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From a Study Chair

"Go as you please"

In every generation there are people who go openly right off the orbit of ordinary life amongst ordinary people. Our interest in them arises from the fact that they are eccentric. In every generation people notice them, think about them, and keep records of their behavior. We are not so ready to note, or make note of, the behavior of those who, as far as appearances go, keep to the rails. It was a real defect of much of our history writing in the past that it was so usually concerned with people who were unusual, by reason of their character, circumstances, worldly possessions, opportunities, etc., while our knowledge of the everyday folk has often had to be sought out in letters, diaries, account-books, law reports, and other varied and curious by-path sources, grubbed up from forgotten attics and cupboards, from rifled graves, and even from rubbish heaps and dumps. What would the student of history a thousand years from now make of our world by going through the files of our newspapers, weekly journals, quarterlies, parish magazines, Sunday papers, and so on? He might not reach a very favourable verdict, and even that might not be at all near the actual mark.

Current Morality

There are many factors that would not be easily apparent. He might get the impression that there were, in a given region, quite a number of murders every year (and more than reported, if all the facts were known), but he might think that there was a great deal of dishonesty in our dealings with each other, judging from the court records in the Press, but he might not be able to put these records in their proper setting. Are they a small fraction of the real thing, or is the story out of focus, exaggerated? The figures recently given on the radio by the BBC Northern Director about the use of unlicensed receiving sets in Northern Ireland were, for instance, rather startling. They

could, it would seem, mean nothing else but that a very large number of people have been using the BBC services without paying for them, and have only "turned honest" when they saw a comparatively small number of their fellows being prosecuted. In other words, they would have gone on stealing the services of the BBC without any compunction had it not been that the risk of detection had suddenly become acute. How honest are we on the average? Is it a stupid question? It is sometimes said that absolute honesty is impossible in our society as it is functioning at present. There are so many silly, obstructive, and, it is often claimed, even wicked and inhuman regulations tying us up, that we need not hope to keep them all. It can, it is asserted, come to a point, when the really honest, God-fearing citizen may say, "I must obey God rather than man; I will not inflict this hardship, even if I do break the law in shewing mercy." Perhaps there is some exaggeration here, but it is true that the "grave-clothes" of officialdom, reinforced with pink tape, are becoming decidedly hampering even for decent people.

The New Law?

Nevertheless, current dishonesty is not to be laid quite so lightly at the door of the planned and ordered society, and we are all inclined to excuse our slackening morality far too easily. We are over-indulgent to ourselves. We talk against puritanism, when, in truth, a little more puritanism, of the right kind, would, as things are, be very good for us all. We have been accused of being straight-laced. It would be better for the world if we were even more straight-laced than we are in matters of ordinary morality. It is the old delusion of making "man the measure" that is betraying us. Morality then has no measure but the individual's desire. "Thou shalt not" may not be a good rule of life. "Go as you please" is immeasurably worse. "Thus saith the Lord—thou shalt!" is the best of all. But if the vision of the Lord, the Law-giver, is lost, there is nothing for it but "Go as you please!" In practice that works out, more often than not, as "Go as the devil pleases!" The late Aleister Crowley, who claimed to have been described rightly as "the wickedest man on earth," and who called himself 666 (the Mark, it will be remembered, of the Beast), in one of his last works, "The Equinox of the Gods," announces "the New Law" for mankind, given out of the Pit, by Baphomet, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole law!" "It replaces the moral and religious sanctions of the past. The spiritual Revolution here announced has al-

ready taken place. There is hardly a country where it is not openly manifest." Crowley was looked upon by many as a silly, infantile, down-at-heels devotee of evil. But he had his moments of inspiration, wherever the inspiration came from. He was inspired when he read the signs of the times as showing that a world government by the "Go as you please" principle for the individual life was, literally, going to the Devil.

VIATOR.