

The Black Butterfly

By PERCY A. HILL

be superstition, or it may be chance
of the people of the Philippines dread
of the *mariposa negra*. To them
harbinger of misfortune. Though pre-
dominantly black, the mariposa negra has white
spots and other small markings. It is harm-
less except in its character as a foreteller of ill
tidings, appearing as regularly each year as the
first wet monsoon. With the fearlessness of
butterflies in general, it often forsakes garden
foliage and enters houses. It will even perch
upon one's hand or fly in erratic circles above
the head of a pedestrian. It may be this pen-
chant for familiar contact, as well as its sinister
color, which has given the natives their super-
stition about it. If something does not
happen within twenty-four hours, he who con-
siders himself warned goes about with a gloomy
feeling that he has been somehow cheated.

The troubadour, José Garcia, called Pepe,
had his superstitions, concerning the number of
scales on the legs of his favorite fighting-cock,
or marked cards in *juego del monte*; but he was
not in the least troubled by black butterflies.
Pepe, whose name might be translated into
English as *Joe Smith*, so common a Castilian
cognomen is it, dwelt, during the latter part of
the eighteenth century, in the suburb of Santa
Cruz, now quite a downtown district of Manila,
outside the walls of the old city. He was mar-
ried to a stout mestiza, Maria, who had brought
him no dowry, but had endeavored to compensate
the musician for this neglect by presenting him
with an addition to the family each year. And
for this numerous household rice and *vianda*,
clothes, money for masses, an occasional ride
in the rickety coaches of the day, all had to be
provided by Pepe from his earnings with his

the Legislature sh
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changes were made in th
last session of the I
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ations, was also
with the an
laws but due to la
for serious consideration. The
uniform Corporation Law
and is designed to facilitate
consolidation of corporations.
for accomplishing this is
and difficult to follow.
and independent judiciary
If justice is not equal to
to the rich, to the most hum-
the most powerful, then justice
Judicial officers, from
of the peace to the Chief Justice of
are protectors of the rights
of the people.

to improve the administration
presented in previous years.
will be submitted by the
for your consideration.
important proposals are: re-
Court in the handling of
cases by the appoint-
judges or the creation of a
transferring the functions of
provincial governor to a
by the Secretary of
of the proper Judge of
amendments to the marriage
laws, the transfer of Bilibid Prison,
San Ramon Penal Farm, and
of other penal farms.

The problem of an efficient control of im-
migration and the administration of the laws
governing the same is a serious and complicated
one. The Secretary of Finance will present for
your consideration bills designed to secure
more efficient administration of the immigration
laws. There is an imperative need for an ade-
quate detention station for immigrants.

Gratifying progress has been made in beautify-
ing the City of Manila and in providing for es-
sential public works. This has been made pos-
sible by the authorization of ₱1,000,000 for filling
of the lowlands, and another of ₱10,000,000
for the erection of new public buildings and
bridges and for street improvements. Inas-
much as street improvements largely benefit the
owners of abutting real estate, the Secretary of
the Interior recommends that the law should be
so amended as to require special assessment
against such property of not less than 60 per
cent of the cost of the improvements.

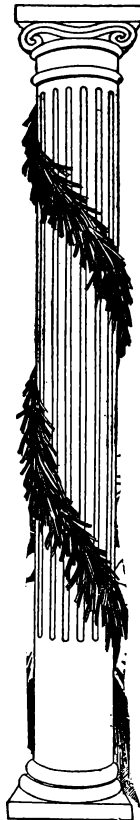
I have called your attention in many subjects
which in my opinion merit your earnest consid-
eration and which need wise and effective leg-
islation. I have no specific legislative program
to urge upon you. Every responsible official
will cheerfully give his assistance you may
desire in carrying out your important duties.
We are united in seeking but one end, the wel-
fare of all the people.

In conclusion, I can only reiterate my sincere
expressions of good will, my earnest desire to
coöperate with the Legislature. This is not
merely an oratorical gesture. It comes from
the heart. Our problems cannot be solved by
oratory. As President Coolidge once said,
"Government is a practical business which
depends largely for its success on sound com-
mon sense rather than high-sounding phrases."
The problems we must meet are essentially
practical. Upon the practical way in which we
meet them depends the future welfare of millions
of people. Words cannot solve them. The
great patriot Rizal said: "Too many words, too
little work." Action, sound, wise, and far-
sighted, is necessary. I have every confidence
in the ability and the vision of the Legislature
to solve these problems. In their solution I
offer you again my close, cordial, constructive
coöperation.

DWIGHT F. DAVIS,
Governor-General

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Manila, P. I.

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twelve stringed *bandurria*.

Rendering serenades under the grilled windows of lovelorn damsels, for which he was rewarded by ardent youths in proportion to their success and financial standing, brought him an irregular income. House-parties, fiestas, and dances paid much better, and in addition there were quantities of native wine, generous supplies of the succulent *lechon*, or roast pig, not to speak of the native confectionery, such as *lumpia*, *poto-lanzon* and *bibinka*, indigestible, it is true, but satisfying. Then there were the church services and processions in which Pepe and his fellow musicians filled the air with melody while behind staggered the pious under the heavily draped statues of Our Lady of Pilar and San Nicolas. These latter exertions did nothing to help fill Pepe's earthly coffers, but did, let us hope, lay up for him treasure in heaven.

Pepe was a philosopher of sorts, a jovial and carefree individual without responsibilities, like many another of his calling. Reckoning wealth in time, he was also a millionaire. Neither the Spaniard nor the Malay place a high value on time. The Philippines, referred to as the *land of mañanas*, is not a figure of speech. What is a day more or less, they argue, when millions have gone before and millions will follow? The mountains never hurry. Ocean, sky, stars and seasons follow cycles, returning so surely that they never seem to change. There's something in it. Pepe employed the word *mañana* quite as frequently as his fellow-countrymen.

If Pepe's superstitions were limited to his gambling games, those of his stout spouse were not. The mere mention of a *mariposa negra* would start Maria trembling as if with ague. Superstitions die hard. Fear and superstition are primitive passions of mankind, and though civilization may replace one fear with another, superstition is never completely routed, even in the most highly civilized social structures. The old Romans said *Beware of the Ides of March*; the Chinese dread the *evil eye*; New Englanders burned witches; New York society matrons turn pale if it is discovered that there are thirteen guests at table. So Maria and her sisters walk warily if they have been unfortunate enough to be brushed by a black butterfly.

Maria had good reason to regard the *mariposa negra* with fearful apprehensions. Had not a black butterfly heralded the death of her mother, who was drowned on a voyage from Guagua to Manila? To be sure, the party had departed from the river town in a banca with but two inches of freeboard. They had left the grassy estuary of the Pampanga, and had faced the choppy waves of the bay where, in spite of tearful prayers to the saints and frantic baling, the overloaded banca had sunk beneath them. Unable to swim, four of the passengers, among them Maria's mother, had gone down under the gray September sky. Maria announced with conviction that a black butterfly had entered the *entresuelo* to warn her at the very moment her mother had been lost. Numerous stories of similar experiences were common among her chattering neighbors, their effect being a general exodus, or at least a rapid exchange of vantage points, if one of these unpopular messengers fluttered in among the market hucksters. But Pepe refused to believe. He was a skeptic, so far as black butterflies were concerned, and Maria swore by all that is holy that his cynicism was the cause of his disastrous end.

It was a hot steamy day in September with the tropical sun evaporating the moisture of the previous day. Preparatory to leaving his abode to sell his melodies, Pepe was trying to tune his *bandurria*, but was having difficulty in hearing anything but the boisterous noise of the numerous young Garcias who were playing *gallina ciega*, or blind-man's buff. Maria was busying herself as usual with household tasks, paying little attention to sounds which were so much a part of her daily life.

Suddenly through the open window fluttered a large black butterfly, attracted perhaps by the gaudy color and pattern of the musician's nether garments. As the butterfly alighted on his knee, Pepe, in mood as untuneful as his unsuccessful efforts had left his *bandurria*, hit wildly at the butterfly which flew gracefully about his waving arm.

"*Hombre*," shrieked Maria fearfully, "leave the *mariposa* alone and perhaps it will leave the same way it came in! It's bad luck to have one come in here—what will happen if you try to kill it!"

No sooner had Pepe given vent to some comforting expletives than two of the tightly drawn *cuerdas* snapped with a loud, reverberating hum.

"What did I tell you?" wailed Maria. "There is the beginning of misfortune and we are lucky if it ends there."

With another oath, the irritated musician made a lunge at the butterfly, which was perched on a cluster of bananas, slowly opening and closing its wings.

"Leave it alone!"

Maria's excited voice informed the children in the room overhead that something out of the ordinary was happening, and down the stairs they tumbled, a toddler of three bringing up the rear.

Certain deaths which occurred with the sinking of the interisland vessel *Euzkadi* some months ago, were attributed to the malevolence of a *mariposa negra*. Presaging disaster, one of these flutterers entered the house of the third engineer, Rafael Lintoja, the day before the ship grounded, and flew about in crazy butterfly fashion until the family was greatly perturbed. "The ship ran on the rocks November 23," said the widow, "and on the morning of November 24 in the morning my attention drawn to a huge black butterfly which came into the house and passed round me several times. On seeing it, I at once thought of my husband..." So the belief keeps up, nothing being more natural, and brings Mr. Hill's story up to date.—Ed.

The family wash in a deep wooden *batia* filled with water had inadvertently been pushed under the lowest step, and the eager brood descending with more haste than care were precipitated into this washtub, from which, to the accompaniment of soapy howlings they were hauled out just

as the neighbors, with the *bandurria* of Manila *vecinos*, came flying in for the cause of the commotion in the *vecino* household. When they heard of the death of the black butterfly and what had happened, some hurriedly made the sign of the cross, others looked accusingly at Pepe, who was glaring larkly at his wife, the children, the *vecinos* neighbors, and even more fiercely at the butterfly of the black butterfly, took up the *bandurria*, left the house and made his way to the *tienda* *Chino* store, intending to repair his broken strings.

Arrived at the *tienda* which supplied the needs of the quarter, he found that his store of silver and copper had been run through a wide hole in his pocket, which he had neglected to repair. Not wishing to return to the house, he continued on his way, that of a young student hoping to urge the *vecinos* to renew his musical attack on the *vecinos*, a certain young lady who lived in the house facing the *Estero Cegado*, then, dividing Santa Cruz from the quarter of *San Joaquin*, named for its unsalubrious waters, the student Ariston, after some persuasion, came to renew his *jarana* that evening, and to repair the serenader's *bandurria*. After the strings produced after a little anxious search had been replaced, Pepe's fingers were soon bringing forth melody from his instrument, and in its harmonious tones, to vent his grievances and the black butterfly, the true philosopher, he would enjoy the *vecinos* until reminded that he must eat and sleep, which it would be borne in upon him that he must replace the lost coins.

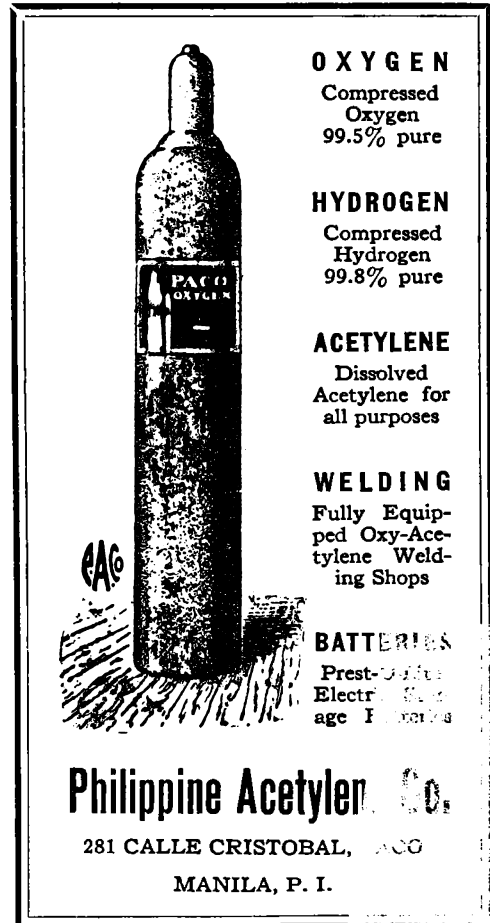
With his instrument under his arm, the errant *musico* was passing through one of the crowded alleys of the quarter late that afternoon. The darkening skies promised a heavy deluge of rain, and he was wishing he had some of his melodies converted into money, that he might take as a peace-offering to Maria. Sounds of merriment reached him, and he raised his head and looked hopefully in the direction from which they came. Despite the morning's occurrences, luck was with him. A man at the window saw him standing with his *bandurria* under his arm and motioned for him to enter. His first thought had been the money he might earn, but when Pepe was in the midst of the gathering, and had accepted a drink of *ambade*, he was not so much the professional musician, he was one of the guests—entertaining the company in a passable voice with a *cancion* of Old Spain.

*Tercera vez volando,
La Obediencia,
No lea, no grito air,
Que los ojos de la mar,
Muy en mi, mi mano a mi!*

Over and over again the *vecinos* sang the chorus. His one drink told for another, the party grew livelier and noisier, and Pepe's brain became more confused the while long-practiced fingers straggled his instrument, ceasing only to stuff some of the indigestible *bibinka* into a hungry *vecino*.

At midnight the music having ceased and the guests departing for the host, with a generous measure of *ambade*, dropped some silver coins into Pepe's hand. In high spirits he slipped the money into his pocket, shouldered his *bandurria* and went gaily off to bed. A peaceful night was not awaiting him, however, for Maria greeted him with a sobering anger recalling the morning's happenings, and when he sought to console her with his afternoon's earnings he discovered there was nothing left in his pocket but the hole. Pepe took the offensive and scolded his wife for her neglect in not retaining the rent, but Maria wailed that it was all the result of the black butterfly. They threw words of each other with such violence that the children awoke and added their share to the hubbub. Silence finally reigned, but moody discontent still prevailed.

Next morning, with an aching head, the Santa Cruz *vecino* betook himself into the sun-drenched streets in search of a few stray coins. He had scorned the black butterfly, but now, as he cursed inwardly at the thought of the *vecino* he had gone without, he began to believe it had something to do with his misfortunes.



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He was not long without occupation in a Manila which will always have music when it can. At the corner of the plaza he was hailed by a fellow-musician, attached to a wedding party, who needed a *bandurrista* to complement him. Pepe joined the procession issuing from the old church, and marched with his companions of the guitar, violin and bajo, who were escorting the strutting groom in tight fitting pantaloons, and the little brown bride whose blushes were visible through her dusky skin. This wedding, as weddings usually do, ended in a feast at the bride's home. Tables were piled with food, polished hardwood floor crowded with dancers swinging their partners to the strains of old *contradanzas*, with the elders on the sidelines, complacently chewing *icho*, or pellets of buyo, lime and the aromatic leaves of the *icmo* vine, commenting to each other on the scene, or joining lustily in some of the *canciones*. Musicians and guests alike were absorbed in the merry scene.

No one saw a black butterfly as it fluttered in and alighted on the pink and white blossoms of the *cadena-de-amor* decorating the tables. Almost immediately it flitted away, circled above a heap of headgear in an obscure corner, and rested on the hat which crowned the pile. Alas for Pepe; it was his hat the butterfly had chosen. A *matanda*, an old man, industriously chewing buyo, directed a stream with such good aim in the direction of the perhaps not so innocent cause of Pepe's estrangement from home, that the startled mariposa flew around and around until it seemed to Pepe, who had come to rescue his hat from further drenchings with buyo juice, that he alone was singled out for persecution. Smothering his annoyance, which was flaming into rage, he endured somehow to the end of the party. When he received his pay, this time he carefully tied it in a corner of his none too clean handkerchief, went triumphantly home and turned both money and handkerchief over to Maria, who set out to do the daily marketing.

Fearing he might start her on her pet grievance, Pepe had wisely refrained from telling Maria whence came the spots on his hat, but to

himself he vowed a war of extermination against black butterflies. During the next few days he did destroy one or two, but generally they were elusive adversaries. It came to be a kind of obsession with him, and he was regarded by acquaintances with mingled feelings of awe and admiration. Try as he would to conceal his activities, rumors reached Maria, who, after the fashion of women, attributed all the bad luck attending the household to her husband's failure to heed her warnings.

If Pepe had a misgiving now and then, he argued with himself that certainly not all the myriad mariposas haunting the gardens of Santa Cruz—and there were many in those days—could presage evil fortune. Did Providence disperse misfortune only during the rainy season? To be consistent, bad luck should be as little in evidence during the dry season as were the attendant butterflies. But Pepe could not convince his neighbors of his logic. They saw, they knew, they believed; and they, as well as Maria, were strengthened in their superstitions by the visions of the village prophetess.

Doña Guadalupe was a pious old woman who lived on calle Dulunbayan, devoting herself and what wealth she had to the church. For a long time she had suffered from hallucinations and visions of the most terrifying variety, and because of these she had a certain influence on both saints and sinners of the quarter. Sometimes she remained for more than a day stretched motionless on her huge carved bed, with staring eyes and haggard countenance. Then, starting up, she would reveal awful futures for the sinful and thoughtless. The *religiosos* declared these visions and prophecies to be a providential warning to mortals, but though the good friars said she suffered from ecstasy, the doctors called her malady epilepsy. Whoever was right, she became the boast of the quarter, which had its pride in the supernatural. They doubted that the miracle of the loaves and fishes surpassed the revelations of their sage.

In the last interview Maria and some of her gossipy neighbors had had with Doña Puring, the epileptic-prophetess claimed she had been

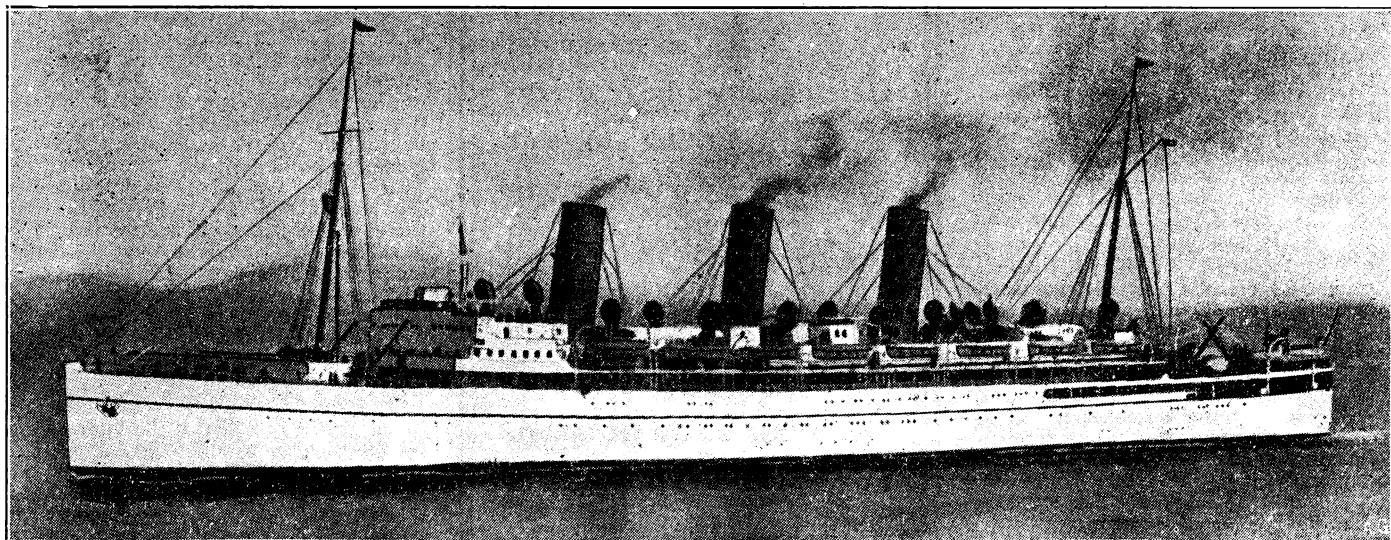
suddenly ordered to have them repent and flee from wrath to come. If their hearts remained hard they would receive as a visible sign a visit from the mariposa negra. Maria had burst into sobs and rushed home, convinced that she was already a marked victim of divine displeasure.

If Pepe wished to forget the existence of his Nemesis, he could not during the days that followed. Black butterflies pursued him on every hand, and he in turn pursued them. The accidental killing of his pet monkey by a stone intended for a tantalizing mariposa but furnished another cause for his frenzied offensive against the flying enemy. And Pepe as well as the entire neighborhood was made uncomfortably aware of Maria's condemnation of his behavior.

Came the twelfth of October, the feast day of the quarter, and a gala fiesta was under way—processions with *carozas* carrying jewelled and flower-decked statues of *Nuestra Señora del Pilar*, other saints, and a half dozen brass bands marching with the more religious of the parish. At the head of the procession, behind the *manquilla* bearing silken standards, proudly walked Pepe, with twenty other musicians, accompanying in harmonious rhythm the intoned Gregorian chants, or playing slow *contra-danzas*. Under the watchful, piercing eyes of Spanish friars in neighboring quarters, the crowds on the narrow sidewalks observed a respectful and decorous silence as the procession moved slowly in and out the short streets, careful not to go beyond the Santa Cruz boundaries into Binondo or Pasig. On the south a paseo, where the church was situated, ran along the Pasig river.

As the company emerged from a winding tour of the side streets and swung into the narrow causeway leading to the river bank, a black butterfly—portentous omen!—flitted excitedly about and settled on the hat of * * * Pepe, of course! Exasperated, obsessed, he stopped playing, made a grab for the enemy, which saucily flitted ahead, flew coyly about the crimson and purple banners, returned impertinently to Pepe and boldly alighted on his nose. Furious, he lifted his instrument, and as the

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butterfly flew gracefully off again. Pepe after it. He would kill this insect at least.

The procession halted in curiosity. The startled musicians ceased playing, and were chided by a tall friar who bade them continue. Half-heartedly, they resumed, but all eyes were intently watching an obsessed bandurrista vainly batting at a black butterfly. The pursuit took Pepe to the very edge of the embankment. The next moment the insect had darted off across the river, and Pepe, intent only on destroying his foe, seeing no danger, took another step and plunged into the muddy current. Heedless of the friars' reproofs, the crowd rushed to the river's edge. But the musician had disappeared beneath the whirlpools of the swollen stream, and as they looked, his bandurria sunk also.

River bancas were quickly manned, but the unfortunate Pepe never came to the surface. Had he met his fate chasing a phantom? The procession wended its way to the church where aves and pater noster were offered up for the soul of the troubadour who would draw no more melodies from his instrument for the fiestas of

Santa Cruz.

When the sad news was announced to Maria, between sobs she recalled each warning the family had received—beginning with the morning when Pepe had broken the strings on his bandurria, when he had first chased a black butterfly.

"If he had only listened to me!" she wailed.

A few days later the corpse was discovered by an artilleryman of the King's Regiment. An eddy had whirled it beneath the arches of the Bridge of Spain to a quiet pool below Fort Santiago. Thus did Pepe leave Santa Cruz. When his fate was mentioned, neighbors shook their heads knowingly. They agreed with Maria. Though it was non-canonical to believe in superstitions, the natives of Santa Cruz had witnessed the occurrence, and after all, seeing is believing. The good friars alluded to a religious frenzy, but they, of course, did not believe in evil omens, and besides, they were known to be charitable souls. Certain it was in any case that a black butterfly did bring disaster to the musician Pepe Garcia.

Understanding Our Age

(Continued from page 11)

and feed her spirit not only with knowledge of books and experiences of travel but also with the sensations and tumult of politics. She attained her economic emancipation when she saw wide open the doors of the office, the shop, the school and other fields of human activity. Her economic emancipation is bound to bring about in the long run a common level of culture, a single standard of morality, an equality of rights and responsibilities between the two sexes.

This change of system in the family will not in any way destroy the home, nor will the home be deprived of its moral and religious background, because the love of the spouses and the natural affection parents have for their children will remain essentially the same, however different may be the rules observed in the relations of the spouses and between parents and children. The conjugal tie will no longer be a forced and perpetual bondage, impossible of dissolution even in the face of immorality, discord and unhappiness in the home. Its duration will depend on the voluntary will of the spouses, of their mutual respect and fidelity in performing their duties.

The church, in the same way as the family, will remain as a human necessity, because the soul is linked to the supernatural, and reason needs religion and faith to satisfy the longings of man for immortality. But the individual will no longer be forced to submit himself to the religion of his parents, nor to the dogmas of a particular religion. He chooses his religion even now, and within it he accepts those beliefs that satisfy his reason. If he worships and follows his belief in good faith, he is entitled to all rights and privileges as a man and citizen.

God has not disappeared from the conscience of the modern world, but the conception of God has changed in the sense that He is no longer made to sanction crimes born out of intolerance or the abuse of power, either by the father of the family, the head of the Church, or of the State. All authority is no longer absolute; it has its corresponding limitations and responsibilities. God is still the supreme sanction of individuals and of nations. But God no longer abides only in the tiara or in royal robes, but also in public opinion and in popular assemblies.

The state is another necessary human institution, and whatever changes it may receive in the future, it will always exist as a power of unity and coordination for the determination of the limits of freedom of the individual and of a group. The head of the state, as such, is no longer irresponsible nor is he above the law. His authority is exercised by delegation from the people, and even in monarchies it is limited by constitutions. The state can no longer deprive a person of his life and respect, without due process of law. The liberty of the citizen and the privilege of commerce are as inviolable as is one's person. The state has no extension. The individual is not the property of the state, not its slave, and public opinion is not

to ride on the back of the people but to be their servants.

In the realm of education, the doctrine of individual freedom has manifested itself in the elimination of the old practice—"Quod magister dixit." The teacher is not supposed to dogmatize. He has no longer the right to impose on his pupils his own theories or personal beliefs. He is expected to stimulate free discussion of the subject he teaches, leaving to his students the choice of the system of thought which best satisfies their reason.

All these changes have been brought about gradually and by natural causes as a result of the sufferings and miseries borne by humankind in its different stages of development. Humanity constantly tries new theories and doctrines, only to give them up as soon as others more effective

for the redress of past grievances and misfortunes are discovered. The tendency of humanity has always been for the better, inasmuch as any people's desire for change is prompted by the need of freeing itself from the abuses and excesses of institutions when the rust of time and the greed of power have corrupted them. Thus, because of the excesses of parental authority, the family régime was changed from the communistic to the individualistic type; out of the extravagances of the Holy Roman Empire was born the Reformation which promoted in later years religious tolerance; because of the abuses of monarchs, popular assemblies were brought into life. It is still to be seen whether from the abuses of parliamentarism and democracies may come another form of government which shall better respond to the exigencies of our epoch.

Religion, morality, family and government will always remain as essential and necessary institutions in the world, and there is no human force that can destroy them, because they are founded on the nature of things. But their forms will not remain the same and unalterable. They will change with the ideals and aspirations of humanity as fast as the latter discovers new truths and understands better the workings of matter and of spirit.

Now, in a world which guarantees complete individual freedom, the education of men and the women cannot teach the norms of conduct and habits of action characteristic of an age which subjected the individual to the control of the family, the church and the state.

The best that education can do in our times is to train the individual for freedom in order that he may make good use of it and not misuse it. Training for freedom requires a constant and methodical exercise of the will, in order to control bad instincts and stimulate good ones. There is need of creating moral restraints *within*, and not *without*, the individual, by developing properly in his conscience precise notions of good and of evil and leaving him to his own responsibility.

Man should do good and avoid evil as a matter of duty, through conviction, and not through fear or consideration of punishment. He should feel ashamed of himself whenever he is willfully at fault, even if no other detect his dishonesty. If man were always inspired by what his conscience reveals to him and should endeavor to suppress the lower impulses and passions which torment him, then he would rise to a position where he would be used to performing good unconsciously and mechanically. This is the state of culture toward which our age is bound, and this can be accomplished if all the agencies for good that exist in the world to regulate human conduct, be it of the family, the church, the state, or the school, coordinate their efforts and reconcile their mental attitude with the ideas of our century. The difficulty lies in the fact that there are still many who will not admit that the world has been improved, with its changes and innovations, and that God is with the modern world, in all its marvelous progress and scientific discoveries, in the same form that He was with the old world—when man knew little of the laws of nature and enjoyed fewer comforts and conveniences.

Why should we refuse to see the will of God in the truths revealed to the human conscience by the modern world? Who but God inspired the prophets of the modern world, as wise and learned as the prophets of the old, in the teaching of new religious, moral, economic and social truths which every day are enhancing the power of human intelligence and opening new fields for its research and investigation? Why place our century at odds with God? Why should it be considered that God has turned His back upon our world, simply because it exerts every effort to better conditions of human existence and tries new forms of conduct and rules of action more in accord with the realities brought about by the inventions, exigencies and discoveries of our age? Is it that God desires paralysis and stagnation in life? No, I would say not. God has placed us on this planet in order constantly to improve it and to beautify it. God has endowed us with the faculty to think in order that

(Please turn to page 29)

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