

EPILOGUE

WE have seen what applied science could do to alleviate the suffering and lessen the wastage of war, and to make advances in knowledge which may help peacefully disposed peoples in their fight against the enemy Nature. To gain these ends required a complex and disciplined organisation, flexible enough to allow individualism more play than is possible with those who are soldiers by instinct or training. Now, after the conclusion of active fighting, there are two serious questions to be answered.

The first concerns the organisation of medicine in peacetime for the good of the community. Social and industrial medicine are already firmly planted growths in well ordered communities; they follow the call of both science and humanity. That much more is needed is universally recognised. The problem is to find how this can be done without sacrificing standards of work, and without stirring to wakefulness the lightly sleeping demons of avarice, slothfulness and strife. It is a paradox of the modern State that as the citizen receives, and rightly receives, greater benefits for himself and his children, so his life is more bond than free. With the circle of individual action ever narrowing, by inexorable psychological law he becomes more frustrate, and therefore more aggressive. This is well seen in service medicine. It diffused benefits so wide and free that it almost caught up with the new deviltries of man himself, but no doctor in an armed service could fail to discern at times a certain hostility in his patients, except during the chastening rigours of illness. His duty was to keep men well, and to treat them promptly and efficiently when sick or hurt, but he was often forced to seem hard when he was merely loyal and realistic. In other words, the normal individual relationship of doctor to patient was often difficult to preserve. Already there are signs that these ties are slackening in civil communities. It seems unlikely that the physician-priest will ever become extinct, but is there not a danger that he may become obsolete?

The second question directs our mental gaze to the beckoning finger of science. During the years of war we owed a vast debt to science, with whose gifts we wrought not only good but evil. In the war story of the medical services the need for scientific direction is apparent; so too is the need for humility. But now we know we cannot go back, and in going forward whither are we going? Even in the field of medical science shall we go on and on to more rarefied atmospheres of applied knowledge where humanity with its warm spiritual metabolism will faint and die? Science is not enough, nor will it avail to invoke the restraining hand of history and experience. Man is blind to experience, and deaf to history. As always he is intoxicated by power, and the new heady brews of scientific method are leading him more and more to destroy, not only by the physical violence of wrecking and killing, but by the moral violence

of suppressing and denying the true culture of mind and spirit. Should we not look to ends rather than to means? Nothing but a change of heart can do this, for it is a question of spiritual values. The doctor is still a champion of the individual; he stands at the springs of life and death in peace as in war, and as a citizen he must accept this challenge.