

I joined Company G after they had fought their brave fight. En route for the front from school at the moment the storm broke, I was sent to them to replace one of their lost officers only in time to take part in the advance which finally crushed German hopes. I may therefore tell of this brave company with only envy that their glory is not mine.

On this morning ten days after the fight I went over the battlefield, at first with repugnant curiosity to see how Heinie had been repulsed. I knew some of the splendid Americans who lay dead there. I knew them for the finest our country affords. At first I was proud to see the little circle of dead Germans that spoke of the unwavering courage which had met and defeated them. I was proud of my breed. But, as I waded through the waving wheat I picked up a photograph. It was of a young officer of the Prussian Guard—a boy, one of the clear featured chaps whom one might instinctively pick from a crowd for a friend.

I picked up another, a post card. One of my men translated the words of love a good son might write to his mother. Surely the thing which makes organized murder of boys like these by boys like those I knew a virtue is the most hideous crime of humanity. It is war. And as long as war shall be such things must go on.

I have talked with men who have served in this war for as much as three years. They speak of being "fed up." I never knew what they meant until I digested the meaning of that battlefield. I have lost many friends in the present action, I could stand that were I sure this war will be the last in history. I must go on. So must we all. In the very magnitude of this thing lies our hope—for surely war is the world's best argument for peace, and a generation which has been so scourged as has this will place war among the things that cannot be.

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## The Education of Joan and Peter

### IX

#### Peter at Howth

IF Oswald in the spring of 1914 could see no immediate catastrophe ahead, he could at least see that a vast disintegrative process had begun in the body of European civilization. The British mind hates crisis; it abhors the word "now." This disintegration, he told himself accordingly, was a thing to go on by stages, to be replaced by stages; it would give place to a new order, a better order, "someday"; everything just and good was going to happen someday, the liberation of India, the contentment of Ireland, economic justice, political and military efficiency. It was all coming—it was always coming and never arriving, that new and better state of affairs. What did go on was disintegration. The British mind believes that you can cool water forever and that it will never freeze, that you saw at a tree forever and that it will never fall, that there is always some sand left above in the hourglass. When the English Belshazzar sees the writing on the wall, he welcomes the appearance of a new if rather sensational form of publication, and he sits back to enjoy it at his leisure. . . .

There is a risk that the catastrophic events of 1914 may blind the historian to the significance of the spinning straws of 1913. But throughout Europe the sands were trickling before the avalanche fell. The arson of the suffragettes, the bellicose antics of the Unionist leaders in Ulster, General Gough's Curragh mutiny, were all parts of the same relaxation of bonds that launched the gray-clad hosts of Germany into Belgium. The great world of labor was also seething with the same spirit of almost aimless insurrection. The pretensions of the old social system that trade unionism had scarcely challenged were now being subjected throughout all western Europe to a

pitiless scrutiny by a new and more educated type of employee.

The old British trade unionism had never sought much more than increased wages and a slightly higher standard of life; its acceptance of established institutions had been artlessly complete; it had never challenged the authority nor the profits of the proprietor. It had never proposed more than a more reasonable treaty with the masters, a fairer sharing of the good gifts of industry. But infatuated by the evil teachings of an extreme individualism, a system of thoughts which was indeed never more than a system of base excuses dressed up as a philosophy, the directing and possessing classes had failed altogether to agree with their possible labor adversary quickly while they were yet in the way with him. They had lacked the intelligence to create a sympathetic industrial mentality, and the conscience to establish a standard of justice. They left things alone until the grit of a formless discontent had got into every cog of the industrial machinery. Too late, the employers were now conceding the modest demands that labor had made in the eighties and nineties, they were trying to accept the offers of dead men; they found themselves face to face with an entirely less accommodating generation. This new labor movement was talking no longer of shorter hours and higher pay but of the social revolution. It did not demand better treatment from the capitalist; it called him a profiteer, and asked him to vanish from the body politic. Higher wages would not pacify it; shorter hours would not pacify it. It threatened sabotage of every sort, and a steady, incessant broadening antagonism of master and man. Peter, half sympathetic and half critical, talked about it to Oswald one day.

"They all say, 'I'm a Rebel!'" said Peter. "'Rebel' is their cant word."

"Yes, but rebel against what?"

"Oh! the whole system."

"But how are they going to alter it?"

"That's all vague. Altogether vague. Cole and Mellor and those Cambridge chaps preach Guild Socialism to them, but I don't know how far they take it in—except that they agree that profit is unnecessary. But the fundamental fact is just blind boredom and the desire to smash up things. Just on the off chance of their coming better. The employer has been free to make the world for them, and this is the world he has made. That's how they look at it. They are bored by his face, bored by his automobile, bored by his knighthood, bored by his country house——"

"But what can they do?"

"Make things impossible."

"They can't run things themselves."

"They aren't convinced of that. Anyhow if they smash up things the employer goes first, and he's the chap they seem to be principally after—..."

Peter reflected. Then he gave a modern young Englishman's view of the labor conflict. "The employers have been pretty tidy asses not to see that the workpeople get a better, more amusing life than they do. It was their business and their interest to do so. It could have been managed easily. But they're so disloyal. And mean. They not only sweat labor themselves but they won't stir a finger to save it from jerry-built housing, bad provisioning, general ugliness, bad investments, rotten insurance companies—every kind of rotten old thing. Anyone may help keel *their* sheep. They won't even amuse them. Why couldn't they set up decent theatres for them, and things like that? It's so stupid of them. There's enough for everyone nowadays and over. It's the first business of employers to see workpeople get their whack. What good are they if they don't do that? But they never have. Labor is convinced now that they never will. They've got their people angry and bitter now, they've destroyed public confidence in their ways, and it serves them jolly well right if the workmen make things impossible for them. I think they will. I hope they will."

"But this means breaking up the national industries," said Oswald. "Where is this sort of thing going to end?"

"Oh! things want shaking up," said Peter.

Peter, warming with his subject, walked to and fro across the Pelham Ford lawn beside Oswald, proposing to rearrange industrialism as one might propose to reshuffle a pack of cards.

"But suppose things smash up," said Oswald.

"Nowadays," said Peter, "so many people read and write, so much has been thought out, there is so big a literature of ideas in existence, that I think we could recover from a very considerable amount of smashing. We have to smash. What holds us back are fixed ideas. Take Profit. We're used to Profit. Most business is done for profit still. But why should the world tolerate profit at all? It doesn't stimulate enterprise; it only stimulates knavery. And Capital. Financial Capital is just blackmail by gold—gold rent. We think the state itself even can't start a business going or employ people without first borrowing money. Why should it borrow money? Why not, for state purposes, create it? Yes. No money would be any good if it hadn't the state guarantee. Gold standard, fixed money fund, legitimate profits and so on; that's the sort of fixed idea that is in the way nowadays. It won't get out of the way just for reason's sake. The employers keep on with these old fixed ideas, naturally, because so it is they have been made, but the workpeople believe in

them less and less. There must be a smash of some sort—just to shake ideas loose..."

Oswald surveyed his ward. So this was the young man's theory. Not a bad theory. Fixed Ideas!

"There's something to be said for this notion of Fixed Ideas," he said. "Yes. But isn't this 'I'm a Rebel' business, isn't that itself a Fixed Idea?"

"Oh, certainly!" said Peter cheerfully. "We poor human beings are always letting our ideas coagulate. That's where the whole business seems to me so hopeless..."

At Whitsuntide Oswald carried off Peter to Dublin. On the Sunday afternoon of their stay Powys motored them through the city by way of Donnybrook and so on round the bay to Howth to see the view from Howth Head. Powys drove with a stray guest beside him. Behind, Peter imparted impressions to Oswald.

"I don't like these high walls," he said. "I've never seen such a lot of high walls. . . . It's just as if they all shut themselves in from one another."

"Fixed Ideas, Peter?"

"They *are* rather like Fixed Ideas. I suppose high walls are fun to climb over and throw things over. But—it's uncivilized."

"Everybody," grumbled Peter, "is given to fixed ideas, but the Irish have 'em for choice. All this rot about Ireland a Nation and about the Harp, which isn't properly their symbol, and the dear old Green Flag, which isn't properly their color! . . . They can't believe in that stuff nowadays. . . . But *can* they? In our big world? And about being a Black Protestant and pretending Catholics are poison, or the other way round. What are Protestants and Catholics now? . . . Old, dead squabbles. . . . Dead as Druids. . . . Keeping up all that bickering stuff, when a child of eight ought to know nowadays that the Christian God started out to be a universal, charitable God. . . . If Christ came to Dublin the Catholics and Protestants would have a free fight to settle which was to crucify him. . . ."

"It's the way with them," said Oswald. "We've got to respect Irish opinion."

"It doesn't respect itself. Everywhere else in the world, wherever we have been, there's been at least something like the germ of an idea of a new life. But here! When you get over here you realize for the first time that England is after all a living country trying to get on to something—compared with this merry-go-round. . . . It's exactly like a merry-go-round churning away. It's the atmosphere of a country fair. An Irishman hasn't any idea of a future at all, so far as I can see—except that perhaps his grandchildren will tell stories of what a fine fellow he was. . . ."

Oswald was not sure of the extent of Peter's audience. "The susceptibilities of a proud people, Peter," he whispered, with his eye on the back of their host.

"Bother their susceptibilities. Much they care for *our* susceptibilities. The worst insult you can offer a grownup man is to humor him," said Peter. "What's the good of pretending to be sympathetic with all this Wearing of the Green? It's like our White Rose League. Let 'em do it by all means if they want to, but don't let's pretend we think it romantic and beautiful and all the rest of it. It's just posing and dressing up, and it's a nuisance, Nobby. All Dublin is posing and dressing up and playing at rebellion, and so is all Ulster. The Volunteers of the eighteenth century all over again. It's like historical charades. And they've pointed loaded guns at each other.

Only idiots point loaded guns. Why can't we get out of it and leave them to pose and dress up and then tell anecdotes and anecdotes and anecdotes about it until they are sick of it? If ever they are sick of it. Let them have their Civil War if they want it; let them keep on with Civil Wars forever; what has it got to do with us?"

"You're a Home Ruler then," said Oswald.

"I don't see that we English do any good here at all. What are we here for anyhow? The Castle's just another Fixed Idea, something we haven't the mental vigor to clear away. Nobody does any good here. We're not giving them new ideas, we're not unifying them, we're not letting Ireland out into the world—which is what she wants—we're not doing anything but just holding on."

"What's that?" said Powys suddenly over his shoulder.

"Peter's declaring for Home Rule," said Oswald.

"After his glimpse of the slums of Dublin?"

"It's out of malice. He wants to leave Irishmen to Irishmen."

"Ulster says *No!*" said Powys. "Tell him to talk to Ulster," and resumed a conversation he had interrupted with the man beside him.

At the corner where Nassau street runs into Grafton street they were held up for some lengthy minutes by a long procession that was trailing past Trinity College and down Grafton street. It had several bands, and in the forefront of it went National Volunteers in green uniforms, obviously for the most part old soldiers; they were followed by men with green badges, and then a straggle of Larkinites and various friendly societies with their bands and banners, and then by a long dribble of children and then some work girls, and then a miscellany of people who had apparently fallen in as the procession passed because they had nothing else to do. As a procession it was tedious rather than impressive. The warm afternoon—it was the last day in May—had taken the good feeling out of the walkers. Few talked, still fewer smiled. The common expression was a long-visaged discontent, a gloomy hostile stare at the cars and police cordon, an aimless disagreeableness. They were all being very stern and resolute about they did not quite know what. They meant to show that Dublin could show as ugly a chin as Carson. Between the parts of the procession were lengthy gaps. It was a sunshiny, dusty afternoon, and the legs of the processionists were dusty to the knees, their brows moist, and their lips dry. There was an unhurried air about them of going nowhere in particular. It was evident that many of their banners were heavy. "What's it about?" asked Oswald.

"Lord knows," said Powys impatiently. "It's just a demonstration."

"Is this all? Why don't we cut across now and get on?"

"There's more coming. Don't you hear a fresh band?"

"But the police could hold it up for a minute and let all these tram-cars and automobiles across."

"There'd be a fight," said Powys. "They daren't."

... The last dregs of the procession passed reluctantly out of the way. It faded down Grafton street into a dust cloud and a confusion of band noises. The policemen prepared to release the congested traffic. Peter leant out to count the number of trams and automobiles that had been held up. He was still counting when the automobile turned the corner.

They shook Dublin off and spun cheerfully through the sunshine along the coast road to Howth. It was a sparkling bright afternoon and the road was cheerful with the prim

happiness of many couples of Irish lovers. But that afternoon peace was the mask worn by one particular day. If the near future could have cast a phantom they would have seen along this road a few weeks ahead of them the gun-runners of Howth marching to the first foolish bloodshed in Dublin streets. . . .

They saw Howth Castle, and while the others stayed behind Oswald and Peter went on, through some huge hedges of clipped beech and up a steep winding path amidst great bushes of rhododendra in full flower to the grey rock and heather of the crest. They stood in the midst of one of the most beautiful views in the world. Northward they looked over Ireland's Eye at Lambay and the blue Mourne mountains far away; eastward was the lush green of Meath, southward was the long beach of the bay sweeping round by Dublin to Dalkey backed by more blue mountains that ran out eastward to the Sugar Loaf. Below their feet the pale castle clustered amidst its rich greenery, and to the east the level blue of the Irish Sea sustained one single sunlit sail. It was rare that the sense of beauty flooded Peter, as so often it flooded Joan, but this time he was transported.

"But this is altogether beautiful," he said like one who is taken by surprise.

And then as if to himself, "How beautiful life might be! How splendid life might be!"

Oswald was standing on a ledge below Peter, and with his back to him. He waited through a little interval to see if Peter would say any more. Then he pricked him with "only it isn't."

"No," said Peter with the sunlight gone out of his voice. "It isn't."

He went on talking after a moment's reflection.

"It's as if we were hypnotized and couldn't get away from mean things, beastly suspicions and stale quarrels. I suppose we are still half apes. I suppose our brains set too easily and rapidly. I suppose it's easy to quarrel yet and still hard to understand. We take to jealousy and bitterness as ducklings take to water."

"Is there no way out, Peter?"

"If some great idea would take hold of the world!" said Peter. . . .

"There have been some great ideas," said Oswald.

"If it would take hold of one's life." Peter finished his thought. . . .

"There has been Christianity," said Oswald.

"Christianity!" Peter pointed at the distant mist that was Dublin. "Sour Protestants," he said, "and dirty priests setting simple people by the ears."

"But that isn't true Christianity."

"There isn't true Christianity," said Peter compactly.

...

"Well, there's love of country then," said Oswald.

"That Dublin corporation is the most patriotic and nationalist in the world. Fierce about it. And it's got complete control there. It's green in grain. No English need apply. . . . From the point of view of administration that town is a muck heap—for patriotic crowings. Look at their dirty ill-paved streets. Look at their filthy slums! See how they let their blessed nation's children fester and die!"

"There are bigger ideas than patriotism. There are ideas of empire, the Pax Britannica."

"Landowne and Carson smuggling guns."

"Well, is there nothing? Do *you* know of nothing?"

Oswald turned on his ward for the reply.

"There's a sort of idea, I suppose."



"But what idea?"

"There's an idea in our minds."

"But what is it, Peter?"

"Call it Civilization," Peter tried.

"I believe," he went on, weighing his words carefully, "as you believe really, in the Republic of Mankind, in universal work for a common end—for freedom, welfare and beauty. Haven't you taught me that?"

"Have I taught you that?"

"What else can there be?"

"I suppose I have been coming to that myself," said Oswald.

"I think you've always been there. That seems to me to be the commonsense aim for all humanity. You're awake to it. You've awakened me to it and I believe in it. But most of this world is still deep in its old Fixed Ideas, walking in its sleep, the Fixed Ideas of class and nationality, of partizan religion, race superstition, and all the rest of 'em. These things hold the mind of the world. And it won't wake up. It won't wake up. . . . What can we *do*? We've got to a sort of idea, it's true. But here are these Irish, for example, naturally wittier and quicker than you or I, hypnotized by Orange and Green, by Protestant and Catholic, by all these stale things—drifting towards murder. It's murder is coming here. You can smell the bloodshed coming on the air—and people like we are can't do a thing to prevent it. Not a thing. The silliest bloodshed it will be. The silliest bloodshed the world has ever seen. We can't do a thing to wake them up. . . ."

"We're *in* it," said Peter in conclusion. "We can't even save ourselves."

"But don't you think, Peter, there must be a lot of people thinking now rather as we do?"

Peter flung a gesture of despair to the blue heavens. "Where?" he asked.

"I've been wanting to get at your political ideas for a long time," said Oswald. "You really think, Peter, there might be a big world civilization, a world republic did you call it?—without a single slum hidden in it anywhere, with the whole of mankind busy and happy, the races living in peace, each according to its aptitudes, a world going on—going on steady and swift to still better things."

"Yes."

"Power and Unity?"

"How can one believe anything else? Don't you?"

"But how do we get there, Peter?"

"Oh, how do we get there?" echoed Peter. "How do we get there?"

He danced a couple of steps with vexation.

"I don't *know*, Nobby," he cried. "I don't know. I can't find the way. I'm making a mess of my life. I'm not getting on with my work. You *know* I'm not. . . . Either we're mad or this world is. Here's all these people in Ireland letting a solemn humbug of a lawyer with a heavy chin and a lumpish mind muddle them into a civil war—and *that's* reality! That's life! The Solemn League and Covenant—copied out of old history books! That's being serious! And over there in England, across the sea, muddle and muck and nonsense indescribable. Oh! and we're *in* it!"

"But aren't there big movements afoot, Peter, social reform, the labor movement, the emancipation of women, big changes like that?"

"Only big discontents."

"But doesn't discontent make the change?"

"It's just boredom that's got them. It isn't any dis-

position to *make*. Labor is bored, women are bored, all Ireland is bored. I suppose Russia is bored and Germany is getting bored. She is boring all the world with her soldiering. How bored they must be in India too—by us! The everlasting East—not so much living as hiccuping up its great great grandfather. The day bores its way round the earth now—like a mole. Out of sight of the stars. But boring people doesn't mean making a new world. It just means boring on to decay. It just means one sort of foolish old fixed idea rubbing and sawing against another, until something breaks down. . . . Oh! I want to get out of all this. I don't *like* this world of ours. I want to get into a world awake. I'm young and I'm greedy. I've only got one life to live, Nobby. . . . I want to spend it where something is being made. Made for good and all. Where clever men can do something more than sit overlong at meals and tell spiteful, funny stories. Where there's something better to do than play about with one's brains and viscera! . . ."

H. G. WELLS.

## A COMMUNICATION

### On Dismembering Austria

A RECENT issue of the New Republic contained, by way of answer to Professor Giddings, a powerful editorial plea for a negotiated settlement of this war. A later issue (June 15th) threw the influence of the New Republic for the first time on the side of those who demand the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary. May an English contributor, who has never yet differed on any vital issue from the New Republic, use your friendly columns to urge that these two opinions are incompatible? Let us dismiss any trivial or verbal issue. No competent partisan of a "dictated" peace supposes that the war can end without negotiations and a treaty. Even the Boers secured some concessions and negotiated a treaty, and the cruel peace of Brest-Litovsk was registered after public debates in a formal instrument. It is equally true that no competent advocate of a negotiated peace supposes that it can be reached by the operations of pure reason; behind the negotiators there will be some balance of forces. This reference to force must include a reckoning of the future prospects of the belligerents as well as their past achievements, and an estimate of the economic stranglehold of the Allies must be set against the "war-map." Dictation in short implies a treaty, and negotiation presupposes potential force. When this approximation between the two positions is made, there still remains a fundamental difference. A "dictated" settlement is one which the enemy will never of his own free will accept. He will submit to it only if the course of the war has left him, at the end, without the means of resistance or of bargaining. It follows, in nine cases out of ten, that his forced acquiescence is temporary: he will regard the peace as a truce, and set to work by armaments, intrigue, and eventually by recourse to arms, to reverse a settlement which is for him intolerable. A "negotiated" settlement is one which the enemy can regard on the whole as equitable. It may contain distasteful clauses and involve heavy sacrifices of his pride and even some sacrifices of real interests. But there is gain (moral or material) as well as loss, and the total result is one which the mass of his nation can accept without vowing at the first opportunity to reverse it. The