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FLYING BEFORE WE WALK:

The Prospects of Civilisation

(Abridgement of a talk by PROF. C. E. M. JOAD, broadcast from the BBC)

about our civilisation is the disparity between our power and our wisdom, between, if you like to put it like that, our mastery of the means to a good life and our knowledge of how to live it, or to put it in still another way, between our science on the one hand and our ethics, which is concerned with a good life for individual men and women, and our politics, which is concerned with a good life for communities of men and women, on the other.

In respect of our power, the power which science has given us to tap the hidden forces of nature and harness them to our use, we've outstripped all our predecessors. In respect of our wisdom, of our knowledge of how to use our power, of our knowledge, that is to say, of how to live, we are no further

are not so far advanced, as the ancient gum. That voice exemplifies the con-Athenians. Science has given us powers trast on which I want to work, the confit for the Gods, and to their use we trast between the marvel of our powers bring the mentality of schoolboys or and the imbecility of the use to which savages.

Take an example of my own experience just before the war. Here am I sitting in the library of a small house in the country - just come in from riding a horse on our Sussex downs. I am disturbed, profoundly apprehensive, at the course of events, so disturbed that instead of going out to pick some peas, which is what I had intended to do, I turn on the radio to listen to the news. But instead of being six o'clock, when we get our first evening broadcast of the news, it is only half past five. So instead of news what do I hear? What does this miraculous voice say? "Ladies and gentlemen, Syd Hambone will now sing 'Tripe and Onions'". If I had been in the United States I suppose it would have recounted to me

HE really distinctive thing forward, in fact in some respects we the virtues of a toothpaste or chewing we put them.

A Tragic Example

Have I taken a trivial example? Let me take a tragic one. Let us consider the case of the aeroplane. Think of the knowledge that went into the making of a machine which, heavier than air, would yet remain in the air. The knowledge of dynamics, of mechanics, of electricity and internal combustion. Think of the ingenuity in application of that knowledge, the skill in the workings of woods and metals, the power to tap the hidden forces of our planet involved in the production of oil, and the generation of electricity required in the working of the internal combustion engine. Such knowledge would suggest that the inventors of the aeroplane were supermen. Take too the intrepidity and the resolution that were shown by the early flying men who were prepared to trust their bodies to these hazardous machines. They were positive heroes. Now consider the purposes for which the aeroplane has been used in the past and seems increasingly likely to be used in the future-to drop bombs and shatter and burn and dismember and mutilate totally defenceless people. So that, as a woman novelist said to me a week or two ago, and I thought it a good description of modern war from a woman's point of view, "Modern art is a running away with one's children, and not being able to run fast enough."

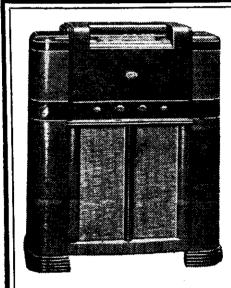
Supermen and Submen

Those, you would say, were the qualities not of angels but of devils. Mr. H. G. Wells put it in one of his inspired pages, "the superman made the aeroplane and the subman has got hold

The case of the radio and the case of the aeroplane I take to be typical -typical of the powers which science has given us and the way in which we use them.

We can talk across continents and oceans, or install television sets in the home, ride above and beneath the surface of the earth and the sea, and we English can go to the middle of Australia and there we can listen to Big Ben striking. Liners have swimming baths, photographs speak and sing, Xrays are the windows through which we can look at and photograph our insides, shops are lighted by electricity, murderers tracked down by radio, roads are made of rubber, and so on. Yet take an example from the debit side of the account. We can't in the midst of our enormous cities afford a little space where poor children can play in safety, with the result that in our craving for speed we kill them off in this

(Continued on next page)



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