

# THE SCIENCE OF POWER

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**PART I**  
**THE FAILURE OF WESTERN**  
**KNOWLEDGE**



## CHAPTER I

### THE GATHERING OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION

**A**T some future time the nature of the drama which is at present unfolding itself in history must make a powerful appeal to the human imagination. Under our eyes, with the confused details of the transition spread before us from day to day in the events of the leading countries of the earth, we see the curtain rising upon an entirely new order of the world.

It is one of the curious features of our day that the nature of the change is as yet scarcely apprehended. The shadow of it rests upon all the events of the time. The meaning of it encircles the world. The instinct of it moves in the minds of distant peoples and of strange races. But there is yet scarcely any conception of its nature. We are undoubtedly living in the West in the opening stages of a revolution the like of which has never been experienced in history. We are witnessing the emergence of causes and the marshalling and

leaguings of forces utterly unknown to textbooks. They will make history for a thousand years to come. But for the understanding of the great transition going on around us the very elements of thought do not at present exist.

It has been a feature of the time which has witnessed the greatest war in the history of the human race to talk as if the existing conditions of the West were the result of peculiar causes introduced by a single nation or affecting a single period of time. We must put aside such conceptions. The present conditions in the West are the result of causes which are universal, which have come slowly to a head in history, which extend far beyond military aspects, and into the meaning of which the development of the entire world will in the future be drawn.

It is a fact, the significance of which has been almost overlooked in the past, that Western civilization has been in a special and peculiar sense founded upon force. All the reasoned knowledge of the West is the science of force in one or other of its phases. Our civilization has been brought to the birth in time as the result of a process of force, which is unparalleled in the development of the race, and the conditions of which can almost certainly never be reproduced in history. For



countless ages before history has view of him, the fighting male of the West has streamed across Europe in successive waves of advance and conquest, vanquishing, exterminating, overwhelming, overmastering, taking possession. The fittest, who have survived in these successive layers of conquest, have been the fittest in virtue of the right of force, and in virtue of a process of military selection probably the longest, the sternest, the most culminating which the race has ever undergone.

It is this fighting pagan of the world who has made the history of the West. The civilization which he has produced is the strangest flower in the fields of time. He has introduced into it at every point the spirit of the unmeasured ages of conquest out of which it has come. Into all the institutions which he has created he has carried the spirit of war, and the belief in force as the ultimate principle of the world.

But at the same time he has inherited a religion<sup>a</sup> which is the utter negation of force, and which in every phase of his development has remained the outstanding challenge to his conception of the omnipotence of force. He has struggled with this extraordinary inheritance for centuries in history. Deep in the inmost recesses of his nature he has continually persuaded himself against belief

in it. He has set his science and his philosophies to reason it away. He has gone forth on his business to the conquest of the world fortifying himself against it and with his spirit resolutely tuned to the doctrine of force. In his national wars he has made the right of conquest the ultimate right of the fittest. In the social struggle he has trained himself to see, in the steel claws of devouring tyrannies closing on the worsted, the natural law of efficiency.

It is only our lifelong familiarity with the outstanding features of our civilization, which has dimmed our vision to its altogether surprising features. As the spirit of the belief, which is the flat denial of the conception of the omnipotence of force, has gradually overmastered the world-builder of the West, the results baffle all adequate description. The pagan has captured the world by force. He holds it by force. But the system of ideas in which he is enmeshed flings into sight an unparalleled significance. While his philosophies have argued with it, while his sciences have branded it as foolishness, it has slowly enfranchised the world around him. It is bringing into the rivalries of life on terms of equality with him every class and substratum of his societies, every race of men on the planet.

The problems which are evolving themselves out

of the deep are illimitable. The blinding vision of which the West has caught sight has been that there is but one class, and but one colour, and but one soul in humanity. It is a vision under which the soul of the pagan world-builder flames in rebellion. But it has come to haunt the moods of industrial Demos as he hums his rag-time music in the midst of the mills of force which he has erected. The spirit of it moves in the dreams of strange peoples at the ends of the earth. And on the mind of Demos and of the distant peoples the effect is the same. It has brought a haunting sense of some meaning, infinite but unexplained, through which our civilization moves towards a fulfilment in which the past may pass for ever, and in which new standards of efficiency, that men have not dreamt of, may possibly arise in the world.

The male of Western civilization has become by force of circumstances the supreme fighting animal of creation. History and natural selection have made of him what he is. For at least four thousand years, and possibly for a period ten times as long, his forbears have represented the highest expression of force in the world. Every instinct of the fight, every quality of the rule of force exists in him through an ancestral inheritance measured by the

meaning of hundreds of generations of successful fighting.

The consequences are felt to-day throughout every fibre of our civilization. As race after race of the peoples of the earth, as class after class, and layer after layer of their societies have been gradually brought into the struggle under the emancipating influence described, there has resulted a conflict of forces never before known. The problems thereof have become in every field of activity in the West the centres of movements molten with human passion. There has never been anything like the daily sequence of events which is spread before us in the record of civilization during the past half-century. It is a record of a war continuous and intense under every phase of human activity. In the programmes of parties, in the relations of nations, in business, in labour politics, in art, in literature, in the whole realm of economic activity, it is war in progress under every conceivable aspect.

But this cannot be the meaning of the West. Through it all there runs a sense of new eras, of new values, of emerging types, of widening horizons, of more spacious ideals of human brotherhood seen through the social emotion. But it is a world of revolution, of sinking temples,

of falling idols, of rending veils, of darkening skies under which the gods of force huddle towards vast Armageddons muttering, "We know not fear," while the past moves from under them.

If we could only see the age which preceded the universal war of nations which began in 1914 as the historian of the future will see it, it would present a surprising spectacle, for we should see this war of the nations to be no more than an incident in a universal movement, involving every leading form of thought and activity in the West, gradually rising to a climax throughout the world.

There is a striking feature which we may perceive to be characteristic of the half-century which preceded the war which began in 1914. At the centre of every movement of opinion in the West the same fact is to be noticed. There is visible a gradual falling back upon first principles, a retreat all along the line to those conditions of elemental force under which the civilization of the West first came into being.

The Darwinian thesis, presented to the Western mind in the middle of the nineteenth century, had a remarkable effect on civilization. It presented to the masters of force in the West a conception of the world which they rendered exclusively in terms of force and struggle. It was not science which

created the universal fame of the Darwinian conception. It was rather the half-informed pagan mind of our civilization. For centuries the Western pagan had struggled with the ideals of a religion of subordination and renunciation coming to him from the past. For centuries he had been bored almost beyond endurance with ideals of the world presented to him by the Churches of Christendom. He had stiffly bowed his armoured back to them, but mostly without inward comprehension. But here was a conception of life which stirred to its depths the inheritance in him from past epochs of time. This was the world which the master of force comprehended. The pagan heart of the West sang within itself again in atavistic joy. Its Schopenhauers, its Omar Khayyáms, its Haeckels, its Nietzsches, its Weinigers, its Wagners became the prophets and interpreters of a meaning in the world which it drank in with understanding.

There can be no more remarkable experience in store for the observer than that which comes to him if, in any of the leading countries of the West, he sets himself to compare at any of the centres of higher learning the questions being set a few years ago to students of the social and political sciences and those which were set in the same subjects but half a century before. The trained understanding



reading between the lines beholds in progress a change far exceeding in significance any political revolution which has ever taken place in the world. The iron of conviction has passed from the mind of authority. The doctrine of force has taken its place. The ears of the present generation have been glued to the ground, strained to catch the distant meaning of vast, formless, approaching causes, speaking a language absolutely unknown to those who occupied the seats of knowledge in the past.

The full effect of the change long in progress in civilization has come into view almost suddenly. The significance of it was from the first perceived by the Churches, those historic centres for centuries of the idealisms of the West. It soon reached to every centre of opinion. For a prolonged period previously the Western nations, even in their darkest hours of struggle, had ever placed before themselves and regarded with unfaltering gaze an inward vision. They had conceived our civilization as gradually ripening, through the perfection of principles inherent in it, towards an age of universal peace and balanced harmony among all the nations of the earth.

The first startling effect in the West of the recrudescence of the pagan doctrine of the omnipotence of force was upon this ideal. For fifteen centuries, since the full adoption of Christianity

by the continent of Europe, the scandal and paradox of the world, says the Honourable George Peel, was that European history was a tale of blood and slaughter.<sup>1</sup> But always hitherto this record had been shamed into irrelevancy by the permanence and supremacy of the vision in the background.

Within the short space of some fifty years all this has been changed. Those living have watched civilization becoming openly and of set purpose a universal place of arms. Within the half-century, by a process of development marking the intensity of the causes at work, they have seen standing armies, on a scale previously quite unknown, becoming a normal feature of the life of modern communities. The sun has followed its daily course from East to West over the nations of the world standing to arms and preparing for war. The full significance of the change, moreover, has lain in the fact that now it was preparation for war without any higher vision whatever of peace perduring in the background.

For the changes in the direction of thought have been far-reaching and rapid. The state of war became spoken of again among men not as a shame and a rebuke to civilization but as a state of nature. During the first period of the twentieth century

<sup>1</sup> *The Future of England*, p. 169.



in the reviews, books, newspapers, parliaments, congresses, and even in the schools of the principal countries, war has been the principal subject of interest. The discussion of war by experts and publicists—the methods by which war is to be carried on, the enemies against whom it may have to be directed, and the objects and policies for which it may have to be waged—has gone on continually.

As the result of tendencies which in a short space have enveloped the world, settled modes of thought regarding war, which in countries like Great Britain and the United States had been the slow growth of centuries of previous development, have become profoundly modified and altered. Men have come to listen silently, as they would not have listened half a century previously, when they have been told by leaders of opinion that the ultimate principles of civilization do not justify the prophecies since the beginning of our era as to an eventual age of peace and goodwill; that war is the natural condition of man, that it is not an evil but a necessity, and even a good, and that the modern resources of science are not tending to abolish war but only to render it more terrible and destructive by raising to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  power the possibilities of savagery.

The alteration taking place in the nature of the pleas urged in favour of peace have become even