amid the discoloring smoke emerging from a pipe that badly needs attention, visions of gas, of planes, and of armadas churning the waters of the ocean into fury and strewing the seas with the dead and the dying.

While Japan feels intensely the smart