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head, prominent eyes, the wide-spreading nostrils of the dramatic orator, a voice of brass and lungs of leather." His subject was the world after the war; and as no one was listening, the Young Soldier asked a question:

"I understood you to say that after the last war all the Government controls were quickly taken off, and the job of restarting industry and turning the wheels of a peacetime world was left to the initiative of individuals, that is to say, to the business man's hope of making profits out of somebody's else's labour. . . . But what I'd like to know is why, since the business men seem already to be running things, what happened after the last war won't happen after this war?"

"That is easy to answer," said the orator. "We should not think of making the same mistakes as they made in 1918. We are far too wise for that."

"Are statesmen really so much better and wiser than they were 25 years ago?" asked the Young Soldier. "I wish I could believe it."

"Most certainly we are," said the speaker. . . . "I wonder that you, a member of His Majesty's forces, should wish to throw doubt upon these obvious truths. I am not sure



"The Red-tape Worm"

that I shall not have you arrested and dismissed the service for spreading alarm and despondency."

THERE is no space for the Young Soldier's encounter with Mr. Escapegoat, Diplomat and Servant of the State; with the Rev. Mr. Hateman, Servant of God; with fat Mr. Transportouse, who "understood the needs of the masses"; Mr. Enna, who proposed to educate them; and Miss Ame, who "would be responsible for cultivating their souls." We must hurry past the Robot mechanically expounding Marxism, ignore Red-tape Worm, the bureaucrat, refuse to listen while Heardhux (Gerald Heard plus Aldous Huxley?) explains how to reach "universal spiritual consciousness," but we must stop when we come to a "small gentleman in late middle age (53), somewhat protuberant equatorially, with bright eyes, red lips, and a short grey beard," strolling in a glade with his hands in his pockets. This man we need not identify. The Young Soldier's discussion with him fills 16 pages, and here we have room for only one page. The Young Soldier tells him about the strange people he has met, and the strange advice they have given:

"Golly, what a collection," said the Philosopher. "And what do you think of them all?"

"I don't know," said the Young Soldier. "A lot of it sounded dreadfully like nonsense to me and some of it—what the Red-tape Worm said, for instance—rather horrible nonsense. Personally, I thought that Mr. Transportouse and his friends were the only ones who talked much sense."

"I am inclined to agree with you," said the Philosopher.

"But you know, they sounded at times horribly convincing."

"No doubt; but just think of the mistakes they made."

"Did they? What mistakes?"

"Well, the first is the mistake of excessiveness—what I call the 'all or none' fallacy. The second is the mistake of dogmatism, that is to say, pretending to know something that you can't possibly know."

"I daresay," said the Young Soldier, "but won't you explain a bit?"

"By the mistake of excessiveness—I mean their grandiosity. How confident and sweeping and wholesale they all were! 'Civilisation is going to collapse'; 'Civilisation can only be saved by a mutation of the spirit'; 'Men must become supermen'; 'The community must be run by a scientific government'; 'Free will must be blotted out and men must be turned into machines'; 'Civilisation is heading for revolution and civil war, and nothing we can do can avert revolution and civil war.' Also, 'Civilisation can only be saved by the victory of the proletariat' and so on. . . . Well, you know, it isn't as simple as that, or rather it is not as simple as any of that. What is more, whatever happens, it won't happen just like that. For my part, I simply can't think of the future in terms of these simple oppositions."

THE Young Soldier is more bewildered than ever. Are there not safeguards, or signposts, or something to keep him on the right track? What rules does the philosopher follow himself?

But he gets only this parting shot: "My dear chap, I am a philosopher. I am, if you like, the signpost. Now you don't expect to see a signpost marching along the road down which it points. Besides, I am too old. It is you who will have to make that better world, not I."

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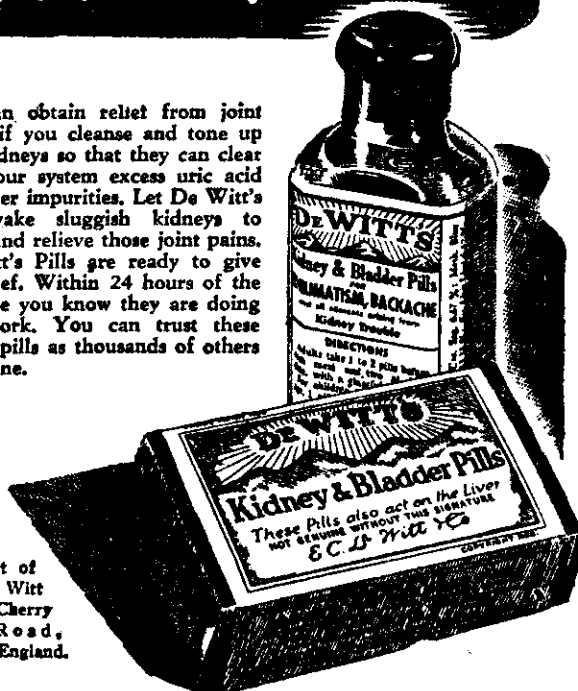
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