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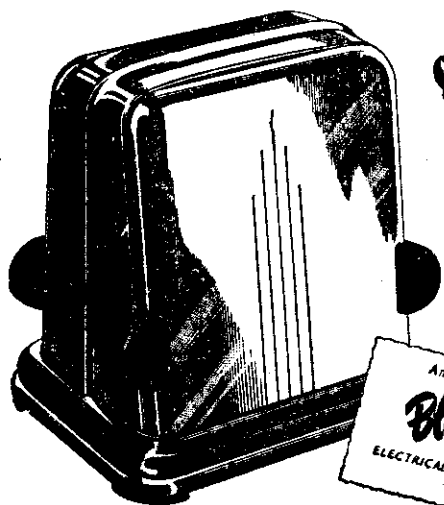
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## Cheerfulness Breaking In

**G**LOOMY opinions about the future of the human race have been put forward by so many eminent men in recent years that the tone of six talks, shortly to be given by Bertrand Russell from YA and YZ stations, promises to be refreshingly different. According to notes on the series printed on page 26, Lord Russell has now decided, after examining "all the causes of gloom," that "there has never in the past history of man been better ground for cheerfulness." It is not very long, of course, since he expressed other views. Few thinkers have been more outspoken on the folly of the human race; he seems in many of his essays to be convinced that man is incorrigibly irrational. Yet suddenly the outlook is brighter, and in what appears to be the peroration of his talks he speaks with almost evangelistic fervour of a human society freed from fear.

Only when the talks have been heard will it be possible to judge the full argument. There are, however, some passages quoted in advance which suggest that Lord Russell's new optimism is under the old restraints of reason. He has not forgotten our folly, which he blames for poverty and scarcity, and indeed for most of our sufferings. All that we have to do, to be safe and happy, is to put aside our fears, to regard other people "in a friendly manner," to reject the "old psychology of sin and restriction and hatred and competition," and to attain the inner harmony which permits us to live comfortably with our fellows. These adjurations have a familiar sound: as always, the difficulty is not in knowing what to do, but in bringing ourselves to do it.

Irrational fear is seen by Lord Russell as "the chief cause of hatred between man and man, and between one group of men and another." It is, perhaps, the nature of man to be afraid without immediate or visible reason. The old

life of the jungle is still in the recesses of his mind, so that the remote ancestor who smelt danger from the mouth of his cave may sometimes be seen looking through the eyes of a careful citizen who means to take care of himself in a world full of potential enemies. Even the hopeful and trusting individual may be oppressed by thoughts of illness or poverty. The possibilities of disaster are unnoticed, or are treated lightly, when the mood is buoyant; but the faintest disturbance in balance of body or mind brings them crowding like chill shadows across the day. Imagination, which allows men to be inventive and to plan for the future, opens a way into darkness as well as into brightness.

It seems unlikely that the people of this generation will escape from the dread which in all ages has oppressed the mind. Emancipation becomes easier for those who have grown old and who have also grown wiser—two processes which are not invariably linked in individual experience. Men like Bertrand Russell, having reached the summit of their years, are able to look back upon perils that were overcome, upon fears that came to nothing, upon disasters that turned out to be bearable. But calmness comes more easily to men who have behind them the full range of experience. It is much easier to be afraid in the middle of the journey. Yet we cannot be told too often that fear is frequently irrational, that it loosens the fibre which should be nerved for living. There are times, as at present, when the message seems to be confirmed by an improved outlook in world affairs. And we turn away from thinkers who ask us to go with them on their private journeys through pessimism, preferring the company of men like Oliver Edwards, who a long time ago told Dr. Johnson that he too had tried to be a philosopher: "but I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in."

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