

LISTEN TO THE BIRD-MAN!

HERBERT SPENCER pointed out that the fittest, who survived, were those who could get used to anything. How wonderfully fit we all are these days! Three years ago we could be surprised and upset by the mildest political crisis anywhere; to-day the greatest revolutions do not make us even yawn. The war will have been a good thing for the world if it teaches us all that great truth of Heraclitus that Everything Flows. The Buddhists have the same philosophy. Nothing truly IS; it is only a flux, a set of combinations constantly flowering in some new way, never crystallizing. To harden is to die; ask your arteries.

So it is delightful to find people seriously discussing "the inevitable Anglo-German rapprochement," in spite of the campaign of hate on both sides; Northcliffe coming out for Home Rule, and Socialists sickening of Socialism. The fact is that all the "isms" are doomed; common sense is beginning to assert itself under the stress of the terrible and beautiful facts of war. Sir Edward Grey perhaps never realized that his devotion to certain political principles would materialize in the bombardment of London. Time has shown us what high explosives ideas are, when there is a detonator handy. But it is more important to concentrate our attention on the fact that nothing matters that we used to think did matter.

FOR here is Lady Aberdeen, of all people, talking like a Sinn Feiner. There was applause, says the New York Times, when she said that she looked forward to the time when Ireland would take her place as "one of the sisterhood of free nations that make up the British Empire." This is just two years since Mr. Aleister Crowley said almost the same words facing the Statue of Liberty, to be hailed as a madman or a traitor, and but five quarters of a year since the Irish Martyrs wrote similar remarks in blood in the streets of Dublin, and on the flagstones of the Tower of London.

It is time that we all took a new look at the world. Things are not what they were. In fact, they never were at all; our beliefs have been prejudice and illusion. Only canned brains should be incapable of the effort now required. We are, by definition, the fittest. Since we survive; and if we are to continue this process, we must do so by accommodating ourselves to the changed conditions.

WE have seen where national prejudice and the gospel of hate have led us. Any one who continues to preach hate is simply a snake. We are talking to the Irish who hate England as much as to the French who hate Germany. It simply will not do. We are in an impoverished world, and for the future we have got to pull together. It is absurd to repair "historical injustices"; no nation but her past is black with such. We must get off the plane of hate and envy together. We must recognize the plain truth that quarreling does not pay. Germany and England are both very silly to starve their best customers—each other. But we should like to put it on a little higher ground than this; it is inhuman to be inhuman. There is only one attitude possible to an

enlightened man to-day. It is not original. It was worded rather epigrammatically quite a few years ago, as follows: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Heaven knows the idiots who brought about this thing didn't know. But most nations trust their destinies to imbeciles.) In the Dhammapada, a classic of Buddhism, six hundred years before Christ, we find the same idea, though without any religious theory to clog the wheels: "The state of hate doth not abate by hate in any time or clime;

But hate will cease if love increase; so soothly runs the antient rime."

The idea had whiskers, even then; but the idea is not proved false by the fact that Mr. Wilson is clean-shaved.

Here, then, is yet another reason for the vigorous prosecution of the war. To fight a man honorably is to win him to respect and love you; a course of mutual cheating, as in time of peace, has the precisely opposite effect.

THE obstacle to mutual understanding has been, of course, ignorance. "Greek" means a thief; Johnny Crapaud, as a term for a Frenchman, commemorates the legend that Frenchmen live entirely upon frogs; even the Bulgar has contributed in a similar way to the wealth of the English language. An idea has to be well fixed before it gets into the language in this way. Mohammedan hill-men always refer to Bengalis as fish-eating bastards. The French think all Englishmen "perfidious." And so it goes, or rather went, for travel, and this war, in particular, is slowly driving the truth home, that we are all men. We must learn to tolerate each others' customs, and we must understand that LAW is only the concrete and organized expression of those customs.

AMERICA has a good point in this matter, and a bad one. The good is that we are accustomed to the most radical changes, not indeed, in ideas, but in the essential conditions of life. The average man of 50 may have been bell-boy, horse-thief, bank messenger, minister of the gospel, cowboy, ragpicker and college professor before settling down to serious life as a yeggman. We live in a country where the economic conditions change overnight in the most amazing fashion. We are a live people, accustomed to catastrophe as others to a change of weather. Nothing can abate our elasticity. But we are cursed with the most dreaded of all plagues that can afflict a nation: variegated law.

IN America no man knows whether he is a criminal or no, unless he is sure that he is one. And this conviction is very widespread. Laws being passed in Albany alone at the rate of 600 per annum, even the judges make no attempt to "keep up with the Joneses," as Judge Welles complains in his recent book. The general disrespect for law has become universal. It is impossible to go into a bar in New York without seeing men in uniform being surreptitiously supplied with alcohol. The