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## THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE TYPE

By EUGEN ROSENSTOCK

In the first impressions of a foreign country those tendencies which are particularly new and which are likely to bring decisive change can scarcely be appreciated. For these are still without clear expression. Time has been too short for them to be registered in the features of buildings and monuments, in the bearing and dress of the citizens, in their behaviour at work and at play. At first I therefore only saw such ancient glories and horrors of England as Canterbury and Manchester, London and Oxford. But soon after I was able to penetrate beyond these and approach the heart of modern English life. To my astonishment I found it impossible to obtain good pictures of the finest works of art in these cities, and in the very shops where reproductions of every Tuscan Renaissance classic were exposed for sale you could not get one of the stained glass of University College, Oxford, nor of Oliver Cromwell standing before Parliament. During the day on which I traversed London from one end to the other in search of these things, I learned much about the English people, their manly carelessness, their dislike of system and their habit of laughing and

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20 smiling at every kind of regulation and official control, big or little.

These fundamental characteristics, however, soon showed themselves as co-responsible for the heavy crisis which weighs upon the country to-day. Everywhere the stranger is impressed with appeals to national character: "An Englishman begins to fight well when he has got his back against the wall," "Muddle through," etc. In Walter Page's letters from England during the War there is a short passage which deals with the method of newspaper vendors. He shakes his head over the fact that each vendor sells only one paper. This stereotyped obstinacy which struck Page so forcibly was expressed in the tireless patience with which certain phrases about England (or about the Continent) were repeated to me again and again in every part of the country. The people in the north and in the south, in the Midlands and in Bristol, all seemed to restrict themselves to a very small vocabulary. This economy of speech is certainly connected with the universal distaste for theories and abstract subtleties.

At this point I began to realise that one could probably see the mote in the stranger's eye better than the beam in one's own. For not only is the English character stereotyped; no doubt it is the same with the German. This gave me food for some months of serious reflection in England. For it was not merely as a foreigner and outsider that I realised the cul-de-sac down which the English type had found its way; the example made the fates of the other European peoples correspondingly clear.

In the mirror of the English people I viewed the common danger which now threatens all European peoples without exception. The fact that it became evident to me in England is no reason for regarding it as a purely English symptom; the very same disease has simultaneously attacked the several branches of the European family tree.

This disease I choose to call the "Impoverishment of the Type."

I went to the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley; the only thing which attracted me there—even though I was in genial company—was the Chinese Restaurant; otherwise it seemed like the sunset of the day of the Britons, extravagant but rather chilly, gay but somehow listless. How proud they must have been seventy-five years ago, at the opening of the first great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace! Admitted that the Crystal Palace Exhibition was ugly and raw, it was nevertheless a beginning, whereas Wembley seemed more like an end.

On Thursday evening at Oxford they were busy with the time-worn game of Union Debates. Two speakers, however, ruined the whole play by taking the arguments desperately seriously. A little Indian had to rescue the evening and provide the saving humour by calling attention to a couple of points of order. But honestly the imitation of this style of debating by members of the women's colleges or by working-men at Ruskin is enough to make the spectator feel sea-sick. These verbal tournaments become intolerable where anaemic girls seek to divert themselves with this particular "amusement for gentlemen."

No wonder that the British Parliament is said to be done for: men are entering it who have no sense of humour. For up till now the good working of the system depended upon this order of things. Hence the average Englishman is nonplussed by the crude and savage outbreak of a new spirit which is totally inarticulate and cannot express itself in parliamentary language, but which is instinct in the various commotions which visit England with increasing frequency from year to year.

In 1925 the —nth Coal Commission began to sit. Everyone told me that half a year later the strike would inevitably come. It came, and everyone plunged into ruin with defiant but open eyes—the Government, the workers and the coal-owners—for no one would formulate a plan, and everything was left to the improvisation of the moment. To a foreigner these proceedings seem incomprehensible.

All these things are connected with the most profound destinies of the country, with events which occurred as far back as the seventeenth century. And here again the foreigner is surprised at the peculiar thoughtlessness with which English history flows onward in its own sentimental tradition without sharing in the great revolutions of the Continent. The Industrial Revolution and the Tudor period are discussed at length, but the overthrow of all systematic, far-seeing statesmanship and bureaucracy is treated too slightly.

Nevertheless England to-day imports a good deal of her philosophy, bureaucratic ideas and officialdom from abroad in order to come through without disaster,

but she imports these things reluctantly, unconsciously, and without profound realisation of the causes which require her to do so, and thus it comes about—at least, that is the impression one gets—that not the best but the most easily obtainable continental methods and ways of organisation are imported. Labour imports third-rate Socialism, the Home Office and the L.C.C. third-rate red-tape. But no one understands the hidden causes governing the development of these things among the many strongly competing States of the Continent. They are despised, but they are made use of none the less. And they remain foreign.

Manly carelessness made England great and colonised the Empire. One is not surprised, therefore, that the English do everything to retain this one-sided masculine character. The most masculine spirits of the old families of England still have the Imperial idea as their focus. In one week last year, when I was in England, no less than six "Firsts" at Oxford enlisted as missionaries to the cultured Hindus of India.

But the lower classes of England no longer have the eyes of their souls set on this labour of Empire. The Dominions do not obtain the immigrants which they need from the Mother Country. One of the prominent leaders of the Empire described to me the fruitlessness of his endeavours to find settlers for the Dominions. When I told him that we had enough Germans for the purpose, his face only puckered with a grimace. He had never thought of the problem as other than purely British. But it is not so, for England to-day is divided into Big and Little Englanders. The heirs of the old Whigs and Tories alike are Greater Britonists.

Labour, on the other hand, has the perspective of Town Councillors. This is the real constitutional crisis of England.

The underlying cause, however, is a sickness of soul. The type of the free Briton has no more been able to confine the primal instincts of a more extensive, richer humanity within its all-sanctifying limits than it has managed to absorb the Irishman! Its principle of manliness has been allowed to remain solely onesided. For three centuries this has been so overstressed in England that any other attitude of the soul has remained undeveloped. Only this can explain, perhaps, the savage brutality of the suffragette campaigns before the War. It explains also, perhaps, a figure so near to the border of caricature as that of a Curzon, and on the other hand the temporary indispensability of such an un-English type as Lloyd George. He was the last person who, using the arts of hell, could coerce the already disintegrating elements of the National Body into unity for a few more years, simply because he was a more diversified type. The pure Englishman—that is to say, the “impoverished type” of the gentleman—no longer attracts the automatic following of the lower orders. An opposition has set in from the deeper level of their soul. So far it has found no proper expression either in thought, teaching, or leadership. But this opposition damns with ultimate barrenness everything which the old type undertakes to-day, whether it be political, economic or educational. So far these instincts can do no more than rear in self-defence and assert themselves by obstruction and violence. They are checked, however, by a preponderating

balance of the accepted type in every department of the national life. Only one thing could help: for the dominating type itself to realise its spiritual impoverishment and reform, for it to find its own way back into a richer spiritual life, nurtured by other than purely masculine prescriptions.

All this can be observed in other forms on the Continent. There the excesses which destroy the balance are different, but the type is no less impoverished.

England is only an example. But the fact that the continental traveller can learn so much for himself in England points to England's secret bond with the Continent. That the inhabitants of England refuse to perceive and realise this community of destiny to which they are subject is also a symptom of the impoverishment of the type. As long as they refuse knowledge of it they will remain its slave. And the louder they sing "Britons never, never, never shall be slaves" and screw their vision upon the Empire, the greater will be their slavery to the subterranean powers which oblige them to share this destiny with the rest of the European family, and which, so long as they pursue their mania for absolute independence, will only remove them still farther from the sources of a free and full humanity.

