

SHOCK AND RELIGION

BY FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

SOME of the saddest results of the war are the cases of 'shell-shock,' of which a distressing instance was given in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1921. But the term 'shell-shock' was used to include all cases of nervous breakdown, besides those due to the actual bursting of a shell. The fearful shocks of all kinds, the tremendous strains men had to endure when they were living in the most horrible conditions — all conduced to break down the individual's control over himself and to disorganize his life. So the term 'shell-shock' was used as a convenient general term to denote those who had, for the time being, lost control over their emotions. In his weakened, shattered condition, one emotion — fear — had gained a predominance and broken up the general system of a man's mind, so that he was unable to hold himself together.

What happened in the war, in these obvious instances, happens also in peace, under circumstances less calculated to attract attention. To many the strain of life is almost past endurance. And in most people's lives occasions come when some fearful shock knocks them off their balance as completely as any shell-shock. Some unbearable sorrow may deal such a blow that the emotion of sorrow gains absolute predominance and breaks to pieces the whole system of a man's make-up. Or the shock may come from a conflict of loyalties — conflict between loyalty to his home and loyalty to the girl he would marry; conflict between loyalty

to a political chief and loyalty to the country; conflict between loyalty to the country and loyalty to what is conceived to be the Will of God. In all such cases a choice has to be made and definite action to be taken. But often a man is in such a situation that, whichever course he chooses, he has both to suffer and to cause pain. And here again an emotion — in this case, the emotion of pain — may so dominate him as to break him down till he is no longer himself. Even the emotion of joy may have such a disruptive effect. The mad scenes on Armistice Day, when individuals, under the shock of sudden joy, lost all control over themselves and did the most outrageously silly things, is an illustration.

And besides individuals, whole nations at this time are suffering from shock; and one at least, namely, Russia, is completely disorganized. It also seems as if humanity as a whole were suffering from shell-shock. So the problem is forced on us: how are we to fortify ourselves against these shocks, so that we shall be able to keep our heads whatever happens, keep ourselves together and in hand, maintain our balance and composure?

The experience of the war gives us, I suggest, a clue to the solution. It was found that in those regiments where there was a strong *esprit de corps*, and firm discipline; where men took a pride in their regiment and the regiment taught them to take a pride in themselves; and where there was a commanding officer who clearly embodied

the soldierly spirit and formed a tangible example for all to follow and a standard for all to emulate — there were fewer cases of shell-shock than in those hastily collected bodies of men in which, through lack of time, no *esprit de corps* had been created, and the men knew little of their leaders or their leaders of them.

Now what kept a man together in these good regiments was a *sentiment* — a sentiment of love for the regiment; a sentiment for that body of men in which he himself was included; a sentiment which was reciprocated — he respecting, admiring, and loving the regiment and the regiment caring for him, censuring him if he behaved ill, but admiring, praising, and rewarding him if he did well. And it is a sentiment of this kind that is, I believe, needed to enable us to withstand the shocks of the world.

But no sentiment for a regiment would be of any strength unless the men who composed it were imbued with a strong sense of patriotism. Love of country must, therefore, be behind the love of the lesser community. The regiment must love the country it is serving, and must be able to feel that the country is caring for it. Then only will the regimental feeling be tense and close.

One step further is still needed. Edith Cavell was perfectly right when she said, 'Patriotism is not enough.' Besides love of country there must be love of the world — love of the world as a whole: not only of Humanity, but of the Universe in its entirety, the stars and the sunshine, and the blue sky and the birds, and the beasts and the flowers, all in their togetherness, and all as imbued and inspired by God. If we can have such a World-Love, we shall be possessed of a sentiment of the deepest, widest, loftiest kind — a sentiment capable of keeping all the various

elements of our life together and of giving it coherence and direction. This sentiment may be built up of many emotional dispositions — joy, fear, pity, gratitude, and so on. But if it is strongly constituted and firmly established, this sentiment — the most powerful there is — will be proof against the shock of any single emotion such as fear, or pain, or sorrow. This dominant sentiment will have so organized our life as a whole, that no emotion will be able to disorganize it. A man who passionately loves the World-Mother who begat him, who tended him in his infancy, and who inspired him with all his noblest aspirations, would never allow fear, or pain, or sorrow to throw him off his balance.

But have we any reasons for loving the world? There are two good reasons: first, because she is so lovable; and, second, because she loves us. And the grounds for saying this are that, whenever there is the slightest risk or chance of our having to leave the world, we realize how sweet and fair she is, and cling to her with all our might; and we find at the same time that she is clinging to us, folding us closely to her and striving to keep us with her.

Perhaps all will not admit the validity of these grounds. Some will cynically point to the cruelty, squalor, and meanness in the world, and will ask how a man *born* defective, or a man on the point of starvation, can agree that the world is lovable and that she loves him. The reply would be that we must look at the world as a whole, and through all time. Parts of her, and for a time, may be bad; yet the whole, in the full process of time, may be good. What is certain is that the world is actuated by a Power that keeps her together in orderly process, and directs her to the lovely and the lovable.

We are ourselves constituent parts

of the world, so we can see this for ourselves. We can feel within us something driving us to the good rather than to the bad, to perform neighborly and generous acts rather than boorish and niggardly ones, and to beautify ourselves and our homes rather than to make them ugly. And, besides this urge from within, we feel a constraint in the same direction from the world about us. We find the world *expecting* us to do the good thing, to follow the truth, and to make beauty. We have, then, substantial grounds for admiring, worshiping, and loving Mother-World. We see that she has the good, the lovely, and the true at heart; and all we have we owe to her.

This World-Love is what is usually spoken of as Love of God; but I call it World-Love, to avoid the notion of God as a Being separate and isolated from the world; and to emphasize the conception of the world as including God; the two being as inseparable from one another as the body is from the soul — God being the ground of the visible world and the visible world being the expression, manifestation, and revelation of God. And this sentiment of World-Love is, I suggest, what we must look to — as soldiers look to *esprit de corps* — to keep us together when shocks come upon us.

But if World-Love is to be our mainstay in the battle of life, we should have it ingrained in us from our childhood, and should have the means at hand for reinforcing and strengthening it within us. And here again military experience suggests the means. Regiments are provided with a chaplain and a band. These did, during the late war, tend to fall into the background. But soldiers might have fared better, and shell-shock been less frequent, if they had been brought into greater prominence. Even wild tribesmen on the Indian frontier have mullahs and bands — holy

men and music — to rouse the religious sentiment and fan it into fervent heat. And not only in war, but in peace, we want these two means of sustaining, strengthening, and refining the religious sentiment of World-Love — namely, the living example of a man of God, and the influence of music.

Just as the ordinary soldier in the ranks needs the inspiring example of his captain with his whole being bent on victory, submitting himself to the sternest discipline and the severest hardships, and disregarding every danger so long as his country's cause may be made to triumph; and just as the captain himself needs that spiritual sustenance which a truly holy man can give him — so do men in ordinary life need the example of a man who, with the whole passion of his soul, is seeking, admiring, and adoring those very best things in life, which reveal what is working in the heart of Mother-World and inspire him with transcendent World-Love. We want the example of a man who has purged and purified and disciplined his life, gathered it firmly together, and directed it to the highest end of combined beauty, truth, and love, till his is a really holy life. We want the example of one who, through the peculiar sensitiveness of his nature, has been able to divine the power, the grace, and the beauty of the love which Mother-World can give; and who has himself, as a brave soldier wins his country's love, sought and won and experienced Mother-World's love in all its tender strength and sweetness.

Such a man would inspire us with World-Love, would keep that religious sentiment, with which we are all naturally endowed, fresh and active within us. And when the strain comes upon us, as it does upon soldiers in battle, he might sternly command us to pull ourselves together, show a stauncher courage, and exert a firmer control over

ourselves, if we were simply slack and sinful. But if, after all we could do for ourselves, the shock was still almost past our bearing, he would show the tenderest pity, console and gently soothe us, till strength once more returned and we were able again to take our place in the battle-front of life.

But besides this personal example and guidance we should need music — the music of poetry and the music of sound — to strengthen and refine the sentiment in us. We should want songs, hymns, anthems, oratorios, which would stimulate love of Mother-World as patriotic songs and marches stimulate love of country, and express in simple, soul-inspiring words and melodies the ineffable bliss of World-Love in moments of supreme exaltation. We should want words and music which will show us what true excellence is, and encourage us to admire, worship, and strive to attain it; words and music which will deepen our faith in the love at the heart of Mother-World, and exhort us to pray for strength, purity, courage, and endurance; and words and music which will urge us to put World-Love into every act of our common-day life, till our good-will is absolutely invincible, and at the close of each day we may feel at peace with ourselves and with all the world.

By this personal example, by this poetry and by this music, especially if we can enjoy them with our fellows, the deep, wide sentiment of World-Love will be built up till it has become the predominant sentiment in our life;

till our whole life is organized about it and it has become so rock-like that no shock, however great, — of fear or pain or sorrow or any other emotion, — will be able to disorganize it and break us down. For when the shock comes, we will keep in our minds the spiritual heroism we have learned to envy, and, if we can, we will strive to hear again familiar music, till it steals into our souls and brings to life once more the old World-Love and enables us to thrust back from us all that would unhinge our lives.

Not unless our lives are thus dominated by this profound and universal sentiment, shall we ever be able to stand the strain of modern life. And to-day the task before us is to create World-Love, and present it in such a form that it will be readily acceptable by men. Some regimental leaders are wholly incapable of instilling a right spirit into a regiment. Others will have a regiment working with a will, and shell-shock unknown. It is the same with spiritual leaders. We want leaders who will renew — and if need be create — a right spirit within us.

Then, when our whole lives are steeped in World-Love, when we are filled with admiration and passionate love of all the best there is in the world, and when we have a fixed determination to prove ourselves worthy of the best the world is expecting of us, we shall be able to face with composure each blow that falls upon us — and in the hour of our victory rightly claim her love.

HOW IT IS WITH US

BY ELSA SIMM

THE rabbit's long hind-legs make him a little absurd — until he has to run for his life. The German housewife's meticulous attention to her household was a little humorous — until now, when her intensive knowledge and skill are keeping her country's head above water.

All that we middle-class women in Germany had to do before the war was to sit on the box and guide our household carriages wisely. We had telephones with which to order our food and fuel, and one or two servants to take them in when they were delivered at the door. Of course, we were always trained to know how to do everything, but we also knew how to train others. And with the leisure which the smooth running of domestic matters gave us we went in for traveling, sport, entertainment, the arts, or politics, as our mothers and aunts before us had gone in for fancy cooking or needlework.

It is no longer a question of guiding the carriage wisely, but of keeping it going at all. Thousands of vehicles are in the narrow muddy road, a danger to one another. Now and then you see an old friend or a neighbor exhausted and unable to keep up. You fear to stop to help him, lest you get stuck yourself!

At present the incomes of the higher-grade professional classes, government officials, professors, engineers, and the like, are somewhere between 300,000 and 600,000 marks a month, about a thousand times the pre-war amount. But in the early days of March 1923, food was more than three thousand

times the pre-war cost and clothing four thousand times higher. Let any American housewife perform the above operation on her budget. She is beaten before she begins.

But in the homemaker's fight there is no such alternative as surrender. One cannot say to the children when they appear in the morning ready for school, 'It is very awkward, children, but I could n't buy you any breakfast this morning because, as you know, I had to have new shoes and it took all of papa's salary for the month.'

Such a statement would be absolutely true, but one does not make it. Instead, one 'manages.'

There is milk for the younger children, owing to the card-system, which reserves the dwindling milk-supply for them only. Some member of the family has already had to wait in line with his pail at the milk-shop, which opened at seven. And there is malt or bean coffee, without sugar — which must be conserved for cooking where it is absolutely necessary. Black bread is rationed, half a pound a day; but of course this is not enough for the older children, so we must buy more at four thousand times its old price. Sugar is five thousand times higher, and we can get it only once a month, three or four pounds a head. Eggs are two thousand times what they were; one egg costs as much as postage for five letters, but eggs are seldom to be found.

So the children get off to school with breakfast of a sort — unsweetened malt coffee and black bread, and mar-