CHAPTER XXVII

ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW CENTURY

REFERENCES: E. P. CHEYNEY, An Introduction to the Industrial and Social History of England; K. MARX, Capital (the first great attack upon modern society from the socialist point of view); R. T. ELY, Socialism: An Examination of its Nature, its Strength, and its Weakness; A. R. WALLACE, The Wonderful Century (an interesting record of inventions); P. LEROY-BEAULIEU, The Awakening of the East: Siberia, Japan, China; R. K. DOUGLAS, Europe and the Far East; T. F. MILLARD, The New Far East: An Examination into the New Position of Japan; SEIGNOBOS, Europe Since 1814. Conclusion.

The political revolution of the nineteenth century accompanied by a social revolution.

LOOKING backward over the nineteenth century we recognize at once that the political drift of Europe has been toward a closer national organization, accompanied by an extension of the powers of the people. The unification of Italy and Germany, as well as the victory of the federal party in Switzerland, the founding of the Christian states of the Balkans, and the separation of Norway from Sweden are all victories of the spirit of nationalism, while the substitution of the constitutional for the absolute *régime* on the Continent, and the extension of the suffrage everywhere to larger and larger circles, indicate the triumphant progress of democracy. To the thoughtful reader it must long ago have grown apparent that the general political revolution is the effect of another revolution in the very depths of society itself. Of this we must now briefly speak, glancing

therewith at the fundamental reasons for the constitutional and national movements of the nineteenth century.

Science, the modern civilizing agent.

The new and irresistible power generated by modern society is science. The reader will remember that we have spoken of an earlier phase of science in connection with the civilization of the Renaissance. Originating in man's instinctive desire for knowledge about himself and the world, science smouldered even under the ashes of the Middle Ages, and burst into bright flame as soon as the new nations had begun to emerge from feudal barbarism. The voyages of discovery, the revival of learning, and the Copernican theory are among the achievements of the scientific spirit, which we recorded in their proper place, and which we agreed ushered in the Modern Period. Since the sixteenth century scientific investigation had not only never ceased, but had progressively invaded new fields and been more perfectly organized. In addition to more accurate observation students gradually brought to bear upon the problems of nature (1) *experimentation*, by which they were enabled to study results obtained by artificial combinations, and (2) *special apparatus*, like the telescope and microscope, designed to give aid in collecting information.

The progress of science.

Science made uninterrupted progress throughout the early modern centuries. Space forbids us to do more than glance at these advances by way of illustration. The Italian Galileo (1564–1642) constructed a telescope, by means of which he discovered the spots on the sun and by following their change of position was enabled to prove that the sun revolved on its axis. Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) discovered that gravitation was a universal force and that bodies are attracted to one another inversely as the square of the distance. A mere enumeration of the discoveries in chemistry and medicine would cover many pages.

Steam and machinery.

Thus under constant accumulation of knowledge we come to the end of the eighteenth century, when the first important steps were taken in what we may call the utilization of science, that is, its application to industry and commerce. In this movement England took the lead. The power of steam had long formed a subject of speculation, but not till 1777 did James Watt yoke it in the service of man by inventing the steam-engine. A boiler with an engine attached could now supply power equal to that of many men. This is the starting-point of the industrial revolution of our age. The steam-engine stimulated the invention and construction of iron machinery; hand-made articles were more and more replaced by machine-made articles; the artisans working under the old system in scattered homes were gathered together in factories, where the machinery was installed; and the cities in consequence of the herding of men grew with unexampled rapidity. Steam as a propelling power was presently applied to transportation, and before the nineteenth century was many decades old the railway, first tried in England by Stephenson, and the steamboat, invented by Fulton, an American, secured a method of travel swifter, cheaper, and more reliable than the domestic animal.

Transportation by steam.

Transformation of society.

The effect of these inventions on the primary problem of man, the problem of subsistence, forces itself on the attention. With the aid of steam-driven machinery the raw products of the earth were amassed and worked over into articles of use more abundantly than ever before, and with the aid of steam-driven conveyances goods were carried rapidly and safely over land and sea to the most distant markets. Wealth was multiplied to an almost incredible extent and trickled in rivulets or flowed in broad streams through all the nations. An immediate general effect was a quick growth of population, for there was now a larger

quantity of food and clothing to be distributed and at a smaller price, while a further consequence was the raising of the standard of living among all classes. Not only has Europe in the nineteenth century doubled its population, but the average artisan can command comforts, which make his life in certain material respects more enjoyable than that of the aristocracy of a hundred years ago.

Present and future.

The social and economic energy, liberated by the application of science to industry and commerce, has proved cumulative, gathering power with each decade. Inventions and labor-saving devices have run into the thousands and hundreds of thousands. What this means for the daily life of man is illustrated by pointing out some of the improvements in the single field of human intercourse: the *telegraph*, binding together the people of the same continent, has been followed by the *submarine cable*, which circles the world, while the *telephone* gives every man direct speech with his immediate neighborhood. The latest addition to this group of inventions, the *wireless telegraph*, has not yet been perfected, but opens a prospect which bewilders the imagination. Another limitless outlook is unfolded by the development of electricity as a motive power by the side of or in the place of steam. It is not impertinent or rash to prophesy that the scientific movement, involving new discoveries of the laws and energies of nature and a fuller utilization of these laws, is no more than well under way, and that the future, from an economic point of view, will be far more wonderful than the past.

Awakening of the individual.

A little reflection will make plain how the diffusion of scientific habits of thought and the unexampled increase of manufactured articles, coupled with a widening network of railroads, telegraphs, and telephones, must have stimulated the political development of the nineteenth century. Superstition, which has always thriven upon ignorance of nature,

has been obliged to relax its hold. The inert masses have been awakened from their sleep, and have generally possessed themselves of the first tools of culture, of reading and writing. The large towns, where life is necessarily most intense, have familiarized the workingmen with modern liberal thought, while the distribution of wealth in the form of plots of land, cottages, and personalty, has given the artisan a direct interest in the policy of the state. In view of his intellectual and material advancement, it was inevitable that he should clamor to be represented in the government, and that his intelligence and material prosperity should be recognized by the concession of the right of suffrage. We have followed the movement by which, generally speaking, the common man has obtained full citizen rights.

The socialist movement.

But the democratic basis of the state was no sooner assured than a movement began which is now the leading problem of every modern community. A workingman at present may indeed exercise the full rights of citizenship, his material and moral condition during the past generation is represented by a steady upward curve, but a new source of discontent has arisen through his growing conviction that our present industrial system favors the capitalist class by securing to it at his expense a reward out of all proportion to its services. He desires a new adjustment between capital and labor, affirming that the amazing concentration of capital in a few hands is the proof of an unfair division of profits, and that this concentration suspends over his head the threat of economic and, eventually, of political slavery. An advanced section of the workingmen has gone so far as to declare its set hostility to the existing system, which encourages the individual to amass all the wealth he can and guarantees to him the untroubled enjoyment of it by putting at his service all the powers of the state. These protesters

call themselves *socialists*, and not content with merely destructive criticism, have, with an eye to the future, opposed to the current system their socialistic scheme, the essence of which is that the means of production should be owned not by a few individuals, but by the whole community, thus assuring a fair share in the benefits of nature to all her children. This economic theory received its most lucid and powerful presentation by a German revolutionary fugitive, Karl Marx. His work on capital (*Das Kapital*, 1867) has become the gospel preached by a thousand apostles in every country of the globe, with the result that there has everywhere grown up a social-democratic party, pledged to overthrow the present individual system of production in order to make room for public ownership and operation. The party has made consistent gains at the elections and in the public opinion of even England and the United States, and in some continental countries, like Germany, France, and Belgium, may conceivably acquire a majority within a generation. At the elections to the German Reichstag in 1903, the socialists polled thirty-two per cent. of the total vote.

Commercialism and humanity.

This hurried sketch of the social and industrial movement of our times may suffice to make clear to the reader that our world has grown smaller, its distant lands have been drawn more closely together, and its many races brought into a more significant brotherhood. The variegated articles of a great manufacturing country are carried to the remote markets of Central Asia and Darkest Africa, which send back in exchange their carpets, spices, and ivory. True, this expanding commerce has come to mean among the ruling nations competition, and too often a remorseless competition for markets, colonies, and conquests. An observer, directing his attention to this feature alone of modern life, might be tempted to declare that peace on earth, the

avowed ideal of Christian mankind, is farther than ever from being realized. And yet the rush and scramble are only a single aspect of contemporary civilization. That at the same time the sense of brotherhood, the humanitarian spirit, is growing, can admit of no doubt. To support our contention we have only to refer to the mounting protest against war, which has lately taken the form of a great international league of peace, or to the socialist movement, which rests on the principle of universal brotherhood, although perhaps thus far the emphasis has been laid too exclusively on the brotherhood of workingmen. This is not the place to attempt an analysis of the fulness, richness, and many-sidedness of modern life, but the vigorous competition and warm humanitarianism lying cheek by jowl, apparently exclusive yet including one another, state one of its special problems, and contribute not a little to the understanding of the recent developments in European politics.

The effect of commercialism on politics.

To this political development we must now again turn our attention. We shall see that while the fierce and conquering commercialism of our day has carried the great powers of Europe to the farthest lands and seas, and created a state of friction among them which makes war a possibility from one moment to another, oil is steadily poured on the troubled waters by that growing number, convinced that there are no longer any quarrels between nation and nation which cannot be better settled by adjudication than by the barbarous arbitrament of war.

Review of European diplomacy.

We have glanced (Chapters XXIII. and XXV.) at some of the special problems which have attended the most recent development of the leading continental states and of England. It is now proper that we review the diplomatic history of Europe, considered as a whole, since the Franco-German War of 1870. Their defeat, coupled with the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, created a bitterness in the hearts of Frenchmen

which for the two following decades induced them to strain every nerve to prepare for a war of revenge. The Alsace-Lorraine question till about 1890 was in the foreground of European interest and kept alive the apprehension that war would break out with each new spring. To meet this danger threatening on the west, Bismarck, the masterful statesman, who held in his hands the destinies of Germany, devised the plan of drawing to his side all the possible allies of France; without a powerful ally, he argued, France would not undertake a war. The peace of 1871 was hardly signed, when Bismarck began to cultivate the friendship of Austria and Russia. The result was the league of the three emperors, which, by establishing friendly relations among Germany, Russia, and Austria, secured the peace of Europe until the explosion in the Balkans in 1876. We have seen how Russia was induced to declare war, by which, though successful, she failed to obtain all she desired, owing to the intervention of the powers in the Congress of Berlin (1878). The Russians ascribed their diplomatic defeat to the desertion of Germany, and the Pan-Slavic party, very powerful at court and in the press, assumed so hostile a tone that Bismarck in alarm formed a close defensive alliance with Austria (1879). This is the beginning of a system of treaties which has lasted to this day (1906). The Austro-German alliance, intended as a warning addressed to Russia and France, presently met with a welcome accession. In 1881 Italy, mortally offended by the French seizure of Tunis, made overtures to Berlin for admission to the new league, which was presently (1883) converted into a Triple Alliance of the central powers. This agreement, although professedly peaceful, carried alarm to the banks of the Seine and the Neva, and induced the French and Russian diplomats to draw more closely together. Czar Alexander III. had some difficulty in overcoming his anti-republican sentiments,

League of the three emperors.

The Triple Alliance.

The Dual Alliance.

but necessity knows no law, and by 1890 he had entered into friendly relations with the French republic, which later on ripened into an alliance. England, not immediately interested in a purely continental rivalry, refused to be drawn into either of these systems and maintained a "splendid isolation."

The armed peace.

The Triple and Dual Alliances, by establishing a balance of power, have maintained the peace of Europe, and in so far deserve the gratitude of the world. But this peace is an "armed peace," each nation at a great expense supporting a huge standing army ready to take the field at a moment's notice. Russia has a force continually under arms of over 700,000, Germany and France of over 500,000 each, and these forces, by calling in the trained reserves, can be swelled without delay to 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 men. The awful consequences of the clash of such numbers have inclined to make statesmen unwilling to assume the responsibility of war and have proved an impressive argument in favor of peace. Still the vast expense of these military establishments raises the question whether they can in the long run be kept up. Poorer countries, like Italy and Russia, have been obliged to put on the tax screws to the limit of endurance. Disarmament is a watch-cry which is gaining more and more adherents in every country. The "armed peace" has accustomed the powers to arbitrate their differences in order to avoid war, and conceivably they may come to see that arbitration is just as feasible and honorable among unarmed nations as among governments mutually suspicious and armed to the teeth.

World commerce and world politics.

While the affairs of the Continent thus passed into a condition of relatively stable equilibrium, a change, hardly perceptible at first, began in the relations of the powers to the rest of the world. The active agent was the industrial revolution already mentioned. The merchant class, long

before the statesmen, began to see the advantage of winning foreign markets for their wares, and opened up in increasing number lines of communication with the rest of the world. The monopoly of oceanic commerce had, during the greater part of the nineteenth century, been left so entirely to England, that the sudden competition of her neighbors almost bore the appearance of an encroachment. Not only had her commercial primacy remained undisputed, but the long occupation of the Continent with its own affairs had enabled England to round off also her splendid colonial empire, won in the eighteenth century. To her territory in North America and India she had added vast empires in Australia and South Africa. Therefore, when the nations of the Continent began to look around, the earth was already preëmpted, except for certain less desirable and even inaccessible sections of Africa and Asia. Nevertheless, the governments by the despatch of expeditions and in other ways reached out a hand for these territories, and England, in alarm at this unexpected rivalry, accelerated the slow movement of absorption in which she had been engaged for over a hundred years. The first object of the ensuing scramble was Africa.

The British in Egypt.

Late in the seventies Egypt invited the attention of Europe, because its government had fallen into hopeless bankruptcy. Egypt was a part of the Turkish Empire. In the early nineteenth century a capable pasha, Mehemet Ali (1811–48), had carried on two successful wars with the Sultan, thereby securing the hereditary transmission of his power and the practical recognition of his independence. His grandson Ismail (1863–79) went farther. He extended his rule over the upper Nile; he helped build the Suez Canal; and he induced the Sultan to grant him the higher title of khedive. But Ismail was a spendthrift. He made the mistake of selling his shares in the Suez Canal Company to the British Government, which thus acquired control

of the great Egyptian waterway, and, in spite of this help, he presently defaulted the interest on the national debt (1879). As the Egyptian bonds were held largely in England and France, these powers interposed to protect their subjects, and forced their way into the management of the treasury. In 1882 a section of the natives, led by a certain Arabi, rose in revolt against the interference of foreigners in the affairs of their country, and England and France had to make up their minds either to abandon Egypt or to conquer it entirely. France decided for abandonment, but England, whose stake in Egypt was high, on account of the passage by the Suez Canal to India, boldly occupied the country with a military force. Since 1882 Egypt has to all intents been a British colony, although the khedive continues to reign at Cairo and the administration is largely in native hands.

The partition of Africa.

Even before Egypt was drawn under the British ægis, missionaries and scientists had called attention to Africa, and two great explorers, Livingstone and Stanley, had disclosed many of the secrets of the tropical jungle. King Leopold of Belgium, the protector of the expedition under Stanley which for the first time traced the course of the great Congo River, was just preparing to organize the Congo region into a colonial dependency (1883), when Portugal raised a boundary dispute and Germany occupied (1884) Togoland and Kamerun. To adjust rival claims a conference was held at Berlin (1884–85), which besides recognizing the Congo Free State under the lordship of King Leopold, established the important precedent of peaceful arbitration for all African disputes. The scramble for Africa once begun continued, until at the opening of the twentieth century the great continent embraces only three states independent and unclaimed by some European power,

Morocco.

Liberia, Morocco, and Abyssinia. Upon the most impor-