

that man is wholly master of his fate.

There has been produced in North America and in other progressive countries the best-equipped civilization that there has ever been. Yet I find that I can look back with some degree of nostalgia to the days of my boyhood, days when we lit our houses by gas or coal-oil, when we went about on our legs or on bicycles or rarely, as a luxury, in a horse-drawn cab, days of very few primitive motor-cars and wholly without movies or radios or airplanes. It is a common failing for people as they grow older to think of the days of their youth as better days, golden days; but in this case I doubt that the conservatism and caution associated with middle age can alone be blamed for my nostalgia. Much has been gained since then, but something valuable has been lost, or at least badly shaken. That is perhaps best described as the sense of security.

This is nowhere more evident than in the state of international relations. The 19th century vision of growing harmony between nations has faded, the vision expressed by Tennyson as "freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent". Our technically-competent era has managed to produce the two most devastating wars in all history, the grimmest economic depression on record, and now a state of affairs described as a cold war, for which it is not possible at present to see even the outline for settlement.

The present atmosphere is certainly a trying one in which to live. It warps the judgment when what is most needed of every citizen is that he should stay calm, cool-headed and alert. It is especially trying, perhaps, for those about to enter on their careers because of the uncertainty with which the future is surrounded. It is also trying for older people who have seen so many of their hopes shattered.

Yet there are real grounds for hope. I believe that we are not bound inevitably to fight before long another great war in order to prevent our freedoms from being overthrown. I also believe that there is no short or easy road to security and lasting peace. We shall, I am sure, continue to be faced for several years at least with recurrent crises and pressing anxieties which will affect the lives of everyone of us.

Part of the current disillusionment over the prospects of peace in our time arises from having set hopes too high in the last stages of the war, just as people did twenty and more years ago after the other war. The major part of our disillusionment, however, comes from the positive actions of others, actions which a huge majority of the people of the western world now recognize as menacingly hostile to their chosen way of life.

When the Charter of the United Nations was being drafted in the spring of 1945 it would have seemed almost incredible that the victorious allies, after putting forth the effort and enduring the suffering that won the war, should so soon be ranged in two great opposing groups. Yet that is what has happened, and the differences between the groups are such that they are impossible of settlement by our usual democratic method of compromise.

Political problems are very rarely wholly solved. They change their shape and their importance. There is no neat general solution for the international rivalries of today, no possibility of devising a panacea that will heal the differences between great powers. Beware of the person who propounds simple solutions, who thinks that if the Charter of the United Nations were amended, or if some of the chiefs of governments were to meet around one table, or even if the issues were forced rapidly to the point of war, the world could soon emerge into an era of harmony and prosperity.

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