charge. Such an oscillograph, designed by Dr. J. D. Cobine of the Electrical Engineering staff, has been constructed in our shops and is a part of our laboratory equipment. The high degree of technique involved in the design and construction of such an oscillograph becomes apparent when it is realized that the timing must be such that the exposure of the film in the photographic system begins within a small fraction of a millionth of a second after the initiation of the lightning discharge. Also within the oscillograph tube, a vacuum of one-hundredth of a millimeter of mercury must be maintained at all times, and yet the photographic films within the tube must be moved to the photographing position by outside control without in any way diminishing the vacuum.

Work is also in progress on other new types of apparatus which will enable us to carry still further our investigations into the effects of high voltage on solid, liquid, and gaseous insulation under direct-current, alternating-current, and lightning conditions.

Industry frequently calls on us for assistance in the solution of its high-voltage problems, and several of our graduates have been taken immediately on graduation into the high-voltage research laboratories of our leading industries. Graduates and members of the instructing staff of the electrical engineering departments of other colleges and universities come to the Department at Harvard not only to work for an advanced degree but also for the opportunity to study our high-voltage research methods. We feel it is becoming generally recognized that our laboratories are in the front rank both in measuring technique and in the ability to carry on research in the field of high-voltage phenomena.

Contemporary Social and Cultural Crisis

By Dr. P. A. Sorokin, Professor of Sociology.

THAT Western society and culture are in the midst of a crisis is a commonplace observation. Less certain is what kind of crisis it is: Is it one of the ordinary crises through which Western society passed several times in the last century, or is it an extraordinary one which happens only once in several centuries? Most of the contemporary leaders seem to think it is ordinary, being either purely economic or purely political or a kind of some partial maladjustment. Accordingly they assure us it will be soon over, and prescribe, as "the way out of it", a kind of surface rubbing medicine: an economic readjustment in money or banking or prices and wages; or similar modification of the political machinery and the party in power; or a reasonable religious reform in making churches more attractive; or changing here and there the curriculum of schools; or establishing sterilization of socially unfit persons. Through these and similar measures they expect to adjust the maladjustments and to end the crisis.

I admire the self-confidence and optimism of these doctors. And yet I cannot help thinking their diagnosis and prescriptions are doubtful. The contemporary crisis seems to me not ordinary, but extraordinary. It is not mere economic or political or partial maladjustment, but involves the whole of our culture and society. Its magnitude is immense. Its end is not yet in sight. And the way out of it is much more difficult than the doctors assure us. We seem to live in one of the greatest turning points of human history, when one fundamental form of culture and society

Professor Sorokin gave this address on December 8, 1937, in the series of radio talks arranged by the Harvard *Guardian*.

begins to decline, and another, and very different, form is coming. The magnificent socio-cultural building in which the Western world has lived during the last five centuries—the building of resplendent utilitarian, materialistic, sensate, and "this worldly" culture that seeks happiness and perfection in this sensory world only—this building seems to be shattered and begins to crumble. A new building of a more spiritual, idealistic, and less sensual culture only looms in the future, but is not built as yet. We are in an uncomfortable position of the transitory period from one socio-cultural epoch to another. Hence the extraordinary character of our crisis.

Such is my diagnosis. What are the evidences for its validity? The first evidence is given by the totality of the doctors who view the crisis as ordinary. Among these, the economic doctors show unmistakably the presence of the most acute economic crisis. The political doctors demonstrate clearly the existence of a grave political sickness in national and international relationships. Biologists and anthropologists assure us that the contemporary selection leads to the survival of the unfit. Ministers, moralists, educators, and judges deplore the sinister symptoms in their fields. Not infrequent are the voices pointing out the crisis of creative art, science, philosophy, and religion. Thus when we sum up the testimony of all the partisans of the "ordinary crisis view" we find there is no compartment of our culture and society which is sound and is not sick. The crisis appears totalitarian and encyclopedic. Such is the first evidence supplied by the very doctors who view it as ordinary.

The second class of evidence is given by the extraordinary magnitude, destructiveness, and bloodiness of international wars and internal revolutions of the twentieth century. The systematic studies of these problems show that in this respect the twentieth century is the most bloody and turbulent century in the whole history of Western society. War and revolution being the sharpest form of anarchy, their extraordinary magnitude in this century is by itself a sufficient proof of the validity of my diagnosis.

The third class of evidence is brought by the present situation in the main compartments of our culture and society. Whatever compartment of our culture we take, be it art, science, philosophy, religion, ethics, law, or social institutions, we find in it an open revolt against the dominant forms and trends of the preceding centuries. They all are in a state of chaos and anarchy. All the standards and values are unsettled, beginning with those of what is true and false (in science, philosophy, religion); what is right and wrong (in ethics and law); what is beautiful and ugly (in art); and ending with the chaotic state in all our institutions, from the family, the property, the state, up to our churches, schools, courts, and factories. All and everything is upset, disorganized, and tends to be ground to dust in the fantastically fast and convulsive Niagara of feverish change. Any adaptation to this dancing world in flux becomes less and less possible. Before we have time to adjust ourselves to the last change, it is gone and is replaced by a new change. In this mad flux, more and more we are robbed of the security of our body, of the peace of our mind, and of the integrity of our personality. Incertitude and insecurity begin to permeate our life.

The fourth series of evidence is supplied by the impotency and futility of all the commendable efforts to fight the crisis. During the last two decades innumerable efforts have been made by the nations and their leaders to eliminate war, anarchy, poverty, depression, crime, and other manifestations of the crisis. And yet, the situation of the patient today is more ominous than at any time before.

When these and many other evidences are properly considered, my diagnosis appears to be nearer to the reality than that of the ordinary crisis.

Does this great crisis mean the death of Western culture and society? It means only a decline of one of their forms and

its coming replacement by another. This other form will be very different, but in its own way as great and magnificent as the declining form at its climax. I conjecture that the coming form will be more spiritual, more idealistic, more just, and more Godly than that on the decline. Insofar, there is no place for any pessimism in regard to the future of Western culture and society.

But before the new form is built, we must cross a dangerous transitional bridge from the present to the future form. Such transitory periods tend to be—the *dies irae, dies illa*—stern, bloody, and destructive. It is the supreme duty of our and the next few generations to make the transition as little tragic as possible. One of the real means for that is an active effort of every individual to become wiser, nobler, and more just. Another means is an orderly re-orientation of the system of social values, making them less relative, more idealistic, and more absolute. The third means consists of an active effort of all social groups to abandon their petty conflicts and to unite in one great aspiration to make the passage painless and to build ever wiser, nobler, and more marvelous culture and society to come.

These means are certainly difficult, but they are the only ones that are helpful. Surface-rubbing medicine is easy, but impotent, as the experience of the last decades shows. It is up to every one of us as to what we make of this transition: a human inferno of the *dies irae, dies illa*, or a heroic deed of heroic humanity.

An Adventure in Translating Theocritus

By Henry Harmon Chamberlin, '95.

ONE of my critics has said he feared I had based my translation of Theocritus on other translations, rather than on the Greek. His fears are groundless. For I have stuck to the text throughout. Sometimes, on a second reading, I have used a trot, usually the French of M. Philippe Legrand, to pick out a word or phrase I did not know. As soon as I felt that I had sensed the atmosphere of the Idyll, I would start to translate with Liddell and Scott at my elbow. It was then that I looked up every word that seemed to warrant a careful scrutiny, in order to understand both its special use and its inner meaning. Through all these manoeuvres, I never read through any translation by anybody.

When mine was done, I did try to read some other translations. They seemed to me extraordinarily *mosche*, to use a bit of French slang. What principally struck me in nearly all of them was the total lack of humor; and humor is one of the most salient features of Theocritus, at times a rollicking humor, at other times a humor that borders on pathos, or merges into high tragedy. There was none of this in the translations that I read. One of them was written for the most part in blank verse, somewhat as Tennyson might have written, if he had had paresis. Another was done in a pale, polished, preraphaelitic prose that made all the Idylls look alike, whereas they are infinitely varied. I have never read any of these translations through, and I do not want to read them any more. I do not think I could stand it for any great length of time.

I do not say that my work is any better, though it naturally seems better to me. I did my translation in verse, because for me the spirit of Greek poetry, or of any other

This paper was read before the Classical Association of New England at a meeting held at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn.

HARVARD ALUMNI BULLETIN

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE HARVARD ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
AND OF THE ASSOCIATED HARVARD CLUBS

For the opinions expressed in the editorial columns the editors alone are responsible.

VOLUME XL. FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1938. NUMBER 16.

News and Views

The National Scholarships. The recent annual report of President Conant contains a quotation from that portion of Dean Hanford's report for 1936-37 which deals with "The Development of the Harvard National Scholarship Plan." Under that title this has been reprinted as a separate pamphlet. For its fuller treatment of an important matter which President Conant could not, within the limits of his report treat in detail, it is a highly significant contribution to current educational history.

Harvard readers in particular may not all remember that the National Scholarship Plan has been in operation only since 1934, and may even possess but a vague knowledge of what it is. In brief its object is to bring from portions of the country that have been meagerly represented in undergraduate enrollment here a constant and larger flow of promising students, whether with or without the financial resources to support them at Harvard. To this end scholarships have been provided and careful methods of selection put into play. The scholarships are awarded primarily on the ground of capacity and character, but the stipends vary with the recipients' needs. Where financial help is required, it is supplied in amounts as required. These range from a prize of $100 to those whom it is desired only to honor, up to $1,200, with an additional $100 for those who come from remote places. These larger awards are designed to meet all necessary expenses and thus to relieve the student from devastating burdens of self-support. To the objection raised in certain quarters that Harvard is thus taking an unfair advantage over local institutions unable to offer such financial help, it is answered that many of the promising students brought to Harvard under this new plan could not possibly afford to enter the colleges nearer home.

What have been the results so far? In the first year, 1934-35, there were ten holders of National Scholarships from six Middle Western States. Two States were added, in each of the two following years, and, through gifts to the Tercentenary Fund, five new States, in the South, Southwest, and Far West were added for students entering College in the autumn of 1937. The number of students in Harvard College who entered with National Scholarships is now 67.

Much has been expected of these men, and the expectations have been met. A recital of their various activities, scholastic, social, athletic, would cover all the inter-