CHAPTER VIII

A SUMMARY OF A FALSE THEORY

I HAVE up to this point treated the Eugenists, I hope, as seriously as they treat themselves. I have attempted an analysis of their theory as if it were an utterly abstract and disinterested theory; and so considered, there seems to be very little left of it. But before I go on, in the second part of this book, to talk of the ugly things that really are left, I wish to recapitulate the essential points in their essential order, lest any personal irrelevance or over-emphasis (to which I know myself to be prone) should have confused the course of what I believe to be a perfectly fair and consistent argument. To make it yet clearer, I will summarise the thing under chapters, and in quite short paragraphs.

In the first chapter I attempted to define the essential point in which Eugenics can claim, and does claim, to be a new morality. That point is that it is possible to consider the baby in considering the bride. I do not adopt the ideal irresponsibility of the man who said, "What has posterity done for us?" But I do say, to start with, "What can we do for posterity, except deal fairly with our contemporaries?" Unless a man love his wife whom he has seen, how shall he love his child whom he has not seen?
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In the second chapter I point out that this division in the conscience cannot be met by mere mental confusions, which would make any woman refusing any man a Eugenist. There will always be something in the world which tends to keep outrageous unions exceptional; that influence is not Eugenics, but laughter.

In the third chapter I seek to describe the quite extraordinary atmosphere in which such things have become possible. I call that atmosphere anarchy; but insist that it is an anarchy in the centres where there should be authority. Government has become ungovernable; that is, it cannot leave off governing. Law has become lawless; that is, it cannot see where laws should stop. The chief feature of our time is the meekness of the mob and the madness of the government. In this atmosphere it is natural enough that medical experts, being authorities, should go mad, and attempt so crude and random and immature a dream as this of petting and patting (and rather spoiling) the babe unborn.

In chapter four I point out how this impatience has burst through the narrow channel of the Lunacy Laws, and has obliterated them by extending them. The whole point of the madman is that he is the exception that proves the rule. But Eugenics seeks to treat the whole rule as a series of exceptions—to make all men mad. And on that ground there is hope for nobody; for all opinions have an author, and all authors have a heredity. The mentality of the
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Eugenist makes him believe in Eugenics as much as the mentality of the reckless lover makes him violate Eugenics; and both mentalities are, on the materialist hypothesis, equally the irresponsible product of more or less unknown physical causes. The real security of man against any logical Eugenics is like the false security of Macbeth. The only Eugenist that could rationally attack him must be a man of no woman born.

In the chapter following this, which is called "The Flying Authority," I try in vain to locate and fix any authority that could rationally rule men in so rooted and universal a matter; little would be gained by ordinary men doing it to each other; and if ordinary practitioners did it they would very soon show, by a thousand whims and quarrels, that they were ordinary men. I then discussed the enlightened despotism of a few general professors of hygiene, and found it unworkable, for an essential reason: that while we can always get men intelligent enough to know more than the rest of us about this or that accident or pain or pest, we cannot count on the appearance of great cosmic philosophers; and only such men can be even supposed to know more than we do about normal conduct and common sanity. Every sort of man, in short, would shirk such a responsibility, except the worst sort of man, who would accept it.

I pass on, in the next chapter, to consider whether we know enough about heredity to act decisively, even if we were certain who ought to act. Here I refer the Eugenists to the reply of Mr. Wells, which they
have never dealt with to my knowledge or satisfaction—the important and primary objection that health is not a quality but a proportion of qualities; so that even health married to health might produce the exaggeration called disease. It should be noted here, of course, that an individual biologist may quite honestly believe that he has found a fixed principle with the help of Weissmann or Mendel. But we are not discussing whether he knows enough to be justified in thinking (as is somewhat the habit of the anthropoid Homo) that he is right. We are discussing whether we know enough, as responsible citizens, to put such powers into the hands of men who may be deceived or who may be deceivers. I conclude that we do not.

In the last chapter of the first half of the book I give what is, I believe, the real secret of this confusion, the secret of what the Eugenists really want. They want to be allowed to find out what they want. Not content with the endowment of research, they desire the establishment of research; that is the making of it a thing official and compulsory, like education or state insurance; but still it is only research and not discovery. In short, they want a new kind of State Church, which shall be an Established Church of Doubt—instead of Faith. They have no Science of Eugenics at all, but they do really mean that if we will give ourselves up to be vivisected they may very probably have one some day. I point out, in more dignified diction, that this is a bit thick.
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And now, in the second half of this book, we will proceed to the consideration of things that really exist. It is, I deeply regret to say, necessary to return to realities, as they are in your daily life and mine. Our happy holiday in the land of nonsense is over; we shall see no more its beautiful city, with the almost Biblical name of Bosh, nor the forests full of mares' nests, nor the fields of tares that are ripened only by moonshine. We shall meet no longer those delicious monsters that might have talked in the same wild club with the Snark and the Jabberwock or the Pobble or the Dong with the Luminous Nose; the father who can't make head or tail of the mother, but thoroughly understands the child she will some day bear; the lawyer who has to run after his own laws almost as fast as the criminals run away from them; the two mad doctors who might discuss for a million years which of them has the right to lock up the other; the grammarian who clings convulsively to the Passive Mood, and says it is the duty of something to get itself done without any human assistance; the man who would marry giants to giants until the back breaks, as children pile brick upon brick for the pleasure of seeing the staggering tower tumble down; and, above all, the superb man of science who wants you to pay him and crown him because he has so far found out nothing. These fairy-tale comrades must leave us. They exist, but they have no influence in what is really going on. They are honest dupes and tools, as you and I were
very nearly being honest dupes and tools. If we come to think coolly of the world we live in, if we consider how very practical is the practical politician, at least where cash is concerned, how very dull and earthy are most of the men who own the millions and manage the newspaper trusts, how very cautious and averse from idealist upheaval are those that control this capitalist society—when we consider all this, it is frankly incredible that Eugenics should be a front bench fashionable topic and almost an Act of Parliament, if it were in practice only the unfinished fantasy which it is, as I have shown, in pure reason. Even if it were a just revolution, it would be much too revolutionary a revolution for modern statesmen, if there were not something else behind. Even if it were a true ideal, it would be much too idealistic an ideal for our "practical men," if there were not something real as well. Well, there is something real as well. There is no reason in Eugenics, but there is plenty of motive. Its supporters are highly vague about its theory, but they will be painfully practical about its practice. And while I reiterate that many of its more eloquent agents are probably quite innocent instruments, there are some, even among Eugenists, who by this time know what they are doing. To them we shall not say, "What is Eugenics?" or "Where on earth are you going?" but only "Woe unto you, hypocrites, that devour widows' houses and for a pretence use long words."