

To L. (on Risks.)

Bucarest. Oct. 27, 1914.

In hospital recovering from the assassin's bullet (4 days later Turkey went to war with the Entente.)

The British minister has just been to say that our ambassador at Constantinople reports fresh plots to kill off C.R.B. and me! In case we should not meet again in this stage of existence I will take the chance afforded by enforced rest to tell you why I thought it worth while to run the risk of assassination, which was involved in agitating against Turkey. I remember telling you, when you asked me, that the risks on this journey were not great, or not greater than on previous ones. I thought the Turks must have wished to kill me, ever since the Balkan Committee began to agitate. But after so many chances (especially since letting me off last year, in Armenia, when I had just been with the Balkan army against them. I thought them spiritless or inefficient or too sensible to spoil their reputation for being civilised.) The great war has excited them so much that fanaticism has boiled over. Also the Young Turks are far more active than the old. If they had been in power before they would have had far more reason to kill McColl, dePresence', Bérard, or anyhow Gladstone!

Some think Germany organised it. That sounds ugly but the ways of war are no better than assassination. It would pay them to kill the statesman who urges a neutral to attack them, e.g. Jonesco(?) But it would injure their prestige. In our case the Turks offered a stalking-horse behind which the German could hide himself.

2. himself./

As to risking life I think the evils of Turkish rule are such that to diminish them is well worth risking my life. The savagery of this assassin gives you an idea of the spirit which animates a proud and dominant race. How much more must it operate in its dealings with unarmed and helpless subjects, despised for their religion and hated for their superior brains. The mass of pain and waste, resulting from general disorder, murder, violation and robbery is such that I have constantly felt one ought gladly to give one's life to relieve it even a little. For years I thought it unfitting to marry while such a hell remained.

No doubt one ought to feel just the same about the needless misery of social conditions at home. If any good end involves risks, they must be taken. What is one's life worth if it can affect lives in greater number? My natural interest is in social reform. But I was forced to the conclusion that this evil of suffering in Turkey was so incomparably greater than other removable evils that anyone who could work at it should put it first.

It is an infinite satisfaction to me that you have taken up the question yourself and thus approved my course.

Nov. 1 - Turkey at war with Russia and with England. What a relief to the mind! Support of Turkey, the greatest blot on English history, at last removed. I have often reflected that I would give my life if I could ensure such a war thereby. Even the Great War is now on the side of good.

1.

HOTEL D'ANGLETERRE

Athens le

Dec. 20 1914.

Dearest,

I must not forget that there is a price on my head & that now I have taken to carrying a pistol & am guarded by the premier's detective, I may not be able to tell you all I wish to say by word of mouth. So I write this but don't send it.

At intervals on this journey, things occur to me that form part of my apologia for vita mea ! & I feel keen to tell you, partly because you are interested, & partly because (in addition) my friends, & specially my nephews & nieces, would like to hear them if I were killed.

The attempted assassination makes it incumbent to explain to you all how on earth I ever came to be meddling in such an out of the way affair as the Balkan cockpit!

Well it arose from certain views of life, & as they seem to me extremely important, I will try to state them, however inadequately.

Well my idea is that we who lead a secure & comfortable life are woefully cut off from realities. If Christ is any guide, every human being is of value; and we must be concerned for all. But to care for them at all we must go out of our way to understand their outlook. Our way of life cuts us clean off from theirs, & our class standards, even cleanliness itself, make it seem almost a duty to keep aloof. Balkan travel was another way to get nearer to reality - hunger and cold, danger, wounds, death, rebellion, sacrifice.

The question is what to do. The finest steps I have heard of were Harold's going to Canada as a labourer, travelling as a steerage passenger & C.R.B.'s living in Kennington. I am glad I was born with a feeling for realities, a feeling that we should know the worst, & not willingly blind ourselves. That seems to me the commonest & worst evil. You may have heard of the family weakness for dabbling in the Warlies ponds, positively revelling in black mud! You know too that I am inordinately proud of the family concern for wrongs, social & personal. Well I believe the two go together! Our liking for the whole nature of the pond, came from a love of reality & dislike of shams & grew into a readiness to deal with social mud. All this life we are asked to shut our eyes.

When in the brewery I felt that we directors ought to know the conditions in which our trade was done, & I got my friends to spend evenings with me hanging about public-house bars! C.R.B. & I found that our deplorable shyness was a great handicap in East End pubs, & another difficulty was that one did not like to drink out of the same glasses or pots as the customers we

found drinking! The only way was to smoke endless bad cigarettes..... I did not become a prohibitionist & I think it may be all right that the brewer in his sumptuous territorial home should be singing hymns on Sunday evening, while the people who make him rich are swilling in a grimy atmosphere which he would think disgusting for himself & degenerating for his children. I can only say that I felt one ought to know, & I think we should all know the poorest class, even when we've no special connection, such as I had, with their chief social recreation. You are one of those who can't be happy while people (those who supply your comforts) are wretched. Well then relieve your feelings, e.g. when you go to sea, satisfy yourself that there is no one housed in intolerable asphyxiation - if you can! No doubt the stoke-hole must be a nasty place, but insist on seeing the fo'castle! and the kitchen! Cecil Harris was a great boon to me because he had curiosity & adventurousness, & Conrad Noel because he was a socialist in addition. Ask Cecil about our visit to the labour colony at Lingfield) & Conrad about model lodging-houses.

I tried to go further by living in a 'furnished room' in Spitalfields, but fear of bad air & vermin cut me off from learning what the life is like. I was limited to the few places which are both very poor & very clean. That means that one knows little. But it is something to realise the outlook of those who at night are either kept awake or blunted morally & aesthetically, by foul air, a chorus of snores, dirty beds, cold, or vermin. If all ought to have a chance to be civilized & (?), we must be radical reformers. We can't do much for the poor unless we know what it is like to be poor ourselves. Charles Booth was right to live with a working family, & Mrs. Webb to be a sempstress.

Counter claims. For me it was always a question whether to break with all the claims already established by a position overloaded with opportunities for work in connection with business - family, class, society, sports, visits, parental wishes, about taking up volunteering, the London hospital &c There was also the call of evangelistic leanings, a class at George Yard Mission once a week, also boys' Brigade at Spitalfields & Working boys' homes &c.

As against striking out a new line, the balance of advantage was difficult to decide. I am very keen that all whom I can influence should know my opinion on this. It is that one should not be bound by grooves & ruts, however good. The world wants new blood, & drastic change, & I trust e.g. that my nephews will follow their own ideals at almost any cost of established ideas of duty, if the latter are not their own.

I wish I had at all events spent a period at a settlement, purely to find out what I could do best, i.e. with most zest & thoroughness. As it was, I tried to belong to both worlds, or rather all worlds, & in the matter of getting at realities I never got beyond staying in a labour home, with ne'er-do-wells, breaking my teeth on hard bread an inch thick, & working in the frost before dawn on a December morning spreading frozen manure. Even this I

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could not have done without the good fortune of having a ---- friend who was also a sportsman in Cecil Harris.

One of the greatest things is to fight against the barriers which prevent us from knowing realities. We are cut off from mixing with the masses largely because of the softness of our lives, & the height of & prevailing standard in clothes, housing, warmth, pure air, & above all food. It is hard enough to enjoy opportunities of talking to working people - and it is well worth while to learn to do so.

Opportunities arise on walking tours, in village "pubs", & some of the best talks I ever had have been with navvies on railways or public works. I think we should cultivate hardness, by means of plain food, cold water, and manual work.

Walking tours are a good means, but to learn in civilized countries is v. difficult & that is one of the reasons why I took to travel in the Balkans. Railway travelling affords one of our few chances of meeting a different class - i.e. by travelling 3rd class. Another opportunity that should never be missed is that afforded by electioneering. Get asked to canvass whether for political or local elections, & whatever your opinions! To abuse canvassing is short sighted. I can never repay my debt to the man who invented it!

Here are some maxims I wd like young men to follow, young women too when possible. Pursue your own dreams. They all come true. & you only lose time by giving up hopes of them. Always choose the more adventurous of the alternative courses. Remember you can never be too optimistic. It is mainly pessimism that keeps the world back.

GRAND CONTINENTAL HOTEL

ROME.

Dec. 30.

The exigencies of our political mission are so urgent that I seldom get a chance of going on with my letter. Therefore please make allowances for its scrappiness & disorder.

I want very much to urge the importance of that matter of reality, because it is fundamental. You and I have agreed that the poverty & demoralisation of large classes of the people is terrible, & all the more because it is due to neglect; it is removable, but the classes with wealth & power do not care enough to remove it.

Now why do they not care? Why do they spend one quarter of the national wealth in amusements. Why do they detest any one who tries to make the poor less poor & more independent? Surely not because they are convinced by sincere study of social science. Nor because they are heartless. It must be, mainly, because they don't realise or know the facts.

It is true that some of those who curse Lloyd-George

4.

Lloyd-George/

are kind-hearted, & a few are earnest & thorough workers. Some of these are at the same time tenacious of power & privilege. However much one is willing to work, it requires still more morality to be willing to forego "position", & work for equality. But these are not a large factor in the army of opposition to reform. I am sure it is mainly due to blindness & ignorance. Human beings are not on the whole brutes, & one must be really brutal if one realizes the state of things & does not believe it can be altered, (unless one thinks God is cruel).

Take a very ordinary matter, the increasing employment of labour on Sunday. It isn't credible that if we realised the delight of a weekly holiday to over-worked people who never get any other holidays than Sundays & bank holidays, we should willingly encroach on the Sundays of, e.g. railway workers. Surely if one personally knew the young man who could never see his girl, unless both he & she got Sunday free, one would not take any part in increasing the demand for Sunday labour. One hears the excuse that the man gets another day in the week. What use is that, unless the girl gets the same day? Everyone knows a common day is essential. But from want of personal knowledge, which wd show one the point of view of the worker, one is careless. Most of us never know what it really is to be tired, hungry, or deprived of what we want.

To recur to the Balkans, this is a good reason for going there. You meet some of these simple realities of life, & become less of a parasite. We comfortable classes escape an extraordinary amount of pain. Getting into a comfortable bed generally reminds me of this, & makes me feel that the least we can do is to work harder than the unwashed, to make up for our good luck.

It is also quite difficult to find any sacrifice that we can properly make. Edward Clifford, though aesthetic & dramatic, forewent the theatre in order to have a share in the natural lot of mankind in the way of deprivation.

Now another point. Those who want to know the poor must at the same time know the rich. Otherwise they won't effect so much progress because they understand less & make fewer converts. I want the 'rich' young man to control his impatience & know one class as much as another. His visits and balls may be frightfully tiresome, or at first alarming! But he must regard it as work worth doing, & after a year or two it can be dropped. My parents were right to urge me to see the world of one's class. I wish now I had done more, definitely giving a year to it, & I am glad I did not do less. The temptation is to rush into urgent work, & not map out one's life calmly. I know some good reformers of the upper class who would have great weight if they knew their class better. But at the same time they must beware of catching the class bias, & of forming ties which will impede their free criticism of their class. This is a danger, because a man who criticizes his class or trade is regarded as a traitor; he offends the usual crude standards of esprit-de-corps honour.

The esprit-de-corps of good men is notably dangerous because their goodness itself makes them think the rest of their class or trade is as good as they are themselves & then they fight for unworthy causes believing them to be worthy.

We are bound to give some offence but very little that one values has to be sacrificed. Indeed the puzzling thing is that we suffer so little opposition of a painful kind. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." Bishop Gore, the kindest of men, gets letters every day that give him acute pain.

Canon Barnett was a very great prophet. Barnett held, like you & me, that pessimism is the chief heresy; that no dream is too Utopian to be followed. My own experience makes me ashamed of not having acted on this. Do let us remember how near we are to progress, if only the world was not held back by pessimism.

The progress already achieved is marvellous, & it is due to the handfull of men & women who believe in working for it. Generally they are people of less all round ability than masses of lazy people - often less than the average. It often exasperates me that work should be put on people like myself, when thousands have more brains & opportunity to do it.

What appalling waste it all is. Yet perhaps the waste through our own want of optimistic faith is greater still. One can easily see that if the available material in brains, leisure, wealth, & faith, were used, the result wd be gigantic. The world would be a different place. Let's remember that Utopianism is obviously true.

People have often suggested that I had some special ability, in order to make headway with the Balkan Committee. The fact is that I had far less than average brains. The only unusual thing I brought to bear was the theory that all sorts of men could help. Other people think pessimistically, & the result is that people are not tried - & quarrels prevail. I also applied the theory to all sorts of things. We did not despair of utilizing any means whatever - e.g. social position, money, advertisement of the cause in any way, by any kind of newspaper, or any other agency.

It was Barnett who proposed the Balkan States Exhibition. It had to be done through Earls Court, & brought us into very queer company! I remember saying to Barnett that I felt rather ashamed of pure advertising. He replied that that was just the method used by Christ! & certainly he never despaired of any one.

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to working people - and it is well worth while to learn to do so.

arise on walking tours, Opportunities in village "pubs", & some of ~~the~~ best talks I ever had have

been with ^{navvies/} ~~NAVVIERS~~ on railways or public works. I think we should

cultivate hardness, by means of plain food, cold water, and manual work.

Walking tours are a good means, but to learn in civilized countries is

v. difficult & that is one of ~~the~~ ^{the} reasons why I took to travel in ~~Balham~~ ^{the Balkans}

Railway travelling affords one of our few chances of meeting a different

class - i.e. by travelling 3rd class. Another opportunity that should

never be missed is that afforded by electioneering. Get asked to canvass

whether for political or local elections, & whatever your opinions !

To abuse canvassing is shortsighted. I can never pay my debt to the man

who invented it!

Here are some maxims I wd like young men to follow, young women too

when possible.

Pursue your own dreams.

They all come true. & you only lose time by giving up hopes of

them.

7. them/.

Always choose the more adventurous of the alternative courses.

Remember you can never be *too optimistic*. It ~~is~~ is mainly pessimism that keeps the world back.

GRAND CONTINENTAL HOTEL
ROME

Dec. 30. The exigencies of our political mission are so urgent

that I seldom get a chance of going on with my letter. Therefore

please make allowances for its scrappiness & disorder.

I want very much to urge the importance of that matter of reality,

because it is fundamental. You and I have agreed that the poverty &

demoralisation of large classes of the people is terrible, & all the

more because it is due to neglect; it is removable, but the classes

with wealth & power do not care enough to remove it.

Now why do they not care ?

Why do they spend ^{*one quarter*} $\frac{1}{4}$ of the national wealth in amusements. Why do they

detest any one who tries to make the poor less poor & more independent ?

Surely not because they are convinced by sincere study of social

science. Nor because they are heartless. It must be, mainly, because

they don't realise or know the facts.

It is true that some of those who curse Lloyd-George are kind-hearted,

8. kind-hearted/

& a few are earnest & thorough workers. Some of these are at the same time tenacious of power & privilege. However much one is willing to work, it requires still more morality to be willing to forego

"*position*", & work for equality. But these are not a large factor

in the Army of Opposition to reform. I am sure it is mainly due to

blindness & ignorance. Human beings are not on the whole brutes, &

one must be really brutal if one realizes the state of things & does

not believe it can be altered. (unless one thinks God is cruel),

Take a very ordinary matter, the increasing employment of labour on

Sunday. It isn't credible that if we realised the delight of a weekly

holiday to over-worked people who never get any other holidays than

Sundays & bank holidays, we should willingly encroach on the

Sundays ^{*of e.g.*} ~~of~~ railway workers. Surely if one personally knew the

young man who could never see his girl, unless both he & she got

Sunday free, one would not lightly take any part in increasing the

demand for Sunday labour. One hears the excuse that the man gets

another day in the week. What use is that, unless the girl gets the

same day? Everyone knows a common day is essential. But from want of

personal knowledge, which wd show one the point of view of the worker,

9. worker/,

one is careless. Most of us never know what it really is to be tired,

hungry, or deprived of what we want. To recur to the Balkans, this is a

good reason for going there. You meet some of these simple realities

of life, & become less of a parasite. We comfortable classes, escape

an extraordinary amount of pain. Getting into a comfortable bed

generally reminds me of this, & makes me feel that the least we can do

is to work harder than the unwashed, to make up for our good luck.

It is also quite difficult to find any sacrifice that we can properly

make. Edward Clifford, ^{though} ~~the~~ aesthetic & dramatic, forewent the theatre

in order to have a share in the natural lot of mankind in the way of

deprivation.

Now another point. Those who want to know the poor must at the same

time know the rich. Otherwise they won't effect so much progress

because they understand less & make fewer converts. I want the 'rich'

young man to control his impatience & know one class as much as another.

His visits and balls may be frightfully tiresome, or at first alarming!

But he must regard it as work worth doing, & after a year or two it can

be dropped. My parents were right to urge me to see the world of one's

class. I wish now I had done more, definitely giving a year to it, & I

10. I/ am glad I did not do less. The temptation is to rush into urgent work,

& not map out one's life calmly. I know some good reformers of the

upper class who would have great weight if they knew their class better

But at t same^{the}time they must beware of catching ^{the} class bias, & of

forming ties which will impede their free criticism of their class.

This is a danger, because a man who criticizes his class or trade is

regarded as a traitor; he offends ^{the} usual crude standards of esprit-

de-corps honour. We are bound to give some offence but very little

that one values has to be sacrificed. Indeed the puzzling thing is

that we suffer so little opposition of a painful kind. " Woe unto

you when all men speak well of you." Bishop Gore, the kindest of men,

gets letters every day that give him acute pain.

The esprit-de-corps of good men is notably dangerous because their

goodness itself makes them think the rest of their class or trade is

as good as they are themselves & then they fight for unworthy causes

believing them to be worthy.

Canon Barnett

~~Savor Barneff~~ was a very great prophet. Barnett held, like you & me,

that pessimism is ^{the} chief heresy; that no dream is too Utopian to be

followed. My own experience makes me ashamed of not having acted on

12. on/

11. on/

also applied the theory of this. Do let us remember how near we are to progress, if only the

of things. We did not despair of utilizing any means whatsoever - world was not held back by pessimism.

e.g. social position, money, advertisement of the cause in any way. The progress already achieved is marvellous, & it is due to the hand-

full of men & women who believe in working for it. Generally they

It was Barnett who proposed the Balkan States Exhibition. It had to be people of less all round ability than masses of lazy people -

I often less than the average. It often exasperates me that work

remember saying to Barnett that I felt rather ashamed of pure should be put on people like myself, when thousands have more brains

advertising. He replied that that was just the method used by & opportunity to do it.

What appalling waste it all is. Yet perhaps ^{the} waste ~~is~~ ^{through} our own

want of optimistic faith is greater still. One can easily see that

if the available material in brains, leisure, wealth, & faith, were

used, the result wd be gigantic. The world would be a different

place. Let's remember that Utopianism is obviously true.

People have often suggested that I had some special ability, in

order to make headway with the Balkan Committee. The fact is that I

had far less than average brains. The only unusual thing I brought

to bear was the theory that all sorts of men could help. Other

people think pessimistically, & the result is that people are not