

The Time and the Teacher

By T. A. BROUGH

Those of us who have long passed the middle arch of life's bridge, and have come within easy distance of the broken arches of Mirza's vision have seen, in this little world of ours, changes great and profound. In almost every civilised country the rudiments of education have been placed within reach of every child. Secondary education is no longer the exclusive privilege of gentlemen's sons. The son or daughter of the unskilled labourer treads college halls in cap and gown without note or comment. The daily paper finds its way into the lowliest cottage. For a mere bagatelle any one may have on his bookshelves an abundant store of the world's best literature.

In the service of a magician of the Middle Ages Ariel offered to put a girdle around the world in forty minutes. In the service of the humdrum Modern Age Lord Kelvin could girdle the world in a fifth of that time without leaving his classroom in Glasgow University. I may turn in my easy chair and talk to my friend hundreds, or, if need be, thousands of miles away. While my ship is ploughing the waves in the darkness and silence of the night, a welcome to beautiful New Zealand comes mysteriously over the expanse of waters to cheer and gladden my heart. A letter is mailed at the South Pole, and is delivered in the King's palace, in one of the most northerly countries of the globe. The Stars and Stripes are said to be floating around the North Pole. An intrepid Canadian leads a party of men and dogs, without provisions, in a journey of many days over the Arctic ice, where no previous explorer had discerned the faintest sign of life, and restored them to the outer world strong and well. In our boyhood days the Great Eastern was the marvel of the ship-builder's art. Now mightier ships than the Great Eastern are scrapped as out of date. Twenty-five years ago lunatics dreamed of flying through the air. Now Lloyd George dictates his correspondence while travelling in his aerial car. Although the airship may not stop between posts, yet it is possible for the stout-hearted passenger to drop from the clouds, without serious discomfort, to the haven where he would be. Science and mechanics have wrought such wonders that to the men of our day the achievements of Hercules sound like poor jokes.

To the careful observer of human life during the last half century social changes as profound, as startling, are clearly disclosed. The division of society into upper, middle and lower classes is no longer regarded as a necessary, beneficent and divinely-ordered arrangement. Those styled, unfortunately, "the workers" claim at least equality of opportunity and reward with all other members of the social organism. The aristocracy of birth sang perhaps its heroic swan-song in the fields where poppies now bloom immortal. In the mellowed atmosphere of its age-renowned ancestral halls bask the new plutocracy who yesterday swung pick and shovel. Today, in moments of pessimism, our fears may whisper misgivings, lest our children's children shall bow beneath the yoke of great nations we had thought to hold in leading strings for ever. Nay, more, it is not alone the pessimist who trembles lest civilisation itself is even now tottering to its fall, to the end that for a Devil's millenium the ape and tiger in us may have scope to range at will.

To the dying world of Greece and Rome Christianity gave new life and new hope. The sacrifice on Calvary ushered in well nigh two thousand years of human uplift. But is its force now spent? Has vital belief in the Son of Man now become a creed outworn? Certain it is that the great Confessions of Faith of two hundred and fifty or three hundred years ago are by devout men venerated rather than read, and that the working creeds of most Christians are much briefer and much simpler, and can hardly be recognized alongside the

official standards of the great branches of the Church universal.

Has the end all but come? I dare to believe not. Outer forms may change. Human machinery in Church organisation may be scrapped; but the best minds in every age will, I think, seek after God, if haply they may find Him; they will, I believe, be ready to subscribe to this brief confession—personal responsibility to a personal Deity, and to regard service and self-sacrifice as the most Godlike expression of the human soul.

What a series of social cataclysms our world has survived! but only because the noblest of our race have gladly yielded themselves bond-servants of duty, have been true to the light that was in them, have ever been ready to pour out their heart's blood rather than betray the faith in which they lived, moved and had their being. And if the present age is to escape shipwreck it will only be because of the men and women who in darkness and in peril, in storm and stress, not counting the cost, do the duty that lies nearest. "The coneys are a feeble folk, yet they have their dwelling among the rocks. The ant has no king, yet she storeth up her food in the harvest."

The members of every class are free to enlist in the grand army of world saviours, but the opportunity of the teacher is unique. Teachers are the only class brought into intimate personal relation with every individual, and that, too, in the great formative years of life. The teacher is the foster-parent, the instructor, the trainer, the guide and counsellor of childhood and youth, and often of early manhood as well.

What has society a right to demand of this man, this woman, of unique and marvellous opportunity? What characteristics must be insisted on, must be taken for granted? When a very young man I listened at a gathering of educationists to a paper outlining the hall-marks and qualifications of the true teacher. "First and foremost," the speaker said, "the teacher should be a Christian gentleman."

But is it true? For many years I held it truth, but ultimately, with keen regret, I was forced to abandon this position. If I engage a tiler to put a roof on my house do I require of him that he shall be a Christian gentleman, or do I assure myself that he is a man of common honesty and has skill in laying tiles? If I buy a loaf of bread do I ask whether the baker is a Christian gentleman? No! I ask whether he bakes bread that will not poison me or give me indigestion, but will help to nourish and build up my body.

If we demand that the teacher shall first of all be a

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—Cicero.

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