

UNPOPULAR  
OPINIONS

HAROLD OWEN

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UNPOPULAR OPINIONS



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# UNPOPULAR OPINIONS:

*A Diary of Political Protest ::*

*By Harold Owen, Author of "Woman  
Adrift," "Disloyalty." etc. :: :: :: ::*

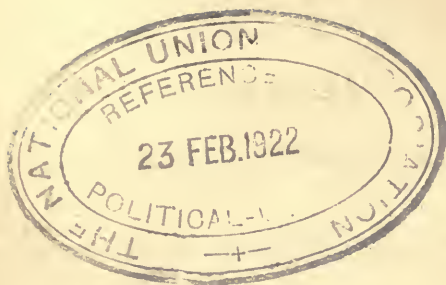
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*Catch me, if you can, in any one illiberal  
sentiment, or in any opinion which I have  
need to recant; and that after twenty years'  
scribbling upon all subjects.*

—SYDNEY SMITH.

UNPOPULAR  
OPINIONS:  
A DIARY OF POLITICAL  
PROTEST  
BY HAROLD OWEN

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## CONTENTS

	Preface (Politicians and Principles) ... ..	1
LIBRARY SETS	A Plea for Reaction ... ..	11
	The Copy-Book Mind ... ..	20
	Crime—Public and Private ... ..	25
	“Right-About-Turn” ... ..	30
	On Saving England ... ..	35
	Man and Woman ... ..	40
	A Rejoinder ... ..	45
	The Unpatriots ... ..	50
	The “Too English” Cry ... ..	54
	Minority Rule ... ..	59
DEC 16 1940	Taxes and Classes ... ..	64
	Incoherence ... ..	69
	Marriage à la Mode... ..	74
	The Wicked Animal ... ..	79
	The League ... ..	84
	Cracked Foundations ... ..	89
	Decivilisation ... ..	94
	The Cynicism of “Idealists” ... ..	99
	Recognition ... ..	107
	Bayonets for Bourgeois ... ..	112
HARDING	Homage ... ..	117
	The Storm Centre ... ..	122
	Ireland : A Retrospect ... ..	128
	Ireland’s English Allies ... ..	136
	A Year Ago ... ..	143
	Devolution ... ..	148
	Once Again ... ..	153

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## CONTENTS

Toleration ... ..	158
Whitewash ... ..	165
Of "Fences" ... ..	169
Mental Anarchy ... ..	176
Apathy ... ..	181
Mr. Asquith ... ..	186
Voice and Echo ... ..	191
Statesmanship ... ..	196
Morality in Statecraft "Within the Gate" ... ..	201 207
Lesser Things ... ..	212
Rightly or Wrongly... ..	217
What We Know ... ..	222
Lawmaking ... ..	227
Our Ignoble Selves ... ..	232
Derision ... ..	237
Mr. Wells' Worst ... ..	242
Promises ... ..	247
Chopping up England ... ..	253
The Cynic's Christmas 1921 ... ..	258 263
Torture ... ..	268
Emasculation ... ..	273
The Wrong Messrs. Right ... ..	278
Bold Bad Women ... ..	284
Opportunism ... ..	289
Mockery ... ..	296
Law and Morality ... ..	302
"Worn Out" ... ..	307
("Laughter") ... ..	312
Self-Sacrifice... ..	317
The Weapon... ..	322
The Last of Them ... ..	329
Appendix ... ..	336

A "Stop-Press" Preface.

## POLITICIANS AND PRINCIPLES

"It is perfectly true that we have changed our minds more than once during the past three years, and we may change them again. Our difficulties lie in our attempts to convince the mediævalists amongst us (laughter) that the world has also changed."—The Lord Chancellor, in the debate on the ratification of the Treaty with the "Irish Free State," December 16th, 1921.

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This passage provides a timely text for an introduction by which it may be convenient to prepare the reader for what sort of "unpopular opinions" he will find in this book. He will soon discover for himself that in the pages that follow there is a progressive disillusion concerning contemporary politicians in general, and the Coalition Ministry in particular; and that I have been at no great pains to conceal a lack of profound respect for all of them. That lack, however, is mainly due to the evidence they themselves supply (in the events herein chronicled and commented upon) that their policy, good or bad, right or wrong, and on this matter or on that, rests on no coherent set of principles. And the Lord Chancellor saves me, by his implications and admissions, the fatigue of further proof.

The passage is in any case extremely interesting, for it not only raises the whole issue between principles and expediency—between coherent purpose and spasmodic opportunism—in government; but it reveals the characteristic mentality of the modern statesman, and so helps

to explain much that has seemed strange in the incoherence of contemporary political life. For one has often asked one's self, "Have these men really any political faith whatever, do they possess settled convictions even on fundamental principles of government, that they can pursue a course so erratic and often contradictory?" And the Lord Chancellor shows how foolish it is to overlook the obvious explanation, merely because it is under your nose. For the case is just as it seems.

The Lord Chancellor's "mediævalists" fascinates by its cool assurance, coming, as it did, from one who used it as a term of derision for those who, unlike himself, have not changed their minds for the excellent reason that they do not change their principles. And for its smooth self-approval and well-groomed effrontery—its debonair assumption that for a Government frequently to change its mind is an act of engaging personal caprice as natural as that of a woman changing her frocks—the passage can be left to speak for itself. The grey truth is, however, that a government which blithely and frequently changes its mind has no mind to change. A mind is not an ornament, or an external thing: it is that settled faith and inward principle which gives character to an individual and authority to a government.

But that reference to the world having changed embodies every fallacy and cowardice of modern statesmen. For, of course, the world has changed, but the whole point is that *it has changed greatly for the worse*, and that the statesmanship which does not concern itself about the nature of the change, but obediently changes with it, confesses that it merely performs the recording function of that mechanical instrument which changes with the wind. A government made up of such men does not govern, for men can no more govern without principles that they can walk without legs.

Now, political principles are, in the main, a matter of intellectual perception; and in settled times the problems of statesmanship are soluble by an intellectual effort which requires the association of no extraordinary moral qualities (a statement true despite the fact that politicians



themselves derive great satisfaction from the pretence that a great moral purpose runs through all their achievements and advocacies, tremendous or trivial). But there are times when even political principles are not enough for the statesman's task—times when they are, so to speak, only the foot-hills of a great range of moral principles towering above the political plain. Such times are those of these passing years, when not only established political standards are being overthrown but the attack sweeps on, past the first line of defence supplied by political principles, to storm moral heights that have hitherto seemed unassailable.

It seems to me (writing a foreword which should really be read as a postscript) that our current and especially our recent, political history shows our statesmen to have neither the intellectual nor the moral capacity to repel the attacks—Indeed, that is not surprising when they think that, here and there, the attacks are signs of progress and that their duty, now and then, is to welcome the advancing forces.

So, to their mental confusion they have added moral uncertainty. They do not see even the practical importance of political principles, if only to simplify government, and make it coherent, and to give them that authority which they do not possess and which (to be just to them) they do not seem to desire. And, as to moral principles, they have not had the vision to see that, though the world since 1914 has changed, it has so far not changed for the better in any moral respect whatever; and so they have been accepting some evil changes they should have resisted, thereby assisting that steady demoralisation to which Opportunism then complacently points to vindicate its own "change of mind." (And, if you should want the real explanation of the steady decline in governmental authority, it lies in the fact that in government we have inferior minds, and authority is possible only to superiority.)

This complicity in tendencies which it was their duty to resist is shown, I submit, in the case of three leading issues with which the Coalition Government has had to

deal; and in each case their policy has been based not on the assertion, but on the abandonment, of some simple moral principle.

In regard to Germany, they have betrayed the simple principle of justice. Succumbing to influences they should have resisted, and changing their "minds" on this matter as on others, they confused the distinction between justice and vengeance, and at length accepted that "new morality" which is very like the old demoralisation—a code which believe that crimes are better forgotten by condonation than remembered through punishment, and which has lost touch with the retributive and cleansing function of Justice altogether, seeing her only as an emotional advocate for the wrong-doer.

Next, they accepted the opportunity offered by Bolshevism to betray the simple principle of humanity, for they have associated Great Britain with the foulest State known in the history of the misgovernment of man, for the sake of a remote and unrealised material advantage; and the year 1922 opens with the announcement that, the first surrender of principle having failed, the degradation is to be carried a stage further by admitting the Bolshevist State into the full comity of the nations composing what is left of civilisation and Christendom.\*

As to Sinn Fein, and the capitulation to the Irish "Terror," what can honestly be said except that it is the surrender of both the moral principles of justice and humanity plus the betrayal of every principle of constitutional government? But the capitulation to Sinn Fein is, of course, merely the inevitable and fitting sequel to the other abdications, and that leads me to the point of

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\*At the Cannes Conference of the Supreme Council of the Allies a few days later, Mr. Lloyd George (Jan. 6, 1922) revealed his plan for what his Press had called "the new Europe." The plan involved the complete recognition of, and co-operation with, the Bolshevist State by all the Allies, to be pursued at yet another Conference. Mr. Lloyd George commended his new policy, especially to the sceptical ear of the French Premier sitting at his side, with much delightful badinage concerning "infamy," "assassins," and so on. He ridiculed "a sort of exalted attitude"

the practical value of moral principles. To gentlemen who only want to "deliver the goods" moral principles, as such, naturally "cut no ice." But we can see that they have even a mundane value, that they give definite results—such as expediency does not, if we only consider how different the world would have been if there had been among the Allies an influence as powerful as was that of President Wilson, exerted by some man who, abhorring war and international crimes quite as much as he, took a totally opposite view of the means by which that abhorrence could be expressed to discourage their repetition.

Let us suppose such a man, with his own moral judgment entirely unwearied and unsubdued either by the passage of time or the general apathy that had almost become callousness, had seen that the supreme necessity was to shock the world back to its forgotten moral sense; that under his influence the Allies interpreted their duty to "do justice to Germany" in the light of their duty to civilisation; and that they had had a Grand Assize of their own, with the criminals selected for trial not merely the heel-clicking automata who have been acquitted by their countrymen on the ground that they only acted under

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on these matters, though admitting "there is something to be said for it."

"But there is nothing to be said for greeting one assassin with the right hand [the allusion was to France's agreements with the Kemalists] and when another assassin offers you his hand putting your left one behind your back—nothing. You get no advantage (sic) if you shake hands with infamy in the East and refuse to do it with infamy in the West."

In this casual, colloquial, chatty way Mr. Lloyd George, sitting as he spoke, at length reached his goal of chloroforming the conscience of Europe—a process whose stages are traced in this book.

It is safe to say that the final stage was accelerated by the Irish Conference; for, naturally enough, after "handing round the cigars" to the Sinn Fein delegation in Downing Street, his progressive mind would instantly turn to the hope of extending his list of personal acquaintances. So it is already suggested that M. Lenin himself (probably to be followed by Trotsky) will appear at that Genoa Conference of All-Europe at which "Europe is to be re-born"—though surely degeneration rather than regeneration is to be seen in a Conference which at last completes and attests the demoralisation of Europe.

orders, but also the authoritative, authentic, and highly-placed Germans from whom their orders proceeded. Suppose that after the responsibility for the initial crime towards Belgium had been duly met in the highest quarters, the heads of each separate department of Frightfulness had then been taken in turn—so that those responsible for the introduction of poison gas, for the sinking of hospital ships, for the ill treatment of prisoners, for all oppressions of the civilian populations contrary to civilised usage, for the sinking of unarmed vessels by which ten thousand British seamen were drowned, and for bombing sleeping towns from the air, had each duly received the appropriate punishment for the introduction of their novelties in slaughter. Supposing all this had been done—as *the civilised world expected would be done* when the settlement of the long account became due—does anyone doubt that the world would sooner have been re-stabilised, that it would sooner have recovered its old moralities and sanities, that it would have lost less respect for the authority of Right, under such a solemn affirmation of the vitality of man's moral judgments? If that had been done, and the old standards upheld before the new ones were reared, then a League of Nations might indeed have been built on solid earth and become a reality, instead of being built in a morass of insincerities and remaining the mockery and futility it now is. Can anyone doubt that if every outraged law of humanity had exacted this adult-minded justice, the world would have been saved from many revolutionary confusions which have thriven because justice and civilised law have seemed nerveless, effete, and no longer certain of their own validity?

I do not say that justice sternly applied to the great crimes of Germany would have prevented the worst crimes of Bolshevism, for they had already been committed. But I do say that if the world had been brought sharply back to the old moral standards, that atmosphere of indulgence in which Bolshevism has thrived would have been absent, and we should at least have been spared the humiliation of accepting Bolshevism after a perfunctory



wash and brush-up. Indeed, in his book "A Defence of Terrorism," Trotsky readily admits that the Red Terror itself was possible only in a world, as he puts it, familiarised with great bloodshed; or in a world, as I put it, brutalised by great crimes that have gone unpunished.

And the reactions would have been felt much nearer home, for I think it can be safely said that the lurid chapter of Sinn Fein would never have been written in a world that had been restored to the old sanities and humanities by a moral determination that looked neither to the right nor the left until Justice had been done to those who began the demoralisation of the modern world.

From this moral deterioration has proceeded material disaster also. For what we have been witnessing, whether the process is stayed or continues, is the breaking up of civilised law, with our statesmen (who should be its custodians) standing helplessly by, so inept that they could not see what the psychological reactions would be. Yet it is not remarkable that the turbulent elements in our social life, noting every indication that Authority had become diffident and statesmanship was changing with the world instead of being a rock in all its waters and tumults, took advantage of their opportunity. It ought to be clear to us, for instance, that the great Coal Strike of 1921 merely hands out to us, in unemployment, diminished wealth, and social confusions whose end we do not yet see, the prosaic penalties of all those surrenders of moral and political principles which have familiarised Democracy with the cowardice and incompetence of governments drawn from "the governing classes" much more than with the aggressive and autocratic qualities which used to be the classic reproach against them.

In Ireland, of course, we see the full effect of a surrender of moral principles compelling the political surrender. If the United Kingdom is now broken up, if the principle of the Union and all the principles of constitutional law have had to be abandoned, it is because the moral principle involved in a reprobation of murder had practically been abandoned already. The demoralised

apathy of the English (and the Irish) people towards what was happening in Ireland was only Nemesis haunting our rulers for their own earlier apathies. Could they not see that if ten thousand British sailors could be drowned and nothing in particular happened, if hospital ships could be sunk and the stretchers in the ships' boats fired on, and no man was hanged for it, the shooting of policemen and the ambushing of soldiers in Ireland would merely seem "all in the day's work."?

In this book there is a good deal to be said about Ireland which may read strangely to-day, and may have only the interest attaching to what the Lord Chancellor would call a mediævalistic point of view concerning the ethics of assassination and the principles of constitutional law. But if it now reads strangely it is only because it affirms principles the Government abandoned as the book went through the press and because "we have changed our minds, and may change them again."

Yet even those who do not change their minds will watch with interest this experiment in enthusiastic apostasy and in what was mere statesmanship becoming what is called "super-statesmanship" simply by changing its mind. If the experiment succeeds (and none hopes it may fail) then some of us will have to revise a good deal of our political philosophy—unless the experiment succeeds only by demonstrating that surrender to rebellion in one place merely increases the difficulties in combating stimulated rebellion in another. For the moment, however, one can only watch with an interest that strives to be sympathetic this new homœopathic method of government; for when the prevalent political disease is the decay of authority it tries the effect of draining the veins of Authority by a transfusion of blood to Rebellion. But, amid the general rejoicing at this "final settlement" I have the courage only to indicate what the most favourable outcome is likely to be: Ireland has been pushing steadily at a door which is suddenly flung open, precipitating her into the ante-chamber of Liberty in the Temple of Independence. Bewildered by her success, and even a little suspicious of it, she does not know what to do with

it—for, as I write, the Dail still deliberates.\* Hence ironies lurk ahead. For the settlement that “brings peace between England and Ireland” may not bring peace within Ireland herself—and then we shall see the irony which will oblige England to take up her duty afresh. But if the settlement does, as we all hope, bring peace within Ireland herself—then from that moment will begin the reaction towards the supreme irony: the restoration of the Union.

A word may perhaps be said as to the origin of this book. Its chapters appeared as articles, written from week to week, in “The Yorkshire Post” (with the exception of the first four pages, which appeared elsewhere) and I have been very grateful for the opportunity given to me of expressing, with entire editorial indulgence, these contemporary judgments on passing events. At a time when freedom of speech is allowed much more generously to revolutionary advocacies than to orthodox faiths, such latitude as I have been accorded needs the warmest acknowledgments. And in days when there are so many changes, not only of politicians’ minds but of swift and great events, it is an experiment to reproduce, as they were written and revised at the time, such rather uncompromising judgments upon events as they arose.

One excuse for reproducing them is that they deal in the main with permanent principles raised by specific issues that are not yet decided. Another is that their public reception, and the many requests made for their re-publication, seemed to justify that step. In any case I hope the book may serve as some record of our political upheavals during the fateful period it covers; and those to whom my opinions are not acceptable will at any rate admit that the book, being a running protest against tendencies that have in the main prevailed, reflects the opinions of other people whilst expressing my own. If my main judgments are wrong, then the book may be taken as a psychological curiosity, expressing a mind out

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\*After a long and vehement debate, Dail Eireann ratified the Treaty for the establishment of an Irish Free State by the small majority of 7 (64—57) on January 7, 1922.

of keeping with its own age, and blindly attached in 1922 to principles as ancient as 1914, though then of almost general acceptance. But if I am even partially right in my judgments, then much else is wrong—including the type of mind which is now considered politically adequate. I would beg the reader to remember that in beginning the book he must carry his mind back to the beginning of 1920, becoming, as he progresses, an older, probably a sadder, but (I should very much like to think) a slightly wiser man.

January 1st, 1922.



## A PLEA FOR REACTION

Nineteen hundred and twenty—and with it comes, with the first year clear of War and its long laboured formality of Peace, the opportunity to set about putting our house in order, in an almost shattered world. With it comes, also, another opportunity: merely to repeat and confirm those errors which will see this year closing, like that which has just gone, as a year of baffled hopes and deepening despair.

For I suppose I am not alone in having noticed that the Old Year died amid many expressions of resignation at its passing because it had been a year of "bitter disappointment" and "disillusion." But I wonder whether others have noticed that all these lamentations for a disillusioning year have proceeded from the illusionists themselves—from those who drew large imaginative drafts on the bank of reality, and are now bewildered to find that they have immensely overdrawn the account, and seem to be highly indignant that the bank has dishonoured their enthusiasms. For they still seem to have learned nothing from these sinister years, since 1914, concerning the potentialities of human error and wickedness, and still seem to think that the world can be restored by illimitable liberties, credulities, and condonations.

Let us try, however, to face the truth. For the staring fact of our times, to those who have but minds to see, is

that all the sinister confusions of these days proceed from an extraordinary public malady which has become almost a public insanity—the determination to slur and shirk the truth, to rhapsodise instead of to reason, to dogmatise instead of to think, to prophesy instead of seeking to know. And the dark truth about all these “disillusions” and the laments of 1919 “cheating our high hopes,” is that there was not the least justification for the illusions, and that the “high hopes” had nothing behind them except the deliberate self-deception of unreasoning idealists.

Yet none was allowed to say so. If you even tried to say so, you were regarded, not as an honest mind facing the ugly facts of life, but as a wicked mind which preferred to look on ugly facts and liked them for their own sake. In vain did you endeavour to warn that there was no short cut whatever from Armageddon to the New Jerusalem. In vain might you beseech the illusionists to look round on the world as it was, and honestly ask themselves whence and how, from such actual terror and immediate tumult, from such a cataclysm of horror and human wickedness as the world had been passing through, could any high hopes of an early “regeneration of mankind” sanely proceed. You were smothered with evangelical contempt if you ventured to say that the emergence of the world from its immense moral degradation, and its equally immense material devastation, would be a slow and bitter process.

So the idealists largely had their way in policy as well as in advocacy. They tore up the old standards before we had erected the new, and would not see what some of us

besought them to realise : that the world had got a long, long way to travel before it could even get back to where it was, and that our great task was not to build a sudden lath and plaster skyscraping Millennium, towering to the clouds, but to restore the very foundations of morality, honour, pity, and human sanity. That task has yet to be accomplished, and until those foundations are restored there will be no permanence in whatever structure may be reared aloft.

Yet how difficult to maintain an attitude of criticism to "Progress" at a time when there is an almost general acquiescence in the idea that salvation lies in accelerating our pace along every road by which we are now travelling ! When it is so generally assumed that Democracy has only just got into its stride and has the New World all before it, it is not easy to affirm that, on the contrary, Democracy has made a false start, and must be brought back to toe the line of strict constitutionalism before it can even hope to go forward. When there is such a wide acceptance of Labour's belief that it is shortly to enter upon its governmental inheritance, it may seem mere perversity to set one's self so directly athwart the current view as to contend that, on the contrary, Labour is progressively demonstrating its incapacity for government, and that its present temper suggests much more the probability of big mistakes (that will either make recovery impossible by their magnitude, or be realised before the damage is irreparable and so lead to deliberate reaction) than an onward, all-conquering march. When it is so widely believed that, even within vaguely constitutional bounds, the impact of "the proletariat" upon government is going

to be much more direct and decisive, it is not easy to affirm, except by an appearance of exaggerated self-confidence, that the constitutional limits of even a democratic form of government have already been reached—and exceeded.

When Labour so confidently assumes that there is an inexhaustible Wage Fund to be drawn upon, somewhere in the strong rooms of Capitalism, it needs a courage that may seem hardihood to assert that, on the contrary, wages have already reached a higher level than can be maintained; just as when a Coalition Government (containing within it every element of conservative caution that our political life apparently possesses) is starting on its second year with unchecked enthusiasm for vast schemes of Reconstruction dependent upon vast State expenditure, it may seem only a churlish stupidity and a reactionary obscurantism that can suggest that, on the contrary, retrenchment is the very first step to be taken on the path of Reconstruction. Above all, at a time when a reluctant resignation is the most active form of opposition to the doctrine that the State shall extend its activities and controls, under democratic compulsions that strike at the root of parliamentary government, it may sound like even an idiotic optimism to contend that, on the contrary, the next decade will see us (unless we have meanwhile gone down in the abyss of revolution) working our way back to the opposite doctrine altogether: that the State must limit its activities to the essential services of government and Democracy must accept the restraints of constitutional government if it wishes to preserve its liberties.

A day or two more, and the Parliamentary game begins

again. I call it a game, not at all because of any fashionable, cheap-and-easy contempt for the institution of Parliament, or even for the politicians who play the game—and who sometimes don't. The reason I call it a game is that the players themselves, nine out of ten of them, seem to rank it no higher, and play it in such a fashion as to suggest that the game itself is all that matters and that the whole purpose of Parliamentary procedure is to score Parliamentary "victories," make or repel "attacks," and defeat "enemies."

But some day, one hopes, it will occur to the Parliamentary mind that the Parliamentary game *is* only a game, and that what matters to everybody but the players is not whether they are on the winning or the losing side, or whether they are on any side at all, but whether right and reason and the principles of good government are on their side. That discovery has, indeed, been made from time to time, but the discerning Parliament men who made it have merely withdrawn from the game in disgust, having found that Parliament does not take kindly to inconvenient members who refuse to play the game of pretending that Parliamentary successes are the same thing as good statesmanship or Parliamentary strategy the same thing as political sagacity. But some day (and the sooner the better) somebody will arise in Parliament, who will see that it is worth while even to lose the Parliamentary game in order to win the political fight—and from the day when any eminent Parliamentarian is not afraid to throw his Parliamentary career on the scrap heap in order to make his political reputation will begin the rehabilitation of Parliament in public esteem.



The game is about to reopen, and what shall we see? Three parties each equally insistent that it is "the party of progress." That claim, of course, is the very first of the rules of the Parliamentary game. But why does it not occur to some thinking mind in the Commons to break that rule, and boldly inaugurate a policy of reaction? I will tell you why. It is because the Parliamentary game is so much governed by phrases that the word "reaction" terrifies the Parliamentary mind. It does not stop to ask whether reaction may not be good or bad, according to what it reacts from. A reactionary policy in Russia, for instance, which restored the Constituent Assembly, and abolished massacre as an instrument of government, would merely be a reaction from barbarism to comparative civilisation. Yet we have seen the term "reactionary" used, as an epithet that settled the whole matter, against any section of the Russian people which desired or strove to restore the very simplest form of human freedom to their unhappy land.

And in our own land, is there nothing from which a reaction would be desirable? Nay, is not some measure of reaction absolutely necessary to the reconstruction of our almost shattered social order and our material well-being? The whole fallacy at the root of the horror with which the term reaction is regarded by the Parliamentary mind is the assumption that "progressive" mankind never makes mistakes and never does what needs undoing. Hence, progress has come to mean the mere persistence in a given course, regardless of where that course is taking us. But, obviously, if you find yourself in the middle of a bog, it may be an heroic and "progressive" thing to

keep straight on, in the hope that you will somehow flounder out of it; but it is unquestionably the saner thing to look round you, and at least see whether the shortest way out of it is not to turn back.

Now, I need scarcely waste space on any development of the argument to prove that we are now, in fact, in political bogland. We are, indeed, so deeply involved that, even to people who desire nothing so much as to tread firm earth again, it has become almost an open question whether we should go straight on and trust to luck, or retrace our steps and trust to reason. My own preference is for reason, as the only hopeful guide in vast human affairs. For luck is only the dancing light of a will-of-the-wisp in bogland, and when whole peoples, and almost all the people of the earth, are immersed almost up to their necks in precarious ground, the simplest sanity counsels the shortest possible cut to solid earth again—even if that lies behind us.

One direction in which we have indisputably gone wrong is in the acceleration of the tendency (a tendency marked clearly enough even before the war) of resisting and deriding, and so diminishing, the authority of rightly constituted government. Take the latest symptom of a malady now so widespread that people no longer mark its effect on the body politic, but accept each fresh manifestation of it as a matter of course. Only the other day a deputation of London Mayors waited upon the Home Secretary to urge that the Government (after thrice saying they would not reinstate policemen who were disloyal to their office, and therefore untrustworthy), should "reconsider"—i.e., reverse—its decision. My

own view is that the mere request, after such clear evidence of the Government's intentions upon such an elemental incident of government, was an impertinence. But the deputation of Mayors, receiving a polite "No" for an answer, then endeavoured to intimidate the Government by declaring that their little borough would refuse to pay the police rate; and one of the worshipful number indignantly exclaimed, "It is only wasting our time to come here!" "*Our* time!"

Well, we cannot hope to make even a first step towards regaining firm ground until we reject the new and pernicious doctrine that duly-constituted Governments exist to be derided and intimidated by sections of the community. We cannot regain the atmosphere of ordered progress until there comes the reaction from an anarchical view of the relative authority of Governments, and, say, the Mayors of Poplar and Shoreditch. Above all, we cannot hope for a return to even political sanity until we realise that all Governments must govern, and that we have the clearest evidence that the tyranny of proletarian rule may differ only in its magnitude and infamy from that of even the narrowest autocracy.

But, there is a "but" to all those most simple truths. It is that a Government, in order to command respect for its authority, must rely not only upon its form but also upon its substance—not only upon its inherent constitutional strength, but upon its intrinsic political capacity. Unhappily, it would be useless to pretend that the existing Government has shown a signal political capacity, has made no mistakes, and needs only to go right on. But its chief mistakes are due to a dread of the word "reaction,"

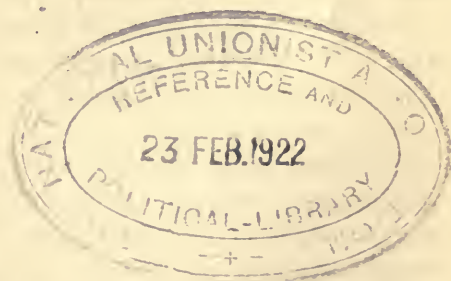


and that dread arises, in its turn, from its intellectual incapacity to judge between what is progress in political development and what is progress in error.

At a time, then, when all political parties in the State are shouting in a discordant chorus that they stand for "Progress," I venture to contend that on the other side of more "progressive" mistakes doubtless yet to be made, lies the revelation that the path of deliberate reaction\* must be trod before true progress, through national consolidation, can be reached.

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\*To mitigate the shock of this audacity I may say that a little over a year later Dean Inge (who generally looks before he leaps and thinks before he writes) made pretty much the same prediction in reviewing a symposium of political opinions: "Not one of the contributors makes the prediction which I seem to myself to see on the horizon. I am coming to think that before long the world will witness a great conservative reaction. I dislike the word 'reaction.' It is extremely silly to call one swing of the pendulum progress, and the next swing reaction, but I use the word in the scientific sense."—"The Evening Standard," April 21, 1921.



## THE COPY-BOOK MIND

Last week's "opinion" contained a casual sentence concerning the uncritical surrender of the Parliamentary mind to mere phrases. And as the very first day of the new Session happened to supply two very glaring and instructive examples of this weakness, I take advantage of a theme so conveniently provided and justified.

For, of course, the theme has as much human interest as political importance. Language is intended not only to embody but to clothe and fit human thought, and it should therefore be, so to speak, made to measure. But if a man reasons loosely and thinks superficially, then his language will be as unoriginal and as hackneyed as his thoughts, and you will find him clothing his thoughts, not with verbal garments felicitously made to measure, but with verbal ready-mades and reach-me-downs. He will fly to generalisations that lack precise relevance to the particular case—he will resort to ready-made phrases that hang gracelessly on stock arguments. He will, in a word, show by his language that his mind is not working under any inspiration, but is merely doing "repetition work," unable to make a creative effort.

The two examples of this Parliamentary weakness I refer to were not revealed on any casual or careless occa-

sion—they were both found in the two very first speeches that opened the debate on the Address itself. Nor were the examples furnished by obscure members—on the contrary, they were furnished by the leaders of the two Opposition parties. Mr. Adamson, opening the debate for the Labour party, declared (concerning Government policy towards the Bolsheviks), “You cannot make war on opinion!” And Sir Donald Maclean, leading what is left of what was once the Liberal party, declared (concerning Ireland), “Force is no remedy!”

It is rather staggering at this time of day to find that hackneyed and arbitrary tag crudely applied to the complicated problem of Ireland. Even if it contained the final and essential truth about Ireland, any self-respecting orator would, one might suppose, resort to any paraphrase or periphrase rather than trot out a Parliamentary ready-made already so well worn as to be threadbare. But the speaker was thinking only at second hand. He did not even complete the quotation. He may, or may not, have remembered that what John Bright actually said was, “Force is no remedy for discontent,” which, at least, was a complete aphorism, and not a tag abbreviated until it is meaningless. For to say “Force is no remedy!” is like saying “Food is no substitute . . .” and omitting to explain that you have left out the words “for drink.”

But force *is* a remedy for something—and that thing is force itself. Even the complete and original aphorism expresses only a twisted truth, for force is neither required nor applied to remedy or suppress mere inactive discontent. But it may be not only one remedy, but even the

only remedy, for discontent, if the discontent expresses itself by force and cannot be appeased by granting the thing desired. If, for instance, Ireland will be content with nothing less than complete Republican independence, and she uses the armed force of Sinn Fein to attain that end, and if that end cannot be conceded by the superior body called Great Britain, then force, to overcome force, may in very truth be the only remedy available. But to repeat "Force is no remedy" without even specifying what disease it is no remedy for, is merely a futile and unhelpful contribution to the problem. Why, then, was Sir Donald Maclean content to trot out this ancient and hackneyed dictum, cut off its point, and rely on that? Because, in the first place, he had heard it pass unchallenged a thousand times before by minds just as uncritical, which were impressed by it without exactly understanding it. Another reason was that the hoary phrase saved him thinking out the problem to which he applied it. Having no helpful philosophy of his own on the matter, he borrowed a quotation, and left out the only words that gave it any truth or meaning at all. Having no light of his own to throw on the subject, he turned on the "gas."

Mr. Adamson's sententious "You cannot make war on opinion!" belongs to the same order of copy-book mentality. Where he got it from I don't know—but it is evidently one of the current fallacies which pass for sublime and accepted truths with the new democracy. If it pretends to be a statement of fact, then it is merely wildly inaccurate. The history of man is simply strewn with the records of war on opinion—not only the figurative "war" of opposed opinion, but the literal war of physical

subjugation of those holding the opinion. And if it were meant to be a moral truth or admonition, then Mr. Lloyd George gave the answer pat when he replied that the Bolsheviks themselves (that is, the very people for whom Mr. Adamson was concerned) actually *began* the "war on opinion" by suppressing the Constituent Assembly; and, he might have added, by the monotonous and wholesale massacre of those holding any opinion whatever adverse to Soviet rule. Are we, then, to suppose that Mr. Adamson has never even heard of that prime fact, making instant nonsense of his grotesque dictum? Not at all. He was merely speaking without thinking, and using a pretentious and sententious fallacy to conceal his mental deficiency. He evidently had some confused idea that to fight Bolsheviks was to make "war" on Bolshevik "opinion," and that to make war on opinion would sound like a self-evident crime in these democratic days. But he had quite overlooked the simple fact that the Bolsheviks themselves do make war on opinion, and not on opinion only, but on the very bodies of men and women. His mind had not travelled far enough to realise that if the Bolsheviks had only been fighting for their opinion *with* their opinion, nobody would have been making war on anything but their opinion. In a word, his Parliamentary mind stopped just where it ought to have begun. It ought to have begun to think—but it sought refuge in a borrowed platitude which happened to be a particularly bad shot.

Well, there you have two very glaring examples of a great Parliamentary defect—the defect of thoughtless speech—illustrated by two prominent and responsible politicians, speaking on immense issues, and taking refuge

in second-hand irrelevancies in order to conceal the absence of first-hand thoughts. If Parliament were merely a parish council, it would not greatly matter. But it is a very disturbing reflection indeed that each example was furnished by the head\* of a potential "alternative Government."

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\*Mr. Asquith was still out of Parliament, and Sir Donald Maclean was leader of the "Independent Liberal" Opposition.



## CRIME—PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

So, at last, official cognisance is taken of the fact that there is an abnormal crime wave. The Home Secretary, we learn, is considering the advisability of controlling the sale of firearms. The Government, we are told, is considering the advisability of arming the police. And one wonders whether the official and governing mind has really got no further, in its diagnosis of the malady, than those niggling remedies indicate. What those proposals really show (being, so far, all that has been revealed of official philosophy upon the crime wave) is that the official mind has not even begun to think where the real malady lies, and, therefore, where and how it should be attacked. The question is immense enough in itself, but it also serves admirably to illustrate the gulf between the wide horizons of statesmanship and the narrow vision of mere politics.

It is generally accepted as a sufficient explanation of the abnormal wave of crime that it is one of the inevitable sequelæ of the war itself. But that explanation merely nibbles at the edge of the problem. Penetrate to its centre, and you will find this truth—that the explanation of the increase in private crime is simply the condonation extended to public crime. The inception of the war was a grandiose crime, and its course was marked by crimes



that defy even a bare catalogue—and those crimes are apparently to go unpunished. A vast country is governed by a machinery which is merely wholesale crime systematised into government itself—and our own rulers are beginning to hint that we must be at peace with the criminal government because we want corn! In Ireland, crime is so common that we no longer notice that there are actually some days when no fresh murder is included in the morning's news—and the Government mind seems to have lapsed into a fatalistic acceptance of "the situation." And, on the top of all this official complacency towards great crimes, we have a large section of the public basing its political "faith," and what it calls its "ideals," upon the condonation of one set of crimes, and the positive glorification of the system that produces the other set of crimes, whilst seeing in the lawlessness of Ireland no grounds for the reprobation of the criminals, but only reprobation of the law. Is it any wonder, then, that there is an abnormal wave of crime, when crime has become almost the normal experience of our days?

Now, statesmanship has so far not shown the least sign that it grasps the connection between the condonation and impunity of public crime, and the increase of private crime. In the three cases I have mentioned, its action is governed by considerations of purely political "policy," and it apparently does not see that there is no earthly hope of re-settling the world on any firm basis of morality until and unless the public moral law is vindicated. And even its purely political policy is affected by the dangerous fallacy that public crime, if only it can be

labelled "political," must be looked upon indulgently, and the law itself must make deference to law breakers. It is nearly a decade ago that I prophesied we should reap a sinister crop from the indulgences extended to the political crime of that day—to the slashing of Ministers of the Crown with dog-whips, the burning of churches, and all the tumults and disorders of those distracted times, ere the war had come. Yet then, as now, our politicians saw no philosophic connection between public and political crime, and the loosening of the restraints upon individual and private crime. Then they did not see or say that the toleration of crime to secure political aims would at length lead, most naturally and inevitably, to widespread lawlessness, displacing constitutional action. To-day they neither say nor see that, fundamentally, there is no ethical distinction between the direct action of the two footpads who the other night decided that the quickest way to get a wayfarer's money on Barnes Common was to knock him senseless, and the direct action of those who propose to "nationalise" industry against the nation's wish by a revolutionary movement.

Nor, apparently, does half the country to-day realise that if, through moral weariness and for material advantage, we let it be understood that German murderers may go scot free, we are only weakening our own penal code, and making it more difficult to punish our own criminals at home. You cannot have the standard of morality lowered internationally throughout the world, and yet hope to keep the standard high in each separate nation or community. And if our politicians should come to think that the shortest way out of the difficulty is to sponge the

German slate, or let the criminals themselves sponge it, then they will only be assenting to a permanent debasement of the moral standard of mankind, and immensely increasing their own difficulties of government at home.

Now, if any indictment whatever is to be drawn against the present rulers of civilised mankind, it is that they have remained obtuse and oblivious to this supreme consideration: that it is fantastically impossible to reconstruct a new and better world, or to establish any new morality, until the old morality of the old world, which did base itself on the ethic of Justice, has been vindicated. Nor have their spoken thoughts even given the least indication that they recognised how debased had become the moral standards of the world through the immense crimes that at length have blunted our very capacity for pity. On the contrary. For instance, just a year ago [Jan., 1919] a certain democratic autocrat was proclaiming, "There is a great moral wind blowing through the world, and woe betide those who stand up against it!"—when the plain and dreadful truth was that there was a most immoral wind blowing through the world, and when all the evidences were that the leaders of civilised mankind were not going to stand up against it.

Well, if we have forgotten what righteous indignation is like, and if our own rulers even invite and assist us to forget, let us at least be left the satisfaction of cynicism, and rejoice exceedingly that, in a world more morally debased than history has ever known it (when the spectacle of women drowning themselves by scores, in order to escape the ruffians whose corn we want, moves us less than a Messina earthquake or a Titanic shipwreck moved

us ere the Hun lowered the moral standards of mankind), our rulers are content with this single positive contribution to practical morality: to make a doctor's certificate necessary if you are careless enough to need brandy for illness, earlier than noon or later than 2.30 p.m. . . . Meanwhile, we must be content to see private crime flourish under the patronage and encouragement given to immense public crimes by apathetic peoples and wearied Governments and perverted "idealists." But some of us, at any rate, know that the world will never again be a wholesome place to live in until some man or influence arises to be as ruthless in the vindication of Right as public criminals have been in the pursuit of Wrong.

## “ RIGHT-ABOUT-TURN ”

Events move quickly in the world drama, and, although by now we know the outline of the plot fairly well, we cannot guess even remotely at the denouement. For the play is being written, so to speak, as it goes along, and the characters change their characteristics as they re-appear, and in the middle of an act an entirely unexpected scene is interpolated which contradicts what went before, so that you never know what is coming next. And I did not know what was coming next when I wrote, in the concluding words of my article last week :—

Some of us know that the world will never be wholesome again until some man or influence arises to be as ruthless in the vindication of Right as the public criminals have been in pursuit of Wrong.

If I had known what was coming next I should have added that the prospects of the world becoming wholesome again were incredibly remote if that opinion were correct, for the simple reason that Right, so far from having the energy to be ruthless, has not even the will power to keep itself awake or the vitality to keep itself alive. Apparently, indeed, it is retiring from the business altogether. Let me explain.

Twelve months ago the feeling of the average decent man concerning the inverted tyranny we call Bolshe-



vism was one of bewildered, incredulous horror. Down to even six months ago that tyranny had no positive defenders except among the Labour party and its associates. I have not space to trace the successive phases of that moral degeneracy (as I shall soon find myself unique and solitary in thinking it to be) which at length has passed into the supreme degradation of civilised acceptance of Bolshevism. But the evidences furnished this week by the drift of events forbid any hope whatever that that moral catastrophe will be averted.\* Nearly all the voices—few though they were—raised in an apathetic world against that system of government have grown weaker and weaker. Some have even changed their tune, and one threatens soon to be singing as lustily in praise, or, at any rate, in extenuation, of, Bolshevism as it sang bravely, and almost solitarily, a little while ago in denunciation of it. Other voices have become silent, failing the final courage to condone what they had condemned; and others, again, frankly say that, without abating in any degree their ethical objection to Bolshevism, they are now prepared to respect the stone-wall fact that Russia has now become an organised Soviet State. Most significant of all these evidences, a group of responsible British officers and officials who have been actually fighting the tyranny, and protecting the little States on its outskirts, now practically say, "It is not for us to choose between Red and White; but the Reds have at any rate won, and that has got to be good enough

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\*Announcements appearing in the Press prepared the country for the probability of a governmental policy of rapprochement towards the Russian Soviet.



for us." In short, might is not exactly right, but it is mighty near it.

By all means, if it must be so. But if we must "accept the situation," let us at least agree henceforth to drop any pretence that moral considerations influence our national conduct. We must, it appears, make peace with the Bolsheviks because, says the "Daily News" (which, to do it justice, has supported Bolshevism throughout its bloody history) "they offer us corn for our bread, flax for our linen, hides for our boots and shoes." So be it. But when we eat that bread, do not let us pretend any longer that we believe man does not live by bread alone. When we clothe ourselves in the fine linen, let us also remember that that was the raiment of the Pharisees. When we use the Russian hides for the soles of our boots, let us at least be honest in making the admission that the souls within our bodies are just as hard and tough.

The official voice speaks: "Diplomatic relations between the Soviet Government and the Allies will not be entered into until its practices are consonant with the principles of civilisation." Brave words.\* But we know exactly what they mean: civilisation, conscious that it has lost its character, is merely trying to save its face, and its formula simply means, "Now that there are no more to kill because there are now no more able to resist, please do not embarrass us by any more gratuitous slaughter, and your past will not trouble us."

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\*They were forthwith forgotten and were unreflected in the policy afterwards adopted of entering into a Trade Treaty with the Soviet government, whilst the practices of that government still continued to be anything but "consonant with the principles of civilization."

And so inhumanity wins its way into the comity of civilised Powers, and barbarism becomes respectable. And so the epigram of the cynic becomes amazingly true, "Nothing succeeds like excess." And so we really are going "to shake hands with murder." Very well—then let us admit, with jolly callousness, that the worst is quite good enough for us, and mark the word "morality" as obsolete in our dictionaries. And we really are not going to bring Germany to account for her crimes, but are going to allow the accused to give themselves the verdict of "Not guilty, with extenuating circumstances." Very well—then, if what Germany has done to us is to be more her affair than ours, let us admit that we are at least on the same level as Germany in regarding Justice as a joke.

The fact is that Might has won, after all. It has won with Bolshevik Russia, obviously enough. Lenin and Trotzky turned Russia into a shambles, and kept steadily and ruthlessly on, piling horror on horror, until at last terror and tyranny triumphed, and we accept the accomplished fact. And German might has won in peace, even though it failed in war, for Right dares not now pursue its advantage, seeing that German might has made such a mess of the world that the world has become "weary of strife," and "asks only to be allowed to forget." And if German might had also won in war, I firmly believe that among the Englishmen forced to walk in the gutters of their own cities whilst their German masters strode the pavements would have been found some to discover, "after all," great merits in the organisation which enslaved them. . . . Meanwhile, Right is no longer sure what is right. With Pilate it asks, "What is

truth?" and with Falstaff "What is honour?" and those elementary attributes, Freedom, Humanity, and Justice are now open questions—to be settled, apparently, by the card vote at some Trade Union Congress.\*

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\*Which had just passed a resolution, on a card vote, sympathetic to Bolshevism, and calling on the Government to recognise it.

## ON SAVING ENGLAND

Being rather inclined to extravagance in personal expenditure, I would willingly have given a penny for Mr. Asquith's thoughts as he drove through London to take his seat again in Parliament.\* The route of his "triumphal march" had been advertised by his supporters, and they called it "Asquith's Day." The honoured and faithful cartoonist of his party figured him as a Roman conqueror (despite his lost legions) stepping into his chariot. Crowds cheered, and the police had to rescue him from the boisterous attentions of students, converting this "historic occasion" into a ragging holiday. And whilst his avowed spokesmen in the Press told him in so many words that he was now England's only hope, those sinister influences that had covered him with opprobrium and insult, to the disgust of even those who had been honestly relieved to see him pass from power, were now just as extravagantly and dishonestly acclaiming him.

Altogether, a searching, testing time for Mr. Asquith; and I should have considered my penny very well spent indeed if it had brought me even a hint of what his thoughts were as he sat in his car, encompassed by so

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\*Mr. Asquith had just been elected M.P. for Paisley, after being out of Parliament since his defeat for East Fife in 1918.

much homage. For, if I had known what he thought of it all, then I should have known a little better than I now have any means of knowing what degree of reasonable truth there was in the claim that he is now going to save England. The best hope for that consummation would be that he looked with a cynic's sadness upon the whole scene—that the tumult of the crowd filled him with more sorrow in thinking of the fickleness of the public heart and the instability of the public mind than with pride in its sedulous tribute—that he reflected how the erratic influences that had dethroned him yesterday, and were trying to re-enthroned him again to-day, would cast him down again to-morrow, all with the same shameless clamour, if he no longer served their turn. There would, indeed, be hope for England if Mr. Asquith himself took Asquith's Day with a very liberal pinch of salt. But, knowing that human weakness mingles very freely with the "greatness" of the eminent, I fear his reflections may have been, as to the crowd, that here was proof that the great heart of the people was sound, after all, and that he may have taken the "almost royal progress" he was told his journey was, as being exactly that.

And now he is going "to save England." Most earnestly I hope he may, for she is badly in need of some such service. But, asking myself what grounds there are for the hope that he is the man to do it, I fail to find any assurance from his own career that he has the strength for that gigantic task. For such a task now demands a combination of character and competence, of courage and clear vision, that would be rare indeed; and that combination is certainly not to be found under the hat which the



London students captured as a trophy, and Mr. Asquith has now bestowed as a souvenir of his "Day."

Dr. Johnson said that you cannot put a man on his oath when he is writing an epitaph; and the sycophantic hyperbole of political hero-worshippers cannot be looked at too strictly—it takes its due place in the great human comedy. But one wonders with what self-satisfaction those writers will look at their words a year hence\* who have just described Asquith's Day as "a landmark in English history," and who pictured a universe thrilled and awed by the victory at Paisley. England would not now be in such dire need of being saved but for that spirit of uncritical and irrational worship of party leaders, which has the effect of giving immense power into the hands of men in whom the habit of self-criticism is discouraged, for they know that whatever their mistakes may be the idolatry known as "party loyalty" will defend them, uphold them, and gloze them over.

But we should have more reason to feel that Mr. Asquith was now destined to save England if he had not so largely contributed, more by what he has failed to do than by anything he has done, to her present plight. Take any danger now threatening her internally, and you will find that Mr. Asquith has contributed to it by ignoring it when it was a manageable tendency; so that whether you consider the state of Ireland, the disruptive claims of Labour, or the decay of governmental authority, you can nowhere find Mr. Asquith placing a timely finger on the spot and saying "This is where we must call a halt."

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\*Within the year Mr. Asquith's political stock had fallen very low indeed, even in his own party, whose active spirits began to look around for other leadership.



But, of course, although he is a failure as a statesman, he will again be a Parliamentary success—and for reasons not flattering to Parliament. My friend, Dr. Arthur Lynch, who knows what Parliament is, has been rather unkindly “giving the show away” in an article in which he, too, discusses Mr. Asquith’s new opportunity, and asks what he will make of it. Dr. Lynch explains what is a mystery to most people—how Parliamentary eminence is really attained. It is largely done by the trick of investing the obvious with a factitious impressiveness. He supposes the case of Mr. Asquith going down to the House to tell it, what everybody knows, that Sinn Fein is gaining ground. Never, of course, would any eminent Parliamentarian say so much or so little in so many words. The simple idea has to be treated with full Parliamentary honours, elaborated, decorated, smothered with rhetoric, overcharged with gesture, prepared histrionically. And this is how Dr. Lynch says it would come out:—

“The truth is . . . (impressive pause) that in Ireland . . . (another impressive pause) the Centre of Gravity” (here he turns round with that well-known gesture, and looks at his followers) “the Centre of Gravity has shifted!” . . . (Here he pauses as if struck with the force of the statement—then, looking up, he takes the whole House into his confidence, and adds rapidly, as something that must be said) “. . . and to the side of Sinn Fein!” The House takes in these words like a revelation. If that be not High Comedy, then my old friend Coquelin was a little boy in art.”

Alas and alas! that what might often be sublime should so often be made ridiculous, and that the pomp of Parliament should so often be a matter of Parliamentary pomposity! I do not know who the man destined to save England may be, and I fear he is as likely to arise outside Parliament as in it. But if he arises in Parliament, I have at least a notion who he will be. He will be the man who

puts an end to the long tradition of artifice in Parliamentary debate, and who sets the standard of deep and honest thinking. When Parliament becomes, as it should be, a place where a shoddy and meretricious argument is regarded as unworthy of the assembly, and a debating sophistry is regarded as contemptible, then England's salvation will, at any rate, be assisted by the removal of its present greatest impediment—which is the ineffectiveness of Parliament in getting at political truth.

## MAN AND WOMAN

A kindly correspondent writes asking why I give to these articles the heading of "Unpopular Opinions," seeing that, he is good enough to say, "they express views so simply sane." I may take another opportunity of giving a fuller explanation of the apparent paradox, but here I can only stop to say that my correspondent suggests the answer even by his question—for the answer merely is that in these days sanity itself has become unpopular. And, perhaps greatly daring, I most willingly stake any reputation I may have for sane opinion by now expressing this particular and particularly unpopular opinion; that what is comprehensively known as "the woman's movement" is, with almost equal comprehensiveness, all wrong; that it will lead to social disaster; and that the movement will be reversed when it is fully realised that the choice to be made is whether woman shall do her own work well, or try to do both her own and man's, and fail in both.

A year ago I should not have said so much. Not in the least because I did not think so, but simply because every publicist must be an opportunist in one sense—a sense creditable enough to his own intelligence, if not to the general intelligence. For there is a time when truth itself is inopportune, for the reason that no man regardeth. A

year ago, for instance (fantastic as that fact may now appear), it was practically impossible to express a word of serious criticism upon the policy of President Wilson. It should have been clear that his general policy, being based upon considerations of what he thought the world ought to be, instead of what the world was, might lead only to further distractions and perplexities in a world already so distracted that any hasty and ill-considered idealism could only confuse the simple issue between right and wrong, by muddling up reality with ideality, and knocking down one set of standards before the other set were strong enough to support so sudden a burden. But a year ago that could not be said, for the general mind, instructed so diligently in his omniscience, omnipotence, and infallibility, would have made any serious criticism of his policy such strenuous, uphill work, that a mere sense of humour forbade the hopeless task. His policy had to be tried before its weakness could be revealed.

So, a year ago, it was with "the woman's movement." Partly through the strenuous assertion of its advocates, partly through the inertia of the general mind, and finally through the fatalistic acceptance forced upon its helpless opponents, its advance was inevitable. I think I can speak with some authority for the third of these categories, for I was one of the small and derided band who held out to the last against that political "reform," and was then quite content to let the whole position go, with the throwing open of all public offices to women, and all the extensions of their emancipation, knowing that the only hope for a return to sanity was in the progressive revelation of what that emancipation would entail.

It is as yet much too soon to say that there is anything like a wide recognition that the emancipatory movement may, after all, turn out to be a mistake. But it is not too soon to say that the atmosphere has changed, and that it is, at any rate, now possible to challenge the whole movement without risking the derision and neglect that would have been one's portion a year ago.

I have no intention (at the moment) of combating the political side of that emancipation, being quite content to wait for the event itself to disclose its own disasters. Now-a-days, Democracy discovers its own mistakes by making them first instead of by avoiding them, so to speak, to begin with. But what the politicians never said or saw was that the social consequences of the enfranchisement would be even more real, and would be first apparent; and it is not too soon to say that some of these social consequences are already being discerned. The political wave is, meanwhile, rising to its height; and by the time women attain political power "on the same terms as men" (which is the next inevitable step), the social consequences will, ironically enough, have become so apparent that the tide will be definitely setting the other way.

One of them is already so clear as to be beyond controversy. It is that masculinity has conceded a good deal more than political power to feminism, and has been busy taking a back seat in the home, and the private family, as well as in the general social family. What is not so clear, but will soon be made manifest, is that masculinity is not going to assent much longer to women maintaining equal political, industrial, and domestic rights and powers whilst men still have to shoulder the same old responsibilities.



There are straws that show a change in the wind. This week Cardinal O'Connell, of Boston, has startled America by expressing the unpopular opinion, addressed to "men only" (a welcome return to the recognition that there is such a thing as a separate male sex, after all), that the most sinister evil of the time is man's abdication in the governance of his own domestic household. Two years ago that was presented as an ideal—nay, the ideal was that man should not only take a back seat in his own home, but should share all his public seats with woman, and so confess that he had no specific and absolute place in the world at all. To-day that ideal is presented as the most sinister evil of our times.

I am not now concerned to justify that fear, real as I believe it to be. All that I have space here to maintain, as one of my own unpopular opinions, is that the era when the enfranchisement of women was regarded either as inevitable or salutary, and as having already passed into the stage of final acceptance, is drawing to a close. In a little while, it will be possible to get people to listen to you when you maintain that it is at most a great experiment, the results of which might have been foreseen by reason instead of being left to be discovered by experience. A little time hence, it will be possible to go even a little further, as that experience prepares the public mind to further receptivity. But it is already clear enough that in the issue now broadening out between masculinity and feminism (which I define as a false ideal of womanhood) some very modern heresies on that subject will receive a very bad shaking indeed—in the light, not of theory, but of human fact and experience.



Ten years ago I said that several generations might be necessary for the discovery and rejection of the heresy then threatening. But in these days of the operation of the mob, or mass, mind, action and reaction follow each other so closely that generations are not necessary to discover even big mistakes. Even three years ago it seemed a ridiculous thing to say that distant generations of women would rear their monuments to those who had opposed, and not to those who had secured, their "emancipation"—which is merely throwing on them a double burden. To-day, with the first dawn of the perception of the wide social consequences of that emancipation, it is becoming an open question again, and the belief here expressed may soon cease to be an unpopular opinion.

## A REJOINDER

If one must reopen this immense controversy (before events themselves compel it, as they certainly will), it is at any rate a great pleasure to meet a controversialist so amiable as Mrs. Fisher\* who, though she believes me hopelessly and gloomily wrong, says so pleasantly and quite compassionately. *Autres temps, autres mœurs!*—for I am one of those who have very good reason to remember the more strenuous and graceless days of this controversy; those dog-whipping, face-slapping, church-burning days (which gave so much sanction and impetus to our current tumults), when those prominently holding my own opinions on this matter lived in a state of expectation of more personal attentions than those of the letters of abuse which so often enlivened one's breakfast table.

Mrs. Fisher finds me gloomy, and my article "calculated to depress the most bouyant" (perhaps not such a bad thing as it sounds, for the most buoyant these days must surely be the least thinking), and she is "saddened" by my "unrelenting hostility" to Feminism. Well, temperamental gloom is one thing (and I have perhaps rather more than my fair share of immunity from it) but the gloom, or the serious concern, of reasoned belief is another,

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\*Mrs. H. A. L. Fisher, wife of the Minister for Education, who replied to the article "Man and Woman" (March, 1920).

and whoever can persuade himself into a mood of cheery satisfaction with the state of the world at the present moment is to be envied rather for his temperament than his intelligence.\*

However, Mrs. Fisher is relieved to think that the reader of my "melancholy column" will revive on discovering that I do not support my views "by any definite attempt at reasoning." Well, newspaper columns are arbitrary measures, and one is often forced to appear dogmatic through the compulsion to be brief. But I hope she will allow me to say that on this matter, at any rate, I have already done enough reasoning to justify indulgence to me, even if I appear dogmatic. "Woman Adrift" was accepted by the Suffragists themselves, no less than by those whose views it expressed, as the standard work on one side of the subject we are discussing; and the difficulty I have now in answering Mrs. Fisher is that it took nearly a hundred and fifty thousand words to do it eight years ago—for though a fallacy can easily be expressed in a sentence, it can often be exposed adequately only in a chapter.

When, therefore, Mrs. Fisher says "No one in his senses wishes to make it harder for woman to undertake the high privilege and great duty of maternity," I can only refer her to chapters specifically dealing with the avowed aim of Feminism to make the duties of maternity subordinate to public and non-maternal activities. When she asks me to remember that "whether we like it or not,

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\*A year later Mr. Balfour: "These are not the days for a facile and easy optimism, unless it includes a clear appreciation of all the perils which even now beset the whole fabric of civilisation." (April 30, 1921).

we have to face the fact" that many women must choose a non-domestic career, I reply that I duly faced that fact eight years ago in the chapter on "The Surplus Woman," by trying to show why we must no more alter the whole of our political structure because some women must be self-supporting than we should abolish the Marriage Laws (though that is what we are coming to) because some women are doomed not to marry. When she speaks of "the full co-operation of man and woman" as though that were only just now beginning to come about, I can only say that a whole book was necessary to explode this root-fallacy that men and women can only co-operate by doing the same thing, and to establish the truth that their co-operation lay exactly in the separateness of their functions.

But there is, of course, a new fact, and Mrs. Fisher plays it as her trump card: Lady Astor\* beamed upon by gallant male members, a "wholesome and refreshing stimulant" as she sits "in her corner" holding her little court, the personified *fait accompli*. Well, the presence of Lady Astor there is, I admit, a terrible and overwhelming fact. It should overwhelm me with "gloom." But it does not; because, as I said some years ago, I think the best cure for Woman Suffrage is to try it, and I think Lady Astor will yet prove to be her own antidote. When the novelty has worn off, she will find no answering cheers to her warning that "the women are going to give you men what they think best for you!" for even the most politely futile male M.P. will find his masculinity coming to the aid of his intelligence as he reflects that the political

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\*Who had just been returned for Plymouth, the first woman Member to enter the British Parliament.

“power” of women depends entirely upon man’s own willingness to accept the feminine view of “what is good for him,” and that if she fails to convince him by “reason” she will certainly not be able to subdue him by force—as he realises, in short, that to have built woman into the fabric of the coercive State is to have made the whole fabric unstable.

“Lady Astor,” I read, “indignantly denied that the men had won the war” (March 26). Well, nearly a million of them are too dead to answer her—and I, too, am “saddened” by the amazingly callous and grudging acknowledgment made by the average political woman to the sex that has upheld by its physical agonies that State which woman is now to control. For, if men have not won the war, those who have returned from it return to find that they have lost the balance of political power, and that the surging problems of our time are now reckoned so lightly that they are about to be decreed capable of solution by young ladies of twenty-one,\* who may “vote” this or that solution with charming *sans-gêne* and characteristic feminine grace, knowing that in any case, whether what they “give us” is “good for us” or not, they will not have the responsibility of enforcing their own judgments. Their new power, in fact, is like so much paper currency unbacked by a gold reserve, and will accomplish nothing (as we tried to warn the politicians who would neither read nor listen), except the depreciation of the value of the vote.

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\*The Labour Party had introduced a measure to this effect, but subsequently abandoned it,—in deference to chilled enthusiasms already discernible in the “atmosphere.”



Meanwhile, woman, though shortly to be given a preponderating power, still retains her protected position. She may "make" laws, but is not called upon to enforce them. She shall enter every profession on "equal terms," and in every industry shall have "equal pay"—but the laws of maintenance must continue. She shall still find her earnings and possessions protected under the Married Women's Property Acts—but a Married Man's Property Act (which is the logical corollary of her "equality") has yet to be drafted. She is an "equal citizen"—but her husband pays the fine if she sets the chimney on fire whilst he is working for her in the city. She secured her political power on the ground of her natural "equality,"—and will retain all her privileges on the ground of her natural "weakness."

Well, Feminism has had its way, but I think it will soon have had its day; and after the great upheaval which must come before many other errors are realised, it will take its historical place in the heresies of our strange times. "You men," says Lady Astor (I wonder whether she has ever read the Dictionary of National Biography) "have made such a mess of things!" But let us remember that she was speaking to the House of Commons—which gave votes to women. However, that little matter will be put right in the general melting pot—and perhaps it is just as well to have had it included.



## THE UNPATRIOTS.

There is not much doubt about this being a progressive age. For even its lunacy is progressive, and moves by leaps and bounds. The latest lunacy is lunatic even in its name. It calls itself Clarté—and the only Clarté I know is the French clarté, which means clearness, or our own clarity. But the only thing clear about the sudden organisation calling itself Clarté, which apparently already has its branches throughout Europe, is that it has not the gift of humour.

That gift is the most humanising influence in all the psychologies. If the Germans had but had that saving grace, they would have spared themselves the odium of half their crimes. For the sense of humour is just that quality of temperament which saves men from all excesses of thought or conduct—of mirth or gloom, of anger or amiability, of vengeance or indulgence, of arrogance or humility. And if those now seeking to establish the new evangel called Clarté had had a grain of humour in their temperamental composition, they would hardly have chosen this time to launch a new creed whose central article is that there shall be no more patriotism.

For they are just too late. They are beginning just when they are being found out, and therefore just when they should "leave off." Even six months ago they might

have had some chance of being taken seriously, along with all the other lunacies of the time. For the world was still playing at the game of make-believe, and was still pretending that you could turn an idea into a fact merely by talking of it as though it were already a fact. Six months ago this wave of what is called idealism, but what ought to be called moral pretentiousness, had reached its height, and the ebb tide had already begun, receding before the unengulfed realities and the obstinate facts of life. Six months ago it was just beginning to be seen that the effort of even statesmen and rulers to accomplish something much less than the Clarté ideal had failed, merely because they, also, sought to solve the acute problems of the world by the application of ideas that were not only unsupported, but were even contradicted, by the facts of life.

Only a few days ago I noticed the lament and admission, in columns where the League of Nations was once urged with clamorous vehemence, that there was "no popular enthusiasm" for the League. Yet I could lay my hands on yards and almost miles of these same columns, with their diurnal abuse of British Ministers for wickedly standing between a world then described as "pining" for a League of Nations and the object of its "passionate desire." Now, the League of Nations does not seek to abolish patriotism and to obliterate all frontiers, as this newest lunacy proposes to do, although it has failed to excite "popular enthusiasm" precisely because its whole policy was based on the assumption that frontiers and patriotisms were inimical to the welfare of mankind. But if that lesser movement, backed by statesmen and States, has failed because it is seen that there is not even a popular

response to what was said to be one vast, universal, popular demand, this time of disillusion must be a very unpropitious time indeed for tackling the much bigger job of abolishing nations instead of merely Leaguering them.

It is a question of sanity long before it becomes a moral question at all. I can, if I am fool enough, easily become an idealist myself by merely shouting, "All men are honest; therefore, away with law and judges and police, and all the other iniquities and superstitions!" But I should be simply descending to the same irrational level, even though I was also ascending to the same "idealistic" heights, as those who say, "All men are brothers, so away with all national boundaries and obsolete patriotisms!" The modern idealist is malevolent, because you find him constantly ascribing wicked motives and moral shortcomings to those who, even having some sympathy with his ideals, point out that they are at present unrealisable, and may therefore be mischievous; and he is also dishonest, because he incessantly talks as though the world were already ripe for his precocities, and only a small number of men among "the governing classes" frustrated the universal desire.

But the matter does not rest there. His ideals are not only untimely—they are sometimes unholy, and are sometimes as morally wrong as he thinks the opposite to them to be. It happens that this precocity about abolishing patriotism is an excellent example of his own moral degeneration. He imagines that we shall be intimidated by his ideal because we shall not have the courage to resist his assumption that patriotism is a pernicious thing. He is wildly wrong. You will not find twenty sane men who

will give assent to the assumption that patriotism is a mediæval superstition or a hindrance to the betterment of mankind; but you will find very many sane men indeed who will contend that, on the contrary, it has been one of the most powerful agents of human progress. And its present justification, like its past, is that nations do not differ only in their complexions and cranial shapes, in their language and their manners, but in their general moral standards, in their political ideas and social sense. In short, the justification for patriotism is that some nations, like some men, are much better than others. The idealist ignores this supreme fact. Just as the modern democrat sees no difference between men, so the modern idealist sees no difference between nations.

I firmly believe that the modern English idealist and, say, the Hun, have so much in common (principally an amazing obtuseness which does not know the difference between good and bad, or right and wrong) that there is no real bar to their fraternisation—which, for many reasons, I should prefer to take place in Germany rather than here.

It is not so very long, however, since some of us were greatly reproached and abused for saying that certain Pacifists were deficient in patriotism—for patriotism was then still reckoned a civic virtue. But now we see that some of these very gentlemen (the Bertrand Russells and Bernard Shaws), bobbing up as signatories to the lunacy of Clarté, absolutely call the negation of patriotism an ideal and a virtue, and are not even concerned to defend themselves from the charge of being unpatriotic. So do we progress from one lunacy to another.

## THE "TOO ENGLISH" CRY

The charge is often made against us English that we are an "insular people"—in any case, neither a heinous nor a remarkable thing, seeing that we inhabit the best part of an island, and an odd charge to make against that people which has spread its communities all over the earth. But are we insular in the reprehensible sense—egotistical, self-contained, strongly prejudiced against foreigners, or arrogant towards them, and all the rest of it? Surely not. In liberality of judgment, in actual open-house, in deference to other people's opinions and regard for their conditions, in Mansion House Funds (quite an English institution) for distress elsewhere, I think we can give points to any race on earth.

Consider, for instance, how often we refer to American susceptibilities (so that we may not even defend ourselves by telling the blunt truth about Ireland for fear of offending "American sentiment"), and how little regard America finds it necessary to pay to ours. The Lord Sackville affair hardly showed President Cleveland anxious to handle a delicate (though artificial) situation delicately; President Wilson can scarcely be said to have gone out of his way to be "matey," but managed, rather, to convey the impression that it was very magnanimous on his part to



come amongst us at all; and this week the British Embassy in Washington has been picketed and besieged by Sinn Fein sympathisers—and yet something in us (or not in us), good or bad, restrains us from even making comment on that extraordinary . . . Hm! Hm!

The fact is, that far from being too English, we err in the other direction. We simply have not in us that touchy, fiery, national sensitiveness which so often creates what used to be called "diplomatic incidents." Not only do we not resent, but we positively applaud, other people's criticisms of us, and if they go too far we are the first (and usually the last) to see the joke. Did not our soldiers promptly learn to play the Hymn of Hate on the mouth-organs that helped to defy the misery of those early, sodden trenches?—and did not our Embassy at Washington actually hang out from its windows one of the captured banners proclaiming "Down with British Militarism!"? No insular people could do that sort of thing.

And then there is Bernard Shaw. If he does not answer the charge that we are "too English" (mostly levelled at us, by the way, not by other people, but by those weird beings amongst ourselves who have encouraged his gibes and jeers at us) then nothing can. Almost his whole stock-in-trade has been the bare-faced insolence with which he has drenched us with his malevolent contempt. He has not given birth to one single constructive and helpful idea in all our problems and perplexities, but has always stirred the cauldron; whilst on every occasion when our national past could be dragged into debate he has always rushed eagerly in to strain the case against us. During the whole of his thirty years' residence amongst us he has not said



one decent public word of the people to whom (on his own theory of us as "aliens" in Ireland, and therefore of himself as an alien amongst us) his relation is that of guest, with all its implications and obligations. And yet Mr. Bernard Shaw is allowed to live quite unmolested here, and a certain class of English people listen to him open-mouthed, with the obsequious grin already half-formed on their faces before the jeer is half-formed on his lips. In no other country in the world would a Mr. Bernard Shaw have been tolerated after making himself so intolerable. If he were just now to go to his own Ireland to tell some of his home truths there——! But, as he would say, "Not —— likely!"

A few years before the war I was in a certain political institution, after the lunch hour, when I became conscious of much movement and bustle behind me, and turned to see a dozen chairs being made into a circle apparently in homage to a man who was counting his guests: "One, do, dree . . . elefen, dwelf! Zat vill be dwelf govee, vaiter!" And the twelve coffees came, whilst the idolatrous circle beamed upon the man, whom I discovered to be Trebitsch Lincoln, M.P.\* Do you think there is any other country in the world where an unprepossessing foreigner, without credentials, could so easily be received into the bosom of a great political party, and be "adopted" into its intimate political life, and be lionised, with his very accent (outlandish in every sense of the word), making him more "interesting"? There is, of course, a certain type of untravelled Englishman (untravelled in mind as well as in body) who is quite idiotically fascinated by

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\*Afterwards convicted as a forger and deported as a spy.

broken English, and who thinks it is part of his political creed and duty to esteem foreign art, institutions, and peoples higher than the native product; but it was surely the very nadir and last humiliation of the British Parliament when the guttural gibberish of "Ve vill not send Budget to Houss of Lordz to be zrown out only again!" fell on the startled ears of the House of Commons.

I have raised the general question apropos of the discussion now proceeding in London concerning the desirability and good taste of producing German plays here, now that the war is over. But a German play was staged in London only a few nights ago, and Mr. William Archer, the well-known critic, began his notice of the play by saying:—"The Stage Society is to be congratulated on having inserted the thin end of the wedge of sanity, and given us the first German play we have seen since the war." Well, I think it all depends. The mere fact that a play is German ought not, at any rate, to be a self-evident gratification, and I am insular enough—or, at least, insulated enough from Germanophilism—to contend that the burden lies on the play to prove itself at least such a supreme work of art that it would be Hunnish to suppress it, and at least to give evidence of a new and purified Germany. But, having said that the production of the play was "the thin end of the wedge of sanity," Mr. Archer has forthwith to avow that the play itself is "a study in insanity," and that it leaves the point "dubious" as to whether "the artist himself is sane"; and the detailed description of the plot shows it to be the story of the adventures of a dissolute modern German—in short, a pointless, morbid, and merely degrading piece of work, and a dis-

grace to the artistic aims of the Society producing it. Is it an "insular" thing to suggest that what we most need is that thin end of the wedge of sanity which shall challenge a little more closely the foreign product in art? To ban a work of art solely because it was German would be stupid, but, even so, I think it much more creditable than to welcome a play merely because it is German. Certainly, the production of such a play from such a source was an affront to English sentiment (or aren't *we* supposed to have such a thing?) for which its producers should be made to do public penance.

## MINORITY RULE

[In April (1920) the first serious divergence between France and Great Britain since the Peace Treaty occurred on the action of the French in occupying the right bank of the Rhine, as a reply to the "menace" of the German Government in moving its troops into the Rühr valley. The protests of the British Government, which refused to countenance or participate in the advance, created an atmosphere of great tension, which was partially alleviated at the San Remo Conference a fortnight later.

On April 14th Mr. Bonar Law announced in the House of Commons, to its approval, that the Government was firmly determined not to release a hundred Sinn Fein prisoners in Mountjoy Prison, Dublin, who were hunger-striking, and whose release was being demanded by English sympathisers. That same night the announcement was made that the Government had decided to liberate them forthwith. They immediately rejoined the active ranks of Sinn Fein, and the death-roll among the Crown forces lengthened rapidly.]

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This has been a good week for the Government (with all its by-electoral little chickens coming safely home to roost), but a very bad week indeed for government. For, just now, Governments should walk very warily, and avoid, like the plague, any "contributory negligence" on their own part which may add to the disrepute into which the whole idea of government has fallen; but it is to be doubted whether our political history furnishes a parallel for two such first-class errors committed in the same space of time as the dispute with France and the Irish muddle.

The French are not always right. They see general

European problems rather too predominantly from the French point of view; their amour propre is always on the alert; they are perhaps a little quicker to take offence than to give satisfaction; and they are perhaps a little difficult to deal with, especially by market-place diplomacy. All the more reason, then, why the British Government should not have chosen a ground on which to proclaim its difference with them where the French, even though the case might have been strained against them to put them technically in the wrong, were fundamentally right. They know the German, and don't forget they do—we have forgotten that we know him. They know his cruelty, his interminable trickery, his demoralised nature which bows to might but never acknowledges right. They know that he is still hoping to win the Peace, and that forces in England are now much more boldly his allies in peace than they dared to be in war (which is saying a great deal), and the British Government did a stupid thing in choosing an issue which exhibited them rather as the guardian of German susceptibilities than as upholders of the Peace Treaty.

As to the Irish muddle, decorous language is inadequate. Said the gay Charles to his brother James, "They'll never kill me to make you king!" and the real strength of the Government lies in the same cynical truth. It survives, not by its own statesmanlike excellences, but because of the low general level of our modern political life, which fails to provide an alternative. But it is a futile business to declaim against the Government for either mistake once the mischief is done. Party animus may derive all the satisfaction it deserves from proving



general governmental incompetence by these two specific instances, but that process can afford no satisfaction whatever to those who, seeing into what disrepute all Governments have fallen, wish only to see their shattered authority restored. And so the more profitable course to pursue is to try to discover whether these two instances do not furnish a common clue to the real weakness of our governmental action.

What they suggest is that the Government is so little sure of where right lies that it is not sure of itself. Probe the French dispute to its real cause and origin, and you will find that it proceeds from the Government succumbing to the intimidation of that English minority which, in peace as in war, championed the interests of Germany. Probe the Irish incoherence to its real cause, and you will find it proceeds absolutely and solely from deference to that English minority which reserves all its sympathies for rebels, and all its indignations for governmental firmness in circumstances of exceptional difficulty.

And I fear that the truth is that modern Governments do not know how to govern for the horrible reason that they do not know what is right. They wobble politically because they are uncertain morally. They are afraid to impose their will because they have no real will to impose. They are not a voice, because they have not the courage to be more than an electoral echo. They are themselves bewildered by the democratic babel, when they might silence it to something like respectful attention, if only they could speak with the firm voice of authority—not merely the constitutional authority, spoken through the megaphone of the big majority, which they really possess,



but the authority of superior minds, which is the authority they unfortunately do not possess.

Take the two instances furnished this week. A Power that sedulously and patiently prepared, through two docile generations, for the subjugation by force of the rest of the world, is frustrated only at the price of immense mountains of dead, and of efforts and sacrifices and heroisms literally incalculable. Even then, victory is dearly bought, for the victors survey a world disorganised, demoralised, brutalised, and bankrupt. Peace is dictated (dictated rather to the victors than to the vanquished by the idealistic force then paramount among the exhausted Allies), and the Peace is the irreducible minimum of what even the most niggard and squint-eyed Justice could be content with. Finally, the terms of that peace are sought to be evaded by the wholly unrepentant race that has plunged the whole world into horror and confusion. You would at any rate hope that a competent Government, even though not composed of supremely enlightened men, would at least have the courage to say, "Our peace terms have been refined down to the last degree of consideration to suit our own civilised susceptibilities, and for that reason they shall be enforced to the last article and letter." Not at all. They defer to that clamant minority which, before the ink was dry on the treaty, hastened to tell their moral and spiritual affinities in Germany that "Democracy" would revise it and save them from all avoidable consequences of their crimes.

Take the other instance, where the problem is just as simple. A country to which political turbulence has become second nature and almost the national industry,

finally expresses its political aims and ethics by secret murder societies, with a whole population in conspiracy against civilised law, either by actual complicity or by sympathy and fear. Could any duty be clearer than that of upholding the operation of Law, even though its processes must vary with circumstances and depart in a lawless country from the ordered processes that are adequate in and appropriate to a law-abiding country? But you find the Government still trimming its policy in deference to the same stringent minority, which is alert and punctilious and full of all the constitutional properties where the skins of rebel murderers are concerned, but is almost comically callous to the reign of organised murder.

And why does the Government wobble and vacillate in two clear cases where the claims of Right should be beyond any honest mental confusion? It is because they are confronted by problems beyond their spiritual comprehension, and treat as politics high matters of ethical principle. They do not realise that in each case they are the trustees of civilisation, and must take the long view and the broad high road. They do not see that the crimes of Germany must be expiated or else the whole moral standard of mankind is debased; and they do not see that it is infinitely better that a hundred men, some guilty and all actively associated with guilt, should voluntarily starve themselves in prison on their own responsibility, than that Justice should be disorganised, baffled, and defeated by organised crime.

## TAXES AND CLASSES

The Budget this year (1920) reveals afresh what has now become a fixed feature of our financial policy: increased taxation to avoid decreased expenditure. But there is, of course, a limit to this easy process, and we are now within sight of it—the point when the effort to increase individual wealth is hardly worth while because that effort is checked and negatived by progressive taxation.\*

With Peace, Retrenchment should become the first Reform. What the politicians have not yet realised is that retrenchment must begin with the State, and not be left to the individual merely in order that the State may have more money to spend. It is useless for the State to appeal to the citizen to live the simple life if the State itself is still living luxuriously, because the two processes cannot continue indefinitely. If, for instance, the State taxed its citizens to such an extent that it left in the citizen's pocket

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\*Six months later (Aug., 1920) Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, declared "We have approached, if not actually reached, the limit of taxation which the country can stand" (House of Commons). Nine months later the Committee of Public Accounts reported that the margin of taxable capacity had ceased to exist, and that however desirable much of the expenditure still proposed might be, "we simply cannot afford it." Even at that date not a single War emergency department had been abolished, and the Government was still contemplating enthusiastically increased expenditure by the Ministries of Transport, Labour, and Health.

only just enough to buy bread and cheese, the citizen himself would soon be content to earn only enough to provide bread and cheese, and the simple life of the citizen would soon bring us back to the primitive State.

Indeed, that is the retrogressive road on which the State ought now to travel a little way. We are impoverished owing solely to a struggle for the elemental existence of our national life as an organised State (a struggle that did actually throw us back upon the simple, primitive function of any State, which is that of self-preservation), and for that reason we cannot afford all, and should be spared much of, that expenditure on political luxuries which belong to the days of fat peace and prosperity, but which is inappropriate to a State just having emerged from its struggle for bare existence.

It is the State that must get back to a bread-and-cheese diet until its citizens (who earn what the State spends) have recovered their financial strength. But the State is very far indeed from a bread-and-cheese diet—its menu, in fact, is longer and costlier than ever—and the truth has yet to be apprehended that whilst the personal luxuries of its citizens are becoming more difficult the State itself is living too luxuriously.\* It ought to have reduced its consumption to just enough to keep itself efficiently alive—“instead of which it goes about the country” playing ducks and drakes with public money, and familiarity with “millions” has bred contempt of economy.

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\*“Why should the Government not begin the year’s finance by setting a rigid maximum limit of expenditure, rationing the various Departments and making each of them keep within its allowance? That is what the private individual has to do,”—“The Observer,” August 1, 1920.

The question of how it can retrench will grow more insistent with each Budget for the next few years, and I think the answer finally to be found and faced will be that which I give now: All those public services which are extraneous to the actual functioning of the State and go beyond its simple needs and primary duties will have to be sacrificed or modified.\* But the main point I wish here to make is that, leaving as unproven the question of the necessity or advisability of curtailing them, they could now be considerably curtailed without doing any social injustice.

Ten years ago, when social reform was the political lodestar, that could not have been said. Even then, however, I tried to get as near the truth as was then allowable by suggesting that we should one day be brought up sharp by the simple question: Whether Labour was a class foredoomed to social and economic injustice which demanded the compensation and justice of social reform; or whether it was bent on securing, and ultimately would secure such a full measure of economic justice that social reform (in plain English, doles from public money to supplement class welfare) would be an insulting superfluity. That speculation was made in the "ninepence-for-fourpence" days, and the gospel of ninepence-for-fourpence was defensible as a matter of social and political ethics so long as Labour was a class incapable of self-protection and deprived of its full economic reward. But, obviously,

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\*It took nearly two years for the official mind to make an approach towards the same conclusion. Forecasts of the Geddes Economy Committee (Dec., 1921), suggest, at any rate, that the Committee will be found to have based its recommendations on this simple guiding principle.



it would be better in every way that Labour should attain the status of full economic justice by its own exertions than that it should continue a helot class to which the social conscience gave the compensation of political charity as a set-off against economic injustice. What was in any case certain, as I thought, was that Labour could not occupy each status at the same time, and obtain its full economic rights whilst retaining all those political equalisations which were meant to acknowledge and ameliorate the denial of those rights.

The two processes have, however, marched abreast until one has even left the other behind. Public money is still poured out to make up a margin of economic injustice which industrial action has at length obliterated, and the ninepence-for-fourpence ratio now has its most relevant application to the fact that in many cases Labour is doing fourpennyworth of work for ninepennyworth of wages. In any case, putting aside exceptions to state the general case, Labour has now attained something like a full (some would say its fullest possible) economic return for its services, and should now relieve the public purse of all that expenditure which was based on the assumption that it was economically ill-requited and doomed always so to be. Labour, in short, should now recognise that the trade unions have enabled them to do for themselves what the State did for them on the assumption by social reformers that they would never be able to do it for themselves.

It is absurd and unjust that, say, coalminers, who now earn wages in excess of many middle-class salaries (and whose wages, moreover, have to be supported at an uneconomic level by State subsidies), should still ask for



their children to be educated at the expense of the class that finds it difficult enough to educate its own children. It is absurd that cheap trains should still be run for a class whose increased wages have made railways unremunerative without State support. It is absurd to maintain a bread dole when the docker gets sixteen shillings a day and the bricklayer toys with his trowel at two shillings an hour. It is monstrous to spend public money on Labour Exchanges that were designed to introduce an eager workman to an elusive job when it is the workman who is now elusive and the job that clamours.\* As for National Insurance, fourpence for fourpence would now be both sound finance and good social justice.

There ought to be two Budgets: One for the essential and primary national services, which direct taxation kept going and so revealed what classes provided it. The other for all those secondary and eleemosynary services which are the expression of social reform, and which might be met by indirect taxation only. Labour would then better realise both where the money goes and where it comes from.

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\*The shadow of unemployment had not yet fallen, and "the boom" was still continuing, whilst organised Labour in the essential industries was still agitating for further increases in wages.

## INCOHERENCE

The other night [April 27, 1920] during one of those recurrent and futile debates on Ireland, in which the criticism of Government amounts to "Do something!" and the Governmental reply amounts to very little more than, "What can we do?" Sir Donald Maclean besought the Government to produce "a philosophical act of statesmanship." That was, so far as it went, a hopeful sign; for, though Sir Donald Maclean himself was unable to suggest a philosophical or statesmanlike course, he did give us the refreshing and welcome admission that the Parliamentary mind still considers there ought to be some connection between statesmanship and philosophy, between government and enlightened reason.

But it was really like asking for the moon. For, whatever else our statesmen may be, they are certainly not philosophers, either in the loose or the strict sense of the word. I do not say they are not "lovers of the truth," but I do say that they are strangely shy at declaring their passion—possibly because they see truth only in a sort of twilight, and are afraid of making a mistake. Moreover, it was even a disingenuous thing for Sir Donald Maclean to ask, seeing that if the Government had given him what he asked for, he would have been the very first to declaim in rhetorical protest against what they had given him, and

“Injustice! Tyranny! Inhumanity!” would have hurtled in the Parliamentary air.

For Sir Donald Maclean believes that the seething political problems of the time, which are overflowing all constitutional containers, can all be compressed within the half-pint tankard, or within the breakfast cocoa-cup, of what is called “Free Liberalism,” and Free Liberalism at this juncture simply has no relation whatever to philosophic statesmanship. In a world of profound peace, in which all political problems could be regulated by reliance upon the patient law-abidingness of all sections of the people, his own creed would be admirable, because it is to just such a state of political simplicity and human perfection that it is meant to apply. But it is michievous, where it is not merely useless, in a time of seething and incoherent unrest such as that in which we precariously live.

What, then, would have been the philosophical act of statesmanship which the Government, taking him at his word, would have enunciated? It surely would have been the determination to tackle every problem of government by the application of the very meaning of the word “government.” It would have swiftly surveyed the whole field of domestic turmoil, and shown that the one common feature of it all was its incoherence, and it would have declared that the Government’s intention was to reduce all this incoherence to order and sanity by the extremely simple method of affirming the superior power of government. And if it really desired to get down to the ultimate philosophy of statesmanship, it would have declared that its first philosophy was to obey the first

instinct of all organisms—simple or complex, for the State as well as for the amœba—which is that of self-preservation.

As to the immediate issue raised, it would have declared, in answer to the exhortations to make some sort of terms with Sinn Fein, that it was going to act so philosophically that Sinn Fein would be very glad to make terms with it—which is the right philosophical and statesmanlike order in which the two processes should be placed, although so incoherent have political actualities become that nowadays it is government that is asked to defer to and conciliate lawlessness, and it is lawlessness that is enthroned as the superior power. And if it be replied to me, as Free Liberalism certainly would reply, that that would not be statesmanship, but “coercion” (as though the two things were always and necessarily opposed, seeing that all law depends upon its coercive capacity), then the reply would be simple enough: that big diseases require big remedies. It is not exactly a joke that the serious effort to create an Irish Republic is supported by a widespread conspiracy of crime. It is not a light matter that in Ireland the writ of law and justice has ceased to run. It is these things that are grave, and that cannot be trivialised, though the effort to trivialise them is part of the general incoherence through which the law is apparently afraid to drive its own coach and horses.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who has lived for forty years among a civilised and hospitable people (whose humane government is the very expression of their own nature, so that it is hampered by its own traditions in dealing with such a criminal turbulence as his own country now shows),

could get no nearer to philosophic statesmanship in the debate than the sententious irrelevancy, "War on opinion is not war on crime, but the begetter of crime!" More incoherence. If the Sinn Feiners confined themselves to the bare opinion that murder was no crime, they would be unmolested, and might hunger-strike peacefully in their homes against a world which did not share their views. If Mr. O'Connor will prove that every victim of Sinn Fein has really died of reading Sinn Fein pamphlets, and not of Sinn Fein bullets, he shall have not only my apology, but something much more valuable—the gratitude of the shocked civilised sense of all decent English people at the low standard which prevails in his country. He is the censor of films, and rightly deprecates the showing of even imagined horrors. But if he will show that Sinn Fein is merely a lurid nightmare of the cinema, we will not even ask him to be consistent in his censure. But when we are dealing with actualities that make even a cinema film a perfunctory and prosaic blood-curdler, what on earth is the good of his futile apophthegms about "war on opinion?"

And then Mr. J. H. Thomas adds to the incoherence by suggesting that "something must be done" to prevent English Labour sympathising with Sinn Feiners. But he refrains from saying the really pertinent and helpful thing he might say—that he, as a Labour leader, will undertake to show his followers that the thing "to be done" is to break the vicious circle of open crime and baffled justice by stamping out the crime. One can never be quite sure whether Mr. Thomas, in his contributions to political philosophy, is warning or threatening. He warned, or threatened, us that the British railway men



would refuse to work the railways if conscription were adopted, but he would do immense service to coherent government if he would now tell his followers that the cause of civilised law even transcends the importance of the metaphysical problem of the ethics of suicide in relation to the ethics of evading justice—a problem which might employ his casual leisure.

Finally, a Sinn Feiner, incongruously in London, demonstrating with his fellows outside Wormwood Scrubbs, appeals to the police to take him into custody in order to save his life—so that Sinn Fein can both appeal to police for protection and murder them from behind a bush.

But through all this jungle of incoherences, illustrated by Sinn Fein, but by no means confined to it, there is one clear broad path to be driven by one simple philosophical act of statesmanship—if only we can discover the statesmen with the philosophy to do it. The path is the great highway of ordered, coherent government—the philosophy is that which begins with seeing truth clearly.



## MARRIAGE A LA MODE

How like America! Here we are, in this old and effete country, conscientiously ploughing our solemn way through the tangled ethics of marriage and divorce, and America shows us, by the "go-as-you-please" marriage, how simple the whole problem is to a resourceful and progressive people. Neither marriage nor divorce need have any further terrors for us, for the beauty of the American plan is that it is one by which both may be avoided. The simplicity of the plan is beyond denial. Its secret just lies in doing the whole thing casually; you just take marriage so casually that it is hardly worth while troubling about getting divorced. You get married, and then agree to separate, and you see each other when you have an odd evening free. You meet casually in the street: "Oh, how are you, Miss Blink? Hardly knew you!" says the husband, Garfield Q. Blank, and Miss Sadie Blink, the happy bride (née Blink, and, as she defiantly declares, "she expects to die as 'Miss Blink'"), replies, "No, I've been 'way down in Alabam' since last fall. Come and eat with me to-night?" "Why, sure! No, holy snakes! Wharram I talking about? I'm fixed with Mamie Mopps for a theater and supper down Broadway. How'll next Friday suit you?"

Obviously nothing could be simpler. The naive delight of the discovery by the American bride and bridegroom,

who have this week been entertaining us, that married life can be deprived of all its drawbacks and boredom by the simple device of married people not living together almost fascinates one by its childlike ingenuousness. But America is like that. She is constantly exporting new religions that have everything but spiritual inspiration, and inventing new evangels that can be traced back to some pre-historic and discarded superstition. Having had no proper youth, she has arrived at a precocity which she sometimes mistakes for maturity, and she discovers "new truths" while you wait. Other people might look upon the device of avoiding the rocks and shoals of married life by simply not having a married life as rather a puerile evasion of the whole matter—like that of avoiding sea sickness by merely never going to sea.

But in America they take these "pioneer truths" very seriously indeed. When the bride says she determined that marriage should never interfere with her life and work, "or pull me down into a sedentary state of fat-mindedness," the crowd says "Great!" When she declaims that she is determined to scrap "the antediluvian custom of a married woman casting aside her name," the crowd murmurs, "Sub-lime!" and does not reflect that the antediluvian marriage customs were, in fact, even looser and easier than this very latest modern improvement would make them. And the husband, taking up the tale, shows at once on what a lofty estimate of marriage the whole idea is based:

If any one wants to know how I feel about it, let him ask some married man of five years' standing how he would like to have a night out without resorting to the hackneyed "sick friend" or the worn-out "lodge-meeting" dodge—

whilst the happy bride echoes, "We decided that accounting for our time to one another would prove irksome." And, certainly, if you take the "night-out" and "sick friend" view of marriage, nothing could be more simply effective than the agreement, to start with, to have as many "nights-out" as you like—just as, if you regard Home primarily as a manufactory for connubial jars, you must admit that the staggeringly simple device of having no home at all does the trick. Yes, it is a great idea, and "Gee whizz!" is the only appropriate and adequate tribute that can be paid to it.

But, leaving aside its rather pitiful comedy of manufactured make-believe and willing and childish illusion, there is a serious side to this latest marriage "stunt" in the fact that it follows and realises, almost exactly, the theoretical projections of American Feminism, and does show how the steady promulgation of fantastic ideas of life at length prevails.

Eight or nine years ago one of the most prominent Feminists in America, Mrs. Gilman, hit upon what she regarded as a great biological truth. It was that "we are the only animal species in which the female depends on the male for food!" and she solemnly instanced "the common cat" as upholding the banner of "economic independence," and showing Free Woman the path she should tread. It is, of course, quite true that the she-cat is not a "parasite," as the Feminists elegantly term the married woman, and that the Tom Cat does not keep his mate in a state of "servile dependence" by maintaining her—just as it is true that each is gloriously free in its amours and comings and goings. But the Feminist mind, seeking to

re-create human relationships by the example of cats and spiders, forgot that cats, after all, were not what we were talking about, and that man, woman, and the child were not quite the same as Tom Cat, She Cat, and the Kitten.

But I recall that biological argument to show to what heights of enlightened reason the creed was raised in order to justify the great aim of woman's economic independence, and in order to prove that married women would only be going to what is called "back to Nature" (actually, back to the jungle and the lower animals) by relieving their husbands of their support and "living their own lives." For the point is that the go-as-you-please marriage is precisely based on that idea: the separate establishment and the economic independence of the wife, separately pursuing her livelihood.

Again, Mrs. Gilman and her fellow Feminists (here as well as in America) elaborated at great length the view (to answer certain objections from dull and old-fashioned people) that it would not matter if mothers had no time, whilst pursuing economic independence, to look after their own children; because it would be quite easy for other women, who had no children of their own to interfere with their vocation, to look after the children of the mother who had no time to give to them. And the American go-as-you-please husband, shirking the embarrassing question of an interviewer, "What will you do if you become parents?" passes it on to his "wife" ("I don't know about that," he says, "better ask Miss H——") who engagingly and "without hesitation" explains that the simple matter would be solved on the Feminist plan:

I can see no reason why a woman with a profession cannot raise her children more efficiently by entrusting their upbringing to a woman who is a professional in that way—at all events while the children are in the younger stage, unfolding like little buds and growing into flowers.

A precious passage, which makes it both difficult and unnecessary to continue. But we may as well take what profit of wisdom we can from all this folly, by recognising that the nauseous contrast between that ready slobber about “little buds” and a mind forlornly oblivious to all that is implied by infant children being left to “professional mothers,” whilst the physical mother is professionalising elsewhere, is not uncommon among the lunacies of the day—for the American fact is but the realisation of the Feminist theory.

Nor should we fail to be on our guard, in our current discussions of reform of the divorce law, against tendencies which set towards making of marriage something little different from concubinage. . . . Meanwhile, the American idea does not even go quite far enough. For the ceremony and solemnity of marriage seems a ridiculously pedantic superfluity to such a take-it-or-leave-it, in-and-out, fast-and-loose, come-round-when-you-like, go-as-you-please arrangement.



## THE WICKED ANIMAL

In the article entitled "Incoherence" a fortnight ago, there was a reference to a Sinn Feiner, who, demonstrating with his kind outside Wormwood Scrubbs, and being chased by a crowd of Londoners, sought the protection of the police, and thanked them for "saving his life"—thus showing, as I said, that Sinn Fein could both ambush policemen to murder them and yet rely on their protection. I wished at the time to refer to another instance of current incoherence but could not do so because the matter was then sub judice: the case of the illogical anarchist who, shouting "Down with Law and Order," was at last taken at his word by a logical citizen, who stabbed him in the neck with an ice-pick and then appeared in a Court of Law as prosecutor of one who was only, from his point of view, a disciple. And both examples of incoherence come within the scope of the answer to be given to a correspondent who wrote me upon the article I refer to: "You say that self-preservation is the first law of the State, as of all other organisms. I quite agree . . . but what I do not quite understand is what present application you give to that principle, and how the State now fails to obey its 'first instinct.'" The answer is that it fails for pretty much the same reason that a jeweller, seeing burglars



breaking into his shop, would fail in his duty to himself if he refrained from calling "Police!" until they were departing with the swag, on the ground that not until then could he be quite sure of their intentions.

In the steady degeneration of governmental authority during the last few years, nothing has been more remarkable than an acquiescence which has remarkably accelerated that process; the acquiescence, by Government itself, in the revolutionary point of view that revolt must be accorded advantages, extenuations and immunities, whilst Government must mind its p's and q's, and refrain from dotting i's and crossing t's. I don't much care whether this be an unpopular opinion or not, but I venture to say that this idiotic inversion of the relative moral positions of Law and Crime, of Government and Revolt, is going to land us, and before very long, right into the lap of disaster.

Of course, we know upon what philosophy Governmental action is based. It is all directed to the end and strategy of avoiding what is called "a crisis." But the end to which all this strategy is moving is simply that of increasing both the certainty and intensity of the crisis by prolonging the preparations for it. Moreover, the real crisis comes, not with the last, but with the first clear and definite conflict between Law and rebellion. So far as Ireland is concerned it came with the shooting of the first policeman. So far as the general spirit of revolt is concerned, it began with the first open use of the word "revolution" by confessed revolutionaries. Obviously, it will also be "a crisis" when the last policeman is killed in Ireland, and when revolution is on the point of breaking

but in England, but that is just the sort of crisis statesmanship should avoid. The question is, How?

Thereupon disagreement immediately begins; and this simple matter of the very first function of government is seen from a dozen different angles, grading from that of the simple "whiff of grape-shot" view (through all the stages and phases of "toleration," "broad-mindedness," "prudence," "statesmanlike restraint," "letting off steam," and other vague euphemisms for inaction from minds incapable of recognising facts and making decisions), down to the simple revolutionary view that in such a matter government has no function whatever—except, perhaps, to uphold the doctrine of "free speech," by protecting meetings held to advocate the State's overthrow. . . . at which point the governmental ice-pick should come on the scene, but does not.

I suggest, however, that the clear course to be pursued can be discovered by ignoring all these gradations of political maxims and watch-words, and by relying on one simple human truth. Just as all morality is finally based on enlightened reason, so all political principles are finally based upon some simple human truth, and the truth governing the action of a State in case of direct conflict between its authority and those who openly defy its authority, is that the State must either prevail by assertion or perish by timidity. In a word, self-preservation is its first law, and it need not go wool-gathering among the political abstractions in order to justify its action. All it needs is to adopt the attributes of that animal ironically described as very wicked, because, when attacked, it defends itself.

Take Bolshevism. Loosely, "Bolshevik" is merely, let us say, a term of vulgar abuse. Strictly, he is a person determined, so far as in him lies, to overturn the State, and replace it by Soviet rule. Are there any such strict Bolsheviks? Thousands. What happens to them? Nothing. Name one of them. Mr. George Lansbury—allowed to go to Russia to see Moscow lit up in an unaccustomed brilliance that makes its wretched population blink; allowed (stranger still) to come back again; and then allowed to stump the country in the interests of Bolshevism. What should be done with him? "Nothing!" says an archaic irrelevance, known as a Great Liberal Principle. "Or, at least, reason with him—convert him by Social Reform"—and meanwhile Mr. Lansbury goes steadily on making his own converts.

But what should be done is as clear as day. The competent constitutional authority should say to him, and to every active agent of Bolshevism, "We are not in the least concerned to argue with you the relative merits of the two forms of government—that which you wish to destroy and that which you wish to establish. We are quite prepared to think you believe Bolshevism is the most benign system of government ever devised, that massacre is merely an effective form of propaganda and slave-labour is the summit of democratic discipline, and that Mr. Lenin has 'the kind face of a man who must like children.'\* Interesting, but irrelevant. All we are concerned about is that the State you are trying to set up can be set up only by the overthrow of that which exists, and as that is your first aim, our first duty is to restrain you."

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\*Mr. George Lansbury's description of him.

And, at that point in the argument, the logical citizen with the ice-pick comes forward, and carries the argument a stage further. He sees that nothing is being done, but he assumes that, in a rational world, no man who cries "Down with the State! Down with Law and Order!" ought to be protected by the State or be allowed to appeal to Law and Order. And he finds that he is mistaken. He finds that the State is not only not that wicked animal which defends itself when attacked, but that it protects those who attack it. And he retires for a month from an illogical world.

## THE LEAGUE

It is not for nothing that these are called unpopular opinions. There is, I hope, no note of defiance in their title, and certainly no perverse pride or affectation of superiority in holding an opinion which is merely unpopular. I intend the title as an admission, and not as a boast—as the deliberate acceptance of a handicap by the recognition of a fact sufficiently obvious: that in these days many opinions which are rationally defensible, but which set themselves against what is supposed to be the spirit of the age, must be prepared to encounter unpopularity. But perhaps that is only another way of saying that Truth may sometimes be unseasonable, and find that it has to make headway against much error and misunderstanding.

There is no current question on which misunderstanding is so easy as that of the League of Nations, with its violent oppositions of faith and reason, of hope and experience. It represents so obviously a desirable ideal and consummation that any one setting himself in a critical attitude towards the League by pointing out that it is not an effective instrument, and by trying to show the difficulties of ever making it so, is condemned (not necessarily with justice) as being an opponent of the aim itself—a cynic, a misanthrope, a “blind worshipper of force,” a stumbling



block in the path of human progress, and a personification of that very devil in human nature which the League exists to exorcise. And that attitude of mind makes profitable controversy very difficult. There are no doubt still good reasons why you "must not speak disrespectfully of the Equator," but I would suggest that the attempt made to give the League immunity from that criticism to which all human institutions should be subject, is a mistake of the first order. For the whole scheme is so vast and inchoate that the only possible hope of its success is to treat the rational critical attitude towards it with at least as much respect as the attitude of emotional adulation and uncritical acceptance.

Merely to say "Let there be a League of Nations" carries the matter no further—carries it no further, in fact, than President Wilson carried it. Nobody quarrels with that aspiration, any more than one would quarrel with the aspiration, "Let us all be good and just!" which is pretty much the same thing. But when the next step is to say, "There is therefore now a League of Nations," or "We are now hereby all good and just," I respectfully but firmly decline to join in the dangerous delusion. In the sense that there is a paper organisation, with a salaried secretariat and stamped note-paper and an address, there is, I admit, such a League in formal existence. But I contend that there is no such thing in existence as a real functioning body; that its powers have no relation to its pretensions; that immense mischief will be done by treating as an achieved fact that which is still in an embryonic stage; and that the organisation which exists is merely a rickety improvisation that will collapse at the first im-

pact with those realities which its frenzied fashioners have ignored.

I have been taken to task for betraying an "unrelieved pessimism" in regard to the League, by maintaining that it is dead for the simple reason that it has never really lived. I may be wrong, and should be glad to be proved so by time; but at least I can give a good reason for the "pessimism." It is based on the simple fact that the higher ideals, like the higher mammals, require a long gestatory period, and the League of Nations was no sooner conceived than it was born—which is why I predict for it a brief and quite inglorious life-history. Moreover, as one of the first critics, not of the aim, but of the attempt to realise it in the middle of a world ludicrously unprepared for it, I find that its course has so far followed exactly what I happened to dread and predict nearly three years ago, when I wrote:—"And, above all, in seeking to establish such a gigantic beneficence, we must be careful not to force the pace. There could be only one thing more disastrous than not having a League of Nations at all, and that is having a League of Nations which was a failure." ("Disloyalty," page 67). A few months later (June 26, 1918), Lord Curzon, delivering what was the first formal and considered statement of the Governmental attitude, said:

In view of these difficulties, we should not proceed too quickly nor go too far. If we attempt at this stage to construct on hard and fast lines an international court, it would only end in failure, and if you fail now you not only destroy the chances of the scheme, but you may throw back the whole thing for generations.

I put to any reasonable partisan of the League whether the danger then foreshadowed is not now seen to

be the very danger threatening the League—that it came before its time?

But there are people, impatient idealists, who do not see the validity of this objection of time and season, and who write derisively of those who want to put it off to “the Greek Kalends.” Like the murder in Macbeth, they maintain that it had better be done quickly. They do not even stop to ask, “How and why do you say, or are we to know, that it comes before its time?”—which would be a very sensible question to ask, and one that needs an answer. I tried to give the reason why, as it then seemed, in the same book, and time has strengthened the force of that reason. I pointed out that, obviously, that was the most favourable time in history to talk of and project a League of Nations, because never was the necessity of any plan to prevent war “more manifest to the slow intelligence.” But

In a much deeper sense this is the most unfavourable time within the history of man for attempting to put the idea into practice. For human cynicism and distrust have surely never willingly gone down to such depths as those depths of disillusion, and almost of despair, of mankind to which we, in this day, have been forced to descend by the revelations of the diabolical nature of that race which is our enemy, and by the dubious attitude of some neutrals.

Again, I put it to any reasonable man whether the considerations then urged have not even gained in force by the subsequent experience of the vitality of national sentiments and jealousies and of racial animosities, even amongst the Allies themselves, and manifested most acutely since the end of the war and after the very establishment of the League of Nations?

But there is a final and, I think, a conclusive reason why we may know that the League comes before its time,

though that idea cannot be developed in the tail end of an article. The name of Krassin, who has just landed amongst us, gives at any rate some hint of that idea. It is, briefly, that the urgent task of to-day is not to save the League for civilisation, but to save civilisation for the League, as well as for itself. Our immediate task is not to establish law between the nations, but to re-establish law within the nations—not to try to rush man to his final perfection, but to try first to get him back to where he was: a being with definite and accepted moral standards and a sense of justice.

## CRACKED FOUNDATIONS

It is a pleasure to acknowledge criticism so courteous, relevant, and profitable as that which has followed my article on the League of Nations, a subject of which I now take leave—until, at any rate, it clamours for fresh recognition.

On only one point must I express an acute disagreement. It is that Mr.—— hails the early inclusion of the enemy States, and the ultimate inclusion of Russia, in the League, as “heartening” news. It is, if all you want is a League of Nations in any form, and no matter of what ethical discordances and opposites it is composed. Excellent news, if you want a League which shall have in it from the start the seeds of its own corruption and which shall merely provide a fresh joy for the cynic. Very gloomy news indeed if you want a League which shall be the organised expression of the highest natures and nations, and shall confound the cynic.

And so we come to the first practical difficulty: the immense inequalities between the ethical standards and the mental outlook of the nations of the earth—the great mountains of distrust, duplicity, insularity, and selfishness, and all the other high peaks in the range of racial characteristics, which must be levelled to the tableland of



the League. Let us take it for the moment that we ourselves are ready for the great experiment; that our general humanity and our public conscience already make us eligible for membership of such an organisation of the highest aims of mankind; and that we ourselves are quite prepared to subdue our sovereignty to the common mind, and rely on its disinterested justice.

But what of the other nations of the earth?—France, intensely national, intensely logical, sure of her self only; who has just passed through the most convincing experience of the infamous potentialities of man, but has not yet seen any proof of a corresponding justice; who has begun to distrust even her own Allies because she thinks they are laggard in seeing justice done to her; and who so far has had no reason to see in the League of Nations anything but an obstacle to stand between her and that justice which the wrongs done to her demand. America—a vast country, self-contained and self-interested, whose material prosperity was even enhanced by the war, and whose spiritual interest in the League of Nations is so little that its national pride has not even been touched\* by the moral prestige which President Wilson thrust, rather than con-

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\*Five months afterwards (Nov., 1920) came the American Presidential election, in which President Wilson was overwhelmingly defeated on the specific issue of the League. English supporters of the League then lamented that the result of the Election ended any hope of effective international action. I took the opposite view—that the American nation had cleared out of its path a great obstacle to its participation in international effort, and that Europe having made “a false start” at Mr. Wilson’s instigation, America was going to show us the right way to tackle the problem. Exactly a year after President Harding’s victory, the Washington Conference assembled. It was much more limited in scope than Mr. Wilson’s scheme, but for that reason accomplished in a few weeks definite and practical results,

ferred, on it by asserting its primacy among the nations in inaugurating the great ideal.

Japan, much more intent on penetrating China with her influence than on ideals which, in the present stage of her policy and development, would hinder both rather than help either. Italy, which may be said to be neither here nor there so far as the League is concerned, and whose present preoccupations arise rather from sharing the distrusts and disillusiones seen to be inseparable from even an alliance. Belgium, the victim of the foulest crime in history, and much too recently betrayed by reliance on treaty and guarantee to be enthusiastic over an extension of the same trust. Then the neutrals, some of whom were certainly less than neutral during the war, none of whom since the war has been conspicuously on the side of right.

And then the others. Austria, whose warmest interest just now would pardonably lie in a League of Nations. And Germany—Germany, who has not revealed a single sign of contrition for her crimes, who looks to the League of Nations as her greatest hope for evading justice, and whose present overwhelming concern is to wriggle out of every reparation—a race yet to learn the very alphabet of loyalty and honour and humanity from which a League of Nations can be spelt.\* And Russia. Which Russia?—the Russia of a demoniacal terrorism which has triumphed by stamping on justice and mercy more than justice ever or anywhere stamped on wrong, a Russia which does not even belong to the civilised comity, still less is ready for

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\*In November 1920 France declared that she would withdraw from the League if Germany were admitted. Great Britain agreed, until Germany had shown her repentance by punishing her war criminals.

the final perfection of organised and enlightened civilisation?—or the Russia now obliterated in the mud and blood and pestilence of its oppression, and yet to emerge to become a nation again?

Can any rational man, looking round on this world, assert that there is in it that coherent purpose of right, or even that understanding of the nature of right, which must *precede* the establishment of such a vast organisation of the universal conscience as the League of Nations means and involves?

So to the second practical difficulty, which must be overcome before the first becomes even relevant—the difficulty expressed by the fact that “our immediate task is not to establish law between the nations, but to re-establish law within the nations.” Mr. —— recognises the disease, but hardly seems to recognise sufficiently its relevance to the establishment of the League. He admits our own internal anarchy, but apparently does not see that until the reign of law, as such, is restored amongst ourselves we cannot hope to establish a higher and a universal code of law among everybody. He sees that “more anarchy is likely to result from the communistic ideas of the time,” but apparently does not see that a League of Nations is simply the communistic idea carried to the nth degree. Mr. —— also recognises the difficulty, but thinks that the two processes may go on at the same time.

They cannot, for the simplest of all reasons, which is that first things must come first. If the foundations of your house are cracked, and the whole edifice is visibly tottering, you will choose a very bad moment indeed, if you choose that moment to build your house a few storeys

higher and nearer to Heaven—for it is a human certainty that unless you first restore the foundations you will bring the whole edifice down to earth.

Yet that is exactly what the League of Nationists are now doing—seeking to build on foundations so cracked that they may be said to be building in the clouds and on the air. The fact we must all face is that civilised law is now in actual dissolution, and that the time is therefore ludicrously inopportune for seeking to carry civilised law into the other dimension of international relations. Nay, the task of re-establishing the reign of law within nations has now become so complicated and increased (as much by governmental supineness as by the assertion of lawlessness) that we may not find our energies equal to it.

Mr. ——— says I “must help” in establishing the League. I reply that I do help by every word I write to urge that that task shall be subordinated to the more pressing need, and that that pressing need is the assertion of authority against current anarchy—in the home, in social life, and in the life of the State. The architecture of human society follows very definite laws; but it rather looks as though it were part of the sardonic plan that just when we might have hoped to rear the pinnacle of human government on the long-building edifice of civilised law, that edifice is seen to be top-heavy and its very foundations insecure.

## DECIVILISATION

[Parliament was this week discussing the principle of a Trade Treaty with the Soviet State that at length the Government had brought itself to propose.]

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What is the use of recalling now the horrors, the atrocities, the follies of the Bolshevik régime? . . . Of what use is it to indulge in this transpontine melodrama? . . . Get to business.—“The Star,” May 29, 1920.

Sir Auckland Geddes, our newly-appointed Ambassador to the United States, has just been telling the students of Washington University: “The present generation cannot hope to see a successful end to the world revolution now in progress. To-day, civilisation totters.” It is to be assumed that Sir Auckland Geddes has not made that discovery during the few weeks that he has been out of England, but that at least he had some vague sense of the calamity whilst still amongst us as a member of the British Government, and that some, at any rate, of his colleagues must have been admitted to his confidence and shared his views. On that assumption, I confess that it is a mystery to me that men can proceed with the routine of their departmental and Parliamentary duties with more or less dogged assiduity, and contrive never to show by any word they publicly said, or anything they publicly did, what fear lurked in the recesses of their minds.



For, after all, a Cabinet is not a society for chemical research or a collection of veterinary surgeons, or any other body equally remote from the human business and interest of civilisation. It is true that if civilisation is, indeed, tottering to-day, its interest for you and for me is as poignant and vital as it is to any member of the Government, from the latest Junior Lord to the Prime Minister. But it is much more their business than ours, for they control the machinery of civilisation, which is that of civilised government; and yet it is possible to say that for anything they have said, from Prime Minister down to Junior Lord, they are immensely more concerned with the possibility of a dissolution of Parliament than with the probability of the dissolution of civilisation. On the whole then, I am inclined to take the charitable view, and suppose that Sir Auckland Geddes, discerning what has been fairly obvious to any mind with insight for some time past, kept his own counsel, and left his colleagues in the dark. That charitable assumption also fits in with the clear fact that the Government itself is assisting in that dissolution, which it could only do if it did not know what it is doing and what is being done.

I have placed at the head of this article an extract (written on the very day of Sir Auckland's declaration), which both confirms the view that civilisation is dissolving and shows the process actually at work. Civilisation is dissolving simply because the civilised sense is going. Knowing something of English journalism I know nothing in it which equals that passage for its final confession—not of despair, shame, horror, or any other civilised and appropriate sentiment—but of a cynicism so crude and candid,

and primitive, as to be almost barbaric. To find anything approaching its straight-forward renunciation of any moral judgment, I should have to look up the files of the "Star's" stable-companion, and quote that passage in the leading columns of the "Daily News," sometime in 1917, when that organ, abandoning finally the extremely tepid note of moral indignation which it had fitfully expressed on the infamies of Germany, and becoming querulous, in its vituperative and sustained pacifism, at the failure to stop the war by "negotiation" with unsubdued infamy, at length blurted out that we had no right to wait until the Germans confessed they were in the wrong, and that "the ruin of European civilisation" would rest on those who declined to make peace with an unrepentant and unbeaten Germany.

Well, "what is the use" of living in deliberate illusion, and laying the flattering unction to our souls that we are still a highly civilised race, when leading journals can blithely and cynically condone the most inhuman chapter in the history of "civilised" mankind, and find their virtual support of a devilish tyranny unnoticed and unrebuked?—for so debased has our moral sense become that we no longer realise the depths to which it has fallen. But it is clear that we have to make up our minds to the degrading truth that there are amongst us active and powerful influences which may be trusted to be the very champions and defenders of infamy, and that so low has our moral vitality fallen that there is amongst us a general apathy to this new phenomenon in our history. There can be no better test of the civilised sense than its sensitiveness to wrong-doing, or a greater test of fixed moral principles

than the refusal to allow time or expediency to weaken our sense of justice and humanity. But we have survived neither test, for we have at length capitulated to infamy, and can read unmoved, and apparently without resentment, the jeer that such moral sense as still survives amongst us is "indulging in transpontine melodrama" by refusal to consort with those guilty of stupendous crime.

I have been thought to be unduly sceptical concerning the reality of that spirit which alone can make a League of Nations a reality in its turn. But is that scepticism really remarkable in face of the clearest evidence that those who are most vociferous in demanding an international code of law are also those who cynically proclaim that there is no such thing as an international conscience, that the claims of "business" supersede those of the simplest humanity, and that the prospect of material advantage to come should forthwith obliterate the memory of crimes whose full horrors are even beyond the capacity of narration and realisation?

Finally, we have the proof that even our own Government shares in what can only be called (though others may search for a euphemism if they care to go to the trouble) this moral degeneracy, and is evidently also of opinion that it is now "no use" to recall the past—a most recent past, which merges into the present, and whose consequences stretch onward to what end no man can tell. And all I can say is that by that attitude they are themselves assisting in the dissolution of civilisation. For, of course, if the barbaric question asked is to be given any answer, the answer is that the only "use" of "recalling the horrors" and atrocities of Bolshevism is to affirm *within ourselves*

that moral and civilised sense which would not condone in others any more than it would allow in us those horrors and atrocities. The only "use" is to see that we do not get so "used" to them that they become part of our own nature. But, clearly, something has snapped in England, and the great virtues have gone out of us. In 1916 I happened to write :—

The great crime of Germany is that she has already demoralised and brutalised, by the enormity of her crimes fatiguing the very capacity to feel, the heart of civilised mankind. By her inexhaustible and progressive crimes, she is blunting the sensibilities, the very capacity for horror and pity, of the human soul. That is her crime, and *our danger*.

We have not survived that danger, and the crime is shared by those amongst us who, at every manifestation of German cruelty and Bolshevik atrocity, have debilitated our moral sense by their insidious, and at length open, cynical, and triumphant partisanship of wrong.

## THE CYNICISM OF "IDEALISTS"

[On June 7, 1920, a debate took place in the House of Commons upon the Government's action in receiving M. Krassin, the Bolshevist emissary, and its intention to conclude a Treaty with the Soviet State. The Premier vigorously defended his policy, and carried the House with him. It was not until nine months later, however, that the Treaty was finally completed, the delay arising through repeated acts of bad faith on the part of the Soviet Government, which interrupted the negotiations. But the parliamentary opposition to the policy did not survive the debate here dealt with.]

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It is not three months since Mr. Lloyd George said that there would be no change of policy towards Russia without Parliament being consulted. But the change in policy has been made, Parliament was not consulted, and Parliament is now told that there was no help for it, and that that is the end of the matter. Is it? That is exactly what remains to be seen. But, with the *fait accompli* staring us in the face, it would be futile to expose the fallacies by which it is justified, for the pace of events these days leaves little time or space for discussion that can no longer influence action. Things being what they



are, let us face them for what they are, and understand exactly what has happened.

Otherwise, it would be quite easy to answer Mr. Lloyd George's arguments for this intercourse with Bolshevism. He was content to rely on one main point. Making no more than an unavoidable and perfunctory allusion to the crimes of Bolshevism, he contented himself with saying that they were, in any case, not our business; that trade with the Bolsheviks was necessary to promote general peace, and to secure for the rest of Europe the raw materials and food which, he reasserted, are there available; and, amid the "loud laughter" of a House of Commons whose sense of the comic is sometimes strange and incongruous, he clinched his point by saying: "Why, this country has opened up most of the cannibal trade of the world."

True enough. But its statesmen have not invited the cannibal emissaries to Downing Street. Nor has it ever been a question of the recognition of a cannibalistic system of government, with the danger of cannibalistic principles being strengthened by such a recognition among our own people, many of whom were already half convinced that cannibalism was the real democratic diet, and were seeking to establish cannibalism here. If the Prime Minister is injudicious enough to rely on the cannibalistic analogy, then he must be told that it breaks down at the one test of its soundness or sincerity: that diplomatic representatives of the Cannibal Islands have not been received hitherto by the Cabinet or housed in Mayfair.

But, avoiding the whole ethical issue and the question of moral compunctions, he based his case upon political

expediency. And it is quite possible that, on that ground only, events may justify him. It is possible, in fact, to conceive a far-sighted but disillusioned man saying (and being proved right), what Mr. Lloyd George did try, ineffectively, to say: "The urgent fact is that Europe is going to pieces, and we must set its machinery going again. We have neither the time nor the strength to combat evil—we must make terms with it, close the feud, and open the shop. It is not magnificent, but at any rate it will be good business—better business, at any rate, than holding out for high principles of human government and then finding that our own organisation has given way under the strain." That is his case, as I understand it, put even a little more sympathetically than he put it himself. But, as that is his case, he must hereafter be judged by it. I cannot stop to argue how far the nation's leaders have brought us to this pass by their supineness in not attacking the *principles* of Bolshevism, and by their long acquiescence in the promulgation of those principles here. Nor can I dwell here on the humiliating significance of the stark fact that Bolshevism, having failed wholly as a constructive policy, having created nothing but made a *débris* of everything, now comes to ask civilisation to shore it up—and, to civilisation's shame, does not ask in vain.

But all I say is that Mr. Lloyd George, having gaily and cynically abandoned the whole moral position, and having descended to the lower ground of expediency and material interest, must either come forward later with the justification of having achieved the results he now reckons on—he must come forward and really "deliver the goods"

—or he must be dragged forward to confess that he has not even secured the price of that dishonour to which he is now so jauntily and confidently committing us. The highest type of statesman, unquestionably, is he who acts from principle; but there is much to suggest that modern statemanship, having no principles, invents its own rules as the game goes on, and it will be interesting to see what the new idea brings us to. But all I say is that the statesman who looks an old friend called Principle in the face only to pass on and take the arm of a shady acquaintance called Expediency, will have a double charge to meet if even his expedient fails. And as to that possibility, all I say is that even the worldly wisdom of the policy has yet to be proved. It has yet to be seen that Bolshevism can either keep faith with us in any respect, or refrain from taking the immense advantage we have conferred upon it to enable it to acclimatise itself here, or that it will “deliver the goods.”\* If we must sell our soul, well and

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\*Within a year, every doubt and danger here suggested had to be officially admitted. First, the Russian Famine supplied a stupendously ironical answer to those “bulging corn bins” by which the Premier had tempted the House of Commons to endorse his policy. Next, exactly a year later Lord Curzon, Foreign Secretary, had to address a very strongly worded despatch to Moscow protesting against the plots and intrigues, categorically detailed, of Bolshevik agents in distant parts of the Empire. Third, the Treaty became a cloak for closer relations between Bolshevism and the revolutionary elements in this country. Fourth, the volume of trade done with Russia after the Treaty was negligible, and the heads of English trading missions officially reported that business with Russia was “impossible” owing to both the nature and practices of its government.

But by the time these revelations were being made, the Premier could divert public attention from them by another of those acute crises which periodically occur to carry him on. This time it was Ireland, and he was calling a Conference with Sinn Fein (June 1921). That is to say, he was again abandoning principles for expediency, and again it is probable that the same result will be seen.

good, so long as we know that we must. But it is to be hoped that Mr. Lloyd George will not have to admit that he has merely given it away, and purchased nothing—neither peace, nor trade, nor European security.

But, whatever the future may reveal to justify the soulless hope or to give it its appropriate mockery, something else is made clear already. For whether the Prime Minister's mundane policy be justified by mundane success or not (indeed, especially if it is justified by success) one thing is now definitely settled—the affairs of every nation are its own. That was the one outstanding agreement of the debate. Mr. J. H. Thomas, speaking for Labour, said: "It is not for this country to interfere with the internal affairs of another country." Sir Donald Maclean, speaking for official Liberalism, said: "The Government were carrying out the traditional British maxim that we had no business with the internal affairs of any country"—a tradition that does not happen to exist, and that comes oddly from one who is a sort of leader of that party that owed its renaissance in 1880 to a campaign that denounced the Bulgarian atrocities and "interfered" in the internal affairs of Turkey. It is strange, however, that the most ardent League of Nationists should, in their eagerness to champion Bolshevism, commit themselves to a formula which they may afterwards find immensely inconvenient. It is odd, too, that it should come from the very people who asserted that it was our duty to support Kerensky as against the "reactionaries" that were supposed to be hampering that loquacious and futile nonentity, and who for a steady six months (until Bolshevism swept Kerensky into oblivion in the autumn



of 1917), concentrated their attacks on the Government for *not* interfering more actively in the internal affairs of Russia by supporting the Revolution.

But if it is true that these same people have but recently been urging that the problem of Ireland, which is our own internal affair, shall be dealt with by the League of Nations, it is also true and comforting to know that henceforth they will not be able to say it. It would, indeed, be possible to say that this debate, which affirmed the right of all nations to do exactly as they liked within their own borders, might have one immense compensation (even at the great price of a cynical betrayal of the nascent principles of international morality) if it cleared the air of a great deal of cant. But, knowing the inveterate intellectual dishonesty of those who have filled our atmosphere with a moral pretentiousness which has become a loathsome sham, I feel certain that they will seek to apply the very moral judgment they have now renounced in the case of Bolshevism, to the very next occasion which gives them an opportunity to turn it to our disadvantage.\* As the case stands, however, we have now reached a point at which we may say that the whole movement towards international standards of

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\*In this debate, English Liberalism specifically declared that the civilised conscience must mind its own business where Bolshevism was concerned. But a year later, and onwards, it fell to them to challenge the methods and efforts of the Government to maintain the authority of the Crown in Ireland; and then they readily and eagerly invoked "the conscience of the civilised world" as their trump card. This combination of moral cant and mental incoherence strikes the outside political critic as the leading characteristic of the modern "progressive" parliamentary mind. What also strikes him is the ineffective way in which it is dealt with by those within Parliament who ought to expose it.



morality and law has definitely receded, for it is authoritatively declared that an international conscience would be an impertinence, and that our business is to mind our own affairs and let other nations mind theirs.

Well and good. It is a very important and far-reaching decision, and is due (oddly enough) to the cynicism of those partisans of infamy who (also oddly enough) call themselves "idealists." And you will perhaps wonder how they can be so stupid as to commit themselves to a principle which, of course, makes hay of most of their pretentious ideals, including that of the brotherhood of man and the sovereignty of an internationalized conscience, and which will conflict so awkwardly with so many of their advocacies. But the explanation is very simple, although twofold. First, they do not "commit" themselves, because their principles are only hand-to-mouth affairs, to be applied or rejected as the issue and circumstances dictate. Secondly, the public memory, as they well know, is very short indeed, and the "principles" of politicians are not recorded like the judgments of the King's Bench. Because they have a political affinity for Bolshevism, the idealists indignantly call even the passive aversion from having anything to do with it "interference"—for that is the sloppy way of parliamentary speech. But they would be the first to clamour\* for

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\*A year later came the Bolshevist admission of the reality of the great Russian famine; and I need hardly recall that the loudest assertions that it was "our moral duty" to "save Russia" came from those who had already forgotten their resounding and indignant cry, "Hands off Russia, while she works out her own salvation!" Muddled minds groping in a moral fog could not see that if, on the one hand, we are to be denied the right of any moral judgment then, on the other hand, we cannot be saddled with the obligation of any moral duty.

our really active "interference" (on the ground of "international solidarity" or any other pretentious insincerity) if their protégés or affinities in Russia or any quarter of the globe needed any sort of help against any sort of "reaction"—just as, on the other hand, they would be only too pleased to see the authority of the League of Nations superseding our own authority in Ireland, and just as they are already giving signs that they welcome, and would like to stiffen, American influence or "interference" in the settlement of the Irish question. In short, even the best of politicians seem to have few principles; but the "idealist" politician is the most cynical of all. For he changes and adapts his principles in strict accordance with the polemical necessity of the moment, and so adds hypocrisy to the sum of all those vices which have to be subtracted from his political virtue. Still, here it is laid down, for what the decisions and authority of Parliament may still be worth, that the internal affairs of other nations are their own affair. Equally, then, our own internal affairs must remain our own affair.

## “ RECOGNITION ”

I had intended to get away from an absorbing theme, and to write of one of the minor follies of a day when folly is of such gigantic shape that wisdom can hardly hope to do more than inflict a few pin-pricks. But the one subject that dominates all others, and fills the whole foreground of the contemporary picture, can hardly be evaded for a single day, and will continue, I fear, to be our chief concern until the crisis is reached, and it becomes our only concern. That subject is, of course, the peril to the stability of the social order, and the Premier's little homily at Pwllheli brings it into focus again.

Only a week ago I was calling attention to the obtuseness of the Governmental mind, shown by its masterly silence on the subject, to the rickety state of civilised government. And now Mr. Lloyd George has paid that glaring fact the compliment of “recognition.” A few days ago the honour of England was sold for value probably never to be received, and I said that all that was left us to hope for was that it had not been given away. And already the possibility is being discussed that that is exactly what may happen, and that having “recognised” Bolshevism, the Government will next have to recognise the fact that Bolshevism has nothing to offer us but itself.

Four or five days ago Mr. Lloyd George was ridiculing the idea, amid the laughter of the House, that we should allow our moral scruples to interfere with trade, and refrained very carefully from applying any moral judgment to Bolshevism. And three days afterwards he tells Free Churchmen at Pwllheli: "When I left London we were discussing in Parliament Bolshevism—the latest fashion among the powers of darkness in this world."

I suppose I am not the only man in these islands who is bewildered by the contrast and the incoherence of the Prime Minister saying nothing whatever, when "discussing in Parliament Bolshevism," which "recognised" the real nature of Bolshevism, and then going down to his native mountains and shadows, and recognising, after all the mischief is done, that Bolshevism belongs to the powers of darkness. Such a change in values and outlook—the hard-headed cynic in Parliament, the moralist in Wales—puzzles until it irritates. Is the contrast only a question of atmosphere, so that in Parliament enlightened reason is not encouraged or stirred, but in the evangelical atmosphere an instinctive rather than a reflective deference is still paid to what were once the accepted and "recognised" moral principles?

The Premier, looking round on an anarchical world, fixes the final responsibility on "the Churches"—on what he calls the "generating stations" of the moral current, and says that political institutions and parties can only supply the wires and fix the lamps and switch on the current—perhaps merely one way of avoiding the confession that if religion generates moral power, Parliament is where it degenerates. But if he recognises that "exalted

political principles are at best reflections of the teachings of Christianity," what creed, may I ask, is reflected by those political principles which he himself was commending to Parliament three days before—the principles that no moral scruples should stand in the way of intercourse with "powers of darkness?"

Let me turn now to another interpretation of the Premier's homily. The "Westminster Gazette" is more or less the official exponent of what is more or less the official Liberal party, and it tells Mr. Lloyd George what it conceives to be the principles of power which have to be generated to restore the shattered world. "They are few and quite simple"—(and of their simplicity there can be no doubt).

That the nations are one family, that hatred is fatal to their life, that they can only help themselves by helping each other, that they must forget injuries, refrain from harsh judgments, and seek reconciliation. They require that unity shall be restored by bringing the enemy countries in (the League), and sitting down with them to discover how justice can best be done.

And so we have now brought out for us three phases and degrees of political morality. First, that of the people who hold that when powers of darkness are recognised as what they are, they should be denounced for what they are, and not given any other "recognition" whatever. Second, the intermediary degree, which says that, as a matter of political or business expediency, they should be "recognised" in the sense of acceptance, whilst reserving the right to recognise them, in a merely moral atmosphere, for the "powers of darkness" that, *entre nous* and God, they really are. And the third degree of political morality says that we must not only not denounce powers of darkness, but recognise them as members of our family,



and "refrain from harsh judgments" upon them, tuck our toes under the same table, and ask them to tell us how they think justice may be done. Practically the whole problem of the world's disorder depends for its solution upon which of these three attitudes is adopted.

The first, at any rate and indisputably, is uncompromisingly moral; the second is frankly cynical and expedient, and may at least turn out to be futile; and the third is hopeless from any point of view whatever except that of the moral degeneracy which it really expresses. By a process whose course I cannot here stop to trace, it has come about that the "higher morality" has come merely to mean atrophy of the capacity for moral judgment. That is to say, the higher morality has ceased to be moral. It is not a difficult thing, but a ridiculously easy thing, to refrain from harsh judgment (you will never hear, for instance, one German reproaching another for German crimes, nor has it been reported that Lenin and Trotzky have had any serious dispute concerning the ethics of massacre), but obviously that facility of refraining from harsh judgments must come easiest to people who have ceased to have the capacity for moral judgment at all. In other words, the ability to refrain from harsh judgment for proven wrong-doing proceeds much more easily, and probably, from those who have no moral standards than from those who have high moral standards. Otherwise, what is the use of morality at all, or what is its nature? Nor will that higher morality stand even the test of expediency, for if we refrain from harsh judgment on accomplished infamy, what standard have we left for dealing with the infamy yet to be done?

The truth is that the world is rotten almost to putrescence, not because its judgments have been too harsh, but because they have not been harsh enough—not because its moral standards are impossibly high, but because they have become so low that Right can no longer walk under them. Months ago I wrote here that the world would not become sane and wholesome again until some man or influence arose who would be as ruthless in the vindication of Right as others had been in the pursuit of wrong. I still hold to that belief, and see in the counsel that we should refrain from harsh judgment on proven and colossal wrong-doing merely the evidence of how far our moral deterioration has gone.

## BAYONETS FOR BOURGEOIS

A strange scene that must have been in the Market Place at Batley the other day. Right on the other side of a Europe "blasted, stricken, and impoverished" by war, lies a land which has been blasted, stricken, and impoverished by a great political experiment, within itself, that has denuded it of almost every attribute and adjunct of civilisation. It is practically shut off from the rest of the world, and keeps in touch with what is left of civilisation only by the great Moscow wireless station—so that one of the latest fruits and proofs of the beneficent activities of the bourgeois class is used to flash out the decrees and defiance of a Government based upon the theory that the bourgeois is a baleful enemy of the human race, who must be excluded from power and reduced to helotry.

The experiment has failed. If it had succeeded, it would only have been at the price of an immense and ferocious inhumanity which could have been defended only on the ground that the end justified the means.\* But it has failed—failed not through any half-hearted application of its theory, but despite that theory having been most drastically applied. The bourgeois class has not only been

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\*This was the justification, expressed with the most cynical frankness, in Trotsky's book "The Defence of Terrorism," published in the following year (October, 1921).

eliminated from Government—it has been eliminated from existence, and such as survive are merged in the general squalor and degradation. The envied worldly well-being of the bourgeois has not been distributed—it has merely been obliterated, and no proletarian is any happier for any bourgeois' misery, or richer for his poverty, or better fed for his starvation, or nobler for his being trampled in the general mire. And the proletarian Government (which means a government of the "breeding" classes) finds that it has itself bred nothing but chaos, from which it can be saved by the Government turning round on its own nature and becoming a simple despotism; and the despotism has further to confess itself powerless to maintain itself without that external bourgeois help from other States which it now seeks. All its inhumanities have gone for nothing; it has destroyed almost everything, and has created only terror, slavery, and pestilence.

And, on an evening in an English June, a leader of English working men, fresh from "that enslaved, infected, starving, and verminous Bedlam," as Mr. Churchill has just described it, stands up in the market place of a Yorkshire town to tell his own class, in homely language, what he thinks of this great experiment to solve the endless problem of human government. I call it an historical scene, this English Member of Parliament returning to his native land ("the greatest and best country in the universe," as he calls it, a land that has taught much liberty to others and had little need to learn liberty from any of them, but is now forgetting all liberty it has itself taught) to commend to his fellows a Government which is a denial in practice of everything he still affirms in theory. He is not

greatly critical, and does not pretend to be; for when he must discriminate in his praise, he is content to say, "But that is their own business," or "That is their problem, not mine." And one of the things that is their business and not his is the massacre of the bourgeoisie.

'One of the Russian claims that I do not like (and I am going to tell the bad things as well as the good) is contained in the statement, "We have got rid of the bourgeoisie by the bayonet." Sounds rough, doesn't it? I don't believe in that style of thing, and I want to avoid it in England. . . .'

*but*, "I warn our rich men and profiteers, our financiers and our landlords"—and the effect of the warning is that that style of thing will be avoided here only by acquiescence in the demands of the proletariat.

Mr. Ben Turner's "Sounds rough, doesn't it?" fascinates me. It may have been only an example of what the Greeks called *meiosis*—a designed and ironical understatement for the sake of increased effect—although the warning to the English bourgeoisie rather suggests that his native susceptibilities have undergone a quick acclimatisation to the rigours of Russia. But I wonder whether Mr. Turner with his colloquial "Sounds rough, doesn't it?" has quite visualised all that lies behind the Bolshevik exultation that the bourgeoisie have been disposed of by the bayonet—and the bayonet has been the most merciful instrument of that Bolshevik idealism of which Mr. Turner says, "But still the idealism seems to be right." I wonder whether he has made an effort to realise how immense must be the total sum of the individual agony which achieved this Bolshevik consummation. I wonder whether



he has emancipated himself from the idea that "bourgeois" as a noun, is an abstract noun meaning "reaction" or "conservative sympathies," or "villadom," or some other abstraction, and realises that it stands for the living bodies of men and women, and even children, for whom the bayonet came as a relief from the terrors and tortures inflicted by the hired Chinese bravos that must have made the prospect of death even sweet?

I wonder whether he has ever told himself that the term bourgeois, as an adjective, merely covers (and covers with an insane contempt) that social class which represents in each nation the civilising element and impulse; and whether he has considered what personal virtues of self-control, self-reliance, self-respect, self-denial, self-improvement, and effort go to produce the bourgeois? I wonder whether he understands that Russia, the least civilised great nation, has merely impoverished its own fund of civilised assets by this simple prescription of bayonets for bourgeois? Eighteen months ago I wrote of Bolshevism:—

"A political system which would have allowed Dogberry to tap Shakespeare on the shoulder and conduct him before the local Jack Cade, or that would have destroyed Charles Dickens and preserved Bill Sikes, would, in time, produce a human society whose natural habitat was not cities built by men, but the primeval forest.—("The Sunday Chronicle," Dec., 1918).

And I wonder whether Mr. Turner's mind has gone down to the thought that this war on the bourgeoisie is merely man's barbarous revolt against himself. I wonder whether, when he spoke of England being "considered by the whole world" as "the greatest and best country in the universe," he himself had considered how much of its

greatness and goodness are due to the class which the system he supports exterminates by the bayonet?

I call it an historical scene—this homely discourse by an English labour man in an English market-place to defend and commend a system which has furnished the most awful example of man's inhumanity to man that has been known this side of the dark ages. It is historical, because it summarises the psychological and political condition of England in a generation which will puzzle generations to come. It is historical because, if the memory of it is preserved, it will explain to the generations yet to come exactly why the Labour movement perished and decayed.

## HOMAGE

I am sure that Mary and Douglas need no introduction to you—you must have noticed their names in the papers lately! Mary and Douglas came to town last Monday (I think it was Monday, but even they cannot be quite sure, after all that has happened to them since), and on Wednesday they smuggled themselves out of town, destination unknown, to escape the perilous homage of London's multitude. They came here to see the sights, and have merely been seen, or have seen nothing but idolatrous crowds that besieged their hotel and would not let them emerge, that cheered themselves frantic when Douglas threw a casual leg over a fifth-floor balcony, and that droned out, "We want our Mary!" for hours on end. They went to a garden party that became merely a *mêlée*, with "surging crowds of women of all classes" hunting them down for kisses and handshakes and with fountain pens and autograph albums. The idolators almost trampled on Mary, and Douglas had to do a thrilling scene in real life to rescue her from homage that clutched and clawed. And Douglas has had to enrich our language—or, more strictly, perhaps, his own—by a new word. "This beats me. It's so absolutely overwhelming that I can only coin a word to meet it. Abwhelming, I call it!"—and I hope it gets no further.

Well, it is no use adopting a superior-person pose about the frenzied homage paid to Mary. I, at any rate, am debarred from it, for I have never even seen the flickering image of Mary, and know nothing of her art (so far as the cinema can project it) or her charm—so far as a voiceless moving vision can reveal it. And so it may be that Mary (and Douglas) have carried human personality up to a point of adorable revelation which one would have thought beyond the limit of possibility, far beyond the accomplishment of saints and heroes. Perhaps, if I had seen Mary (and Douglas) on the screen, I, too, should have been moved to ecstasy by that careless leg thrown over the balcony, and should have wept with joy at catching in my hat one of the kisses that Mary blew—perhaps, and on the other hand, perhaps not. As it is, I feel that I have no right even to go on calling them Mary and Douglas (still less the “dear old Duggy” of Tuesday’s quickly ripened intimacy), and if I henceforth allude to them as Miss Mary Pickford and Mr. Douglas Fairbanks, it is only because I hope I know my manners. Besides, they have borne themselves, considering the immense difficulties, so modestly, and have behaved so sensibly amidst much that seemed to be so senseless, that I feel they are entitled to the ordinary courtesies and amenities of life—which, indeed, may now even be refreshing and welcome to them.

Of the idols, then, not an ungracious word. But the idolators are another matter. In these “goey,” democratic days, one ought not, of course, to revive the obsolete word and idea of what used to be called manners. But, had I been writing, say, ten years ago, I think I might have

risked it, and asked whether it was really quite the thing positively to frighten people with the frenzy of your welcome. But manners, of course, are out of the modern question. Sanity, however, is still recognised—however imperfectly and fitfully—as a desirable human attribute, and this insensate worship of cinema stars makes me a little uneasy. After all, Miss Pickford is not Joan of Arc, nor is Mr. Fairbanks, let us say, Shakespeare; but neither of these immortal figures re-incarnated could or would have evoked such “absolutely overwhelming” tributes. And so the behaviour of thousands of more or less educated people right in the heart of Imperial London becomes a matter of legitimate public concern. Miss Pickford and Mr. Fairbanks may even think they are representatives of the national character, and I shudder to think of the headlines that must have been sprawling across the front pages of the American newspapers during this week!

Fortunately, we are told how it strikes one who is not of our race and who is not a modern, but a poet spiritually living among the eternities—Rabindranath Tagore.

Through a dense crowd waiting outside Kensington Palace Gardens in the hope of seeing Mary Pickford passed an Indian gentleman, tall and dignified. He paused to scan the gathering through his gold-rimmed glasses, and stroked his long, iron-grey beard, as if wondering what the gathering could signify. Then he proceeded on his way, unnoticed by the crowd, unaware that they had in their midst the Indian poet and mystic.

Hot-foot upon him pressed the inevitable interviewer, fortuitously there, who explains what the crowd meant and who Miss Mary Pickford is, and asks him what he thinks of it all. The poet does not like to say. He is reluctant “to say anything disparaging about an indivi-



dual of whom he knows nothing whatever, but who evidently exercises such immense power over the minds of the people." He had "always believed that the unsophisticated mind of the people had an instinctive wisdom which unconsciously attracted it towards the deeper needs and enjoyment of life." But the crowd waiting for Miss Pickford shocks him: "In Japan the whole population comes out in spring to see the cherry trees in blossom. In ancient Greece the performance of great dramas attracted not merely the men of some exclusive coteries of culture, but the common people, who had the sensitiveness of mind to be able to enjoy immortal works of art." This worship of natural beauty or great art he understood, "but the sight of a great concourse of crowds come to express their adoration for a power that satisfies some momentary craving for sensation is disconcerting to my mind."

Disconcerting is the right word—and the spectacle which shocks him is, unfortunately, most disconcerting to those who have the highest hopes for humanity, and most rebukes those who put all their faith in democracy. For, unhappily, the truth seems to be that the crowd will always remain the crowd, and will worship at strange shrines, and that the few will always dominate the multitude, by one power or another. "Tell them," says Miss Pickford, "I should like to shake hands with them all and see them all singly—but I can't!" And so a democratic Prime Minister might say, "Tell them I should like to hear all their views, and to do exactly as each asks me—but I can't!" And just as each democrat feels he ought to have direct personal access to the governing power, so each

idolator wants direct personal recognition from the idol—and it can't be done. "But tell them," says Miss Pickford in a comprehensive gesture of despair, "that I just love them all!" Alas, that is more than we can say of ourselves just now! But one wishes that the torrents of goodwill that gushed to waste in London this week might have been used to fertilise more goodwill amongst ourselves. One would like to feel that the homage of the crowd would be as freely, though more profitably, given to any man who would lift England out of her present mood and plight.

## THE STORM CENTRE

[Civil warfare, lasting several days and with a long death-roll, had broken out in Derry during the last week of June, 1920. A few days previously a deputation of Irish railwaymen (among them several Sinn Feiners), introduced by Mr. J. H. Thomas, M.P., had waited on the Prime Minister to justify their refusal to allow members of the N.U.R. in Ireland to work any trains carrying troops or munitions, and to ask the Government to withdraw its troops from Ireland, and to refrain from sending any more munitions, until certain Labour Congresses had met. What follows was written under a sense that the Government was gradually losing control of the situation in Ireland, despite the Premier's energetic declarations to the railwaymen that the Government intended to remain "adamant" and "If it is a question of setting up an independent Irish Republic, that is a thing we could only accept if we were beaten absolutely to the ground."—Official Report.]

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A week ago Mr. Lloyd George, in dismissing a deputation of Irish railwaymen who had come to instruct him in his duty, told them, with what can only be called excessive amiability, that he "had been very glad to have heard

the views presented so very ably and clearly by the representatives of Sinn Fein." A week later, the representatives of Sinn Fein in Derry are also presenting their views very ably and clearly—for they are quite good shots and have plenty of ammunition—and one wonders when the Government, on its part, is going to present its own views in terms as direct and unmistakable.\*

Unfortunately, the Government does not even verbally present its policy towards Ireland very ably and clearly; and, worse still, it apparently does not realise that unless its policy is more clearly defined and more ably presented, it will soon find itself confronted at the same moment with the need for an immense decision and with a public opinion quite unprepared for it. The decision it may have to take is either to conquer Ireland as an enemy country is conquered, or to allow Ireland to secede from the United Kingdom, and by that secession start what would then be the swift process of the breaking up of the British Empire. If it decides, as it must (and as the Premier has said it will), that the first choice alone is possible before the other alternative, it will have to rely

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\*The civil warfare in Derry came as a great embarrassment to the English sympathisers with Sinn Fein, who were just then vehemently protesting, during the debates in the House of Commons on what they called the "Partition Act" against its underlying principle that Ireland was not a united country. Thus, "The Westminster Gazette" ventured to reproach the Sinn Feiners concerned: "We should have thought that at this particular moment they would have used every endeavour to avoid a conflict with Ulster. Claiming, as they do, that Ireland is one people, and has only one enemy, England, this demonstration of her terrible divisions must seriously weaken their case." (June 22, 1920). It will be noticed that not the fact revealed, but its inconvenient revelation, was the chief concern. The revelation did not in the slightest degree "weaken their case" with their English advocates, who continued to urge that the Home Rule Bill unnaturally divided a united Ireland,

solely upon the support of public opinion in Great Britain to carry through such a vast, and repugnant, but necessary, task.

After all, if the ultimate development of the Irish crisis is that we may have to face with determination, as the Premier tells the railwaymen the Government is prepared to do, a civil war of a million casualties and five years' duration, it is pretty obvious that the very first essential of success is that the country will see the Government through. But it is equally obvious that the Government has done amazingly little either to prepare the public mind for its task or to convince public opinion of the justice of its cause. On the contrary, it has allowed Sinn Fein pretensions such a start and advantage that one section of the political community is already "officially" hinting that if the choice has to be made, Sinn Fein will find Labour on its side; so that, when the choice has to be made, the Government will enter on its formidable task with enemies already established in its own camp.\*

What that would mean is again clear enough. The word "revolution" is now so openly used by the Labour leaders that it would be an affected stupidity to ignore a possibility that would become a strong probability if the trouble in Ireland reaches that stage to which, by every progressive indication, it is swiftly marching. The plain truth of the situation is that the Government, if driven to the task of reconquering Ireland, may find itself hamstrung by Labour here—unless an abler and clearer justification of that policy succeeds in creating in the general

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\*Immediately afterwards, a Labour Party Conference held at Scarborough declared its readiness to "let Ireland go wherever she wishes."



mass of British people such an acute sense of the rightness of the British case that the support given by Labour to Sinn Fein will, at least, be negated. But time is short—perhaps already too short—for the transition of general public opinion from the fatalistic apathy with which it now regards the Irish problem, like all other problems, to the vivid and acute perception of what is at stake.

For the Irish problem is now absorbed in the greater problem which looms upon us—the maintenance of ordered government in Great Britain itself. The Labour party with its violent sympathy for “internationalism,” does not give its sympathy to Sinn Fein because of any specific affinity with that violently nationalist movement. It gives its sympathy because Sinn Fein is now only part and parcel of the general revolutionary movement, and if Sinn Fein were to win as a national cause it would have won the first round in the revolutionary cause itself.

Ireland, then, is now the storm centre of the whole political situation; and the immediate importance of the Irish problem to us is, not its relation to the fate of Ireland, but to our own fate—just as the first and immediate importance of the Home Rule Bill is not that it proposes to settle the right relation of Ireland to Britain within the Union, but that it will give the Government the moral justification for the steps it may have to take to prevent Ireland going outside the Union. The Home Rule Bill is, in fact, analogous to that “payment into court” of a sum admittedly due which strengthens the resistance to a more exorbitant claim.

I do not think that this function of the Home Rule Bill has been sufficiently recognised, and too much latitude and

acquiescence have been given to the view that the Bill is an "unreality." The action of the Asquithian Liberals in standing aside from the discussion of the Bill on the ground that it is, as Mr. Asquith said in a phrase of turgid rhetoric too long to quote, a "travesty" of justice to Ireland, should have been smothered with contempt as being what it demonstrably is—a political dishonesty of the first magnitude. But, unfortunately, that view has been allowed to infect the whole debate and has been very inadequately met by the Government, which probably does not even realise what would lie on the other side of a breakdown of their "last effort."

It is, of course, quite true that to prescribe the Bill as a remedy for Sinn Fein would be, as has been said, "like prescribing a pill for an earthquake," whatever that locution may mean. But that is not the intention of the Bill. Its first immediate purpose is not to satisfy or answer Sinn Fein, but to proclaim that the Bill represents (according to the Government's reiterated declarations) the farthest concession that can be made to the only degree of Irish national sentiment that Britain can recognise, and so to leave the hands of Britain clean and free for any task that may lie ahead.

The first thing, then, to be settled and proved in any effort to prepare the public mind for whatever military policy might have to come, is that the policy actually proposed to Ireland, and rejected with scorn by Sinn Fein and by English Liberals alike, is so just as to make the military policy justifiable if it became inevitable. We were sure enough of our cause in 1914, and yet it had to be pursued, during the whole struggle, in the teeth of

treacheries and defections. It is hardly of less importance that we should be sure of our cause in what may lie ahead of us in resisting the aims of a revolutionary Ireland, for we may be sure that if stern work were forced upon us, we should be betrayed by the same enemies\* now immensely more powerful, numerous, and self-confident through the spread of the revolutionary spirit.

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\*We had not long to wait before the "betrayal" came in the clearest indications from English Liberals that they would give no support to any effort to assert constitutional government in Ireland. Three months afterwards Mr. Asquith made that quite clear; and exactly a year later the Government (by calling the Conference with Sinn Fein and offering Ireland that "Dominion settlement" which Mr. Asquith had called for) indicated just as clearly its abandonment of any such intention.

## IRELAND : A RETROSPECT

A whole generation of English people has grown up under the shadow of the belief and the reproach that "the English can never understand the Irish." Speaking for myself, I escaped from the tyranny of that hypnosis by beginning to reflect, about a decade ago, that in any case the converse must be equally true and just as reproachful to the Irish intelligence; but that the fact probably was that the Irish were past understanding by the English except on the acceptance of this truth: that the Irish have a capacity for not merely bearing, but nourishing, a grievance which is naturally bewildering to that tolerant race which "lets bygones be bygones"—a phrase, and perhaps its philosophy also, which has no adequate equivalent among the popular sayings of other peoples. Put shortly, the Irish have an awful and immense capacity for hatred—which, if it were fully reciprocated by the English, would very summarily settle the Irish problem. (In passing, let me note the incoherence that this everlasting hatred of England by the Irish is defended and upheld by precisely those English people who vituperatively condemn any of their fellow-countrymen suspected of hating Germany for what *she* has done).

This legend of England's inability to understand Ireland, which has obsessed a generation, is really respon-

sible for a good deal of the acute development of the Irish problem. It has produced a disastrous sense of helplessness in the mind of the average Englishman, and has led him to regard the political vagaries of Ireland with quite an irrational indulgence. Above all, it has led him to accept the entirely exaggerated estimate which Ireland herself makes both of her own importance and her grievance.

If, however, we shake off the thralldom of this idea that the Irish are too spiritually profound and too temperamentally complex to be understood by the soulless or dull-witted English (and if we also deprive the Irish grievance of the sympathetic advantage it receives from the widespread development of revolutionary ideas, and think of the problem only in relation to a normal ordered world), we shall begin to see something of the essential simplicity of the Irish problem. Essentially, and after making all historical allowances, Ireland has no current grievance which the rest of the members of the United Kingdom might not share if they cared to make it one.

It has become the almost unchallenged fashion among English partisans of Ireland to speak of "the denial of her freedom" as though she were deprived of any constitutional rights whatever; and those partisans did not scruple during the war to compare Ireland's "struggle for liberty" against England with that of Belgium herself against Germany. But, reduced to its simplest terms, the Irish grievance is merely that Ireland does not possess that which no other member of the kingdom possesses: a Parliament all to herself. The political life of even England, the "oppressor," herself, is not free and unre-



strained, but is so much at the mercy of other non-English combinations and influences that English nationalism may almost be said to be non-existent—for Liberal policy during the last thirty years has deliberately depressed and suppressed the English national sense whilst aggrandising and flattering the national sense of every other partner in the kingdom.

There arises, next, the consideration whether, though denied the extension of her constitutional liberty which she constitutionally claimed, she was unjustly governed. Fortunately, where space is short, I can dispose of that point by calling as a witness the late Mr. John Redmond, who, in 1916, shortly before the Irish rebellion, in conspiracy with "gallant allies on the Continent," signed a now forgotten Nationalist manifesto appealing to his countrymen to come into line with England in the common emergency of the Great War. That manifesto contained, amidst much to the same effect, these passages:—

Two-thirds of the entire land of the country has passed into the hands of the people. . . . Tens of thousands of cottages have been built all over Ireland. . . . The Irish labourers have been transformed from the worst housed, worst-clothed, and worst-fed class in Europe into the best-housed, the most comfortable and the most independent body of labourers in the world. . . . There has grown up a new Ireland of happy and prosperous homes. . . . Local government has been wrenched from landlords, and is now in entire possession of the people. . . . The tenants in towns have achieved a charter far in excess of anything ever extended to any city or town in England.

But, to get back to the constitutional issue, the Home Rule movement, recognising special claims for Ireland then not urged or even contemplated for England, Scotland, or Wales, at length succeeded in passing a Home Rule Bill into law [1913] and Ireland once more had her

separate Parliament—on parchment and the statutes. How is it that that is as far as it got?

To give the ultimate, and, therefore, the least obvious explanation, it was because the Parliamentary vote is both asked and given without a full sense of the voter's responsibility. A Home Rule Government was in power, and though it was certainly not returned with the clearest specific mandate for Home Rule, it may be admitted that it was returned to power with the general knowledge that it would develop a Home Rule policy.

But, as soon as the Home Rule Bill had passed into law, the underlying difficulty in the whole problem then became acutely manifest. Ulster had not been forgotten, but merely ignored. And the flaw in the Government position was that the electors of Great Britain had been merely asked, "Do you agree to Home Rule for Ireland?" and had answered in effect, "By all means." But the question had not been put to them, "Do you not only agree with Home Rule for Ireland, but are you so determined she shall have it that any objection to it by Ulster shall, if necessary, be over-ridden by force?" If that question had been asked, in 1910, it is pretty certain that the answer would have been, "Well, no—we would hardly go so far as that." But the question had to be asked afterwards, and from 1912 until the Great War broke out it became increasingly apparent what the answer was.

In 1912 the Liberal attitude to Ulster was that she was only "bluffing," and, in the alternative, that if she was not bluffing, she was "defying the Imperial Parliament." So she was, but she was defying the Imperial Parliament to do what it very well knew it had had no electoral

authority to do: to coerce Ulster—and that acknowledgment was afterwards made by Mr. Asquith declaring they had no intention to coerce Ulster. But in 1912 that acknowledgment had not been made, and the position was that orthodox Home Rulers dismissed Ulster with the contemptuous word “Bluff!” and the orthodox Unionists opposed Home Rule in any form or degree.

At that time I was myself an orthodox Home Ruler—with qualifications. For I thought I saw in the strict party faiths (one asking too much and the other conceding too little) no hope of rational settlement, but only a perpetuation of the problem, whichever party triumphed. Throwing party orthodoxy into the dustbin, I saw two things with equal clearness:—(1) That the bare negative of Unionism could not be maintained, but (2) that the Liberal contempt of Ulster could not be defended from even a Liberal point of view, and could be maintained only by straining Liberal principles. It seemed obvious that the Liberalism which proclaimed “government with the consent of the governed” for Irish Nationalists to whom “English” supremacy was repugnant, must also apply to Ulster, to which Nationalist supremacy was equally repugnant; and the case became stronger, and not weaker, by the reflection that the Nationalist movement was the expression of an intense animosity to my own country, whilst the Ulster resistance was the expression of a loyalty just as intense—so long as it was reciprocated and respected by England. For England could not expect its continuance if she subjected Ulster to a Nationalist yoke in order to free Nationalist Ireland from the “English” yoke.

The party faith, however, was too outraged by such an effort at honest, non-partisan thinking to allow the publication of such heterodoxy in any Liberal journal, but a more commendable broad-mindedness allowed me to write, in what was then a Unionist daily, an article ("The Daily Mail," September 9, 1912) which advocated as "the only way out," what is now the governmental policy, as may be seen by these culminating passages:—

But let us assume that Ireland a nation is really the final truth of the matter. In that case, I say that if the one-ness of Ireland be indeed a reality, and not a political phrase, then North and South will be much more likely to find out the reality after a period of probation in separate self-government than by being yoked together from the start in a "union" which will merely repeat on a smaller scale the present "dis-union" between England and Ireland which it is the very object of Home Rule to abolish. Let it be granted that Ireland is one, and should not be divided. Then statesmanship would rather let the two parts find the fact out for themselves than force it upon them in the form of a theory to begin with.

It will be readily seen, I think, that the whole policy of the present Home Rule Bill is implicit in that paragraph, and statesmanship has since carried the matter no further than that.

Nor, as things are, can it. Even statesmanship cannot work by magic, but must operate within the limits of human facts and reason. And human reason or ingenuity simply cannot propose any solution of the Irish problem which ignores the brick-wall fact of the racial and political division of Ireland, or which can go beyond the provision that a united Ireland shall be acknowledged by the Imperial Parliament as soon as ever the unity is discovered and proclaimed by Ireland herself.

The solution now proposed, therefore, gives all she can

ask as well as all she can get\*—short of secession by successful revolution. If that alternative is now presented to us, where does the responsibility lie, apart from those Irishmen who present it? The responsibility lies with that English party spirit which regards party orthodoxy as of higher force than human truth, reason, or even honesty. English Liberalism, baffled and infuriated by its own failure in dealing with Ireland, finds a vindictive satisfaction in the present state of that country, and has quite lost touch with its obligations to either England or the cause of ordered government. It sees the problem of Ireland only from the angle of party prestige, and strains its embittered sympathies solely to the rebellious element in Ireland, whilst being intolerant of the loyal element there; and is so unsympathetic towards the purely British interest and point of view that it may almost be said to be indifferent to it, whilst furtively exulting at the embarrassment of the Imperial Government, now faced with a repugnant and embarrassing duty in repressing rebellion.

Such an attitude at such a time does not deserve the reticences of respect or toleration for it has no other purpose, and will probably have no other effect, than so to debilitate public opinion that the Government, which apparently has none too much confidence even in itself, will also come to believe that it cannot rely upon the British people for support in resisting the Irish demand for secession. I shall therefore carry the matter a little further by trying to show that English "Liberalism" is now merely completing the mischief it has already done,

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\*I had not calculated upon a Government so lightly discarding its own policy which I was here defending.



and that whilst it is now finding a bitter and vindictive satisfaction in the present state of Ireland, it had already performed half its task by preparing Ireland for the state in which she is, with armed rebellion steadily gaining the upper-hand.

## IRELAND'S ENGLISH ALLIES

I concluded the previous article by saying that in this I should try to show that Liberal policy was largely responsible for the present state of Ireland. In any case, things being what they are, that would not be an entirely un congenial task ; but it ceases to be anything like a painful duty after reproaches and protests made to me in the interval by a few outraged Liberals. "This time," writes one, "you have bitten off rather more than you can chew, and I defy you to prove your monstrous charge." The point is whether it is the monstrous truth.

The "monstrous charge" of responsibility for the present state of Ireland is hurled by "official" Liberals at other people with much persistence, and without any apparent reluctance ; and the dreary truth seems to be that modern Liberalism appears to think it proves its own moral superiority by attributing the worst faults of motive and action to its opponents, and by its hot and indignant resentment of anything like the reciprocal process. It is that sort of self-righteousness and absence of self-criticism which makes its modern presentation irritating beyond amiable endurance, and which has deprived "the unfortunate split in the Liberal party" of any poignancy. That by the way.

But I have neither bitten off more than I can chew nor

contended more than I can prove. I intended to prove the first part of the case by showing the responsibility of what may be summarily called "Birrellism" for the Irish Rebellion of 1916, and then to pass on to the tolerance and encouragement given to current Sinn Fein, which is merely the continuance of the Rebellion. But in times when history on the grand scale is recorded in the daily headlines, it is not surprising that one forgets minor historical events; and I had quite forgotten that the whole Liberal policy in Ireland, antecedent to the Rebellion and relevant to it, was formally inquired into and judged by a Royal Commission—whose findings are doubtless already forgotten by others also, but deserve to be recalled because of their urgent application to the present situation. I am, therefore, saved all the trouble of evidence and argument by being able to recite the judgment itself (July 1916) which is not merely convincing but damning:—

The general conclusion that we draw from the evidence before us is that the main cause of the rebellion appears to be that lawlessness was allowed to grow up unchecked, and that Ireland for several years past has been administered on the principle that it was safer and more expedient to leave law in abeyance if collision with any faction of the Irish people could thereby be avoided.

Such a policy is the negation of that cardinal rule of government which demands that the enforcement of law and the preservation of order should always be independent of political expediency. . . .

It appears to us that reluctance was shown by the Irish Government to repress by prosecution written and spoken seditious utterances and to suppress the drilling and manœuvring of armed forces known to be under the control of men who were openly declaring their hostility to your Majesty's Government, and their readiness to welcome and assist your Majesty's enemies.

This reluctance was largely prompted by the pressure brought to bear by the Parliamentary representatives of the Irish people, and in Ireland itself there developed a widespread belief that no repressive measures would be undertaken by the Government against sedition. This led to a rapid increase of preparations for insurrection, and was the immediate cause of the recent outbreak.\*

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\*For further extracts from the Commission's Report see Appendix.

The first part of the "monstrous charge" is there fully sustained.

As the result of that judgment, sweeping and emphatic, Mr. Birrell "went"; and one would have thought that all that is meant by Birrellism would have gone with him. Nothing of the kind. Modern Liberalism simply has no memory, and if a fact destroys its web of sophistry on Monday, it keeps quiet on Tuesday, and on Wednesday starts spinning another web. Just as five years' intensive education of Germany's nature and purpose goes for nothing even whilst the education is proceeding; just as the initial treacheries and subsequent infamies of Bolshevism are remembered only enough to enable it to say that to remember them at all is "melodrama," so the cumulative and culminating proof of the futility of toleration towards Ireland's open enmity still leaves it urging the same futility, after demonstration and condemnation of it have been given. Surely, the most dreary form of unintelligence is that which refuses to learn or to profit by experience, and the refusal of Liberalism even now to acknowledge the lessons that Ireland has taught us during the last five years stamps it as a dangerous force even in opposition, and a disastrous potentiality for government.

During the adult life of every man now middle-aged, Liberal Home Rulers have been repudiating with scorn the "libel" and the "monstrous charge" of Unionism that the implacable Irish spirit would still prove that England's danger was Ireland's opportunity. Until four years ago, it was possible for them to repudiate that "libel" honestly and sincerely. But before me, as I write, lies an original copy of the proclamation issued in 1916

by "The Provisional Government of the Irish Republic," calling upon the Irish people to "strike for freedom":—

"Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation . . . having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe . . . she strikes in full confidence of victory."

A vindictive people would have exacted a very heavy penalty indeed for that supreme treachery. Had the English one-tenth of the malevolence towards Ireland that the Irish have towards England, had England's capacity for remembering wrongs done to her been a hundredth part of that tenacious and brooding and unappeasable memory which, reaching back four centuries, animates Ireland to-day, we should hardly be discussing the "sham and insult" which is all that Liberal Home Rulers can say of this last honest attempt [the Home Rule Bill then before Parliament] to do justice to Ireland.

After that Easter of 1916, at any rate, it became impossible for them any longer to contend, and still be thought honest public guides, that Ireland could still be trusted, or that toleration of lawlessness and a policy of magnanimity was any longer a rational course. Nevertheless, they did, and do still, dishonestly contend these things. Their clamour has repeatedly intimidated the Government to acts of clemency and conciliation, and all these pusillanimities have produced nothing but derision and a bolder defiance—and still the Liberal Home Ruler has the audacity to charge the Government with being responsible for the present state of Ireland, and still he has the courage to urge "a policy of frank goodwill" towards a people whose illwill is unappeasable, and who, at any



rate, have the manliness to scorn concession for the weakness it is.

It is safe to say that no rebellion, in such circumstances of supreme treachery, would have been repressed by any country on earth with less vindictiveness or punishment than the rebellion of 1916. Yet what happened afterwards? All the leading Sinn Feiners, except the very few who paid the final penalty, were safely lodged in custody, and Sinn Fein was effectively scotched. Then came the proposal for the Irish Convention, and at the instance of Sir Horace Plunkett, vociferously supported by the Liberal Home Rulers, England once more acted on the racial impulse to "let bygones be bygones," threw open the prison doors, and let out De Valera and all the Sinn Fein chiefs, so that they might sit round that harmonious board. Did they do so? Did they show the least appreciation of this real magnanimity? Did they allow themselves to see in it any indication whatever that they might be mistaken, after all, in their malevolent estimate of the English character, and make even a tentative reciprocation of this undoubted goodwill? No. They left the Convention to convene, and started straight away from the point when their activities had been interrupted to re-create the organisation of Sinn Fein.

Yet England's magnanimity was even then not exhausted. The steady development of organised murder as part of the campaign for the establishment of an Irish Republic has, perforce, stirred the Government to spasmodic acts of firmness, but each has been cancelled by an act of clemency, and has been followed by another appeal to goodwill—and each concession has been

monotonously succeeded by a higher wave of Sinn Fein energy, so that every batch of released hunger-strikers has meant simply so many more active revolutionaries restored to the ranks, and so many more fresh recruits at each fresh evidence of England's indefatigable goodwill. In face of such cumulative evidence of how Ireland does in fact respond to England's conciliatory moods, it is impossible to say less than that those who still urge a policy of unreciprocated conciliation are themselves virtually accomplices in the revolutionary purpose of Ireland.

And it is by what Liberal Home Rulers refrain from saying as much as by what they say that their responsibility is to be judged. Mr. Asquith has not said a word of adequate condemnation either of Sinn Fein crime or of Ireland's republican demands, but has reserved all his rhetorical energy for denouncing a Bill which he calls "a travesty of Home Rule" (and so travesties the truth), and walks sulkily out of the House of Commons whilst it is being discussed, only to endorse the Irish falsehood that Ireland cannot get any measure of justice from England. A few weeks ago, when public opinion seemed to accept (though I hope only with the fortitude of fatalism) the negotiations with Krassin, Mr. Asquith had the hardihood rather than the courage to say that "the step of opening up trade relations with Russia ought to have been taken a year ago." But "a year ago" Mr. Asquith did not say that steps ought to be taken to open up trade relations with Russia, for a year ago, when the stench from the earlier Bolshevik battues still filled our nostrils, that would have been a difficult thing for even a self-declared English Bolshevik to say. A year hence, if Sinn Fein has by then

reduced Ireland to the useless chaos of an "independence" which would be a calamity to her and yet could be then prevented by us only by a "first-class civil war," Mr. Asquith may say that "a year ago" the Government should have taken steps to save Ireland from her own folly—but he refrains from saying it now, when the counsel might have both weight and point.

But it is his Party's Press that furnishes the most abundant proof of the virtual complicity, by sympathy, of English "official" Liberalism with the revolutionary purpose of Ireland; and the detailed proof of that sympathy is here precluded only by considerations of space. If called for, however, it can be promptly supplied; but the proof is so overwhelming that I do not think the allegation will be authoritatively challenged.

To repeat it in general terms, the distinguishing feature of Home Rule Liberalism is that it readily accommodates itself to every extension of Irish demands, and does not allow its sympathies to be even weakened by crime or alienated by the stark demand for separation and new dies for our Mint. On the contrary (to make the charge specific and clear), it announces in advance that if the Irish want a Republic, and are prepared to fight for it, then English Liberalism is not prepared to support any Government which resists the claim. English Liberalism, in short, has become virtually the ally of revolutionary and separatist Ireland—and that is the monstrous truth.

## A YEAR AGO

On this Saturday last year [July 19, 1919], we were rejoicing for Peace Day. A year after the event we may soberly ask ourselves how much or how little cause we had for rejoicing. Even on that day, eight months after the cessation of war, there was a subdued note in our joy. For the long and wearisome process of making formal peace had blunted our capacity for rejoicing, so that on Peace Day we felt we were rather celebrating the end of the labours of statesmen at Versailles than the victory that had come to us through the long endurance of our race. Moreover, our elation was checked, and even reprimanded, by the really hideous truth that a large section of our countrymen was bent on cheating even the hopes from our victory over external foes by developing within ourselves a war of class enmities that began where the other war left off. Finally, a good many of our countrymen positively grudged us the victory itself; had fought to make it difficult, and had hoped to make it impossible; and, when at last it came, hardly took the trouble to conceal the fact that it gave them no elation or pride whatever.

Looking back, then, on Peace Day, now a year older and wiser, we can see that we are wiser only because every

tendency we then dreaded has since justified foreboding by its progress and development. We had, in fact, one real cause for rejoicing only (affording a purely negative and retrospective gratification), and before us lay a prospect uncertain where it was not actually dark. The overthrow of Britain by Germany had been frustrated, but the price already paid and yet to be paid for that relief almost mocked our thanksgiving; for in the train of victory marched a long retinue of dangers, distresses, confusions, and enmities, so that the end of the Great War threatened to be only the beginning of the end of civilisation. That, I think, is one of the most sinister ironies of history. The question is, To what and to whom do we owe it?

To that question there is only one answer. We owe it, from first to last, to that perverse spirit, as immoral as it is irrational, called Pacifism, which ignobly pleads for all that are ignoble, and yet has the consummate effrontery to pretend to speak for the highest ideals of man; which claims to work for the reconstruction of the world, and yet is the advocate of every agency of disintegration. Pacifism, we surely now can see, has accomplished three things. First, it so debilitated our moral sense that our statesmen, softening before its intimidations, at length accepted its morbid morality, and gave us a fly-blown peace in an atmosphere charged with the false righteousness of the Pacifist theory that colossal crime must be condoned for the sake of that general demoralisation which is their idea of peace. Second, Pacifism has been the open fomentor of revolution. It encouraged the rebellious pretensions of "advanced" Labour in the interests of its anti-war policy, and, now, by extension and



habituation, supports the frankly revolutionary aims of Labour. Third, it has immensely undermined the whole idea of patriotism, and has at length reached the point when it does not trouble to defend itself from the charge of being frankly and simply unpatriotic. As between ourselves and Ireland, Pacifism is on the side of Sinn Fein. As between the Allies and Russia, Pacifism is frankly on the side of the Bolsheviks; as between ourselves and Germany, Pacifism is frankly on the side of the Germans; as between ordered government and direct action, Pacifism masks its revolutionary sympathies by a few perfunctory tributes to constitutionalism that get no further than phrases. For the problems of India or Egypt it has no solution except that which is derived from sympathy with revolt against British rule.

The function of history may be cynically described as that of telling posterity what the contemporary generation itself did not know; and our great grandchildren will have clearly pointed out to them many determining factors and events that we ourselves do not discern. But one thing history cannot make any clearer than it is to our own eyes, and that is how Pacifism became a vital force, influencing policy and therefore changing the course of history. Left to itself as a creed which gave common ground for many discordant discontents (perverse morality in the honest but stupid; the frank spite of unpatriotism in the dishonest; the vanity of the mediocre in obtaining prominence by the initial unpopularity of an anti-national attitude) Pacifism would have remained merely a morbid curiosity of history, but for one disastrous fact. That fact was that a leader arose who focussed all its

diverse and abstract follies into a definite and authoritative policy, and from that moment Pacifism became a world-force. And, seeing what revolutionary and incoherent forces Pacifism comprises, from that moment also the revolutionary and disintegrating forces of the world became coherent and effective. President Wilson's Fourteen Points, which represented what may be called the constructive side of his idealism, were merely fourteen obstacles to a satisfactory peace—and I define a satisfactory peace as being one which would have brought home to Germany a sense of her sin by a justice as ruthless as her own crimes. The fourteen points, however, shackled and hamstrung the Allies. They were wrong for the simplest reasons—that they altered the rules of the contest whilst it was actually in progress, so that a Germany which began its effort to subjugate the world in the full consciousness that the alternative to world power was “downfall,” found that zealous idealists were ready when she had failed to give her the benefit of a totally different set of rules which she herself would never have dreamt of, still less have applied to her victims; and we may yet have to see how Germany will secure through world unrest the aim of world-power she failed to obtain through conquest.

But if President Wilson's idealism was wrong in its immediate application to peace it has done immensely more mischief by the authority it has given to Pacifism, enabling it to cultivate its purely revolutionary activities. Nay, he himself gave a direct encouragement to those activities. In the days when his words passed without criticism, he said that Governments must learn that they

were of no importance beside "the plain man." That was, in any case, an odd dictum from a man whose temperament led him to give a very autocratic interpretation of his office, and whose power was derived from his governmental office only, and not from his own status as "a plain man." But it helped, like all he said and did, to bring authoritative Pacifism into harmony with that purely revolutionary purpose which now absorbs all the other purposes of Pacifism, and which to-day leaves us very little cause indeed for rejoicing.

## DEVOLUTION

The case for Devolution (which has recently been desultorily discussed) is simple enough. It rests on two considerations: that of legislative efficiency and that of satisfying national sentiments; and, for my part, I see no answer to the claims made for it on either ground. But I am primarily interested in the consideration of national sentiment, and am interested in it mainly because, unless English people are vigilant and assertive, they will find that the whole cause of Devolution will involve English acquiescence in a contemptuous estimate of the English national sense. For the warmest supporters of Devolution are those who say that it is only possible by England being chopped up into legislative little bits, so that the smaller nations in the kingdom may not feel hurt by the preponderating importance of an English Parliament which a system of Devolution would reveal. So it is just as well that, early in the discussion and before the scheme is crystallised by the pioneers and accepted by English apathy, it should be made pretty clear that if the price of Devolution is that England is to be reduced to heptarchical débris in order to placate other susceptibilities and make a Celtic holiday, there will be trouble.

It happens that I have taken a particular interest in

Devolution for some years, not as a devolutionist so much as an English nationalist—which is a political classification so novel to the ear that I have sometimes been compelled to repeat it, conversationally, and in print I daresay it gives a shock. But as a Home Ruler, my interest in Home Rule ceased to lie only in its promise for the “appeasement” of Ireland, whose egotistical and unappeasable woes long ago became boring (politically considered, and apart from rebellions, revolutions, and assassinations), but lay also in the promise it gave that when Ireland had been satisfied, and Scotland and Wales had clamoured for their national satisfaction (and received it as a matter of course), poor old England would get her turn—not at all because anybody cared twopence for *her* national aspirations, but because, by a process of exhaustion, there would be no avoiding it. I remained a Home Ruler, therefore, mainly because of the contingent or residuary advantage to England, so that she might once again emerge for what she is, and cease to be smothered by other nationalisms, and controlled by other influences, and her national character repressed and misrepresented and thwarted in political expression. The idea of England being some day governed by an all-English Cabinet (once the other nationalisms had had their way) fascinated like a dream.

Obviously, however, it would not have done to shout that hope from the housetops. For I found that among English Home Rulers you became suspected of being some bizarre and unnatural sort of politician if you speculated upon any advantage to England of Home Rule all round. You might grow purple with enthusiasm for the



national cause of Ireland (or Iceland, or Bolivia, or the Zionist movement), but it was regarded even as bad form or political amateurishness\* to talk about a subject so foreign to the English political intelligence as English self-government. Besides there were the other nations to consider. To a Scotsman, Home Rule for Scotland must sound not so much like political development as a law of nature. To a Welshman, Home Rule for Wales must appear as a belated act of obvious political justice. To an Irishman (of those days), Home Rule had no meaning apart from Ireland herself. But if each and all were made separately to realise that the Home Rule movement, once started, must at length reach even old England herself, their separate nationalisms and enthusiasms might cool before a logical development by which England would control her own political life and become conscious of her own separate nationality. And so one had to be tactful, and say (or write) little, lest Celtic and English radical suspicions were awakened. It was with almost a conspirator's caution that one sized up one's man and dropped a hint. . . .

But, of course, someone must have "blown the gaff." For during the last twelve months the danger has been scented in Celtic political circles, and a few months ago

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\*In the play "Loyalty" (St. James's Theatre, 1917) I had made the protagonist, specifically representing the English point of view in British patriotism, speak of Home Rule for England, to the derisive chorus of the "party politicians" in the play, who contemptuously excluded such an idea from their "practical politics." Many of the dramatic critics of the play adopted the same attitude as the chorus of Pacifist-politicians (whose derision I had intended to be its own satire) and saw in the idea of Home Rule for England "a great joke" and conclusive evidence of "the political amateurishness" of the author of the play (which was produced anonymously).

one Scotch M.P. (I think it was Captain Elliott) went so far as to warn his fellow countrymen that it would be a bad day for Scotland when England came into her own again and stood for what she is. But already the Celtic mind was prepared, and simultaneously with the discovery of the danger came the declaration of how it was to be met. It was to be met by the extremely simple process of hacking up England so small, and into such a lot of inoffensive little Parliaments, that the dignity of no Parliament in Edinburgh, Cardiff, or Dublin would feel affronted. On a procrustean bed England was to be stretched, a limb lopped off here and there, the body squeezed and pulped and boned, and the political reform called Devolution was to be accomplished by what can only be called an English deformation. The real beauty of the whole idea was that it was never supposed that England would object to the process. The little plot first emerged at one of the earliest meetings of the Speaker's Joint Committee. I quote from a Coalition Liberal London paper:

It early became accepted that the areas of Scotland and Wales lent themselves easily to separate treatment as distinct units; Ireland was debateable; England became the serious problem. A suggestion was made that if England remained undivided she would have powers that preponderated over all other units. This was naturally objected to by the champions of other countries. There seemed nothing for it, therefore, but the partition of England herself.—November 7, 1919.

Mark the significance of that "naturally," and the calm assumption of "there seemed nothing for it, therefore." The beauty of the idea is enhanced, moreover, by the fact that those people who grow incoherent with indignation at the proposal to "divide" an Ireland already divided by what seems an impassable gulf, purred

with the most complacent content over the idea of dismembering England, which for a thousand years has been the most homogenous national entity on the face of the earth—England, the cradle of half the White world. The startling thing is not that the proposal should have been made, but that the acquiescence of England should have been taken for granted. I admit that the English national sense is pretty weak, and that English complacence is amazingly accommodating. But I confidently aver that neither quality is so extravagantly perverted that English people are going to see the very mother of Parliaments chopped up into heptarchical mincemeat to please and flatter other Parliaments; and the discussion of Devolution will proceed a little more smoothly if that fact is recognised from the beginning. If England decided to partition herself in the interests of legislative efficiency (which I doubt), let her. But she must be her own butcher and do her own quartering.

## ONCE AGAIN

Some days ago a correspondent wrote in these pages to reprove me, without making any attempt to disprove, for having attributed much of our current unrest to the activities of Pacifism. His criticisms did not seem to me to deserve any specific answer, for though I am always glad to meet an argument, or to profit by reasoned criticism of my own arguments, criticisms that ascribe to me "motives insignificant and unworthy" do not interest me even enough to cause resentment. I admit that my opinions are not anæmically held or expressed, but when a forceful opinion is the only weapon I can wield against violent opinions often enforced by violent action or the threat of it, and when the political ideas that I oppose are themselves expressed with unmatched arrogance and bitterness, I am little inclined to apologise for the strength of my own. On the contrary, I ardently wish some political force would arise to give effect to all opinions like them, so that some resolute will would take up the challenge of every disintegrating movement, restore to constitutional government its lost authority, and find its reward in the relief and support of a people now bewildered and wearied by the tolerance extended to every hostility to good government.

I persist in seeing in what is called Pacifism (though the name is dropping out of current political nomenclature as

the war recedes and pacifism merges into revolutionary activities), the chief agent of all these hostilities. The correspondent to whom I have referred spoke of it as "a comparatively small and ineffective movement" (which is the very view upon which it has thriven, until it is now neither one nor the other), and it may be that others also so think it. What, then, exactly is Pacifism, and what has it accomplished? It is not merely the expression of a humanitarian horror of physical contest and bloodshed, for it could not be that and yet be the partisan of a system of government which has the bloody record of Bolshevism, or be so perfunctory in its condemnation of the murder department of Sinn Fein, or reveal such definite sympathies with that section of Labour which, if it had its way, would repeat in England the physical cruelties and terrors of both régimes. Nor does Pacifism manifest itself only in relation to the problems of the war, seeking to negative a peace based on victory just as it sought to end the war itself without victory. Its attitude to the war is really only one of the many manifestations of a type of mind which has come to be called "intellectual," which is a purely anarchic type of mind, much more sympathetic to revolt than to authority, consciously non-patriotic and international, revolutionary rather than progressive, and bitterly hostile to government based on the conservative or individualistic idea in politics, whilst intent on extending the bureaucratic State in the interests of the communistic idea. In a word, it is practically Bolshevik in everything but opportunity and the crude cruelty of a low civilisation. Some Pacifists "would not hurt a fly," but view without a shiver men and women being murdered whole-



sale if only the human truth is disguised by the political abstraction of "bourgeoisie."

And what has this ineffective movement done? Briefly, in war it was our internal enemy (at the least a drag on the national effort, at the worst a plotter against the achievement of the national purpose) and since the war ended it has supported every development of that class war which it pioneered during the war in the interests of its pro-German policy. On the eve of war, it sought, first through the Neutrality League, and then through the League of Democratic Control, to keep us out of it altogether by trying to "rouse Labour" to do what Labour declined to do. When conscription was proposed it told Labour that it had the right and the duty to resist, and from that moment and by that claim, it raised the pretensions of Labour to control government. It upheld the right to strike during war, and did not uphold the duty to fight. It promoted open conspiracies to end the war by compromise, and told Labour (which by then was taking up these claims on its own account) that its duty was to overthrow the Government and end the war "in its own way." It has stimulated Labour to make every unconstitutional claim it has since developed. This "ineffective movement" also brought into being the League of Nations—and before any one says that that is something to its credit, let him reflect that the Pacifist aim was to bring the League into being during the war in order to evade victory and a peace based on it. It has been so effective that by its sympathetic attitude to Sinn Fein it has immensely increased the difficulties of the Imperial Government, and has so debilitated public opinion that no man

now can say a Government would receive the support it needs to resist or overthrow an Irish Republic. We are on the eve of finally recognising the Bolshevik State, and nothing but the pertinacities of Pacifism (stirring up Labour to believe that hostility to Bolshevism meant hostility to "democracy") will have brought that supreme demoralisation about. Finally, this ineffective movement has succeeded so well that it now practically inspires and impregnates the whole policy of "official" Liberalism, or of any alternative government—save that sort of government which would smash Pacifism and all it stands for with a heavy hand.

But if you wish to realise exactly how effective and established Pacifism has at length become—solely through the toleration extended from the beginning to its progressive audacities—you have but to read the following extracts (which lead me to take up the subject again) from authoritative Pacifism. The passages quoted were written a week ago by Mr. A. G. Gardiner, in the "Daily News," and of Mr. Gardiner less cannot be said than that he is, by the opportunity given him in the Pacifist Press, one of the most sinister agents of Pacifist turbulence in the kingdom, as I have elsewhere abundantly proved.\* Writing on the Bolshevik reply to the Allied Note from Spa, he says:—

"It gibbets the Allies for ever in the pages of history. . . . The Allies cut as poor a figure before the indictment of the Russian Government as any card-sharper that ever appeared in the dock. . . . Perhaps the much-maligned and sorely tried Russia will show more wisdom and statesmanship in the hour of success than she has been taught by the shady and slippery body that she has beaten and rebuked."—July 24, 1920.

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\*"Disloyalty: The Blight of Pacifism" (1918).

Those passages suggest many reflections. Their envenomed unpatriotism certainly suggests how far Pacifism has established itself, when it can say of the Allies all that the Bolsheviks themselves would say of them, and say it not only with impunity, but without any longer exciting resentment or surprise. When one reflects on behalf of what cause it is that such embittered partisanship is displayed (so unscrupulously embittered that it does not stop at comparing the statesmen of the partisan's own land with "card sharpers" in relation to a Government based on massacre), those passages arouse the hope that we might borrow enough of the Lenin-Trotsky methods to discourage that sort of thing. The passages also suggest how difficult government has become through the application of toleration to intolerable people, who have gone far beyond the point where toleration is either due or defensible.

## TOLERATION

[On July 28, 1920, Archbishop Mannix, who had been making speeches in the United States fiercely denouncing England, sailed from New York in the *Baltic*. "One of the noisiest anti-British demonstrations ever organised by the Sinn Fein Irish of New York" crowded the pier to see him off, and Mr. de Valera, then a fugitive in America, attended him.

The crowd "yelled insults at the British flag, flying at the "*Baltic's*" stern. Now and then a youth in the uniform of a United States sailor or soldier would mount to a point of vantage as he yelled "To hell with England!" ("*Daily Chronicle*"). Resenting these insults, Mr. Joseph Shaw, of Leeds, reciprocated them, and then was pursued by Sinn Feiners with iron stanchions, from whom he was rescued by the police.

With such a bon voyage, Archbishop Mannix sailed, as he thought, for Ireland, having challenged the British Government to prevent his landing there. But near the Irish coast a British torpedo-boat intercepted the "*Baltic*," took off the Archbishop, and landed him at Penzance. For a fortnight there was a great outcry in England, but, with very little support indeed from Press or politicians, the Government held firm in its determina-

tion not to allow the Archbishop to go to Ireland to inflame the passions there, and the agitation died down as the Government kept firm.]

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In concluding last week's article I spoke of toleration being neither due nor defensible to intolerable people, and I seize the topical pretext now afforded by Mr. Joseph Shaw, of Leeds, to enlarge the point, which, briefly, is that toleration cuts both ways. Mr. Shaw expressed the point the other way round, by showing that intolerance must also cut both ways. Being just as intolerant of Sinn Fein haters of England as they are of the England they hate, Mr. Shaw very rightly and reasonably answered them back, and for that simple act of most legitimate reciprocity was, from all accounts, nearly murdered, even standing under his own flag.

It was a curious scene, just as significant, though it may not prove as historical, as an earlier scene in another American harbour—Boston. For on the deck of an English ship, just about to leave the shores of a "great and friendly Power," stood the prelate of a Church which has no reason to complain of the tolerance of England, but who for a decade past has devoted his episcopal office and authority out in Australia to a campaign of abuse of England, having the quite definite object of so infecting the Commonwealth with Ireland's own hatred, that its allegiance to the motherland would be weakened and "the painter" cut. It is his own boast, confirmed by the charges made against him by his own co-religionists out there and still loyal to the Empire, that he frustrated the effort of Australia to replenish her shattered divisions



during the war, and that he associated with every element hostile to the cause of the Allies, even during the dark days of the March (1918) offensive. And now, sailing under the flag of what to him is an "enemy country," he surveys from the deck of the "Baltic" a frenzied crowd that shows its devotion to him by hissing the name and flag of England—execrating England whilst their hero is being borne away on an English ship to (as he hopes) his native Ireland, there to fan the fierce flame of hatred which he himself has industriously blown upon for ten years. And an Englishman, also surveying the crowd, but seeing it with an English eye, sees it very differently from the Archbishop at his side waving benedictions to it, for the Englishman returns its maledictions as heartily as they are given—"somewhat unwisely," as an English Coalition paper puts it. And in that "unwisely" lies the whole issue and debate concerning toleration.

Why "unwisely"? I will tell you why. Simply because the tolerance of England and of the English has become such a tradition that careless and unanalytical minds do not realise that there are times when even a tradition must be broken. The whole case for toleration is that its spirit must be reciprocal. The whole case for abandoning toleration is that its spirit is neither requited nor respected, but is merely exploited and abused. I suppose the contention hardly needs proof that England, its people, and therefore its government, is as tolerant a nation as any on the face of the earth. And I think we have merely found that toleration does not pay, and that other nations and races seek merely to hamper us with our own traditions without making any attempt to copy

them, so that whilst others may steal horses, we ourselves may not look over the hedge.

On the other hand, aggression and intolerance *do* succeed in obtaining a respectful sort of consideration. I suppose (again to make a proposition beyond discussion) that even a liar would not contend that England, in all her long history, has ever been guilty of such a purpose of deliberate aggression as that which Germany revealed six years ago. Her purpose was, briefly, to enslave the world just as our purpose was, not for the first time, to save the world from any such fate. The German purpose almost succeeded. If it had succeeded little more would have been said, because very little more would have been allowed to be said; but even though it failed Germany is discovering that the world is much more eager to forget the brutal attempt than to remember it or dwell upon it, and those English people who seem to wish to see England always trussed up tightly in her "traditions" are precisely those who let it be known that Germany has suffered very little indeed in *their* respect.

Or take Bolshevism, which is nothing less than intolerance, absolute and unqualified, concentrated in government and expressed by force and cruelty. Do we find that even this most absolute antithesis of tolerance suffers very severely from the moral reprobation of the rest of the world? Not at all. Its physical and material success has given it the prestige which goes with success, and it may soon command, by the ruthless exercise of its power over Poland\* that respect which coward souls so often pay to

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\*The Red Armies of the Soviet were then marching on Poland, with every expectation of complete success,

the unscrupulousness that has the last word by accomplishing its purpose. Nay, the Soviet State has already received, from its very earliest and bloodiest beginnings, the support of precisely those people amongst ourselves who are always urging toleration and restraint upon England, and who wish always to see her strangled in the coils of every "tradition" that effaces her authority or numbs her will. Some day, and perhaps soon, the English people, being at last "fed up" with traditions of toleration, and finding that though the meek may ultimately inherit the earth, they are a long time in coming to their inheritance, may decide that a policy so misunderstood and derided and mistaken for mere flabbiness, must give way to a policy more suited to the temper of the times. But you may be sure that, however imperative the necessity which obliges her to modify the tradition of tolerating even that which is intolerable, the reproach will then be flung in her teeth that she is also a perfect example of the hypocrite for having so long disguised her real nature under a "tradition" that was but a mask.

The considerations that apply to England's tolerance in relation to other races also apply to the tolerance extended to many intolerable and intolerant people within her own household, and it would be an easy matter to show, as I may later do, that we now find ourselves exactly where we are (wherever that may be) mainly because of the deference paid to the tradition of tolerance long after it was either due or defensible. To-day the word and threat of "revolution" is breathed openly. Three years ago it had scarcely been uttered, even under the breath, but those who wished to utter and threaten it, and who first tried to

do it periphrastically, soon found out that the old tradition was still working. And, finding that it gave them immunity for practically anything they might say or do, they very naturally went further, and then further, until now there is a definite Revolutionary party, which discusses merely the date when it is to "come off," and until a Member of Parliament (though I admit his name is Malone)\* finds no difficulty in saying that he hopes he will never re-enter Parliament save in the company of Red Guards come to smash up the futile place.

And so we see how the tradition of Toleration, indiscriminately applied, works out in practice. It does not act as "a safety valve" only, but as an encouragement as well; it does not only "let off steam," but stokes the boilers also. It does not assist the revolutionary mind to see the error of its ways, so much as confirm it in its own judgments and arrogance. Are we, then, to assume that the virtue of repression must replace the vice of toleration? Not entirely. That repression of sedition which is permitted (and obliged) by the existing law, should be rigorously pursued as a matter of course; and perhaps the law against sedition might be strengthened with advantage. But the abuse of the tradition of toleration is really to be laid as much at the door of the governing as of the governed. When those who govern have a dignity equal to their office, and possess those qualities of patriotic and disinterested courage, sincerity, and capacity, which give authority to statesmanship and preserve its traditions, they are pretty certain to find

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\*Sent to prison some months afterwards for a speech at the Albert Hall advocating lamp-posts for Cabinet ministers, November 1920.

their own regard for those traditions mirrored in the attitude of the people. But rebellion, you will say, is a manifestation of "the modern spirit." I quite agree; but then, perhaps, that is because some of our statesmen are so very modern, too.



## WHITEWASH

When Messieurs Krassin and Kameneff looked down on the House of Commons the other day from the Distinguished Strangers' Gallery, they looked down in triumph on a great capitulation.\* They represent a State which looks down on Houses of Commons in another sense, for the new Czardom has rather less respect than the old for representative assemblies. Nor will I say that in all cases their contempt is undeserved—they could not have been sitting there at all if the House of Commons had not lost much of its own self-respect.

But the House "recognised" them, in every sense of the word, and Labour members looked up at them, and gave them the glad eye of comradeship and political affinity. They represent a Government which represents—what? Justice, humanity, freedom, and all those attributes which, so oddly, still linger on the lips of their friends and advocates here? No, it represents the precise and actual opposite of these things. It stands for Force—not even the disciplined force of a great national cause, but for a force exerted over their own people in primitive

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\*The final adoption, August 10th, 1920, of the Trade Treaty with the Soviet State, after many "hitches" but apparently no hesitation on the part of H.M.'s Government. Actual signature, owing to more hitches, was delayed till March, 1921.

savagery and simple cruelty—until at last, by sustained tyranny and ruthless discipline, it has consolidated a State that began with guttersnipes fighting each other for offal into a great engine of military power, which (it is said) now has the Continent of Europe almost at its mercy, and now strides over Poland.

We have just come through a great war in which we, too, had a defeated enemy\* (but such a different enemy) at our mercy; and those people who here support Bolshevism have for several long years concentrated all their vituperative righteousness on the contention that victors must not exact the price of victory. But, at the first clear sign that Poland would be prostrate before the Bolshevik armies, a very different note was sounded, and we were told that the Bolsheviks would be “more than human” if they did not press their advantage, and the “disarmament” of Poland was instantly suggested, so that she might be helpless before any Sovietising process that might then begin. Whilst our own war was in progress we were bidden to believe that it was a war for everything except that for which it was waged—our own national existence and the existence of so many other nations that it also became a war for human liberty. By turns it was described as “a fight for Democracy,” and a war to “free the German people”; and again, when the circumstances demanded the change of text, a war “for the little nations.” And now that Poland, whose freedom was the only positive triumph of the peace, is helpless, it is quite forgotten that

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\*The downfall of Poland seemed inevitable, and was accepted by our pro-Bolsheviks as a foregone conclusion, when the situation was dramatically changed by the Polish defence becoming an active offensive, and turning the flight of the Red Army into a rout.

she, too, is a little nation, and is the classic example in history of a nation torn and dismembered. "And Freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell"—but Freedom could not produce the tiniest scream at the prospect of Poland falling now. For Freedom these days has lost her voice.

Well, there are Messieurs Kameneff and Krassin sitting over the Clock. Nothing has changed—everything has merely been forgotten. The pits full of slaughtered bourgeois no longer heave with the last agonies of those only half dead. All is still. The regiments of reliable Chinese executioners are long ago disbanded, and their work is done. Butchery has ceased, for there are none left to butcher. Wholesale pillage has ceased, for there is nothing to steal, (now that the Bolshevik State itself has gone into the business by stealing everything) even in retail. The prisons are not so crowded with victims, for they were emptied in batches of those who were taken out never to return, and now there are no "rebels" to imprison except workmen who are stupid enough not to be able to reconcile forced labour with "a dictatorship of the proletariat." Nothing has changed—except that Bolshevism has won through, and now only asks civilisation to recognise it, supply it with the little things that civilisation produces and even modern barbarism needs, and crown its work with an acceptance which, to civilisation, is just as degrading as approval.

And there sits M. Krassin as a sign and token that civilisation is as opportunist and degraded as politicians can make it. Callers at his flat in Mayfair are now informed that "His Excellency" is in or out, or cannot receive them. His wife and daughters go shopping in

streets where the shops are not yet looted, and where the boots on the feet of the passers-by are still safe. He and his companion now sit, cheek by jowl with real Ambassadors, with the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, and with a son of the King (somewhere over the Urals is a mineshaft in which bodies were thrown), listening to the Prime Minister of Great Britain explaining to the House of Commons that it must, after all, admit that the Bolshevik government is not a democratic State (dear me!), whereupon a "moderate" Labour member (Mr. J. R. Clynes) rebukes him for his ill-advised and gratuitous reference to the political attributes of another Power! The whitewashing is complete, and we must hold a candle to the devil.

France, I rejoice to see, is still a civilised State. She is not even modern and cynical enough to say, "Well, if barbarism is more powerful than civilisation, there you are!"—which is even more than our own Prime Minister says. And the United States, too, lets it be known that it "strongly recoils from recognition of the Bolshevik regime." And this is too much for our own wee free Bolsheviks. "What!" says the "Star," "this from the land of President Wilson!" And so: "It is not for the United States, nor for us, to like or dislike 'the Bolshevik regime.'" And, seeing that we no longer have the spirit of a louse, I quite agree. So we will leave MM. Krassin and Kameneff still smiling, as they look down on the House of Commons. After all, from their point of view, they have quite a legitimate satisfaction in finding out that England's whitewash is now available for the blackest walls and ceilings in all the house of human government.

## OF "FENCES"

[During this week in August, 1920, the nearest approach that had yet been made to what may be called the formality of Revolution, occurred by the formation of a Council of Action, composed mostly of Labour M.P.'s, including several of the Privy Councillors belonging to that body. The ostensible object of the Council of Action was to forbid the Government to give any help whatever to Poland, then being rapidly surrounded by the Russian Red Army; but it was clear that there was a general revolutionary purpose behind the movement, if the development of events favoured an extension beyond the initial "Hands off Russia!" motive.

What the Prime Minister's attitude to such a movement should have been I tried to make clear at the time; what a different course our subsequent history might have taken if such a direct challenge had been boldly met, it is now useless to speculate.

But the Prime Minister seemed to have no adequate sense either of the strength of his own constitutional position or of the possibilities of restoring the credit of government by taking the opportunity presented by this act of organised and formal defiance. Indeed, he received a deputation of the revolutionaries, to enforce



their views, and listened to those views with more respect than they were propounded to him.

The conversation ran on these lines :

The Prime Minister: Do you mean that Labour in this country will not permit the Government, say, to send a single pair of boots to people who are fighting for their liberty?

Mr. Bevan (the "Dockers' K.C."): Labour will consider that position when the occasion arises.

The Prime Minister: Very well, that is quite good enough for me.

To this formal defiance of the constitutional government the Liberal party extended that virtual encouragement which is expressed by the mildest remonstrance, diluted by a little positive approval.]

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In the organised criminal system there are certain agents and auxiliaries of burglars and thieves known as "fences." They do not steal or burgle (nothing so crude or courageous), but they receive the stolen goods, and profit by the transaction. These vicarious criminals are sometimes found behind respectable counters in shops with most respectable fronts, for a presumption of respectability is a great asset in the illegitimate side-line of a legitimate business. It not only averts suspicion, but gives them a ready-made defence when suspected; since they can first plead entire and open-eyed innocence; and, should that defence fail, fall back upon the cynicism that, as his Worship will no doubt agree, business is business, and if my client has on this occasion perhaps not been quite so circumspect—um—um—um——

The modern political system provides openings for the same sort of talents. For myself, being hopelessly old-fashioned, I do not take a cynical view of politics, where principles are concerned; though I willingly allow, for the

sake of human interest, a reasonable latitude where strategy alone is involved. So far as politics is a game, by all means let it be played skilfully as well as fairly. Let us even close our eyes, if you like, to the eagerness with which modern partisans take advantage of the embarrassments of the governmental "enemy," and do not care twopence how much they discredit the whole idea of government if only they can discredit a given Government. But there is one political operation we cannot close our eyes to, and that is the operation of profiting by the dirty work of others, encouraging it and condoning it, and yet leaving open a back door of escape from the charge of complicity, and all the time holding in reserve the respectability of a long-established party business, with a most reassuring shop front, to urge in rebutting any "cruel" suspicions. And if the most odious type of criminal "fence" is he who also carries on a respectable business, so, I think, the most reprehensible counterpart in the political system is that type which pretends to take the loftiest view of political life, which rebukes the cynical view of it in others, and which prides itself on a political morality of quite a superior order—but takes advantage of any revolutionary situation it has not the courage to create.

There are many opportunities in these days, when much political dirty work is being done, for this work of politicians "receiving" the proceeds of others' enterprises, and then converting them to their own uses and turning them to party profit—and to make the analogy a little more complete, I would define any party profit made out of unconstitutional action as establishing the parallel

between that sort of political offence and the work of the "fence" in the criminal system. Ireland, of course, gives one opportunity for it—and the opportunity has been, if I may so put it, Liberally used. You do not dare to say that your own policy is to thief an Irish republic out of the British Constitution—look at your past record. . . . Have you not always said that Irish aspirations must be satisfied within the limits of the Constitution—can you not lay your hand on your heart and declare that you said in the year Umpteen-umpty-two that Ireland must for ever remain within the United Kingdom? But if the Irish now insist on a republic, why should *you* go out of your way to strengthen the hands of the Government by recalling these declarations?—and if the Irish finally filch their republic out of the Constitution, well, what can *you* do except accept the inevitable and receive "the goods"? You do not believe in murder and crime to attain political ends (do you not, indeed, drop a casual reproof now and then to keep the back door of respectability open?), but if the campaign of crime only proves, as you say, that "the chief guilt rests on the shoulders of the British Government," what is an honest politician to do? If the goods are finally passed over the counter, does it lie in *your* mouth to say they have not been honestly come by? Who are you, a respectable political tradesman, to challenge the clear statement that they have been come by on the high moral ground of "self-determination" and that they have been acquired "in the sacred name of liberty?"

Then there is the case when the stolen goods do not come your way—and in that case, of course, you invoke all the constitutional proprieties to protest against the

misdemeanour. As over the Stockholm Conference, for instance. Then, the "democratic" delegates, anxious to fraternise with enemy democrats in order to force a peace like that which afterwards came at Brest Litovsk, were furnished with passports for the job and journey by a Government that either did not know its business or failed in the courage of its duty. But Mr. Havelock Wilson's merry men intervened—and instantly up went a cry of "Police!" and "What is to become of the Constitution?" The Constitution, as it happens, was not in question; for the pacifist envoys were only what they were: so many fussy and private persons who had intimidated the Government to furnish them with passports to try their amateur statesmanship. But they were not emissaries of the Government, and so the Constitution was not in danger, nor was the State defied, by the refusal of Mr. Havelock Wilson's stalwarts to cross the dangerous North Sea with such a passenger list. But how quick were the constitutional susceptibilities *then*, when somebody else's point of view was receiving the benefit of "the goods!" So that those who invoked the Constitution against a strike which did not suit their book quite forgot how they had "received the goods" when other strikes, some even stopping the supply of shells at the front, had come *their* way. Three years afterwards, they upheld the railwaymen who refused to carry soldiers to Ireland, and the dockers who refused to load munitions for Poland or arms for the Irish Constabulary—constitutional offences which happened to produce a little profit over the party counter. But they had forgotten that in 1917, when only the national interest benefited by the trans-

action, their high political rectitude had denounced the "arrogance" of seamen "saying who should and who should not use the transport services of the country."

But this week\* the Constitution really has been threatened—openly and directly, and without any debatable margin—and it has revealed very clearly, indeed, the real political morality of people with most respectable shop fronts. When the goods were coming over the counter, they cried, "That's the stuff!" and asked no embarrassing constitutional questions, and made their political profit out of the swag. Then, after the transaction was complete, they remembered their respectability, and hedged. Probably recollecting that only a week ago they were delving in constitutionalism as deep as Magna Charta, in order to indict the Government for its "unconstitutional action" in limiting the opportunities for mischief of Dr. Mannix—probably reflecting that next week (if Mr. Churchill writes another article against the Bolsheviks)† they will have to mount the constitutional high horse again on the constitutional by-law known as "collective responsibility of the Cabinet," they make the leisurely discovery that, perhaps, after all, to people of their fine sensibilities, the goods may have been slightly tainted—um-um-um—but (*crescendo*) with such a Government in power, it would be sheer pedantry. . . . !

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\*This week the Council of Direct Action was formed—intended to serve as a Provisional Government—if its services should be "required" by the course of events.

†Mr. Churchill was the only member of the Government who had the courage, at intervals, to denounce Bolshevism, even during the negotiation of the Trade Treaty; and for this expression of an independent view Liberal critics demanded his expulsion from the Government.



Well, these are degenerate days generally. But I should be interested to learn of any more marked example of degeneracy than modern Liberalism shows. Once upon a time, the creed really had principles. To-day, it is super-saturated with that intellectual dishonesty which we call cant. It stands within its respectable shop trading on an old reputation earned for it by men of honoured memory. . . . but it will receive any goods that come its way.

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## MENTAL ANARCHY

At the hour I write the Lord Mayor of Cork lies in Brixton Prison so weakened by a fortnight's fast that he is regarded as a dying man. He is determined to die rather than serve his sentence, and the Government, at the moment (for experience makes the qualification necessary), is determined to let him die, whilst earnestly hoping he will abate his suicidal intentions, rather than let him fix the duration of his sentence by that of his will and capacity to go without food. Thereupon the Government is charged with callously adhering to a legalism which is in conflict with humanity, and all the English sympathisers of Sinn Fein join the Sinn Feiners in demanding the release of a man whose threat of suicide is designed to create a dilemma which is no dilemma at all except by the admission of considerations of sentiment to which he has no right to appeal. Priests of his creed and country, who are unmoved by the deaths of those that are murdered by Sinn Fein and given no choice to live, pass in and out of the prison with grave faces, stirred to a sudden concern for human life by the fate of one who chooses to die. The Diarist of a London paper ["Westminster Gazette"] records with pained and awed amazement that he had stood one morning near the road leading to the prison, and noticed that "people passed along on their business without

casting a glance" in its direction, and "seemed unable to grasp the meaning of what was going on, and its probable consequences!" But night brings great crowds to surge and riot about the prison, and it is chronicled elsewhere:—

Every orator who ever held forth in Hyde Park seemed to have transferred himself to one of the side streets running off Brixton Hill. Thirty "hands-off" meetings were held at once. Resolutions calling for hands-off everything—Russia, Ireland, strikes—were passed at the rate of three a minute. More sedition was preached in 20 square yards in 20 minutes than our forefathers dreamed of in the whole land in 20 decades.—"The Daily Chronicle."

That is where we have got to in these stirring days, when every decision of Government is regarded as just one stage in an endless discussion, and every protest is accompanied by threats that carry us straight away to Revolution-just-round-the-corner.

Let us hope that the case of the Lord Mayor of Cork will, at any rate, carry us to finality in the matter of the hunger-strike. It is essentially a modern problem—if a matter so simple can be called a problem at all. There have always been martyrs for faith, and such martyrs are fully entitled to the martyr's crown. But martyrdom has, in common with most things, degenerated; and the modern rebel expects to wear the martyr's crown but be spared the sacrifice. In this form the problem is little more than ten years old—a legacy bequeathed to us by the ladies who, in the name of Democracy, burned down churches to obtain those votes which Democracy ten years later says it has no use for. They may, indeed, be said to have inaugurated the new order of revolt, now widely accepted, which claims that rebellion is so natural and commendable in a democracy that the rebel must not be asked to run the risks or pay the price of rebellion. To

day we are reaping in many fields what then was sown in one. For the weeds of disorder flourish abundantly merely by not being uprooted (so making it very difficult for the cultivated civic virtues to thrive), and the popular wind scatters their seeds far and wide. No man can contradict me, even though he controvert me, when I say that the heavy crop of disorder we are now gathering in Ireland is the thicker for much seed that has been blown across from England.

Though the problem of the hunger-strike is simple and easily resolved by reason, it does not follow that ethically it is altogether beyond debate. But the only feature that can make it so debatable must be an overwhelming disproportion between the crime and the punishment, making the law more morally odious than the crime itself. Under the present law of England, for instance, a man may not buy a bottle of ink, for example, on an "early closing" afternoon. But if, under the imperative necessity, say, of making his will that afternoon, a man committed the crime of buying a bottle of ink from a courageous shopkeeper (whose shop was open to sell one thing, but forbidden, under the ridiculous law, to sell another), and he was sent to prison for the crime, I could entirely sympathise with the protest of a hunger-strike—even though its ulterior object was to get out of a dreary world in which such pettifogging tyranny was possible, and insanely regarded as "progress."

But the case of Mr. MacSwiney offers us no sympathetic feature of that nature. He was a rebel, was arrested when engaged in the work of a rebel, and is entitled to the crown of a rebel's martyrdom only if he accepts the

rebel's punishment actually inflicted on him. But his own self-inflicted punishment, even though it end with his death, can only give him the crown of a spurious, because self-inflicted, martyrdom. If he dies, I, for one, will salute him as a courageous man, for every man who gives his life for a cause is a brave man. But in such a case he must be judged by the cause and not by the courage—and the cause of rebellion furthered by organised murder closes the argument, for both law and ethics.

The question of rationality remains. If a prisoner says to his gaoler, "Let me free, or I will kill you!" he may be saying an unwise thing, but is not saying an irrational thing. But to say "Let me free, or I will kill myself!" takes the matter into a sphere so irrational that neither the law nor the general sense can follow him. It is a clash of wills, and one will or the other must prevail. But if the will of the prisoner prevailed over the will of the law, the very order of reason would then be inverted. Yet this rationalistic view outrages those who, treasonably sympathising with the prisoner's cause but sharing the courage of Cork only at the point of the pen in London, say that where "a human life" is at stake the rationalised view is the inhuman view. The plea that a human life is at stake happens here to be not only irrelevant but odious. For Sinn Fein takes human life freely enough, and no actuarial calculation of moral values can possibly prove that we ourselves should hold the life of Mr. MacSwiney, who chooses to die, more sacred than itself holds the life of Inspector Swanzy (one of its latest victims), who did not choose to die but was killed by others, with as little compunction as a terrier kills a rat,



Here something more than a human life is at stake, and something more than the reign and rule of Law in lawless days when the obligation on the Law to rule strictly transcends every other consideration. What is at stake, fundamentally, is whether ordered human government is still to rest on ordered human reason, or whether we are to add to the anarchy in government the chaos of anarchy in mind.

## A P A T H Y

The will of the Lord Mayor of Cork still defies that of the Government, and his bodily vitality still defies the death that his will courts. Unfortunately, the two processes cannot continue indefinitely—"unfortunately" because none of us would hesitate to be reconciled to the continuance of one defiance if only the other might indefinitely triumph. In a question complicated by considerations of humanity and sentiment, we can all go that far (even for one who bids his friends to be resigned to his fate because "my death will do more to smash the British Empire than my release"), but I, for one, can go no further, even though I unfeignedly respect his fortitude.

For the dying prisoner, so expressing his undying animosity to the British Empire, also discloses how the real issue is opening out. The personal fate of the Lord Mayor is what it is—a lamentable incident in the long feud, now so dreadfully embittered, between England and Ireland—and must be left at that. It is as incidental as the first or the latest murder accomplished by Sinn Fein,—of neither more nor less importance and neither more nor less tragic or deplorable. But the personal fate of the Lord Mayor is overshadowed by the greater question of the impersonal first principles of law and government, and is overwhelmed by an even bigger

consideration still, which is the fate of the British Empire. The British Empire of to-day, I admit, is but a speck in the immensities of time and space, but Alderman MacSwiney's personal fate has also the same relation to the Empire which he hopes (with a somewhat disproportionate egotism) to smash.

Last week, paying my due tribute to his courage, I supported the Governmental refusal to be intimidated into letting him go free by his threat and policy of suicide. This week, returning to a subject which has more than a week's vitality, and which will perhaps be vital for a good many weeks of Irish history, I have to admit that the support given to the Government is amazingly meagre. The other day the "Westminster Gazette," which daily utters its protest in the name of official Liberalism, roundly asserted that the Government's firmness received "scarcely any support from any quarter," and added, "We can only hope that, as in the case of the Mountjoy hunger-strikers, the Government will change its mind at the last moment." One would have thought that any responsible political intelligence, even though warped from its straight standard by progressive indulgence to revolutionary tendencies, would at least have retained enough straightness to put the wish the other way round, and to hope that the Lord Mayor would change *his* mind, rather than express the truly anarchical hope that the will of the Government might be subdued by that of an individual. One would have thought, also, that any responsible mind still retaining the desirable faculty of memory would have shrunk from a reference to the Mountjoy hunger-strikers, seeing that their release (followed not by appre-

ciation or moderation, but merely by a higher tide of crime and defiance) must make nonsense, and even wicked nonsense, of the plea now raised that the release of the Lord Mayor of Cork would lead, or even give the remotest promise of leading, to peace and reconciliation with Ireland (if that effect were even faintly probable, who would not grasp the chance?). But when argument is useless controversy is futile, and fundamental differences are only widened by discussion.

But what is not to be controverted is that the Government does receive very little effective support, and does encounter much effective denunciation. Fortunately, there is no marked public response to the journalistic thunders, and the statements that "the conscience of the nation is profoundly shocked" by "the brutality" and "blind folly" of the Government may be viewed rather as incitements than as statements of fact. On the other hand, there is very little evidence that the Government receives any effective measure of popular support. Whether apathy accounts for it, in a people so wearied with big events and constant strife and unending crises that its mind has lost its resiliency, or whether the popular instinct that the Government is right is merely not vocal, the fact remains that there is no popular rally to the Government's aid. Moreover, nearly all the influential public voices are raised to denounce the Government with increasing vehemence, and amongst its routine political opponents no man has emerged from the routine party path to reinforce its authority in this simple instance of the fundamental rights and duties of ordered government.

And so one begins to wonder whether the virtue and

vitality of an Imperial race are really going out of us, and whether we really wish to keep the British Empire in being. For no reflecting Englishman can doubt (1) that it is the hope and aim of all the associates of Alderman MacSwiney to smash the British Empire; (2) that the first step in the smashing process would be the triumph of an Irish Republic; and (3) that to make unreciprocated concessions to these avowed enemies of the British Empire is to become accomplices to the accomplishment of their aims. Yet those aims are almost disregarded in the public discussion of the tragedy of Brixton Prison, and one would suppose that Alderman MacSwiney had doomed himself to death in revolt against the injustice of imprisonment for no higher offence against the State than that of refusing to pay a dog-licence. Influential English voices, and journals professedly representing the English point of view (being published in the English capital, but not necessarily inspired, therefore, by English sense or sentiment) clamour much more vociferously for governmental surrender on this personal issue than they do for governmental insistence upon the integrity and safety of the British Empire. The English people seem to have ceased even to reflect with any responsible pride on what the British Empire really stands for in the stability of a shaken world.

Nor does the Government itself do much to stimulate or even to seek that public support on which it must finally rely for its own justification. Bitterly assailed from every quarter, unexpected as well as expected, at home, for its "brutality" in resisting the intimidations of a perverse sentiment in conflict with rationality; subjected



to vehement criticism from abroad (and even from countries where the hunger-strike would be regarded as fantastic), which charges England with departing from the traditions of civilised government, it remains doggedly silent. If it were the silence of determined strength, that might not matter so much. But nothing in the Government's record suggests that it possesses that reserved strength, or that it is so sure of its authority as to make a sudden autocratic silence a desirable policy. Much more probable is it that it allows its case to go virtually unstated because it lacks the competence to state it with the crushing finality of which the case is philosophically capable. And so popular apathy and governmental speechlessness see us drifting to a crisis in which the beginning of the smashing of the British Empire may rest on the world-wide legend that the British Government barbarously murdered an innocent Irish patriot smuggled into an English prison.

## MR. ASQUITH

Last week I wrote of the harmful silence of the Government in face of the sustained campaign to secure the release of the Lord Mayor of Cork, and of the reprehensible abstention of its responsible political opponents from the duty of supporting the Government in such a clear and elementary matter of Governmental responsibility. The silence of the Government has since been effectively broken,\* with the natural result that all those who gave

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\*In announcing the Government's determination, Mr. Bonar Law wrote (September 5, 1920): "If the Lord Mayor dies in prison the responsibility will in some degree rest on those who by their repeated appeals have encouraged the belief that the Government would prove insincere in their determination."

Describing the Lord Mayor as "an avowed rebel," "liable immediately to be shot," Mr. Bonar Law added that the Government could not release him, because that would be "a course which, as the Prime Minister has said, would inevitably lead to a complete breakdown of the whole machinery of law and government." But had the Lord Mayor survived until Mr. Lloyd George had changed his policy, he would probably have been one of the Sinn Fein emissaries received at Downing Street. In other words, if the Government is right in its later policy, then it comes very near justifying the Sinn Fein claim that the Lord Mayor was "murdered" by the British Law.

The Government remained firm, and as the weeks went by the agitation in England against its action died out. But for nearly two months longer the Lord Mayor defied both Death and the British Government. He died on October 25th, 1920, after a hunger-strike of 73 days. A fortnight after his death nine hunger-strikers in Cork "gave in," after a fast of ninety days, on the advice of Mr. Arthur Griffith; and those English critics who had most bitterly attacked the Government for its firmness in regard to the Lord Mayor then admitted that, given sufficient resolution on the part of any government, the policy of hunger-striking was certain to fail.

it their support under somewhat discouraging circumstances, and with no faith or reason but their own to rely upon, are now reassured to find that the Government not only knows its own mind, but knows how to state it with sufficient, if not final, effectiveness. The silence of its responsible opponents has also been broken—first by Sir Donald Maclean, who simply doesn't matter, and next by Mr. Asquith, who, perhaps, still does matter, if only for his representative capacity. And Mr. Asquith lets it be known that he thinks the policy of the Government is "a political blunder of the first magnitude"—and leaves it at that.

The phrase interests me, because I remember that he spoke of woman suffrage as being "a political disaster of the first magnitude," and left it, also, at that—until he unceremoniously and perfunctorily accepted "the disaster" in a rhetorical evasion of ten minutes' length. It would appear as though Mr. Asquith keeps convenient but unconvincing formulas handy, leaving a blank for what he deems the appropriate word. It is an Ollendorffian method of expressing a policy, quite sufficient, perhaps, for those who accept his pontifical authority, but singularly unsatisfying for those who prefer to see a mind at work behind a phrase. Applying his dictum to himself, I now venture to say that Mr. Asquith himself is becoming a political disaster of the first magnitude, and I think I can make the charge good.

Take Ireland only. The question of the Lord Mayor of Cork is personal, and limited at one end of the argument, but almost illimitable at the other. Mr. Asquith confines himself upon it to a bare dogmatism which is

merely meaningless, because it is unreasoned. But is it, therefore, to be supposed that Mr. Asquith's own mind leaves it at that? Not in the least. He knows, for even the mind of an election agent must know, that the question behind the Lord Mayor's defiance is whether the Government acknowledges his claim of "refusing to recognise the jurisdiction of an alien court." He knows that the question behind that is whether we have any business in Ireland at all, and behind that whether we shall assent to her secession from the United Kingdom, and establishing herself as a new and independent foreign and hostile country right at the doors of the rest of us. And he knows that behind that question lies that of the whole unity of the British Empire. And though "British Empire" has necessarily an Imperialistic, and, therefore, unpleasant sound to most of his followers, he himself knows quite well that, on the whole, the British Empire stands for the biggest realisation of the ideal of ordered liberty in the endless problem of human government. All these issues he knows are implicit in the question of the Lord Mayor of Cork. Yet he is content, as it were, to reach down a formula, "political — of the first magnitude," and fill in the blank. But if charged with treason to the constitutional cause by thus taking a course on one question which involves so many consequential issues, Mr. Asquith, of course, would have his defence. He would repudiate with righteous scorn (another formula) the suggestion that he was assisting in the break-up of the British Empire, and say that that was the very thing he wished to avoid—by, however, letting out the Lord Mayor on his own terms, and thus strengthening his claim

that British law has no business in Ireland, because Ireland is not a part of that constitutional entity, the United Kingdom.

But life is too short to chase the fallacies of politicians by a circuitous route when they are so vulnerable to a frontal attack. And there happens to be no need to pursue the implications and construe the consequences involved in the Lord Mayor's case, for the excellent reason that we can begin where they all leave off. For Ireland at the present moment is actually, and not hypothetically, a rebel country, and the unity of the kingdom is not a contingent, but a direct and immediate issue, with an Irish Republican army defying the Imperial Government. And what has Mr. Asquith to say about that situation? Nothing, and rather less. Does he say, as he should, "English Liberalism has not only never encouraged Irish Independence, but has based its whole Home Rule policy on the repudiation of separation, and has for thirty years strenuously repelled as libellous the suggestion of Irish disloyalty. When, however, that disloyalty is open and active, English Liberalism, even whilst maintaining its Home Rule faith, must at once range itself on the side of the kingdom's unity, which at once becomes the superior issue, and on the side of the Law in maintaining it?" No, he says nothing of the kind. He remains inactive whilst half his party, faced at last with the definite demand for an Irish Republic, instantly capitulates to it. Moreover, in his last speech in the Commons on the Home Rule Bill, he had the singular hardihood to assert that the present Government was responsible for the present state of Ireland, and nobody in the House had the debating readiness



to recall that his own Government was condemned by a Royal Commission (as I recalled in these pages a few weeks ago) as being responsible, by its lax administration of the law, for that very Rebellion which was merely the first manifestation of that "present state of Ireland" which this Government has inherited from his, and in regard to which he now gives them much less than no assistance.

I say, then, that Mr. Asquith is guilty of treachery to the whole constitutional cause, and no longer even plays the game of politics as it once was reputably played, when party political warfare was always waged within the limits of the constitutional frame and fabric. The process of the kingdom's disintegration, which began under his own Government, and for which that Government was judicially held responsible, is now going on at a faster pace under his eyes, and he himself accelerates it by describing the affirmation of our constitutional right in a given crucial instance as "a political blunder of the first magnitude." That is why I say that he himself is becoming a political disaster on the same scale, and, though I admit that these things have so far not been said of him, I also submit that it is quite time they were.

## VOICE AND ECHO

Any reader who pays me the compliment, probably undeserved, of remembering some of the leading opinions expressed in this column may recall that one opinion (so confidently held that I ventured to repeat it) was that the world would not get itself straight again until Right became as relentless as Wrong in the pursuit of its own aims. Another opinion, incidentally expressed, was that the time must soon come when the very latent sense of English nationalism would assert itself, and the English point of view, tired of being expected always to accommodate itself to some other point of view, would find active and emphatic expression. The first opinion was meant to have a general application, and the second was written in relation to Ireland; but both opinions have now become relevant to the Irish trouble.

The "Black and Tans" are newcomers in the history of these amazing times, and only a fortnight old in its phraseology, but they stand for something that may affect both Irish and English history for many a long day. They are really the turning point in English and Irish relations, and what has turned is the English worm. Hitherto, the Irish alone have been allowed to have their grievance, and have been immensely indulged in the expression of it. For

reasons too long here to expound, they have been allowed to assume that whilst their hatred of England was defensible, and even admirable, because it was an expression of fervent nationalism, the nationalism of England must dumbly acquiesce in the justice of their insensate and extravagant contempt. To such absurd lengths has this acquiescence in the Irish point of view been carried that English partisans of Ireland have repeatedly spoken of the Home Rule Bill (which gives to Ireland all that she may justly ask and will ever peaceably get)\* as "a deliberate insult to Irish national sentiment"—the idea, apparently, being that Irish National sentiment was the only sentiment that mattered, and that "insults" to English national sentiment (compressed into a simple formula of unqualified hatred, and expressed by rebellion when England was fighting for her life, by direct revolutionary action, and by every form of outrage) must be meekly borne. Well, the Black and Tans are now engaged in asserting, at last, the English point of view. "You hate England," they say. "Very well, here we are, England's representatives, and quite prepared to reciprocate Irish sentiments, national or otherwise, with appropriate sentiments of our own."

Ever since the murder organisation of Sinn Fein became revealed as what may be called a permanent department, it has been quite clear that the real difficulty of the Government in restoring order in Ireland lay in that apathy of the English spirit which refuses to take seriously or to reciprocate a challenge of national senti-

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\*A passage which illustrates the danger of political prophecy when its fulfilment depends upon the consistency of a given government.

ment. Nor is any Englishman eager to see Ireland's hate of England answered with anything like full reciprocation. But, it is another thing to ignore the reality of Irish hatred and intentions, however reluctantly the challenge may be accepted; and, even on practical grounds, it was a disadvantage for the Government to have to confront a movement inspired by an ardent national sense with human instruments of its own purpose who were as impersonal in their duty as firemen putting out a fire, and who were merely denationalised functionaries animated by nothing but a sense of formal duty. But the practical effect of confronting such a movement by men in whom a national sense of their own is becoming developed will be to bring both sides face to face with the reality of the situation that Irish hatred of England has at last developed. To "Up, the Rebels!" the right answer has at last been given.

Those English soldiers who marched down the street of an Irish town a few weeks ago singing "Boys of the Bull-dog breed" may have acted, as aloof and superior minds might express it, according to the best traditions of the music hall; but in any case they broke the evil spell of make-believe by which the whole problem has been fogged, for it assumed that whilst Sinn Feiners were making war on "England" (as they condense Great Britain) England was too "correct" to acknowledge that crude truth. The Black and Tans have now dispelled that fog of fundamental insincerity. Having all fought in that great cause which the Irish did their best to imperil, they are under no illusion about what the Irish republicans really are, and they know an enemy for what he is, and at

last say so; and, so saying, simplify the issue. Having been kept too long in the clouds of abstractions, of "sacred rights" and "the modern spirit" and "self-determination," the issue has at length been brought down to earth to be seen as what it really is, and to the Irish separatism which says "We will!" the English race-sense has at last uttered its first clear "You shall not!"

The fulfilment of the hope expressed by the other "opinion" does not, however, give quite the same satisfaction. Having asked that Right should be as relentless as Wrong, it is now only fair that I should be asked in turn (though I put the question to myself) "How do you like your prescription as now applied to Ireland?" I do not like it—but my dislike is limited to the consideration that the prescription has been irregularly dispensed.\* Powerful and drastic medicines should be made up only by properly qualified dispensers, and administered only by the responsible practitioners; and it is not a good thing, but a bad one, that reprisals on Sinn Fein Ireland should be undertaken by a semi-military body acting on its own impulse and authority. It is a bad thing on the general ground that it brings confusion into the functioning of ordered government, which should act from the head downwards, and not from the limbs upwards.

Making that reservation, I do not condemn the prescription itself. It is not a bad thing, but a salutary thing, that those who seek to terrorise should in turn be terrorised; that those who not only defy the Law but

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\*The issue of "Reprisals" had for the first time been raised as the new activities of the Black and Tans (September, 1920).



render the conventions of Justice ridiculous and helpless should be met by an unconventional Justice which alters its methods to meet a case not provided for by the ordinary code of judicial procedure; and it is not an unjust thing, but the simplest, if also the crudest, justice, that those who assassinate in ambush should be shot on the definite evidence of their association with the organisation of assassins. "Drogheda, Beware!" says a proclamation issued "(By Order) Black and Tans."

"If in this vicinity a policeman is shot, five Sinn Feiners will be shot. We are not drink-maddened savages, as we have been described in the Dublin rags. We are not out for loot. We are inoffensive to women. We are as humane as other Christians, but we have restrained ourselves too long. Stop the shooting, or we will lay low every house that smells of Sinn Fein."

It is not a pretty proclamation, and it is made "By Order" of the wrong authority. But it is a human document, and there is only one man who can read it without some human sympathy, and he is the Sinn Feiner. Yet even he, if he be rational to the point of strict justice, would have to admit that it is but his own voice in another mouth. Nay, it is not even that, but is merely the echo. His voice came first—will it now be drowned in its own echoes?

## STATESMANSHIP

It seems pretty clear that we must either have a new definition of statesmanship or a new order of statesmen. For, within a single week, we have had three sudden contributions to the settlement of the Irish question from three men ranked as men of State, and of each contribution it may be said that it exhibits no more wisdom than would be expected from any three men in the street. To Lord Morley let all indulgence be extended. He lives on into what must seem strange days—the philosophic Radical, who sees a Radical party with no philosophy left to it except that of the opportunism of accepting the latest idea “going”; the Gladstonian Liberal, who has lived to see a Liberalism that Gladstone would not have recognised; the individualistic “honest John,” who manfully stood out at Newcastle against a legislative eight hours day, and now lives in a day when no bounds are set to the legislative sanction of industrial demands. He has lived on to what must surely be a day of many disillusionings, and it is pardonable that his octogenarian philosophy concerning Ireland can get little further than the hope that “a better spirit may prevail.” And so say all of us, and perhaps Lord Morley cannot be expected to say more.

To the others [Lord Grey of Fallodon and Mr. Asquith] not quite the same indulgence can be extended.

For where Lord Morley can only remember, they have forgotten. They have forgotten that in the Home Rule party their function and position was to guarantee the element of Imperial integrity, and to assert that Ireland's autonomy must be found within the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. They were, in fact, Liberal Imperialists, suspected not so very long ago by that left wing of the Home Rule party which was always glad to take the Irish point of view against the English or the British, but now no longer suspected because they have "proved" themselves. They were vice-presidents of that Liberal League which was founded specifically to check all those tendencies in Liberalism which at last have left it a helpless rump, and they assented to that post-Gladstonian movement among Home Rulers which expressed itself by Lord Rosebery's phrase concerning "the pre-dominant partner." All these things they have forgotten. They now blithely concede everything they once stood against, and have not even the grace to recall what they once said and believed. They recant without making the recantation, and so save themselves the trouble of explaining by what philosophical process they arrive at the destination for which they have so recently started.

But a distinction must still be made between the two. Viscount Grey can, at any rate, plead, though not too successfully, that he only wishes to throw away the shadow to retain the substance. Mr. Asquith does the opposite, and throws away the substance to retain the shadow. But both reduce the control of the Imperial Parliament to the shadow of a shade, so that the constitutional margin would be too narrow to allow for its

maintenance without some future armed assertion, which would merely bring us back to where we are now. Yet all three have one thing in common—they are all English statesmen. The Scotch claim (not without much reason, though the Welsh can hardly be expected to assent) that they “run the Empire.” We ought to be grateful to them for it, when English statesmanship has practically gone out of the business.

Three weeks ago here I said of Mr. Asquith what may then have seemed blunt and inconsiderate (though not ill-considered) things. I said that by his silence on the revolutionary demands of Ireland he was proving himself a political disaster of the first magnitude, and charged him with being a traitor to that cause of constitutionalism which the Government was left to uphold without any help from him. It will now be seen, I submit, that I was doing Mr. Asquith no injustice. Now that he has broken his silence we can see what his silent meditations were. He was not only *not* meditating on the duty of statesmanship in opposition to support the constitutional cause which he upheld in office, but was apparently meditating a total abandonment of that duty and position. His cerebrations have suddenly converted him to an Ireland with its separate army and navy and its complete fiscal independence—to an Ireland, in short, which shall become virtually a foreign country only a few nautical miles away. “I do not share the apprehensions of those” who don’t like the prospect of an Irish army and a submarine navy and an exchequer that could be fed from what the rebels of 1916 called “our gallant allies on the Continent.” And, again: “I am not alarmed by the spectre

of an Irish Republic." Why should he be when he has taken a step so far towards it that an Irish Republic becomes only the next step further?

Now, statesmanship is not entirely and always a matter of adjustment to new ideas, so that a man may believe at 70 what he repudiated at 60, and still be called "progressive" and a statesman. Statesmanship has also its fixed and static quality, and must stand to its principles on fundamental things like this of the Irish problem and the union of the kingdom. Mr. Asquith attempts no philosophic (i.e., reasoned) defence of this revolution in his own mind, but apparently he subscribes to the loose prevailing notion that as "things have changed" principles must change with them. But what has changed—except the extent of the Irish demand and the fact that Irish sentiment no longer disguises its real aim? The geographical facts have not changed, the immense political importance of what we call the Union has not changed, nor has Britain to confess any change in her treatment of Ireland to justify this higher demand and this open hostility. On the contrary, she has witnessed an Ireland treacherous during her most fateful years, prosperous when she became impoverished, unconcerned where she was striving, unhelpful when not actually striving against. These are the only things that have changed, and still they find Britain seeking to do justice to Ireland\* as though these things had not been.

Nor, fundamentally, has Mr. Asquith himself changed. In office he upheld the constitutional cause because (as is

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\*Through the Home Rule Bill, still being pressed through Parliament as "the last word" of British concession to Ireland.



now obvious) in office he could do nothing else. Out of office, he abandons the constitutional cause because, being out of office, he has no responsibility. But he has not changed. A cork in a bottle, guarding the contents, is still only a cork when it finds itself bobbing on the waters. And all the other little corks in his wake are now bobbing up and down with the same fussy and false appearance of dynamic energy. Writes the Right Hon. C. F. G. Masterman, ending a column of ecstatic acceptance of the latest Asquithmanship:—

“In such a pronouncement Liberalism comes into her own again. The issue is joined, and in a battle worthy of a great and immortal cause!”

And, indeed, the melancholy truth seems to be that what is now called Liberalism finds all its exaltations in “Great and Immortal” causes of destruction. To it, the newest thing is the truest thing, and its latest immortal cause is to smash up the Union.

## MORALITY IN STATECRAFT

Here is Parliament meeting again, with great issues that, when it separated, were looming on the horizon, now hanging above it as clouds, and overtopping it. [This week, (October, 1920) a national coal strike was about to begin, with every preliminary indication that it would develop into a "general strike" having revolutionary characteristics.] And again one may ask, What of the men upon whom the control of such high destinies depends? A week ago I was writing here of the bankruptcy of English Liberal statesmanship, at any rate concerning Ireland; and a book just sent to me goes a good deal further by challenging the soundness and solvency of British statesmanship all round. It is called "The Mirrors of Downing Street," and its author is content to call himself "A Gentleman with a Duster." He dusts and polishes the mirrors, and asks the statesmen to have another look at themselves in the clear reflection.

Without encroaching upon the province of the reviewer, I can at least say that it is an honest book, for the strivings towards just judgments are obvious, and the anonymous author takes conscientious pains to be fair even to those statesmen whom he presents with the least flattering reflections. He is, in fact, as impartial as any mind with

a settled standard of political morality can or ought to be. But the total effect is one so unflattering to our general statesmanship that, if the mirrored reflections be true likenesses, they leave very little hope or comfort to us, for the book shows the essential littleness of all our great politicians.

With the judgment of Mr. Asquith I, for one, cannot quarrel greatly. It has been necessary recently to say, reluctantly, what I conceived to be the truth about him, and with every fresh revelation of his current political phase, the reluctance diminishes. But with this I do not agree: "He has outgrown that energy of moral earnestness which characterised the early years of his political life." What characterised those early years was, surely, his rational rather than his moral earnestness. We cannot "remember Featherstone" and forget that. I should rather say that what he has outgrown is that intellectual earnestness and sincerity which, if they did not make him great, at any rate kept him competent. His latest phase is that of a "moral earnestness," which is only superficially "moral," and fundamentally its opposite—as witness his Irish policy, with all the moral values inverted. It requires no moral earnestness whatever to be uncritical of crime, and to harry a baffled justice, but it did require a moral earnestness (that of statesmanship seeing and doing its duty) to resist and repress sabotage.\* The truth

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\*The Featherstone incident admirably illustrates the change in Mr. Asquith's political outlook here dealt with. In September, 1893, during a coal strike in Yorkshire, the strikers began to destroy the mine property, and the disorder so increased that the local authorities were compelled to apply to the Government for troops. Mr. Asquith, then Home Secretary, at once complied with the request. When the soldiers arrived, one colliery was in flames,

about Mr. Asquith rather seems to be that he has lost his intellectual grip, and is now trying to maintain his equilibrium on a very slippery and precarious moral foothold. But "he is entirely without creative power. . . . He has never had an idea of his own. The 'diffused sagacity' of his mind is derived from the wisdom of other men. He is a cistern, and not a fountain"—with that judgment I entirely agree. So long as he trusted to his brains he was safe; for if he had not the imagination to be brilliant it could also be said of him that, by way of compensation, he had not enough imagination to be dangerous. But, now, ceasing to borrow his wisdom from other men, he is "borrowing his morality," as Charles Surface had to threaten to do from Joseph—and the Joseph Surfaces of our political life, plausible "men of sentiment," are quite

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and the strikers were attacking another. They refused to disperse after seven appeals from the magistrate, the reading of the Riot Act, and even a bayonet charge. The officer in charge then ordered his men to fire, several strikers were shot, and order was restored.

At political meetings addressed by Mr. Asquith, he was shouted down with cries of "Asquith the murderer!" and "Who shot the miners?", but to his own constituents he declared: "There is one thing which neither I, nor any other Liberal Minister worthy of the name, will tolerate, and that is the use of disorder, of lawlessness, or riots. I do not care who it is that instigates it, or who defends it—so long as I am responsible to the Sovereign and people of this country, riot and disorder shall not be allowed to prevail." Defending himself in the House of Commons, he taunted the Labour members who had attacked him in the country for not being in their places in the House, and said: "These irresponsible critics know as well as I do, and would admit it if they cleared their minds and tongues of cant, that there is no sane man in this country who would not have acted as I have."

His modern attitude to Sinn Fein also receives its most effective comment from his own past. Earlier in the same year (1893) his first speech as a Minister (in Gladstone's last administration) was upon an amendment to the Address moved by Mr. John Redmond, urging a reconsideration of the sentences on Irish dynamiters, *nearly ten years previously*, who had been found making nitroglycerine and concealing arms in various parts of Britain and Ireland. His speech was an uncompromising declaration of firm-

the wrong people for a statesman, seeking what is called by them "a new orientation" rather late in life, to adopt as moral counsellors.

And so I feel my way into the real criticism to be made of the "Gentleman with the duster"—and also to the hopelessness of all these discussions, since the whole difficulty of agreement concerning what constitutes statesmanship arises from differing, and apparently irreconcilable, points of view concerning what constitutes morality in statecraft. The author of a book which practically says that we have not got a single real statesman to our credit finds the explanation in one fact—character, or the deficiency of it. I quite agree, though I would add another ingredient, of equal importance—brains, or the deficiency of them. But even this agreement on the necessity of character does not help us, except in so far as

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ness. Ridiculing the idea that the "political" nature of a crime entitled it to any indulgence, he concluded: "It is far easier to be what is called clement, and to let people out of gaol, but we have to discharge a duty which we are determined to discharge at all costs. For my own part, I say in reference to the past, and if need be in reference to the future, that persons who resort to this mode of warfare . . . are persons who deserve and will receive no consideration or indulgence from any British government."

To hear such a voice from the past restores one's faith in one's own present sanity. Such declarations from a Liberal Minister also suggest how far we have travelled since then, and comfort some of us by explaining (what in these days often seems strange) how some of us were once proud and content to call ourselves Liberals.

Mr. Asquith's courage was all the more praiseworthy as the Government was then practically dependent upon the Irish Nationalist vote. His biographer writes: "His unflinching adherence to the principles of justice in face of the pressure put upon him, marked him out as a statesman of strong convictions and high courage, who could be depended upon to safeguard the high interests entrusted to his charge. At the close of his speech the Unionists vied with the Liberals in their emphatic applause."—"M. Asquith," by J. P. Alderson).



character is a definition and expression of moral qualities, for the simple reason that we can apparently still differ as to what these moral qualities should be, and how the character should manifest itself. To make the point of difference clear I cannot do better than quote a few reflections upon, rather than of, Mr. Lloyd George by the "Gentleman with the Duster":—

"His failure is a growing tendency to discard an instinctive emotionalism for a calculated astuteness."

"The truth is that Mr. Lloyd George has gradually lost his original enthusiasm for righteousness."

"One seems to see in him an illustrious example both of the value and perils of emotionalism. What power in the world is greater, controlled by moral principle? What power so dangerous, when moral earnestness ceases to inspire the feelings?"

It is interesting to note that Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George have changed by reverse processes. The cold-blooded rationalist has joined the political emotionalists and "men of sentiment"—what may be called Surface sentiment—and the impulsive emotionalist is now allowing his reflection and reason to control his instinctive emotionalism. And I submit that that is only another way of saying that Mr. Lloyd George is becoming a statesman just as Mr. Asquith is giving up any claim to be one. "What power in the world is greater than emotionalism, controlled by moral principle?" Emotionalism which is not controlled, or rather inspired, by moral principle, is in any case spurious and worthless; but the real and right check upon emotionalism is *reason*. The old and emotional Lloyd George would have continued to say for instance, "Trust the Irish people!" which the most emotional and the least reflective mind can easiest say. But the new Lloyd George, less emotional and more reflecting, says, "We must act in the light of the proof given

that the Irish people are not to be fully trusted.”\* I do not agree, then, that he has lost his enthusiasm for righteousness—what he has lost, in the disillusioning experience at close quarters of a world not as good as it ought to be, is the wholly false enthusiasm of pretending it is better than it is. Moreover, righteousness is not found only in an enthusiasm for right—it involves also a due and adequate sense of wrong-doing.

Mr. Lloyd George's critic with the duster sees in his "failure" to produce a peace with Germany based on "vision and conscience" a proof of the abatement of his righteous enthusiasm. Others, on the contrary, discerned in his first refusals to compromise with infamy—that is, in his civilised vision and admission of a civilised conscience—the beginnings both of statesmanship and of a really righteous enthusiasm, though there are signs that he cannot "stay the course." On the whole his mistakes have been those of his emotionalism, and his successes will be found where he has disciplined his instinctive emotionalism by the restraints of reason fortified by experience. Morality in statecraft, then, does not mean unlimited credulity—that is for those who have no responsibility. It should be a reasoned morality—and the beginning of all morality is to recognise truth. But its final expression is justice—which, in its turn, means vindicating Right even more than being lenient to Wrong.

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\*A passage which illustrates the danger of ever taking politicians at their word, for in less than a year Mr. Lloyd George had completely reversed his policy, and called the Conference with Sinn Fein.

## “ WITHIN THE GATE ”

This autumn Session of Parliament (1920) is, in intention, dedicated to Ireland, so that a Home Rule Bill may at last pass into law. But with a national coal strike just three days old as the session opens, that primary intention may certainly be frustrated, for even graver matters than the relation of Ireland to Great Britain may arise during a session which begins with “a national disaster” (as the Prime Minister truly calls it), which has been brought about largely by those to whom a national disaster is the chief revolutionary hope. There may, therefore, be a popular temptation to regard the consideration of the Irish business of the Government with impatience, and even indifference, and to think that the cloud over Ireland matters very little when the whole sky is overcast.

But that attitude of the mind must be withstood, for the Irish trouble and the strike mischief, even though they can be judged separately in their origins, must be considered together for their general and combined effect. They spring from different sources, but both at length flow into the same sea of trouble—and the trouble is that of maintaining government on its legs. In that sense, the Irish problem is not subsidiary to any other, but contributory to the only problem that really matters. And for that ulti-

mate reason every effort, Asquithian or otherwise, to aggravate the Irish trouble, and so to add to the difficulties of government at an hour when all troubles converge to the same crisis, deserves and needs a much more emphatic condemnation than is given in conventional political controversy.

This is not the first session of Parliament, by a long way, that has been dedicated to the Irish question, which has exercised a tyranny over our political life so long and insistent that only a people patient to the point of meekness could have endured it. But there is no reason why it should not be the last (short of discussions on administrative policy), if only the English people will resolutely bend their minds to the simple issues involved, resolutely make up their minds to the only course and policy which those issues allow, and then just as resolutely back the Government in carrying that policy through.

What, then, is the issue, stripped to nakedness, bared to essentials, and robbed of every rag of irrelevance and dialectical pretence? This: On the one hand, Britain offers to Ireland, at a time when we ought to be offering her nothing but the sword she asks for, the olive branch she spurns. Her claim has been for political independence within the constitutional fabric of the kingdom—the only claim that her English sympathisers and protagonists, up to now, have urged and recognised. That claim is satisfied up to the hilt by the Home Rule Bill now before Parliament—a Bill which, sanely and straightforwardly recognising the divided Ireland now sharply revealed, after years of the futilities and evasions of what is called “the party faith,” sanely and straightforwardly gives identical

rights to the two parts, leaves to the parts themselves the task and responsibility of proving that Ireland is a single political entity, and even provides the bridge and mechanism by which the two parts may come together, if their unity be an honest and fundamental fact, and not a superficial and dishonest fiction. That is the British side of the case.

On the other hand, Ireland, or the disloyal part of her, now frankly reveals her disloyalty in the simple claim for full independence and the right to establish herself as a foreign power right at our western ocean-gate. One thing only could entitle her to raise her demand above the explicit limitation on which Irish Home Rule has ever been considered by England, and that is that she had performed us some signal service by which she could be both trusted and rewarded. Has she performed such a service to warrant this new and final demand? On the contrary, she did her untrustworthy best to render us, in our most critical struggle, the final disservice of treachery, by complicity with our foes. That demand being flatly refused, whilst the legitimate demand is actually in process of being satisfied, revolutionary Ireland elaborates an organisation of simple terrorism, and repudiates her allegiance so completely that she frankly regards the killing of the agents of the British connection as "no murder."

The issue, then, is about as simple and clean-cut as any political issue can be, and leaves no casuistical margin for any sympathies that are not definitely either British and for the Union, or Irish and for the disintegration of the kingdom.

Organised Liberalism, practically abandoning any



pretence of sympathy with the British side of the case, has now given its sympathy to the Sinn Fein cause. It is a stupendous treachery, and the consummation of that long process of demoralisation by which organised "Liberalism" has abjured every constitutional principle for which it once stood, abandoning every theory of coherent government as soon as it is attacked, so that the sympathy it extended to Bolshevism from the first was only the logical precursor of the sympathy it extends, at the last, to the first definite and promising revolutionary movement to break up the British Empire.

And the only point I wish to make in this article is that to which I have been leading—that this stupendous treachery is being dealt with far too leniently, and that our rapid political demoralisation must be arrested at the point, at any rate, when open treachery to the constitutional cause comes to be debated as a permissible political issue. What should be made clear, and unpleasantly clear, is that the sort of statesmanship which, suddenly repudiating the basic principle of even its own Irish policy, surrenders instantaneously to a revolutionary demand enforced by violence, is merely a cowardly and treacherous pusillanimity.

Mr. Asquith especially is vulnerable to attack, and the attack should be pressed home. He talks of the "hellish policy" of the Government, but no one adequately brings home to him his own most direct responsibility for the present "hellish" state of Ireland; and it is immensely to be hoped that when the Irish debate takes place some Minister or member will confront him with the judgment of that Royal Commission which, in the summer of 1916,

condemned his Government for facilitating the Irish rebellion by "allowing lawlessness to go unchecked," so adopting a policy which was

"the negation of that cardinal rule of Government which demands that the enforcement of law and the preservation of order shall always be independent of political expediency."

A statesman found guilty of breaking "the cardinal rule of Government" is already in a position too weak to be strengthened by trying to make a virtue of his breach of trust; for Mr. Asquith is now very much in the position of a soldier who, having surrendered a fortress it was his duty to hold, defends himself by saying he has come to the conclusion that the fortress, after all, ought to be in the enemy's hands.

Finally, the charge to be made against him and his associates is that at a time of unparalleled difficulty in government they deliberately assist the forces of disintegration—for no adult and self-respecting mind could contend that surrender to violence in Ireland would not affect the stability of government both nearer home and further afield.

## LESSER THINGS

While great issues are in suspense let us leave them alone (for the moment) to mature as they may, and turn to lesser things. Ireland, at any rate, can be left to dree its weird, as we watch the policy of Government firmness proving itself or failing. For Ireland there are only two policies—that which we can best call Birrellism, in honour of its inventor, though its other name is inaction; and reaction. Birrellism believes in letting ill alone in the feckless hope that things may not get much worse; the other policy believes in giving ill an uncomfortable time in the very reasonable hope that, if the staying power of government is long enough, things will get much better. To that policy, not only in Ireland, but everywhere else, I pin my steady faith. "The cure for lawlessness," says its apologists, "is not lawlessness on the part of the forces of the Crown." I agree. But the cure for lawlessness by terror is the vindication of the authority of the Crown—by the regular processes of justice when they can be operative, and by their irregular operation otherwise. Ambushes cannot be overcome by the Fontenoy politeness of "Fire first, gentlemen." Reactionary sentiments, I admit. But I am not terrified by the word, for all depends on what we are reacting from; and this series of

Unpopular Opinions opened with "A Plea for Reaction" in order to take that bull by the horns from the first. Reaction, after all, only follows the law of the pendulum, and the violent lawlessness of Ireland will only be stopped by violent law—or by condonation and surrender.

The miners' strike is another matter, and at this stage no comment can usefully carry us beyond platitudes and pious hopes. One can only hope that it may be settled soon, and say that the sooner it is settled the better—and yet be conscious that that is leaving everything unsaid. For it can hardly be settled soon without settling nothing of the permanent issue such a settlement must leave behind for later exploration—the issue of how far and for how much longer the community can leave to organised labour a monopoly control of essential industries. Linked with that issue is another problem, that of the sympathetic strike, which certainly is an enlargement of the power of trade unions not contemplated by those who were sympathetic to the Trade Union Act of 1875, but are anti-sympathetic to a state of affairs by which a vast industrial upheaval may always be 24 hours ahead if a single miner or a carman or a signalman be involved in a dispute. We have had a Triple Alliance in European history, too—inspired by Prussia, accepted by Austria, and forced on Italy—and perhaps history may repeat itself in the industrial sphere.\* But as to that, we can only wait and see, feeling uneasily certain that we shall not have to wait very long to see a good deal.

Meanwhile, there are lesser things—chocolates, for

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\*It did, by the collapse of the Triple Alliance over the Miners' Strike of the following year, April, 1921.

instance. Let it be recorded that in a week of great crisis the Law, which is not supposed to "concern itself with trifles," solemnly affirms, on a test case, that no chocolates may be sold in a theatre after eight o'clock—which is about the hour, to complete the Law's ridiculousness, at which most theatres open. By comparison with such "fiddling" tyranny, Nero's performance was apt and dignified; and when the historian comes to deal with us he will be puzzled by a phenomenon that baffles a good many of us contemporaries: how, at a time when the whole social, industrial, and governmental fabric visibly totters, and when the gravest problem of statesmanship is to uphold respect for Law at all, respect for it is strained and frittered away by such pettifogging restraints on the simple liberty of adult persons, and crimes are manufactured out of such innocent elements. In one sense it is perhaps reassuring; for a people that will meekly submit to all the indignities and prohibitions of the current shopping regulations, or to the prolonged tyranny of an arbitrary Liquor Control Board issuing its edicts from some inaccessible bureaucratic fastness, cannot possibly be a people of violent revolutionary tendencies. But this matter also must wait—until actualities show what reason ought to have revealed, what are the true functions of government and what are its usurpations.

And so to another lesser thing—the woman juror. Time was when some of us said "Pause! If this thing comes about, then prepare for woman in Parliament, on the bench, at the bar, in the jury box, and even in policeman's uniform—anywhere and everywhere, in fact, except where she is wanted most." I can still hear the answering



jeers, and feel the blast of derision, the taunts of "clumsy humour," the indignant reproach of trying so basely to prejudice the mere and innocent demand "to make a little cross on a little bit of paper once every five years or so." Well, now we have got them all, the whole civic retinue, including the woman juror:

"Women jurors acted at Swansea Quarter Sessions for the first time yesterday. After the jury had been empannelled two workmen arrived at court with the urgent request that their wives might be allowed to go home to cook their dinners. To the great discontent of the applicants, the request was refused."—Daily paper, Tuesday.

"Six men and six women made up the jury at Rochester Quarter Sessions yesterday, and they had to spend the entire day over a trial which proved tedious. So one of the jury-women produced her needles and wool, and sat in the jury box diligently knitting whilst the case went on."—Daily paper, Tuesday.

"When women jurors sat at Walsall Quarter Sessions for the first time yesterday, counsel said that the first case was a very unpleasant and indecent one, so that women might not care to try it in the company of men. The Recorder said he could not engraft any new principle on the law as now framed, and the case was therefore tried by a mixed jury."—Daily paper, Tuesday.

Well, I feel very lonely in making my protest, but that does not deter me, for I know that as time goes on my loneliness will be much mitigated. And I do protest against the whole folly and social incoherence which the politicians have thrust upon us, so that the sanities of life are outraged when the law filches wives from husbands who want their dinners; so that the dignity of justice is outraged by the sex that carries its knitting into the jury box; and so that the common decencies of life are outraged by a law, based upon a de-humanised philosophy of life, which herds six men and six women together to adjudicate upon matters of sexual indecency. To me, life seems to have become hideously promiscuous. Others, apparently, like it, and see all this indiscriminate asexuality in the social function without any misgivings

whatever. For, on the day after all these things are recorded, a hundred "eminent women" entertain a hundred complacent men at lunch, and I read this concluding note of a journalistic pæan :

"This luncheon symbolises the formal and final reconciliation between men and women, the ratification of peace terms between old enemies."—"The Daily Chronicle," Oct. 20, 1920.)

"Reconciliation!"—when the sex war is only just beginning. "Old enemies!"—when the natural and harmonious dualism of men and women has only just been shattered!

## RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY

In these loose-thinking days, when self-deceiving fallacies or sophistries meant to deceive poison all public debate, one comes in time to recognise "leading lines" and old offenders, to lie in wait for them. Amongst these rogues and vagabonds on the logical highway, these thought-shirkers we respectably call fallacies and these truth-dodgers known as sophistries, is the "rightly or wrongly" vagabond. I am not sure that he is not a greater rogue, but vagabondage shall charitably cover his misdemeanour, for you find him wandering on all the highways and byways of public debate, doing no honest work whatever, but dodging and shirking the whole point, and begging (as is the vagabond's way) the whole question. And I am afraid he imposes on many honest, but stupid folk.

What he does, as you soon discover by seeing him at work, is to muddle up right and wrong when it *does* matter which is which, by saying, "rightly or wrongly . . ." as though it didn't matter at all which was which. Somewhere or other, in a great pile of printed evidence of modern human folly, I have a choice collection, though carelessly gathered, of this perfectly stupid and often dishonest dialectical trick; but they have accumu-

lated to the point when they bury themselves in oblivion. There must be, however, a thousand horrible examples of the contention, under various forms, that as the Germans, "rightly or wrongly," believed that they were only fighting a war of self-defence, against an unscrupulous set of allies who had plotted their downfall from the first, we should end the war straightway by a generous recognition of this widespread belief. In the opposition to compulsory service, also, the vagabond made his appearance with the plea that, as Labour believed, "rightly or wrongly," that compulsory service was not designed to beat the Germans, but was only "a sinister effort to enslave Democracy in the fetters of militarism," it should be abandoned in deference to that extremely unintelligent belief or that extremely dishonest pretence. The conscientious objector, too, was not only to be spared but honoured because he, "rightly or wrongly," believed it was not his duty to fight for his country; and I think I could lay my hands, not where I should like, but upon a few hundred examples of the trick, in the early days of the Russian betrayal of the allies down through all the foul history of Bolshevism, by which all the treacheries, chicaneries, and devilries of the Bolsheviks were defended on the ground that, "rightly or wrongly," they believed England and civilised Powers generally "were not to be trusted."

The rogue has been called in I know not how many times by those embittered partisans who, having even less dread of a revolution than hate of the existing Government, have condoned the constitutional excesses of Labour by trumpeting forth that Labour, "rightly or wrongly," had lost all faith in constitutional government

ever since, by a curious chance, the Coalition was constitutionally returned to power.

The latest use of the trick has been to attack the Emergency Powers Bill this week on the ground that, "rightly or wrongly," Labour will feel it as "a provocative blow" aimed at its "indefeasible right to combine"; and so is furnished another example of why government in this generation is so difficult, by an unintelligence that almost merges into insanity and intellectual dishonesties that almost become public crimes.

Let us glance at the circumstances in which the Bill has been brought in. A national miners' strike is in its second week, a strike by which a million men cease work and throw a million more out of work at a time when violent processions of unemployed make their first appearance in London streets, and during the very week selected by the leader of the Labour party in the House of Commons to arraign the Government for not tackling the problem of unemployment. On top of the miners' strike, confessedly political in its origins and first demands, the railwaymen throw down the bombshell of the sympathetic and revolutionary strike, not aimed at the railway companies at all, but aimed at the country and the Government, in the hope of paralysing both. With this move, there comes a general recognition that we may, at last, be faced with what Mr. J. H. Thomas, standing out against extremism when he himself is faced with it, calls "a bloody upheaval." In a word, the revolutionary boil was clearly coming to a head, and something had to be done to lance it—as I suggested only last week, by hinting that the drawback of speedily settling the miners' strike would be



that it would leave behind the unsettled problem of how the community was to be protected against organised labour's monopoly in essential industries.

Then the Government revealed its purpose in the sudden Emergency Powers Bill. How urgently the Bill was needed was also revealed on the same day, for the Labour-controlled Borough Councils of Shoreditch and Deptford, acting on the advice of Mr. Robert Williams, the firebrand leader of the transport workers, refused to allow municipal buildings to be used by the Government for volunteers engaged in the distribution of food during the then-impending strike. Mr. Robert Williams will have no volunteers, "especially from the middle-class and White Guard element of the community," and says, in effect, that the food will be distributed by "the appropriate trade unions," under a system of "permits," to the "useful" members of the community. Mr. Robert Williams cherishes strange notions concerning the meekness of what he calls the "middle class or White Guard element of the community," but he shows, at any rate, that it was high time the Government let it be known that when organised labour ceases to supply the essentials of life, they will step in and organise other labour to carry on the nation's daily existence.

Thereupon, in the first day's debate on the Bill conferring these powers on the Executive, up goes a chorus of opposition from the "Liberal"-Labour Coalition, and speaker after speaker touches the bed-rock of inanity by urging that the measure shall be instantly dropped because, "rightly or wrongly," Labour "would regard it as provo-

cative." Nor was this sheer unintelligence confined to those from whom we are accustomed to expect it:—

"Lord Robert Cecil: Mr. Bonar Law says that his Bill is not a threat; but that is immaterial so long as it is so regarded by one of the parties."

Or, as I might say, "Lord Robert Cecil says that the League of Nations is not a delusion; but that is immaterial so long as it is so regarded by those who think so."

Again:—

"'Withdraw the Bill' pleaded Lady Astor, "It is not provocative, but it will be so regarded by our amateur Bolsheviks."

And so flourishes the "rightly or wrongly" fallacy, by which nothing is final, and nothing is right or wrong, but anything may be either, and everything ends in futility. It is a silly game, but even when a game is silly, two can still play at it. And so it is enough to say that, rightly or wrongly, the Government thinks it has been provoked to pass the Bill, and rightly or wrongly has duly passed it.

## WHAT WE KNOW

[Armistice Day, November 11, 1920. For this week the controversial flag of "Unpopular Opinions" was lowered.]

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At last a great chapter is closed. When the soil of France fell on the coffin of the Unknown Warrior and the grave closed over him, it ended the War, as burial ends the ritual of death. Now, with that almost impersonal body brought to its rest, we can feel, as nothing else could make or let us feel, that all is over. It is the last of all the great ceremonies of the Great War, the last pomp of all its circumstance. Fittingly, it overawed them all. It was the most majestic, yet the most simple; the most sublime, yet the most poignant of all the panoplies and parades, the solemnities and exaltations, of our high adventure. His mouldering body was the symbol and the epitome of a great harvest, gathered and garnered at last from a great field where honour sowed and glory reaped.

To all of us, spared for a little while longer for the inheritance we have received from him, have come this week the self-questionings of a proper humility. Looking backward, we ask what reproaches must fall on us for the part we bore in the great event whilst it lived and moved and possessed our being; and, looking forward, we are

compelled to ask ourselves whether we are to prove ourselves worthy of the inheritance, how we shall use it, and whether we shall pass it on in all its integrity, or diminished and ignobly used. The Great War now awaits judgment at the bar of History, but it also brings us before the bar of our own judgment. The Unknown Warrior arraigns us there, challenges us, but cannot judge us, and there is now only our own judgment to meet. How shall we meet it?

May we not, to begin, call *him* as our witness? For though he is an unknown warrior, we know something of him and he knew something of us. We know his race. Knowing that, we, at least, can say that he belonged to a race that has never yet, in all its thousand years, provoked such a cause as that for which he had to die. Many things may trouble our racial conscience, some things may stain our record, but from one stain both are free: we have never drenched Europe with the blood of those who had to die to resist our tyranny. Thrice we have saved Europe from despotism—we have never devastated Europe to impose our despotism. We have given more freedom to the world than we have ever taken from it. We have often been unprepared for war—we have never plotted and prepared for war, never made war our "national industry."

And so, in all our seemly introspection as the grave closes over this epitome of our race, let us at least not make the mistake of judging ourselves so harshly that at length we should misjudge *him* and involve *him* in our self-reproaches. For what do we know of him that does not suggest he would approve of everything we have done,

except throw doubt on the cause for which he fought, make difficult the victory he achieved, and deride the Peace he earned?—and of much that we have left undone, save that which is involved in the supreme reproach that we have not yet done our duty to those still living whose charge on us he symbolises in death?

We think of him as one dead, and so an agent in all the great reconciliations that death imposes. But he was once a living man, feeling as we felt, confronted with definite, living facts that moved him to the duty and sacrifice that brought him to where he now lies. To us the war has often been presented as a sort of impersonalised catastrophe that had no definite human origins, something as remote from human wills as a great upheaval of nature; so that men not knowing why, suddenly found themselves at the throats of other men, not knowing the wherefore, all convinced not of their being right or wrong, but merely of its being senseless and without purpose—all equally innocent, and all equally guilty, all equally helpless, and yet all equally responsible, and none having the elementary sense to inquire into its definite human origin and causation. But we cannot honour him if we ascribe to him a view of the great epic in which he bore a part so abstract, detached, impersonal, and even dehumanised as that view is.

To him, we may surely say, the war did not present itself in that dim, blind way. He did not think of himself as the victim of an impartial chance in which human rights and wrongs were indistinguishable in a common human frailty that deserved equal censure and pity. We know that he distinguished between his race and another, and we



know that unless he had felt the distinction in his very blood and bones he could not have borne his part so valiantly or believed in his cause to the death. Let us, then, be careful not to involve him in our own humilities, as we shall do if we think of him only as one dead and forget how, when living, he himself judged the cause for which he died.

And yet, with the earth now covering him, how one wishes that all animosities of race were buried in that tomb! It is always assumed by those who are eager to forget and forgive that those who are loth to forget and slow to forgive betray thereby a spiritual deficiency. But I wonder why, even out of that charity to others which they seek to inculcate, the thought never occurs to these critics of his race that the reluctance they condemn is really the sign of a great spiritual struggle, in which a passionate love of peace contends with a passionate hatred of wrong—a struggle, too, in which the desire to forget conflicts with the duty that memory owes to him.

He was, unquestionably, the victim of a great wrong. Can one, then, readily forget and forgive the wrong without weakening all the obligations of honour and gratitude and memory due to the victim? And is it not rather a mechanical morality which says that with the wrong frustrated and Right triumphant, the moral judgment shall cease to operate in any further condemnation? Yet these questions need not now be answered, or even pressed in any spirit of unseemly controversy, for we know that however much we may mitigate the harshness of our judgments as we stand round his bier, those generations which will be secure from the emotional and spiritual recoil, those

who will follow us and will not have to pass through the alternating emotions of a living experience, but will judge the established truth by re-established moral standards, will at any rate absolve from any charge of spiritual deficiency those who find it hard to forget and forgive. And perhaps he, above all, understands.

But I think it may be said that one reproach that he would level at those who still live on in the land for which he died is that they do not prize it as he did. "Patriotism is not enough," said one having his own steadfast spirit.\* It is not. But one could wish that the benign words were not so often recalled by those who use them to imply that a very little patriotism is enough. And is it dishonouring to the memory of the dead warrior to suggest that if he could now speak, million-tongued, he would have only one reproach for us by saying that he died for the peace of a country which now nourishes deadly enmities within itself? Would he not say that we had dimmed the glory of his victory and marred the joy of his sacrifice by rancours and hatreds that made a discord of our very thanksgiving? We know that he was worthy of England—and we know that an England worthy of him would be the England of our dreams.

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\*Nurse Edith Cavell.

## LAWMAKING

Not for a long time, in days that bring little to cheer, have we had more enheartening news than that published the other day. The Government, it was announced, had decided to call a halt in its legislative forced march, and to concentrate on administration—that is, on the first business of government. Well, it is never too late to mend; and Governments, apparently, are never too old to learn. But they are very slow to learn, and seem to see a thing, at best, only when it is obvious, and, at the worst, not even then. It has been obvious enough surely for many months and some years that what was needed most was not more laws, but better government, and the efficient administration of the country under the laws already existing. How is it, then, that that truth dawns only late in the day on the official mind?

I am afraid it is because the official mind never gets far enough away from official politics to see the problems of government simply. For several generations we have been measuring progress almost solely by the volume of political enactments, by quantity and not by quality. Governments fell, or came in, on "reform"; Whigs were "dished" by Tories, and Radicals were "sold" by Liberals; and the party game see-sawed between compet-

ing bids for popular support, with party expediency taking the place of political principle in increasing measure. Then, with the rise of democracy after the franchise of 1884, and the gradual predominance of social reform over constitutional reform, the measurement of political progress by the increased bulkiness of the Statute Book became an almost absolute standard of political achievement. The Liberal rule which began in 1906 relied for its reputation on overtaking the "arrears of social legislation" bequeathed by the more or less beneficent indolence of the Balfourian régime, and in 1912-13-14 the legislative machine was grinding its hardest, and the Parliamentary boilers were simply choked with "clinker." Then, suddenly, the engines of government had other work to do, and the pulleys were taken off the legislative machine. The fires in the party furnace were banked, whilst the fires of patriotism flamed up to move all the engines of government for one supreme task.

And that was the point in our modern political history when the governmental mind should have made a breach in its political philosophy commensurate with the breach actually made in our internal political history. That philosophy was applicable to a time of profound peace, security, and prosperity. But times had suddenly changed, and the governmental mind did not change its philosophy with them. For it waged a war for bare existence with one foot, and a good deal of its heart, in the grave of its legislative hopes. Then by surrendering instantly, with hands up, to the delusion that the great war was "a fight for democracy" (a cry invented by those anxious to find any formula which might save the party

face in a great cause demanding national unity), the governing mind, not in one party only, made *the first cardinal mistake of the war*. For it accepted a cry which gave a sanction, in advance, to that accentuated class war which has since developed. To this day we are paying for that initial falsity; for the cry that we were fighting for democracy was instantly twisted to mean that we were fighting only for the advanced programme of the "progressive" party politicians. And so it gave countenance during the war to every fissiparous movement to which the democratic label could be attached, and to every claim made by the left wing of the progressive forces to control the peace and our whole national policy. It was the parent of a large progeny of fallacies and sophistries which have since grown up into very active and hefty revolutionary ideas.

I have now to connect this argument concerning the effect of the "fight for democracy" cry with what I mean by saying that the governmental mind missed a great opportunity to revise its political outlook then, instead of being driven to do it under more difficult circumstances now. When the war broke out, under a Liberal Government that had conceived its whole duty to be that of intense legislative activity, the main body of its supporters at once asked how the war was going to affect their progressive programme. That fact is well established in my own mind, because it happens that the very first words I wrote on the war were based on the wild laments that went up, when the war was only a few days old, that Liberalism was "dead," because "it could not survive in an atmosphere of war."



The years that followed showed that the party stomach had become too fastidious for the dry bread of liberty, and still craved for its political luxuries. And there was no statesman to rebuke, *from the first*, that insatiable mood, which has led to so many disastrous discontents, or to tell them that the war had brought us down to the elemental realities of an organised State; that political "progress" (especially of the debateable kind) must of necessity be suspended until the old foundations were re-secured; and that the frenzy of law-making would have to give place to a very deliberate abstinence until something like the old national prosperity had returned.

But none of these things was said, and after the "fight for democracy" cry had been accepted, it would have been useless to say them. For though the party fires had been banked, the furnaces had not been drawn, and the old fires soon flamed up, fed by fresh, fierce fuel, and stoked by fierce "democrats," who saw that if Liberalism was "dead," something very much in advance of it was very much alive. Hence followed many indiscreet promises and many precocious rhapsodies about "a new earth," and "a land fit for heroes to live in," when nothing was more certain than that the devastations of war would make it a land not too good for even the unheroic. Hence came the vast educational plans; the "grandiose" schemes and finance; the multiplication of Ministries, and the whole megalomania and frenzied pace of new laws and crushing taxes.

And now, suddenly confronted by where it is all taking us to, the Government realises that it must cut down its legislative luxuries, and concentrate on the simple, urgent

task of government. It suddenly realises that after the intensive culture of our national resources made necessary by a war in which to win carries almost the price of defeat, the soil of political progress must lie fallow for a while, and that contraction and not expansion is the first governmental duty.\* But it is late in the day to make the discovery, and the real mischief began when the self-centred pre-occupations of the party-mongers went unrebuked. But now we know that our task is to secure and consolidate the State, and to take in sail whilst the storms about us last. If the ship of State can stagger through under "bare poles," it is as much as we have any right to expect.

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\*The letter of the policy was adhered to, but the spirit foreshadowed has not been. The announcement was the first indication that the wave of "Reconstruction" enthusiasm beyond our immediate capacity had abated; but though lawmaking on the great scale had ceased, the assertion of Law, even on fundamental issues, was not evinced in any new spirit.

## OUR IGNOBLE SELVES

“If you are writing much about Ireland these days, for Heaven’s sake say—” And I throw the letter (from an old friend far away) at the toast-rack. Enough of Ireland for one week, anyhow. The week opened with Ireland and with the news of her murderers, with simultaneous precision, rousing sleeping men in their lodgings scattered over Dublin, and leaving them in the sleep which knows no waking. It has been Ireland in the Commons [Debate on Reprisals and Dublin assassinations], Ireland in the Lords [2nd Reading of Home Rule Bill carried, November 25, 1920], Ireland in the papers, Ireland in train, tram, bus, and tube. A threadbare garment is the subject of Ireland, so patched with lurid tragedy and coarse crime that little now is left of the original fabric of a mere political issue. Never was there such a tyranny, wearisome to mind and heart, as that which Ireland has imposed on our political life; and there must be few Englishmen who do not ardently wish that the tyranny of geographical fact did not forbid the one solution of the Irish problem which would make Ireland the sole guardian of her destinies, untroubling ours. For, really, we have little in common, apart from the political unity inexorably imposed by the geographical fact. No nation on earth

has a greater capacity for self-pity and a smaller capacity for self-criticism than the Irish—a difficult mixture, not found in our own temperamental composition, and leading to much mischief.

But Ireland also closes the week. An hour ago, the dead witnesses of another Irish quality passed through our London streets, and the realities of last Sunday's crimes came home to us. [The officers murdered in Dublin received a public funeral]. It is only a few weeks since the dead body of the Lord Mayor of Cork went along the same streets through decorous crowds. To-day is returned to us the high interest exacted for that "martyrdom," interest paid to the death by brave men who were given no chance in life, but who were dragged out of their warm beds to be butchered, or were slain as they lay. And as the long defile of death passed amongst us, the London crowds, ordinarily so apathetic, tolerant, and impartial in their metropolitan philosophy, so impersonal in their attitude to racial hostilities directed even against them, seemed to be stirred by a quickened sense of the rights of their race in relation to the wrongs of Ireland. But a few weeks ago the Sinn Fein flags passed amongst them without a protest—an example of tolerance that could hardly have been seen in any other country or capital on earth. But to-day their own flag, covering the coffins of those who died in their service, passed before their homage, and I do not think the London crowds felt ashamed of that flag, or of the work that must be done under it in Ireland. So the week closes as it began, under the shadow of Ireland's unappeasable hate of England, and I pick up my letter again. . . .

If you are writing much about Ireland these days, for Heaven's sake say that we English are being trapped, as usual, by being asked to realise the theory of ideal justice whilst no other people has got as far as the theory. The Government ought to say bluntly that they can only work with human agents, and within the limits of the human facts imposed on them, and that if inhuman murder is done it cannot and will not be met by either superhuman tolerance or any deference to cant about a "humanity" which others do not feel.

For my own part, I quite agree. It is a fact, as I wrote here some time ago, that the English are always expected to conform to a high standard which no other race respects or sets for itself; to strangle themselves in their own traditions; and to paralyse themselves by moral compunctions which those in conflict with them do not share.

And so I come to what I said a moment ago about the Irish having much self-pity and little self-criticism—and both the excess and the defect are egotistical qualities. For many weeks we have been told, by pens and tongues asserting that they spoke for England, that our policy in Ireland stamps us as uncivilised; and now I notice that Mr. Asquith (whose courage increases by his distance from the House of Commons) has just addressed the ardent youth of Bradford Liberalism in these words: "I tell you that as an Englishman I have never felt before the bar of the civilised world the same sense of shame and humiliation as I feel to-day." With his conscience so sensitive to civilised opinion as that, how fortunate for Mr. Asquith that to-day he is not an Irishman! Mr. Asquith says what he says because he is ashamed of what is done in Ireland by the English. But no Irishman says that, or anything like that, for what is being done in Ireland by the Irish. Mr. Devlin had his opportunity on Wednesday night, and he delivered a speech which, we were told, greatly moved the House by its eloquence. But



the subject of the debate was the murder of those English officers whose dead bodies have just passed amongst us, and Mr. Devlin's eloquence did not follow Mr. Asquith's noble example of racial self-criticism, but was directed entirely to the woes of Ireland—the same old, fatiguing threnody of self-pity, implying that we should weep for an Ireland whose tragic woes obliged her to murder English officers in their beds.

From this excessive self-pity and deficient self-criticism, at any rate, we are free. Indeed, we have amongst us those who even transpose the excess and the deficiency—and in that transposed form, again, you have the marks of an egotistical quality, though the egotism is that of self-righteousness. Mr. Asquith's words were, I admit, consistent, under some circumstances, with a character of the most elevated nobility—but they were equally consistent, as things are, with a character far removed from that excellence. For recent years have shown that we have amongst us those who suffer from the delusion that exceptional nobility of character will be automatically ascribed to those who blacken the character of their country; and I fear that Mr. Asquith, forced to give spasmodic signs of life to answer the expectations of his party, really has fallen to the depths of that spurious "high-mindedness."

To Mr. Asquith, ashamed of his country "before the bar of the civilised world," this consolation, however, may fairly be given : that he, of all men, ought to know that it doesn't matter. For he leads a party (or what is left of it, owing to its noble proclivities not being adequately appreciated by an ignoble nation) whose whole

strident gospel for three, four, and even five years has been that what Germany had done (and Termonde, Aerschot, and Malines are, after all, quite as actual as Ballyhooley) also doesn't matter, and that the sponge of a charitable judgment must be wiped over the whole record in order that, as he told the same young Liberals of Bradford, Germany may be received forthwith into the civilised bosom. Surely, with a nobility so immense that it must be universal, and with a charity and a philosophy of toleration so embracing, Mr. Asquith may hope that his own country may, for its current record in Ireland, escape eternal shame "at the bar of the civilised world." Nevertheless, it is a pity that Mr. Asquith should be ashamed of his country—for he may drive it, at length, to a reciprocation of that feeling in a "reprisal" of sentiment.

## DERISION

[The Irish Office had just published extracts from captured Sinn Fein plans, showing preparations for widespread destruction in London and the great provincial cities. At the same time Sir Håmar Greenwood, the Irish Secretary, announced in the Commons that the Government possessed evidence of the payment of large sums of money from abroad (including half a million from Bolshevik sources) for the promotion of terrorism in Great Britain.]

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In the drama of our modern history the plot steadily thickens. Downing Street barricaded; the galleries of the House of Commons closed, and such strangers as are permitted to pass into the precincts of Parliament searched for weapons; the police on duty round the whole area of governmental headquarters armed with automatic revolvers; Ministers moving about with a bodyguard of protectors and riding in bullet-proof cars—such, with other precautions not publicly paraded, are the recognitions that now have to be made of the derided “plot to smash the British Empire.” And so this week sees us pass another milestone on the road to what one may quite reverently call God-knows-where. It is not a fortnight since the Irish Nationalist party—the whole three of them—lollèd in their seats in affected “derisive laughter” at the Irish Secretary’s revelation of Sinn

Fein plots. We did not have to wait long to see how much their derision was worth.

It is curious to reflect how all the great drama of these years has been accompanied, scene by scene, by that derisive laughter, mocking truth and reason. I wonder how many times its guffaws have been heard, and "We refuse to believe," "We indignantly repudiate," and "Nothing but inveterate malignity could suggest" have been said by people who simply and truly did refuse to believe, just as a horse refuses to drink, but who nimbly adjusted themselves to the accomplished fact by ignoring its accomplishment, or who forgot all about their incredulous scorn and righteous derision by accepting the "incredible thing" once it had happened, as quite in the day's work.

The spirit began before the war began, and by its immense success during the war has at length reached that perfection of audacity which enables it to refuse to see meaning in truth. It mocked and jeered at every fear of the dark purpose of Germany. The shock came, and took the breath of derision away for a little while. But it soon recovered its breath, to ignore what had been already proved by denying the next thing then in process of proof—which was that Germany meant to accomplish her purpose by foul means. When that proof was given, Derision took counsel with itself and decided to invent a formula which should discount every other inconvenient proof in advance, and the formula was that these abominations were to be ascribed to an abstraction called "militarism," with which "the German people" had nothing to do. So the spirit of Derision took refuge

in a stronghold of Idealism, shouting from its battlements that all these things were only war's barbarities, so that the only urgent need was a thing they called Peace, which merely meant a callous oblivion. The Lusitania, the sinking of hospital ships, the rain of death from the air, and the higher peaks of infamy, were passing embarrassments, triumphed over by the same evasion, as though the thing proved became, on proof, irrelevant. And so by the end of the war the spirit of derision and denial was in full breath, proclaiming its own "larger vision," in being ready with a big sponge for the past, and the same old truculent, unabashed incredulities about the future.

With this success and practice, Bolshevism found it at the very top of its form. It was, perhaps, a little difficult, after hailing Bolshevism as "the most glorious episode in human history," to reconcile that humanitarian magniloquence with every proof of its stupendous horror. But it was possible, by merely speaking of Bolshevism as something else than it really was, by never dwelling on the realism of its butcheries, but always dwelling on the "idealism" of its "aims," to bridge the wide gulf between the initial enthusiasm of "the most glorious episode" and the final cynicism of "This cheap melodrama about 'refusing to shake hands with murderers'!"—and the interval between the two points was filled in by derision of "those who have Bolshevism on the brain."

And just as the war taught these deriders nothing whatever, just as the whole ghastly truth of Bolshevism has taught them nothing except that Mr. Churchill is



“a dangerous man to have in a Cabinet,” for seeing Bolshevism objectively, as the thing it really is, and so calling it, so Sinn Fein has taught them nothing except that its plots and terrorisms—denied and derided and discounted all along—must be allowed to prevail once they are proved true, and, being true, only represent “the undying flame of Irish nationalism.” From the war, from Bolshevism, and from Sinn Fein, there is some moral to be drawn unfavourable to the Germans, to the Bolsheviks, and to the Sinn Feiners. But that spirit of incoherence which is steadily disintegrating our whole national life, and making public discussion a derationalised thing, extracts from each phenomenon a “moral lesson,” which in each case exculpates the wrong-doer and arraigns the victim.

I am driven to this generalisation, and to this attempt to reduce a baffling squint-eyed incoherence to something like a formula, by one recent example of its operation. If there is one thing so clear and true that its clearness and truth could only be weakened by discussion, it is that Mr. Birrell, as Irish Secretary, was compelled to leave office by the proof given, and affirmed by a Royal Commission, that his policy of giving lawlessness its head culminated in, and led to, the Rebellion of 1916. And so, that being the fact, it is quite in the nature of the prevailing insanity that Mr. Birrell, of all men, should now be resuscitated in the public memory and presented as the one man to whom the present state of Ireland is no rebuke. And so I read (in “The Daily News”) : “We wonder what one man in particular must be thinking of the course of events in Ireland. For he

must be thinking very hard. It is strange now to look back upon the storm of obloquy with which Mr. Birrell was hounded out of office. . . .”—and so on to the difference between Ireland as Mr. Birrell left it and “the anarchy which Sir Hamar Greenwood has created and made.”

Well, we have to reckon with the fact that there is a new element in the discussion of public affairs which immensely complicates the task of straightening out the tangled skein. Truth is now mocked to its very face. The reality of Sinn Fein plots is now obvious enough, and the Downing Street barricades are the simplest and sanest recognition of their reality. But the cartoon supports the pen, in this wise: John Bull, presenting himself at the Downing Street barrier, and demanding to “see the man who contracted to bring about Peace and Prosperity,” is met by a villainous policeman thrusting a revolver in his face, and the barrier bears the legend: “This barricade is erected to protect the Premier from persons driven insane by the Coalition Irish policy,” whilst (just to stir the cauldron of class hatred) the legend continues, “The Unemployed are advised to cart their despair somewhere else.” And so the spirit of derision passes into something else, that shameful thing which is merely a cynical lie. A “Truce of God” is called for Christmas.\* That truce of God would not be necessary if the truth of men were more manifest.

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\*The Premier was being pressed to secure “a truce of God” for Christmas, by consultations with “the moderate element of Sinn Fein.” On December 9th, (1920) the Government announced its “double policy” of martial law (a year too late) for the worst districts in Ireland and its willingness to treat with Sinn Feiners innocent of crime.

## MR. WELLS' WORST

Mr. H. G. Wells, a novelist of great repute, has just added another book to his row. Having recently been in Russia, for exactly a fortnight (and going there upon the invitation of M. Kameneff, a Russian "diplomatist" just sent out of Mr. Wells' country because of his diplomatic duplicity), the eminent novelist returns to write a book on what he has seen, and on what he thinks, of the stupendous disaster of Bolshevism. As for what he has seen, he tells us nothing that we did not know, and a good deal less than we already knew, and tells it, moreover, as a man talks rather than a writer should write—"disconnected details" he calls his description of Russia in the Shadow, and no man need contradict him. Exactly three years ago, when the very name of Bolsheviks was new to us, Mr. Wells was writing to say what fine fellows they were, "much better educated than our own diplomatists, to whom one has to talk like a fifth-form boy," and of a political intelligence that put all our Western statesmen into the shade—"the real goods" of super-statesmanship, in fact. That was three years ago.\* And three years later Mr. Wells, having seen them at work in the unpromised land where you

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\*Writing in the "Daily Mail," January 15th, 1918.

cannot even get a decent wash-and-brush-up, writes of them (thus making his harshest criticism of Bolshevism), "These Bolsheviks are, as I have explained, extremely inexperienced men, intellectual exiles from Geneva or Hampstead, or comparatively illiterate manual workers from the United States. . . . The Bolshevik Government is inexperienced and incapable to an extreme degree." But Mr. Wells, in December, 1920, is quite blandly indifferent to what he wrote in December, 1917, or thereabouts.

That is one reason for saying that what Mr. Wells thinks of Bolshevism does not intrinsically matter. In his book to-day he says many things that will seem just as ridiculous as the things he wrote three years ago, casually thrown off and then apparently forgotten even by himself, now seem and are foolish. What, then, really does matter about the fact that Mr. Wells upholds and justifies (for that is what his book does) the insane and inhuman experiment of Bolshevism? It is that Mr. Wells, having a great name in one department of literary activity, has thereby an immense potentiality for mischief among that large, indiscriminating, democratic public which, being impressed by "names," confuses their authority. It is true that Mr. Wells has as much, or as little, right as any educated man to present Bolshevism to the favourable consideration of civilised people. But, equally, almost any other educated man has as much competence, for his book is remarkable not for what he thinks as for what he fails to think and where he stops thinking. In any case, his responsibility is enormous in upholding the immense tyranny that has produced such

vast human misery. How does he meet, or evade, this responsibility?

First, he writes with the detached, objective air, and in the colloquial matter-of-fact tone, of the modern pseudo-scientist, setting down with a fine gesture of impartiality those comparatively unimportant facts unfavourable to his advocacy, the admission of which may suggest the judicial mind, whilst betraying no sense whatever of what this system and experiment mean in human misery and injustice. He listens to Lenin talking of his intention to make a desolation of all the towns in Russia, and then to tackle the peasants "in detail," as though it were quite natural that this "little man of the Kremlin, whose feet hardly touch the floor when he sits down," should be allowed to test his tyrannies and theories by a hundred million human agonies. If the Bolshevik experiment had been conducted on some gigantic chess-board, where the proletarian pawns obliterated bloodless knights and bishops, and an inhuman tyranny exercised itself only theoretically upon suffering bits of wood, then Mr. Wells' obtuseness to the human realities behind the theory would have been quite in the best "scientific" spirit. But when he can call our refusal to trade with Bolshevism an "atrocious" blockade, and has little more to say of the *real* atrocities than that the Bolshevik Government is no more responsible for most of them than the Government of Australia, then I, for one, find it much easier to forget the good things Mr. Wells has done than to forgive this one supremely bad thing he has done.

Next, with the cleverness of mere audacity, he roundly



denies that it is the vast experiment that has produced the misery he saw. "Ruin" (and "a vast, irreparable breakdown")—"that is the primary fact of Russia at the present time." And then he says, with quite unscientific naïveté, "This spectacle of misery is, you will say, the result of Bolshevik rule." We do, indeed. To which Mr. Wells, in a crescendo of naïveté, rejoins, "I don't believe it is!" and proceeds to the now familiar conclusion that the red ruin of Russia is primarily due to "the atrocious blockade," and "the journalistic British oaf," who has helped to maintain it. And Mr. Wells does not even pause to ask himself whether "atrocious" (his "oaf" may be left to his own literary conscience) is quite the term to apply to the refusal of a Government to trade with a State that seeks the overthrow of every Government unlike its own. Nor does Mr. Wells seem to be conscious of the admission he makes of the Bolshevik failure when, reaching his final conclusion, he says that what is left of civilisation in Russia can be saved only by the "helpful intervention" of those capitalistic and constitutional governmental systems which Bolshevism seeks to destroy.

But the political simplicity of Mr. Wells' mind is most distressingly revealed in his account of his interview with Lenin. He is fascinated by Lenin's talk of "the electrification of Russia"—Russia, where all the surviving scientists are dependent on what he calls "salvage" agencies, and where the bolts of the rusty locomotives start from their sphere as soon as they begin to move under steam generated fitfully by wood fuel—and Mr. Wells is "almost persuaded to share this vision," this puerility of

the man who, having made a wilderness, proves his sagacity to Mr. Wells by talking of "electrifying" it. Again, he praises the Lenin vision in seeing that Bolshevism is nothing more than "the inauguration of an era of limitless experiment." "Those who are engaged in the formidable task of overcoming capitalism," said Lenin recently, "must be prepared to try method after method until they find the one which answers their purpose best." And the uncritical mind of Mr. Wells makes no challenge whatever of this devastating confession that all this tyrannical disorganisation of human rights and activities is made by insensate theorists who know only what they want to destroy, and are content to find out by "limitless experiment" what can go into its place. It is, truly, a pitiful exhibition of egotism that a man of Mr. Wells' intellectual parts should lend even his intellectual shortcomings to apologetics in the interest of a crazy infamy which, if practised in his own land, would have rendered him ere now a commiserated dependent upon "salvage" agencies at work among the debris of our intellectual life.

## PROMISES

The shadow of unemployment now falls on us darkly. Soon it may be not a shadow, but a pall; or, if still a shadow, that which is cast before by sinister coming events. For not even the optimist (who may be defined as the man whose hopes outrun his reason) can be proof against a fear that it may require only the conjunction of a hard winter and acute distress to bring to a crisis the long-maturing malady of revolutionary unrest; and because of that very reasonable fear the task of statesmanship, if it still possessed the qualities of vision and courage, has long been well marked out. The task was, first, to minimise the risk of large unemployment by avoiding every action on its own part which might contribute to it; and secondly, but quite as importantly, to expose, and, as far as possible, to frustrate, every action on the part of others that tended towards industrial disorganisation. In both respects, statesmanship has failed—failed, that is, in what was its duty.

It allowed the huge debt incurred to avoid a German conquest to deprave its general financial standards, so that it has confronted its peace expenditure exactly in the spirit of that resigned and reckless desperation which the saying "as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb" defines.

As to the second part of the indictment, it has failed on this simple ground; broadly speaking, the whole policy of organised labour, ever since its "class consciousness" responded to the stimulus of our national emergency in war, has been to make and enforce claims which, whilst giving labour a temporary advantage, were certain ultimately to produce a wider economic calamity—and statesmanship uttered no warning and fixed no responsibility. It has bought off strike after strike by concessions that have merely fed the organised appetite. Let it be granted that each concession was the price of peace—at the moment. But even then some authoritative voice should have been raised to shout that there must come an end to the process, and that the process itself, with its cumulative effect, stage by stage, must make the end of economic disaster as inevitable as death. The last coal strike was settled by what was called "a statesmanlike compromise."\* It may or may not have been that, but it is at least equally probable that omniscience if we could get it to speak, would say that the highest statesmanship would not have compromised, but would have most uncompromisingly said, "So far as our benevolence is concerned, we should like to see all miners earning £20 a week; but our responsibility obliges us to consider the direct relation between the cost of coal and the general industrial well-being, and we now definitely declare that more work is the first urgent thing, and more

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\*This was the strike of October, 1920, which was "compromised" largely on the miners' terms. The great coal strike of 1921, which lasted three months, and immensely increased the problem of unemployment by the stoppage of dependent industries, had yet to come.

wages must wait." Again, we want houses, and the house shortage has been for two years one of the worst social evils bequeathed by the war. The chief impediment to the building of houses is the claim of organised labour in the building trade to monopolise that trade in its own interest. And only now, two years too late, when the house shortage is both chronic and acute and unemployment is passing into the same phase, the Government declares its resolve\* to allow a man to lay a brick with or without the leave of the bricklayers' trade union. How is it that such an obvious assertion of simple human right is made so very late in the day?

It is because we are only just beginning to work our way through the confusions made between simple human rights and the assertions of perfectly false "democratic" principles. In 1915, when the need for munitions of war on a scale not till then contemplated had become manifest, the word "dilution" jumped into our current vocabulary. As the organised and settled labour in the engineering trade was utterly inadequate for the production of the munitions urgently called for to answer the German hail of shell, it was necessary to "dilute" that labour with that of men, and women, who offered themselves to the task. And organised labour demurred, and, at length yielding, gave its consent to a man working for his country's salvation despite the disqualification of not belonging to a trade union. But they accompanied the "concession" with the demand that when the war was over their trade union rules should be fully restored to them, and even be converted into statutory rights.

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\*Nothing whatever came of this resolve.



That was one of those clear opportunities, of which many have been supplied during these fateful years, for statesmanship to choose the right road and avoid the wrong. To that demand it could have answered:—

“What you call your trade union rules are the result of a private compact, to which the State is no party, between yourselves and your employers. So long as those rules affect you and them only, the State is not called upon either to uphold or dispute them, though they are rules which no State can itself enforce, because they conflict with elementary human rights. But the State is concerned with them now solely because, at a time of great national emergency, they come between the national need and the right and desire of men who stand outside your organisation to work for their country’s salvation. For that reason we cannot recognise them, and we refuse to recognise them on the broad and simple ground that the rights of common citizenship transcend those ‘rights’ which are merely the result of bargaining by trade organisations. For the period of the national emergency, therefore, they must be abrogated simply because they conflict with the national interest, and when the emergency has passed they will simply revert to their former status—a set of rules which you are entitled to enforce as between your employers and yourselves, so long as you can give validity to them.”

That was the answer that should have been returned to the claim then and there, and if it had been returned when the claim was first made, it would have been effective and respected.\* But in those days statesmanship had already begun its capitulations to claims made for “democracy” that were subversive of simple human rights, and the

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\*To meet any objection of being “wise after the event,” perhaps I may explain that I advanced the argument summarised above upon the first raising of the issue in 1915.

On Christmas Day of that year Mr. Lloyd George had gone down to the Clyde, to urge at a meeting of engineering workers which became an uproar (and would listen neither to him nor to Mr. Arthur Henderson, then in the Ministry), the need for increased output.

I was then asked by a London newspaper to write a series of articles stating the case for dilution, receiving the support of the then Minister of Munitions in that task. The articles were replied to by officials of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, who contended that the rules of the Union could be relaxed only if the State would protect “the birthright” of trade unionists by giving

promise was given that trade union rules should be restored by the State itself, and even given statutory sanction, and the voices raised in warning against where this new principle would take us went unheeded.

What then was unsaid has now to be said, and at length it becomes necessary to issue to the Bricklayers' Union an ultimatum which in effect lays down the principle, though it fails to express it, that the right of a man to work does not in the least degree depend upon his membership of a voluntary trade organisation, but is inherent and sacred. And so, one by one, rash promises, like curses, come home to roost—promises made by men in responsible and governing position, who do not think responsibly and cannot look ahead.

For now another cloud looms on the industrial horizon. The promise has been given that industrial workers shall share, not the responsibilities, but the powers of management, and in the railway world the protest has at last been made that "it can't be done." Whereupon come threats of another industrial upheaval, and we shall next

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"statutory safeguards" that no workers brought in to do war-work should afterwards be employed, "under penalty" to them and those employing them.

I answered in the sense given above, pointing out the impossibility of any State using its powers to prevent any man earning an honest living. My right of reply, however, had to give way to what was considered the "inadvisability" of contesting these claims. As they remained uncontested generally, they very naturally hardened into a conviction that they were accepted, whilst strengthening the general claim of Trade Unionism to assert an authority in conflict with national interests. My own feeling upon the general matter is that an injustice is habitually done to the British working man by assuming that he will not listen to reason; but, however that may be, that the tact which enjoins silence where great principles are concerned merely postpones and accentuates the trouble.

have to face the consequences of the amiable assumption that to be a platelayer or a railway porter carries with it the inherent justice of a seat on the board of directors. It may do so (though I think I could prove it does not), but if it does so it is only because to be a railway director also carries with it the right to a seat on the Executive of the Railway Workers' Union.

## CHOPPING UP ENGLAND

Six months ago I ventured upon a warning concerning the probable development of the idea of devolution. I then pointed out that those politicians who were most active in its advocacy had already committed themselves, and were doing their best to commit other people, to the belief that devolution was possible only if England were hacked up into legislative little bits, in order to placate the smaller nations of the kingdom; and added that it was "just as well that early in the discussion, and before the scheme is crystallised by the pioneers and accepted by English apathy, it should be made clear that if the price of devolution was that England must be chopped into heptarchical debris . . . there will be trouble."

From then until a few days ago (Dec. 20, 1920) there had been no development of the devolutionary plan—and, to be sure, there have been more urgent matters for the occupation of the political mind. But one day last week the leading devolutionists, seeing the session closing with "nothing done," waited upon the Prime Minister to urge their case upon him and to press for early legislation. Wholly sympathetic to their aims, the Prime Minister replied: "But how is it to be done? So far as Scotland and Wales are concerned, they are simple matters. . . .

The question is how to deal with England. Are you going to have provinces, or are you going to have a separate Parliament for England? If you have a separate Parliament for England, it is so important a Parliament that it is only barely less important than an Imperial Parliament. That is the problem you have to face."

And so, for once in a way and as a great relief and variety, it is England that blocks the way. England being what she is, vastly the most important unit in the United Kingdom, must, quite naturally and inevitably, reflect that importance in her Parliament. And to the Prime Minister that seems a "difficulty" and the "problem," and it is clear that he thinks the difficulty can be overcome only by England ceasing to be England and allowing herself to be carved up into provinces. With a delicacy natural under the circumstances, he does not urge that solution, but merely hints that until that solution is adopted no headway can be made with the scheme. His supporters in the English Press, however, dot the i's of his reticence and cross the t's of his reserve. The London organ which is specifically his supporter asks, steadily pursuing the line of country followed six months ago, "What have Bristol or Manchester or Birmingham done that they should not enjoy what is in prospect for Cardiff?"—a triumphantly irrelevant question to which the answer is that other towns in Wales have precisely the same relation to Cardiff that Manchester and Birmingham will have to their own capital of London. And then the organ bluntly proceeds: "It is necessary that politicians should thrash out the initial



postulates of the problem; and one of them we take to be that England should be divided into at least six divisions."!

It will be noticed that the whole argument of "problems" and "postulates" rest upon one postulate which cannot be made, for it is in itself fundamentally disputable. That postulate is that the fact of England being just what England is, neither more nor less, constitutes a difficulty and a problem. Englishmen, at any rate, may be pardoned for not seeing the problem or the difficulty. To them England is just what she is—and the acceptance of that fact, and not its rejection, must begin the argument. That is the initial postulate, and other postulates can only meet with expostulation.

Where does any difficulty arise in the fact that the English Parliament, the mother of all others, would still retain a predominance commensurate with England herself? The only serious answer is that inasmuch as devolution is intended to ease the pressure of Parliamentary work, that pressure will not be greatly eased by the fact that the English Parliament will be almost as big as the Imperial Parliament. Even so, that "difficulty" must be left to arrange itself, and it is by no means insuperable. We have but to think of how much Parliamentary time is devoted to non-English matters, and how much Parliamentary work for thirty years has been devoted to Ireland especially, to realise the immense freedom and relief that would come to a purely English Parliament. Besides, Parliamentary efficiency depends in the first place upon efficient Parliamentarians, and who can say that when England has her own political concerns under her own

political hat, she may not develop a system of Parliamentary efficiency as effective as everything else she has managed to do when allowed to mind her own business?

But the argument for Parliamentary efficiency is only a part, and the lesser part, of the case for devolution. We all know that the devolutionary idea received its first impulse from the demands made to satisfy the national sense first of Ireland, then of Scotland, and then of Wales—with England relegated to a residual position—and the objection to a predominating English Parliament arises much more from the jealous national sense of the other partners in the kingdom than from any considerations of Parliamentary efficiency.

And so it is high time, even though we are at very little more than the beginning of the controversy, that English people should lay down in flat and absolute terms their refusal to see their ancient realm hacked up in order to placate other nationalistic jealousies. English people, if they will only exert themselves to think and feel, must realise very keenly the psychological origins of all these fissiparous and separatist movements. It is not England who has paraded her national egotisms and clamoured for recognition of her separate nationhood. She has loyally abided by the unions, and made her hearth that of the Empire—so much so that, very often, she has found herself rather crowded out of her own hearth. But the other nations have wanted to have the best of both worlds—all the advantages of the union plus the recognition of separate nationality, aggressively proclaimed. And now that they are to be taken at their word, and have their national aspirations satisfied, it is a little too much that they

should begin to protest against the logical, just, and inevitable result that England's national predominance should be made manifest in her own Parliament. Why, to some of us it was this ultimate advantage of the emergence of England that reconciled us to the Home Rule and separatist theory of modern political "progress." Speaking for myself that was certainly so, for six years ago I wrote:—

"What enthusiasm I have for Home Rule comes from a faith and a hope that I trust will spread even among English Liberals. The hope is that when the devolutionary process has worked itself out England will regain control of her own destinies; and the faith is that when England has a Parliament of her own, her national spirit may once again assert itself, and leave her free to deal in her own way with all sorts of problems which now focus themselves in her midst, because of her capital importance and greater predominance."—"The Westminster Gazette," June 18, 1914.

But it is really too much that English complacency should now be asked to acquiesce in the final disappearance of an English Parliament in order that the susceptibilities of other nations may be soothed by her dismemberment. Indeed, unless English people are now so apathetic and denationalised that they deserve the humiliation, there is not the faintest hope for devolution if it is made to depend upon such a contemptuous estimate of England and the English national spirit.

## THE CYNIC'S CHRISTMAS

For the third Christmas since the great fracture, peace on earth—a nominal peace only, whilst the world licks its wounds. The last treaty of peace with the last enemy to be treated with still waits assertion; and the Allies do not quite know whether to use the terrible Turk as an instrument with which to chastise the fickle Greek, now hailing the returned King\* whose welcome attests, in the very land that gave it its name, the eternal weakness of democracy. So the Turk may come into his kingdom again. He, after all, never conspired with our delusions, or pretended to be any better than he is. If he knocked our countrymen and his prisoners on the head, as they trailed their parched misery over the desert or laid themselves down to die, he could plead that he only knocked them on the head to save them the trouble of dying. Has he not urged that it is unjust of us to make a fuss about what he did to our men, seeing that he did his own soldiers the same service when they, too, fell out on the march?

So, between the enlightened democracy of Greece, now hailing Tino as a relief to the fatigue of trying to live up to an exacting political probity, and the unspeakable and unchanging Turk, there is perhaps not a pin to

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\*King Constantine, emerging from his exile in Geneva, had just been "called back" to Greece by the popular voice, and the Allies complacently assented.

choose. Well, it takes all sorts to make a world. The Prime Minister of what was once a mighty Empire bids us take care not to risk the "hatred" of the Greek people by daring to resent their treachery or ingratitude. Apparently *our* displeasure, *our* hatred, *our* point of view does not matter anywhere or upon anything. Indeed, we do not seem to have a point of view, except that we must accept any standard of political morality that may be going. So to Turk and Greek alike, and even to Bolshevik, the compliments of the season.

On the whole, I fear a cynic's Christmas. The London streets reflect the prevailing mood. There is no Christmas rush, no Christmas jollity, no hearty, old-fashioned wishes for a hearty, old-fashioned Christmas—for everything that is old-fashioned has vanished from the earth, the old endearing customs are gone, and the new world (that is ever so much worse than the old) has few endearing traits.

Down Piccadilly comes a sudden clamour, and a rush of men jangling boxes. The boxes are "For the unemployed," and the men who hold them shake them almost aggressively in the faces of passers by. They "do not ask for charity"—they demand money. From a side street leading to stage-doors and to fashionable restaurants where it is ceasing to be the fashion to go (for fashions are expensive things), come the sounds of music, Christmas music. "Hark, the herald angels sing" has its unmusical, and even its unrecognisable moments, but it has a musical quality when fetched out by skilled players, and to-night that quality triumphs over the roar of traffic and shuffle of crowds. But it sounds rather



poignantly in the brilliant dusk of this Christmas Eve. The poignancy is that it makes its appeal to a sentiment that is not there to respond to it, and it becomes that pathetic futility, a convention keeping up appearances. The crowd goes ceaselessly by, but the message of the hymn does not enter its sophisticated heart. And probably the players themselves are out of tune with their music, for they are ex-Service men—the men who fought for England, and who in sodden, shell-swept trenches longed for the sounds and the sights and the smells of London, for the warmth and the lights and life of London, and who now see London sweeping by—absorbing the very sound of their appeal into the general sensuousness and movement of a London that has lost many illusions, and that this year has none about Christmas.

Here and there, in the busy shopping streets, are men seated against the wall with trays of chocolates on their laps—men, some of whom have but one arm or one leg, but who have ribbons on their breasts. And on the kerb of Regent Street—just defiantly escaping the gutter—are two strange figures, one dressed as Father Christmas (convention still doing its best) and the other in incongruous companionship as Pierrot, and they hold “a lucky dip” sack to tempt the passers-by. And Father Christmas and shivering Pierrot are, Heaven forgive us, officers who served in the Great War!

And what of the great world and the big things this Christmastide? Parliament closes its session, half-awake after sitting through the night shouting “Vide!” and “Agreed!” on things that matter little, too dulled to care about the things that matter much. It has just been

told by the responsible Minister that, though Bolshevism is a loathsome thing, though nothing would do the world so much good as its disappearance, and though its agents here have made the negotiations difficult by their duplicity and breaches of faith, yet we can only "persevere in our efforts" to trade with the loathsome thing that has nothing to sell, and therefore nothing wherewith to buy. I pick up a paper three days old—a paper that has for a year urged that "we must trade with Russia." Three days ago it took notice of what the loathsome thing had been doing to our prisoners in Baku. "For calculated brutality it would be difficult to match the story. . . . Systematically ignored every obligation of humanity. . . . Deepens the feeling of horror and the impression of a callousness almost inhuman." Yet next week and the week after, as last week and the week before that, you will read in the same paper, of a physical complexion not inappropriately green, that "we must trade with Russia." But of what use are feelings of horror and impressions of callous inhumanity, of what use is the moral sense at all, if no discrimination is to be made in policy between right and wrong? The Prime Minister, fresh from telling an audience that the sole hope of the world is a League of all the nations in it, listens with approval to his Minister saying that the sole hope of defeating Bolshevism is to trade with it,\* and does not realise that the sole hope of

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\*The Minister was Sir Robert Horne, President of the Board of Trade. As Chancellor of the Exchequer he had to make the confession ten months later (October 1921) that what he had described as "the sole hope" had turned out to be "futile." It is only in the profession of politics that such mistakes can be made and so lightly acknowledged, and the man responsible for them continue his gay career without any sort of penalty.

the world is, first, the perception of right, and then the assertion of it.

And so one ceases to wonder at the moral incoherence of the world in marvelling at the incoherence of its rulers. How can they in the same breath denounce the thing they court? Will nothing but the final catastrophe make them see that Right cannot go on much longer with its compromises, but must soon assert itself or be submerged? Cannot they see that the soldiers with their Christmas music, and Father Christmas on the kerb, and the determination "still to persevere" with the loathsome thing, are all manifestations of the same moral treachery? All these submissions of right, these abdications of duty, these compromises and confusions, take us nowhere near the ultimate goal of peace on earth and goodwill to men. They only make it difficult, and rather a mockery, for one decent man to wish another "A merry Christmas"—and this year he must leave that to the cynic.

## 1921

And so passes another of those years we are glad to see go. We have been like feverish readers impatiently turning the pages to see how the story goes, knowing that the happy ending must come, but wondering how many pages must be turned to end or ease our suspense. It is odd to think that we have to go back seven years to remember the pathos of the dying year, and recall humanity in its normal mood of regretting the passage of its mortal years. To many of us the succeeding years must have seemed so much time stolen from us. They have been years that have taken us off the track and the purposes of our lives, and far out of our course, leaving us all so much older and sadder, and so little better or wiser, that we are glad to see the disheartening years go by, even though they take so much from the dwindling tale. And so what of 1921?

It will be no better than its immediate predecessors\* (and, by being no better, be so much the worse) unless the responsible minds which, in so great a measure, control our destinies first diagnose the malady with accuracy, and then treat it with courage and skill. After all,

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\*At the end of the year the verdict was:—"We shall all be glad to be rid of 1921, which has been a year of nightmare and confusion. . . . Its record in political confusion, financial embarrassment, industrial strife, and unemployment will entitle it to take a high place among the black years of the history of civilisation."—"The Observer," Dec. 25, 1921.

there is no mystery about the trouble, which is humanly caused and humanly curable. On the top of the devastations caused by a great crime, to frustrate which impoverished Europe and disorganised half the world, came the upheaval of an effort just as deliberate as the German aim, to change the nature of governments by overthrowing constitutional forms and substituting new and arbitrary despotisms. But it is quite an accident and an irrelevance that the new idea is associated with Democratic aspirations. Russia is not where she is because of any dictatorship of the proletariat, but because of a "self-determined" control by which the proletarians are dictated to just as much as what is left of the other classes of the community. And Russia gives us no clue to what a pure dictatorship of the proletariat would be like as a just and efficient form of government, for the simple reason that the dictatorship is not realised, and is probably by its own nature unrealisable. Russia is where she is because all Russians are engaged either in asserting or resisting, or in mutinously accepting, a form of government which has no roots whatever in constitutionalism, and which therefore totters even whilst it tyrannises. It is like a vast machine in which all the wheels, thrown out of gear, grind at each other, and there is no coherent national purpose in the vast disorganisation.

And so it is not necessary to raise any controversy concerning rival class-claims in government in order to say why the Russian Government is wrong, and why that spirit amongst ourselves which accepts its example is also wrong. It is wrong, firstly and sufficiently,



because it is an unconstitutional government, and does not function efficiently. It would be useless to retort that the Government it replaced was also unconstitutional, for it was a system with centuries of tradition and acceptance behind it, and susceptible to the constant attack of the forces of freedom within and outside it; whereas Bolshevism, the new and improvised thing, begins where Czarism, the old and discredited thing that was to be improved upon, left off—the apogee, in fact, is lower than the nadir. And Czarism did conform to fundamental ideas of government, once its postulate was accepted. It sent its rebels to Siberia, after trying them in properly constituted courts, and Sovietism shoots its rebels wholesale without any trial whatever; but ordinary liberty was assured and lawful property was respected in a degree that is not only unattained but unattainable under a system of Government which holds that there must be no private property at all and that trading is a crime. Suppose, then, that the clock could be put back, so that the Russian people could be asked, “With your country prostrate by the impoverishment of the war, which will you have—the old régime with all its faults, trusting to time and the spirit of freedom to amend them, or a totally new system of government which we will presently outline to you, telling you exactly what your country will be like after three years of it?” Does any one doubt that out of the population of 160 millions, 159½ millions would shout for King Log and down with King Stork, leaving the minority that precise half-million who are ruling by terror to-day?

And so I come nearer home, and to the point which

takes me there; and the point is that this is, of all times in human history, the time most unsuitable for experiments in government and for big departures from accepted and experienced forms. It comes back to me that very early in the war, before the first vague assertions of the new Democracy had crystallised into either phrases or policy, I ventured to write that the test of our national character would be in the degree with which we came out of the struggle not only victorious, but with our national institutions and outlook unaffected by the confusions of the struggle, however susceptible to change by our deliberate purpose. The intervening six years may have made that point of view seem progressively difficult to sustain, but I think we shall have to work back to it. With the world in its present acute disorganisation the surest hope for recovery is a return to the path from which we departed, and that path is the acceptance of constitutional and rightly constituted government and the full restoration of its authority.

But the old year closes with a new cloud. "Labour," meaning those delegates and officials who have given it up, ends the old year by a report on Ireland which denounces the constituted Government and promises to open the New Year with a campaign which shall champion the Irish revolutionary cause. In a report which is so obviously and uselessly partisan that it might have been written upon a "Resolved, that the Sinn Feiners have our complete sympathy, and that we all go to Ireland to collect the necessary evidence," they ostentatiously refrain from any judgment upon those murders in which the victims were clothed in the uniforms of con-

stituted government. The reason is not, except superficially, that their ethical values are confused, but that they are subscribing, now even unconsciously, and as a matter of course, to the new doctrine that all revolt is right and worthy, and all assertion of constituted authority despicable and wrong.

If, during 1921, we revert to the older magisterial doctrine that an assault on the police does not minimise the offence by politicalising it, but doubles the penalty, then we shall know that we are coming to the end of the long lane. I hope, indeed, that during 1921 the word "Conservative" may be restored to our political nomenclature.\* Silly people will think that that is a silly thing to say; but even as a Liberal, I admitted that Conservatism had its final justification in the fact that there were some things that needed conserving. And one of them is that respect for governmental authority, duly and rightly constituted, which shall prevent men from attacking Government in the interests of revolution by treating Government as merely a given political party in power. It is that, certainly, but with a difference and with the accent on "in power." But the difference depends entirely on the extent to which the Government is possessed by the sense of its own constitutional strength, and then asserts that power.

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\*Exactly within the year this daring speculation was realised by the revolt of the Conservative wing of the Coalition, expressed against the Prime Minister's project for a General Election in February, 1922. On January 8, 1922, Lord Rothermere concentrated the influence of his paper, "The Sunday Pictorial," in an article by himself upon the need of the revival of the Conservative party. But a year before the very word "conservative" would have sent shivers of a shocked propriety down any Coalition spine—if I may be permitted to use that pure figure of speech.

## TÓRTHURÈ

“Mr. Robert Smillie, speaking at Glasgow, said he was amazed that the working classes could remain contented under existing conditions. He wondered whether the leaders of Society ever took thought that the time might come when the workers would want to live in their palaces.”—Daily paper.

It is an interesting revelation of Mr. Smillie's political mind that, not content with three years' open talk of revolution as the expression of that discontent which he himself has done his full share in stimulating, he is so disappointed with the result that he is amazed at a contentment which nobody else discerns. It would be even more interesting to follow his speculation that a time will come when the workers, rousing themselves from their slough of content, may want to live in palaces. The practical objection to that aspiration is that there are not enough palaces to go round. The moral objection to it is that it is part of the loose morality of the time, one prominent trait of which is that people, by merely coveting that which belongs to some one else, and laying claims to that which is not their right, imagine themselves to be pioneers in a new enlightenment of social justice.

The hard fact is that palaces are, in the nature of things, quite an unproletarian luxury, and more people must be housed in cottages than in them. And the human fact is that the world would be an altogether impossible

world if the gradation from cottage to palace, through all the steps from small villas to stately mansions, were represented by corresponding stages of envy on the part of the occupants. And if those points of view, giving cold comfort, should arouse Mr. Smillie's own discontent, and lead him to remind me that history has shown that a time does come, ha! ha! when the workers want to live in palaces, and do so by merely taking possession of them (as in Russia, 1917), then I must summarily close the discussion by transcribing the second cutting on my desk from the same day's papers:—

"A message from Helsingfors states that the Soviet authorities are now most actively enforcing the laws against strikes, punishing strikers with seven years' hard labour, and depriving their families of their food cards."

The interval between the palatial dream and the prison reality may be filled up at Mr. Smillie's leisure.

But I cannot pursue his theme to the end of the column, for I am more interested in a third cutting. It is from an article by Mr. Robert Lynd:—

I wish there were a Harriet Beecher Stowe to write an "Uncle Tom's Cabin" about Ireland in 1921. I see no other way of bringing home to the average Englishman the fact that England is now ruling Ireland in the spirit of torture.

The article, sprinkled with references to Judge Jeffreys, Nero, and Bloody Mary, is an excellent example of that inordinate capacity in the Irish for self-pity, on which I wrote here some weeks ago. For Mr. Robert Lynd is Irish. The fact that he is attached to an English paper which exists (I know no other *raison d'être* for it) to misrepresent or present unsympathetically the English point of view, and to represent sympathetically every point of view opposed to that of England, is part of that



penalty which England pays for being the predominant partner and London pays for being the Imperial capital. Mr. Lynd's function, therefore, is to use its congenial columns as a propagandist for Sinn Fein, and so accustomed are we to the tolerations of our land and capital that, unlike Mr. Smillie, we are not "amazed" at the spectacle of the enemy's case being so assiduously expressed amongst us.\* Indeed, probably very few readers of the paper concerned stop to reflect that its writers are so consistently, and often so venomously anti-English that what they say should be regarded with a judicial suspicion.

And so when Mr. Lynd's pen writhe to emit the words "spirit of the torturer" they probably writhe in sympathy, and merely think that the case against England must be very black indeed when an English paper feels itself obliged so industriously to expose our English infamies—in Ireland, in Egypt, in India, "towards Russia," and

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\*Let me give an example of how this English advocacy of the Irish cause has worked. We now know (January 1922) exactly what relation Mr. Erskine Childers has to Sinn Fein; and the Dail debates on the ratification of the Irish Treaty have revealed him as an Englishman bearing just the same sympathetic relation to Ireland with enmity against England as Mr. Houston Chamberlain had to Germany.

But if you turn to "The Daily News" of April 10, 1920, you will there see its leading article concerned with its familiar theme of America's justifiable hostility to us on account of Ireland, and its attitude and gratitude are expressed by this sentence: "Facts such as those to which Mr. Erskine Childers has been giving necessary publicity to in our own columns obtain as full currency on the other side of the Atlantic as on this." To its innocent readers, Mr. Erskine Childers is presented as a pained and impartial Englishman reluctantly telling the truth about his country's record in Ireland. Actually, as we know now, an "English" paper was giving hospitality to a witness not less partisan than Mr. de Valera himself. By such processes is England being steadily honeycombed and undermined.

ubiquitously. For the judicial spirit is not a prominent quality in the general mind, and if M. Krassin (who, I rejoice to see, is leaving us, never, I earnestly hope, to return) had subsidised an English newspaper in the interests of Bolshevik propaganda\* many English readers would soon accept without question what that unprejudiced witness to the charm of Bolshevism and the crimes of England found it its painful duty to say of us every morning.

But, reverting to Mr. Robert Lynd, who is impersonally of much importance for the reasons assigned, I happen to remember that just six months ago he was writing in the same paper a series of articles after a visit to Ireland. The "torthure" (excuse the deliberate distortion, but in no shorter way can I suggest local colour and the whole blatherskiteness of Irish exaggeration)—the "torthure" had not then begun, and no Black and Tan had ever been heard of. The rebels were then not "on the run," but were having it all their own way, and were in undisputed control of large districts in Ireland, and when a policeman was shot that was just the jolly end of the matter. Mr. Lynd, indeed, drew such a comforting picture of Ireland, successfully flouting all British authority and having the time of its life, that Mr. A. A. Milne, a humorist with a delicate sense of proportion (a sense all humorists must have) mildly butted in to interrupt Mr. Lynd's Irish ecstasies in an English newspaper to inquire, "Very nice indeed—but what about those

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\*The subsequent revelations concerning the negotiations to subsidise "The Daily Herald" show that that speculation was merely "an intelligent anticipation" of what was in any case inherently probable.

murders?" To which Mr. Lynd, rather shocked at being asked such a question in his own paper, and recovering his composure with some difficulty, replied that the murders were only the crowning proof of England's infamy!—much as Archbishop Mannix declared a few weeks ago that if men were driven to break the law of God then God, no doubt, would take all the circumstances into consideration and overlook it, which is a very comforting and accommodating theology.

But now that the tables are somewhat turned, now that policemen are not murdered with entire impunity, now that "reprisals" have become "official," now that the tail of the traileed coat is being duly trodden on, Mr. Lynd, obeying the national impulse to self-pity, cries out "Torturers!" and asks the wood paving blocks of London streets to rise to denounce the infamies done in a land "where a pregnant woman with a child in her arms is shot by passing police" (no mention made of accident, or of the case of Miss Isabella Scales shot last week by three masked men who attacked her sweetheart, an auxiliary policeman, when she tried to shield his body with hers) "and where, when the body of a dead patriot is discovered, it is the custom of the relatives to examine it for marks of torture!" Mr. Lynd wails, "That poor mother! That poor mother is Ireland! Is there any moral meaning in persecuting her?" As to persecution I say nothing, for it is not in question. But there is indeed a moral meaning in making Ireland see that the terror of the law shall at length prevail over lawless terrorism, and there would be no moral meaning in law if it didn't.

## EMASCULATION

At last, women jurors at the Old Bailey—and so even our nightmares come true. I admit that in the present confusions of Upsidonia, one more or less does not greatly matter, and in any case the “logical right” of sex-equality must now run its logical course. “No,” said an Old Bailey barrister, interviewed on the innovation, “I do not see why women jurors should be precluded from sitting in certain unpleasant cases. After all, they asked for it, and must now go on to the bitter end.”

But one does begin to wonder whether our law-makers, seeing the theory now being worked out in practice, have no misgivings concerning its human desirability. I say nothing of mixed juries in “certain” cases (if you start with a false premise, then you must be content where the logic of it takes you), but if any one contends that that logical result is worth the price to be paid in the “unpleasant” companionship in the jury box, I will not trouble to contradict him. Nor will I say anything of murder trials. I have seen a good many juries, trying a fellow-creature for his life, file into the jury box with their verdicts written on their faces, some with their faces stonily set, others with that ashen and dishevelled look which you see in passengers coming off the Channel

boats; and if any man tells me that the vindication of "logical right" by this painful duty is worth the invasion and violation of the temple of what we used to call womanliness, I will let him hold his strange belief in peace.

Nor will I make any controversial point of the women who are "nervous," and ask to be excused, or who faint in the jury box and stop the case. These, doubtless, are incidents that will be unknown in 2021—if not for one reason, then for another. Nor need attention be drawn to the fussiness which the new duty engenders ("We must be given special retiring-rooms, and have our luncheons provided"), or the arrogance:—

"I know one thing we women will do," said a jurymoman, after being in the Court half-an-hour. 'We will make the lawyers wear clean wigs and have better manners.' "

—from which we are to gather that the woman juror already confounds her authority with that of, say, the Lord Chief Justice. I will refrain also from any speculation as to whether a jury of women, trying a man for any cause in which the element of wife maintenance is involved, will be struck with the irony of the fact that in an era of such far-reaching sex-equality that women sit in judgment upon men, a man is still liable for supporting and maintaining an equal citizen. Nor, yet again, will I seek to enlarge upon the underlying and fundamental weakness of the new order of things—that it will, inevitably and at length, arouse that masculinity which, even if now strangely dormant, no Parliamentary laws can subdue, and will cause men to revolt at the humiliation thrust upon them. For the sex that is called upon to uphold and maintain all law is certainly not going to



subscribe, for long, to an artificial equality which must break on the first impact with the natural reality. The woman juror empanelled to try a man occupies a position as fundamentally false as that of a woman policeman empowered to arrest him first—and that power would soon be seen to be trying the old Adam a little too far.

Or the bubble may be pricked from the other side, and one fine day some courageous woman, telling the Court in her woman's way that she "has no patience with the silly business," and declining to be wheedled by the Common Serjeant to go into the box and then to "just listen," will put the law's majesty in a dreadful dilemma. For the Court will hardly have the courage to send a woman to prison for contempt of court for such a defiance, and when the alternative fine is imposed she will be able to make the triumphant retort that it will have to be paid out of her husband's money. . . . And the Judge will then say, "I will have the Court cleared if there is any more of this unseemly laughter!"

All these things, however, are (let us say) but the side issues and debating points of what is already being called "a great experiment"—and it is by so regarding it that I am enabled thus to indicate that even the most law-abiding mind may contemplate without impropriety the breakdown of a great human revolution which was brought about merely because it was the next thing that had not yet been done, and in an enthusiasm already declining to the chastened stage of "a great experiment." But, all these debating points apart, one wonders whether our law-makers ever catechise themselves upon two main

points. The first is whether, by the time woman has educated herself into the easy and competent exercise of her full civic equality, it will only be found that what she has therefore gained as a citizen she has lost as a woman, and the human world has gained nothing but lost much. The whole fallacy of the movement, as it seems to me, is that it is based upon the assumption of the Super-woman—the woman who can do her own work and possess her special attributes and yet do all other work and retain those attributes. That dualism of mankind which the restless “progressive” mind sought to abolish as a discordance was, in fact, a harmony—and the discord is only now beginning. Doubtless, several generations of women, trained in all branches of civic service, will at length evolve those temperamental masculine qualities which hitherto have gone with them, but did our law-makers really believe that woman could both eat her cake and have it?—do they think she will emerge from the ordeal with the dualism established in her own nature? What is gained, in short, by masculinising women that would not be “gained” by the temperamental emasculation of men?

And that brings up the second point, much more important, which is that of the gradual emasculation of our public life. This spectacle of Judges, Common Serjeants, and Recorders beaming paternally over the new toy, and acknowledging the denied sex-difference by their very sex-deference, and of interviewers asking the new jurors, “You won’t be hard on us men?” and getting the grim answer, “Don’t be too sure about that!” has its comic side, no doubt, but it inevitably antagonises

(and depresses) any mind still retaining essential masculine traits and the masculine point of view—which, of course, is no more reprehensible in man than the corresponding feminine quality is in woman, though that truth is strangely overlooked in the current adulation of “woman’s point of view.” But if ever there was a time, in man’s troubled history, when the essential masculine attributes of mental strength and moral courage were needed to guide his destinies, it is the time in which we live, when shallow thinking and perverse unreason on the part of many men are found in sinister alliance with all the potentialities of masculine brutality and destructiveness. And the increasing permeation of the fabric of our public life and national policy by feminine influence (as it must continue to be in the transitional stage, until the undesired and derided womanliness has been modified) may be found to be the last irony of our confusions.

## THE WRONG MESSRS. RIGHT

It occurs to me that I have now entered upon another year of what I will call unpopularity. I can assure the reader that that quality in these opinions is not intended in the least degree to be provocative or defiant, but is merely the straightforward recognition of the fact that certain political principles I hold have to make what headway they can against the popular current. Yet that they are accepted by, and acceptable to, many amongst the few—and even a few amongst the many—has been made pleasantly clear to me from time to time; and the course of even a year has seen many opinions that must have sounded too confident, and even defiantly unpopular, since justified either by the event or by the drift of general opinion that may, before another year is out, make my own opinions no longer unpopular. Be that as it may, I venture to suggest that in any case it is not a bad thing that in a time of rapid and even violent change, when old-established political principles and standards of human conduct have been monotonously falling like nine-pins, a few people should detach themselves from the general crowd and exert themselves to withstand by reasoned faith what they regard as ephemeral heresies.

Yet it is an ungrateful task. The insincerities of

modern politics in any case make it uphill work, for it is the damning effect of "political belief" expressed in party that men, in the main, believe what they wish rather than what they think. Hence there is a very small margin of fluid opinion ready to be influenced by reasoned argument. Again, errors and tendencies are now so extreme and pronounced that insistence, reiteration, and even vehemence are necessary to counteract them; and if one happens to be temperamentally disinclined for controversy, and yet to have that inconvenient public sense which will not allow a man to sit quietly down under a pelting hail of fallacies, sophistries, intellectual dishonesties, and emotional insincerities, then the strain of incessant contention becomes very real—all the more as a sense of futility often goes with it, as one sees how little impression can be made on the general mass by even the indefatigable efforts of a few individuals. For it is a curious thing that fundamental error seems to get advertisement by exposure, to manage to establish itself merely by persistence and audacity, and to thrive on toleration.

Here and there I have written of the loose and shallow thinking of our time. It is one of those charges which may so easily be made, and therefore be either true or false, so that in making it allusively and passing on, leaving the proof to be taken for granted, the sensitive and conscientious mind is conscious of not having quite done its duty. For half the mischief of our political discussions is that rash and unsupported generalisations are tossed about by the gross, and many public men habitually say and write those things which they know to be



false, and are, therefore, content to leave unproven. So this week I propose to give specific attention to the charge of loose thinking by considering a series of rights claimed by the Labour party, showing their contradictory nature, and putting them forth as a fair proof and example of the confused thinking which so largely accounts for the incoherent policies of that party, making it a futile thing where it is not a positive danger.

There is first "the right to strike." In our country nobody contests it, if it is meant to cover the general right of any body of workmen engaged in ordinary industry to refuse to work except on their own terms. Indeed, there is no way of resisting that right, except the way employed in the only country where the right is denied—Russia. Yet it would be absurd in any country to concede the unqualified right. If, for instance, a body of workmen refuse to abide by agreements they have come to, and their refusal takes the form of a lightning strike, then one may say that whatever difficulty or impropriety there might be in contesting the legal right, there is no denying the moral wrong.

Or, again, if a body of workmen affirm their "right" in a great national emergency, and thereby endanger the national interest, then undoubtedly there arises another qualification of the right, which otherwise is freely conceded, of a body of workmen to use their power of industrial combination for their own industrial interest. Obviously, also, a strike for political, and not industrial, purposes introduces the qualifying element; and I would myself go a little further and assert that the sympathetic strike, which brings great bodies of labour into a dispute

alien to them, goes outside the pale of that strict and indefeasible right which says that no man shall be denied the simple human right of refusing to work on conditions of employment that are not acceptable to him. If that right is denied him he becomes simply a slave—as in Russia.

Having seen that even the right to strike has its qualifications, let us consider it in relation to another right claimed—the right to work, by which the right to demand work is meant, and that is not quite the same thing. This right is based upon the claim that the social conscience of the general community cannot allow a man willing to work, but unable to find employment, to be refused maintenance in default of wages. That right is generally conceded—that is to say, the moral obligation on the part of the community to see that no willing man should suffer privations for lack of work would now hardly be contested by any but a doctrinaire. But it must be pretty clear that this right conflicts absolutely with the right to strike. For unless Labour is to assert itself only by rights, and never by duties, it cannot have the best of both worlds by demanding that the community shall provide it with a living in default of a wage, and yet assert its right to strike in flat defiance of the interests of the community. A few electrical or gas workers may plunge a town into darkness by virtue of the right to strike; but they cannot assert that right, and still leave any foothold for the claim that the community must also find work for them if work went short.

And, after the claim of the right to work, we come to the straightforward contradiction of the claim made of

the right to prevent others working. If the members of the organised building trade were, owing to causes now unimaginable,\* thrown out of work, they would presumably assert the right to have work (i.e., wages or maintenance) found for them. Yet they are put out of Court in advance, for it is they who do what no other section of the community does—deny to others the right to work even when the work is waiting for them. Earl Haig has just told the Building Unions that, if the right to work is in question, ex-Service men have the prior claim, and that flawless assertion was regarded as a courageous eye-opener. Actually it stopped short of the truth, which is that the denial by one set of men (organised in a vested interest now contrary to the public interest) of the right of another set of men to earn their own bread by doing the same kind of work, stands out as one of the most amazing examples of modern incoherence.

Finally, there is the claim of the right to management, of which nothing can be said except that it simply does not exist. Some recognition of that fact is apparently made by those who assert it, for Mr. J. H. Thomas says that the railwaymen wish to exercise the right only because they would contribute to the general efficiency of the railways by taking part in controlling them—an assumption for which there is no solid ground whatever. Indeed, every relevant fact within human experience suggests that to allow labour the right to manage the

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\*At that time the demand for new houses was immensely in excess of the supply, which was restricted by the rules of the building trades unions, forbidding their members to lay more bricks per diem than a certain easy maximum; and refusing to allow their monopoly to be modified by the admission of ex-Service men, starving for want of work, to their ranks.

industry in which it is engaged—being part of that element which itself has to be managed—would be disastrous. But in any case, the right is disproved by the fact that no corresponding responsibility could be enforced, and the one feature common to all these discordant “rights” is exactly that absence of the element of responsibility or duty. Though the right to strike, the right to work, the right to prevent others working, and the right to manage and control are together incoherent, the one thread of coherent purpose in their incoherence is that rights are asserted and obligations ignored. The last two rights are non-existent; they belong to the fourth dimension of discussion. And the right to work, thrown on the community, is valid only so long as the right to strike is not asserted against the community.

## BOLD BAD WOMEN

The case of the woman juror, which at last is agitating even the popular mind, has three degrees and aspects of importance. It is important in and for itself, for the question of women doing their civic duty by adjudicating on the most unpleasant manifestations of human frailty raises an issue of simple human decency. Its next importance is that it raises the issue of whether the whole idea of woman's political emancipation does not ultimately involve (as I, for one, have never wavered in contending it does) her personal demoralisation. But I think its greatest importance is that it illustrates the immense stupidity of the modern political mind by the revelation of its inability to think ahead.

We are only just at the beginning of the realisation of the political "ideal" of woman's enfranchisement, and already even dull people are beginning to realise that an immense human problem has been created, rather than solved, by its realisation. Yet in not a single debate in Parliament on this supreme human issue did any single politician, on either side of the argument, do more than scratch the surface of the problem. It happens to be a subject on which I have written more than any other man (and probably more than any woman), and, therefore, an exceptional familiarity with its pros and cons



must be conceded to me, whatever be the competence of my judgment. And I can only say that the contrast between the depth of the subject and the shallowness and perfunctoriness of the consideration given to it by the politician has been a most disturbing revelation of the intellectual incompetence of the Parliamentary mind.

A few days ago newspaper announcements asked us to be impressed with the fact that Lord Hugh Cecil is going to cross the floor of the House, and take his seat on the Front Opposition bench. For my part, the announcements did not impress me so much as depress me, for I reflected that in the last debate in the Commons, when the great "victory" was won, Lord Hugh Cecil was one of the members who, even at that eleventh hour, trotted out the old shamelessly perfunctory assumption that the enfranchisement of women was going to mean nothing more than an occasional visit to a polling booth, and ridiculed the idea that her womanliness could possibly be affected by that pedestrian exercise. And the gloomy truth is that few of our politicians had dug their minds any deeper into the subject than that. Not a single speaker in any of the many debates on the subject gave the least indication that he had read any of the reasoned literature on the subject, so that it can be truly said neither side did justice to its own case; and to those who had either read or written much about it, the Parliamentary debates lacked every quality of the adult mind, and sounded like the alphabetical prattlings of infancy. If that seems exaggerated language, I can only say that its simplest justification is that no responsible politician ever made even the beginning of an attempt to work out or

estimate the *responsibilities* that would follow equal citizenship, but talked monotonously only of rights and privileges, as though duties and responsibilities simply had no place in the argument.

Among the realities and consequences of woman's enfranchisement that were never envisaged by the politicians who brought it about, was that of the woman juror; and when, within a year of its accomplishment, the barriers went down one by one, the familiar exultations went up. After the magistrate's bench, the bar, and the jury box were thrown open, joyful anticipations of a Lady Chief Justice or a Mistress of the Rolls gave fresh attestation to the inexhaustible folly of the age. And now there has come a little check to all this uncritical enthusiasm, and the light of reason is falling through the chinks of all this emotional armour. Writing a few months ago ("Lesser Things"), I ventured to do the unpopular thing by raising a tiny discord in the swelling harmony of congratulation upon the achievement of the woman juror:—

"I feel very lonely in making my protest, but that does not deter me, for I know that as time goes on my loneliness will be mitigated. And I do protest against the whole folly and social incoherence which the politicians have thrust upon us. . . . so that the common decencies of life are outraged by a law based upon a dehumanised philosophy of life which herds six men and six women together to adjudicate upon matters of sexual indecency."

Yet it has needed the advent of women into the jury box of the Divorce Court itself,\* and then the conjunction

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\*"A few days ago (in "Emasculation") Mr. Harold Owen emphasised an aspect of the question of women jurors to which far too little attention was given when Parliament gave sanction to this innovation. Mr. Owen's fear has speedily been justified, in the very first case in which jurywomen have had to sit in the Divorce Court."—"The Yorkshire Post," Jan. 21, 1921.

of a particularly disgusting case, to arouse public attention to the matter by an actual instance of the repugnant realities of sex equality; and now even some of the champions of emancipation are beginning to cry out that this is more than they bargained for. I quite agree. But three things have yet to be said: That the discovery should have been made by reason in advance, and not by experience when the mischief has been done; that in any case it is part of the whole, and you cannot maintain the privileges of power by asking concessions that invalidate its integrity, or by making compromises that shatter the whole pretence of "equality"; and, thirdly, that the problem of women jurors is not wholly a problem for women, for there are also men who have a sense of modesty and decency, and who have a right to object to an enforced association with women in a repugnant public task.

Meanwhile, the clouds of a great general doubt are gathering even about the altars of the faithful. At a meeting of the Women's Freedom League this week, a lady who is now in the public eye (being a successful law student) as potentially the first woman barrister, said that what puzzled her was "the absence of massiveness in women's achievements"—no Bacon, Plato, or Shakespeare among her sex. And what accounted for it? That "few women dared to be themselves."

"I honestly tell you there is a sort of woman I like best—the woman who likes all that is bad in life. . . . Some of the great ladies lived scandalous lives. They have great value for us because they dared to be themselves. . . . I am inclined to think there is too much morality about women. . . . So long as women accept so much modern morality, custom, and fiction we shall not see what they are capable of."

So perhaps we are in for an era of bold, bad women—all for the sake of vindicating the false and foolish theory of sex equality, and in pursuance of the desperate hope that when women are as bad as men, they may be capable of the same “massive achievements.” The fatal flaw in the hope is that men are not mentally great because they are morally bad. Moreover, daring to be one’s self, if by that is meant a sort of moral dare-devilry, is not evolutionary progress, but its opposite. It would not even be a sign of originality—for all the sins have already been committed. Still, the idea is hopeful. For we are getting nearer to the time when the bottom will be knocked out of the whole “emancipatory” movement when the question comes to be asked, “Why can’t we do the big things that men do?” and the desperate answer comes, “Because we do not dare to be as bad as they are!” Yet there is one good reason why women need not despair of being even worse than men—they often are.

## OPPORTUNISM

[The Coalition, meeting Parliament (February 15, 1921) for its Third Session, had now reached *l'âge critique* of governments. It had created new enemies, and estranged old friends, without creating any new friends at all; for on many prime issues it had steered such a zig-zag course of opportunism that it had simply come into collision with the opposed sympathies on those issues. Indeed, the greatest enthusiasm left among its Parliamentary supporters was the depressing conviction that however bad the Government might be any then existing alternative would be worse.]

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Nothing in the Government's record has more strained the confidence of its supporters than what may be called, in a purely complimentary sense, its Russian policy. That has touched bed-rock in opportunism. There is a sort of opportunism which is at worst harmless, and at best praiseworthy, and which is part of the inevitable accommodation of practical politics. That benign type is really a very necessary safety-valve in the working of Governments, for it allows a Ministry to acknowledge its errors, to recognise facts to which it had not attached sufficient importance, or to fall into line with sympathetic movements whose strength it had not properly estimated,



But there is another sort of opportunism which is beyond the indulgence of either the charitable judgment or the cynic's shrug. It is that of surrendering some prime principle or fundamental faith, as a fortress is surrendered by those charged to defend it, so that the opportunism becomes a betrayal. The diplomatic intercourse of the Government with the Bolshevik régime belongs to that category of opportunism. That it has thereby flagrantly betrayed the faith of those who put it into power needs no saying. In December, 1918, it would have been a fantastic absurdity for anyone to predict that within a year they would be directly negotiating with the emissaries of Bolshevism. For at that time the Prime Minister, rallying his forces for the General Election, thought it necessary to declare that some of the Labour extremists in the country had Bolshevist tendencies, and it was clear that his opinion then was that there could be no more damaging political argument than the suggestion that even his extremest opponents were tainted with Bolshevist sympathies. But there can be no escape whatever from the charge that in opening up negotiations with the Bolshevik power the Government betrayed the trust given to it by every man or woman who cast a vote in its favour.

Indeed, it might be said without exaggeration that those who elected them on the "search their pockets" promise, would as soon have expected the Government to become formally pacifist and pro-German as to start negotiations with a Power which, at their election, was regarded as beyond the pale of civilised association. But, within a couple of months, the proposal of Prinkipo,

and within twelve months the beginnings of actual negotiation.

But there was one curious feature about this Bolshevik rapprochement. Opportunism is generally defended on the ground that in the actual case there is no betrayal of principle involved. In this case the betrayal of principle has been defended on the ground of its opportunism. The Prime Minister, when first defending the "change of policy towards Russia" (the early rumour of which had stunned the public mind, but left it incredulous), drew from his supporters in the House of Commons no warmer support than embarrassed coughs when he declared, "What we think of Bolshevism is not the point—we don't approve of cannibalism, but we have opened up trade with cannibals"—omitting to say that we have never yet invited them to send us anthropophagous plenipotentiaries.

And so an immense ethical principle, and not only a principle of high politics, was surrendered, and its surrender was defended on the ground that it was an opportunistic necessity, the necessity advanced being that of restoring the flow of European trade by opening up the old channels. That the necessity will be satisfied in the case of Russia is not yet capable of disproof, for the simple reason that the projected treaty, delayed by the persistent duplicity of the Soviet Government and its agents, has not even yet been completed. But nobody can believe that the formal resumption of trade with Russia, involving the formal recognition of the Bolshevik State, will have any effect whatever on European trade; for the simple and final reason that Russia has no hope

of any economic revival under Bolshevik rule.\* The Government, therefore, can defend even its opportunism only by the confession of an amazing credulity.

And why has this surrender been made? At the best, the Government can only hope, and cannot believe, that the opportunism will be justified by the economic result—the result is problematical, whilst the surrender is a certainty. Yet nothing but the certainty of the result also could have given even a dubious justification for the surrender. And so I ask whether anybody really doubts that it has been a surrender, not to an economic necessity (however credulously regarded), so much as to the vituperative clamour of those who want to see Bolshevism accepted and recognised for its own sake, rather than for the sake of Russian exports or British trade? I fear it must be said that whilst the Government can at best plead political opportunism to justify its Russian policy, that defence in its turn involves them in a charge of credulity and cowardice. Certainly nothing done or left undone has more grievously shocked its supporters and strained their allegiance. The world may be in the melting pot; but, after all, there are some things that need not have been thrown into the cauldron. They are the honour and pride of the British race, and the responsibility of a civilised people in a world where so many

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\*The cynic is entitled to whatever satisfaction he can get out of the characteristic fact that in his speech outlining the Government's unemployment plans (H. of C.) on October 19, 1921, Mr. Lloyd George positively rebuked labour members for still pinning their faith to the trade and employment which Russia "offered." Having quoted figures to show how little the trade with Russia had amounted to under the treaty, he added "Until Russia is restored to a much better condition I fear there is not much hope for British or any other trade there."

standards of humanity, honour, and sanity have been engulfed.

From criticism so severe in its terms the question may be, and should be, asked: What other policy could the Government have pursued? I think the answer is clear enough to any mind that keeps realistically in view the nature and proved effect of Bolshevism. It is this: Any British Government sufficiently sensitive of its duty to the British people (who are not parvenus in the great world, or a backward race, but are empire-builders and an imperial people), and adequately conscious of its responsibility, therefore, to civilisation, would have fought Bolshevism, not with armies any more than with trade treaties,\* but with the simple strength of its disdain to make any acceptance or recognition of it. A negative policy? Not at all. It would at least have affirmed the old moral and political standards of our race, never too common in the world, never so much needed by the world as now. It would at least have accomplished the positive result of strengthening the instinctive repugnance of our people to the Bolshevik system; whereas the surrender has actually increased the moral strength of the Bolsheviks, whilst debilitating our own. For the average Englishman, seeing his own Government in amiable diplomatic intercourse with such a Power, is finally driven, in his bewilderment, to fall back upon the cynical comfort that if even his own statesmen come to terms with such a Power, the mere man in the street need not worry about humanity or political ethics.

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\*The Governmental argument has been that to renew trade relations with Russia would overthrow Bolshevism.

In this way, the Government has deepened the darkness it should have done something to dispel, and has intensified one of the two main problems of the world of to-day, the moral and the economic. If it wished to carry its policy without losing our confidence, it might have said: "Here are two immense problems, separate yet interacting. First, you have the problem of restoring the world to its old standards of right and wrong, standards which have been overthrown by stupendous public crimes that have left the world demoralised. Next, you have the great economic problem of civilisation becoming as bankrupt in material resources as in moral credit. And we find that we simply cannot satisfy one problem without intensifying the other. We find that just as we cannot punish Germany for her crimes, because that would only increase the economic confusion of Europe, so we can no longer proscribe even Bolshevism, because we want her 'bursting bins.' In other words, to amplify Bethmann-Hollweg, economic necessity knows no moral law. The world is so rotten economically that it cannot afford the luxury of moral scruples; and so we must deliberately lower our standards, accept the great retrogression, make terms with what we must no longer call infamy, and just take the world as we find it."

If the Government had said that, or anything like it, they would at least have shown they knew what they were doing, and why they were doing it. It would not have been magnificent, and it would not have been true (for Bolshevism is as bankrupt materially as it is corrupt morally and politically), but it would at least have shown



that the Government knew what high human destinies were involved in their decision. But, as things are, they leave us uncertain of whether they have either felt strongly or thought deeply. As things are, we have lowered our flag without even the consolations of cynicism, or the compensation of certain economic gain.

It is high time that the world settled down—it is high time that we ourselves settled down. And the charge to be made against the Government is that it has failed to realise two big but simple truths. The first is that the world will settle down in the right way only when it is shown what the right way is; and the second is that the vindication and assertion of Right, and not any compromise with Wrong, points the right way out. What I, for one, have come to miss in the Government is any capacity, either of a moral or an intellectual perception, to distinguish what is Right from what is Wrong. In other words, it lacks just those qualities which are necessary to give it the authority which should attach to national leadership—sure faith, clear purpose, and firm will—so that its mind, fumbling with big problems, can only fall back on compromise where it should be uncompromising and on opportunism where it should stand out for principle.

## MOCKERY

[During the week ending March 5, 1921, a German Commission, headed by Dr. von Simons, came to London to discuss the reparation claims of the Allies, raising their objections so truculently that the Prime Minister was compelled to adjourn the Conference to the following week with a declaration, which was practically an ultimatum, that the German representatives should carefully revise their tone and attitude.]

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Six-and-a-half years after the dawn of The Day—that baleful Day which has turned the world into night; two-and-a-half years after the last hosts of her vile effort were overwhelmed; nearly two years after her signature of the treaty that granted a peace beyond her understanding and her deserts, Germany sends her delegates to London to “confer” with the Allied Governments and victors on the payment of the bill at length presented to her. It is a very small bill indeed for such an enterprise as she undertook. It takes no account whatever of the spiritual loss and cost, seen in a world that only manages to save itself from demoralisation. It takes no account of the physical carnage, either, and does not put the price of even five pounds a head on the manhood that had to fall by the million to resist the German terror. It does

not translate into terms of cash to the extent of a single halfpenny all those bodily miseries and spiritual agonies which the will of a monstrous militarism, backed by the eager hopes of a docile and credulous people, thrust upon a happy world. It exacts not a penny even of the cost of resistance—a cost which has impoverished us, and all those who suffered by our side, and immensely widened the circles of personal tragedy in the big whirlpool of war. It makes no computation of any damage whatever beyond that of a material kind, and, even so, then limits it so ridiculously that it asks Germany to pay us, so far as we are concerned, about a shilling in the pound of all that might justly be demanded.

A very small bill indeed—so ridiculously small that Germany has come to regard the whole matter as of very little consequence, and so long in being presented that she has had time to accommodate her mind to the idea that it is a fly-blown impertinence. So that when Dr. von Simons leaves Berlin to “confer” with the Allies about it, he pops his head out of the carriage window to answer the loud shots of “Festbleiben!” from the Berlin crowd by shouting back, “Ja, Festbleiben!”—“Yes, I will stand firm!” He came amongst us, as we should say, in the mood “to stand no damned nonsense,” and he does his work so well that the British Premier, informally spurning his counter-proposals as “a farce,” describes them later in a formal diplomatic speech—a rejection ending by an ultimatum—as merely making “a mockery” of the Treaty of Versailles.

Now, some of us have “stood fast” to one opinion concerning Germany and the Germans. Not all the

deluge of half-treacherous evangelicalisms, not all the unreasoning babble of what calls itself idealism and others call merely the deliberate evasion of truth, not all the intimidations of the "righteous" folk who have been far kinder in their estimate of Germany than of their own countrymen, has weakened in the slightest degree the opinion that what Germany was she steadfastly remains, in her Festbleibenish way. And now Germany obliges us by behaving, right to the very last, "according to plan" and all precedent. From the very first dawn of The Day, when "necessity knew no law," down to "noon on Monday," she behaves as she can only behave, and as only she can behave. Reason, justice, generosity, decent sentiment—these are things she simply does not understand. Argue with her, and she takes it as a game of verbal cunning. Reason with her, and she thinks that that weakness only means that you are not sure of your case. "Confer" with her, and the spirit she brings to the Conference is that of Petticoat Lane. Threaten her, and her conduct will be dictated solely by the consideration of how far you can make your threats effective—and that alone is why she will come to heel "before noon on Monday." In a word, having no reasonable intentions herself, and understanding no argument but that of compulsion, she is contemptuous of reason; having no sense of justice herself, she does not believe in it in others; though, in her lumbering half-baked way, she has an idea of the advantage to be derived by dealing with those who are hampered by all such scruples.

As for magnanimity, it would baffle her if she took it

seriously, but she escapes from the dilemma by deciding that if it is real, it is merely what she has a right to expect; and if it is feigned, its cunning can be improved upon. And so her psychology is both complex and simple, immensely cunning and profoundly stupid. She does not even see that we are so sick of her, and of her filthy war, that we should be glad to cut almost all our loss for the sake of Europe and civilisation, and to help to get the world going again. She does not meet us half-way, even when we have already covered half the distance before we set out to be met. Sincerely unrepentant, and merely hoping to save by the chicaneries of peace something from the loss of war, she does not even see that her own interests would be served by a settlement that would re-settle Europe again. She does not even see that in reality it is she who has defeated us, for brutishness has destroyed more than it can be called upon to pay, and she has so wearied and exhausted civilisation by its effort to resist her that it is driven to make "an offer" rather than to exact justice. Insatiable in all her appetites, she resists, and to the last, the little we dare ask her out of the much we might and ought; for she argues only that if she can escape with little, why not try to escape with next to nothing? Repenting nothing but her failure, she is concerned only to reduce its consequences to a minimum. She has almost smashed European civilisation in the struggle necessary to escape her enslavement, and she would complete the task tomorrow if only she could be overlord of the ruins, and set us to work amongst them.

And so the firm but reasonable language of the Prime



Minister will be effective only by its firmness, and not by its reason. He told the German delegates that the German people were wrong in thinking we wished to oppress or enslave them, or that our demands "were designed to destroy that great country." They do not believe it—they only affect to think so because they know that the charge of enslaving anybody is a charge to which we are sensitive, though in their case enslavement was not a charge but an avowed aim. If, when they were deporting the Belgians to make them work under the actual lash, you had charged them with enslaving the Belgians, it would have seemed to them just as ridiculous as charging them with using poison-gas. You cannot charge people with doing that which they do openly and as a matter of course, but they can, if they think you "soft," charge you with doing that which at once occurs to them because it is just what they themselves would do. I fear, then, that when Mr. Lloyd George rebuts the charge, and protests that "we have no desire to impose a bondage on her people," they are only pleased to have driven him, as they think, on the defensive; and when he says that if the German people only realised the extent of the devastation wrought "their attitude of mind would change," he is making the persistent and common mistake that the German mind works like our own. The German people already know enough of the devastation wrought, for it was they who wrought it, and their only regret is that now they have to pay for it.

And so the mockery consistently goes on. As they mocked honour to begin with, and humanity all along, as now they mock justice. Yet they are not wholly to

blame. If, now, they wish to reduce the Treaty of Versailles to another scrap of paper, cannot they plead that their allies among the Allies have been saying from the very first day it was signed that the treaty must be torn up? If they now seek, to the very last hour, to evade the reparation and meagre justice demands, cannot they point to those industrious traitors to our cause who have never ceased to contend that to "make Germany pay" was an ignoble obstacle to the brotherhood of man? Is it any wonder, then, that Germany haggles with Justice when all along she has had so many friends in its court?

## LAW AND MORALITY

One of the advantages of being a "reformer" or a "progressive" these days is that you can say and do what you like, and get it all put down to your reforming zeal and your progressive soul. As a "progressive" you can preach open treason or plead an enemy's cause not only with impunity, but with a beautiful glow of self-satisfaction at having done the noble, the courageous, the really righteous thing. And if you are a "reformer" you can discuss and advocate any revolution in social or sexual ethics, and claim to be broad-minded, clear-eyed, cant-free, and what not. It is all rather hard on those (though I am afraid there are not too many of us) who are reformers principally in the sense of wishing to see many of our reforms reformed, and are progressive mainly because we should like to see a little "progress" backward until we had struck the right road again. But times are changed, and in these circumstances I propose to abstain entirely from any apology whatever for daring to discuss, without being in possession of a reformer's licence, two matters with which I must deal this week, arising upon two Bills which have received their second reading, both touching the relation of law and morality.

Lord Gorell's Divorce Law Amendment Bill, equalis-

ing the offence by equalising the legal consequences of marital infidelity, wholly ignores the fundamental truth, which nobody seems to have urged in the debate, that the natural consequences cannot be equalised. The injury a wife may do to her husband by an act of infidelity is one which he cannot do to her, and the distinction which the law makes between the two offences does reflect the significance of the natural distinction. The legal distinction will, no doubt, be abolished in obedience to the current effort to establish a civic and artificial equality all round between the sexes, but it will, at best, replace an inequality by an anomaly.

The Bishop of London's Bill raises in a much more acute form the issue between law and morality. It seeks to raise to seventeen years the "age of consent" on the part of the female, and to rule out the male defence of having reasonable cause for thinking that age had been reached. The first proposal is one of very questionable expediency, the second one of unquestionable injustice, and the whole Bill illustrates the danger of legislation to enforce morality. On the principle of fixing an age of consent there can be no conflict of opinion whatever, provided the recognition is made that its sole object is to protect an age of innocence and not to impose penalties for sexual immorality. Its justification, in fact, is entirely a question of degree, and is to be tested by going up and down the scale. Nobody would now seek to bring down the age to where it was when Mr. Stead launched his crusade in the early eighties. On the other hand, no judicial person would agree to its being raised to eighteen, for reasons that are obvious enough.

Mr. Stead's efforts resulted in the age being raised from thirteen to sixteen, and it must be said that, though the succeeding years have not weakened the case for that extension, they have lessened the justification for going beyond it. For, undoubtedly, the general and marked tendency of modern life is to have accelerated the mental and physical maturity of girls (and of the youth of both sexes), so that there are very few girls of sixteen who now need, by their innocent ignorance, the protection of the law. The intensive cultivation of the senses by all the modern agencies; by cheap literature, the cheap drama, the cinema, and the picture paper; by the decreasing segregation of the sexes, socially, and through the extended non-domestic employment of girls and women; the free discussion and publication of salacious cases; the less strict manners and the greater contempt for convention; and by the relaxation of home restraints—all these agencies have made an irresistible combination in the sophistication and worldly enlightenment of the young girls of to-day.

The provision to deprive a male defendant of his defence in regard to age would not long survive the experience it would furnish, in practice, of the arts of the blackmailer. But it is inherently unjust because it rules out of consideration the very element of criminal intention which in all other cases is a necessary proof. But it does something more than that—it operates with deliberate bias against the male. For many girls of seventeen are very "advanced," and it would be a monstrous thing that such a girl, endowed with that power which has the greatest influence of all on human conduct,



and making an appeal which it is no business of the law to frustrate, should pay no penalty beyond appearing in the witness-box against the partner of her pleasures, standing in the dock. Such a girl must be accounted not as a victim but as an accomplice; but the moment she becomes an accomplice and ceases to be a victim the case for her legal protection breaks down. The discrimination against the male would be an act of gross injustice, not only not affirming the equality of the sexes, but doing the opposite by the special penalisation of the male. Indeed, the one unifying principle in the two Bills is that they both exploit the prevailing tendency to "take it out" of the man.

And yet, so long as we check and challenge them by critical reason, it is not a bad thing that these proposals should have been made—even if they are rejected.\* Of one, many people will say that it is a proposal positively good, and I am content to leave it as debatable, but it is possible to oppose both proposals and still respect them. For they do, at any rate, register the demand for a higher sexual morality in days when that morality, according to all competent witnesses, is at a very low ebb. Days, indeed, when broad-mindedness does not quite know when to stop, and Virtue itself is afraid of being considered frumpish and "unprogressive." Only the other day an eminent novelist, Mr. Maurice Hewlett, recorded quite frankly that the experience of a young mother coming to him as a magistrate to claim a vaccination exemption certificate, and proudly informing him that it "was not 'a matter for her husband' " as she was an unmarried

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\*As they were.

mother, gave him a new idea of the pride and sacredness of motherhood, and left his attitude towards the phenomenon quite interrogatory and more than tolerant. Well, motherhood (like fatherhood) is a very easily acquired virtue, but if the fact itself is its own halo, and if its sacredness comes of its own accord, then Bills like those of Lord Gorell and Dr. Ingram are assuredly out of place in their attempt to regulate a natural function which, apparently, calls for rhapsody rather than regulation. But all this loosening and tightening of the strings, all these fresh stringencies and new licences, would not be entering so largely into the social discussions of the day if only one great social force had not been allowed to decay. It is that of home influence and parental authority. That authority, the first of all natural authorities, is the last to go. But it has gone, along with all the other authorities, and until it is restored the jumble and incoherence of modern life (which is a rudderless ship manned by a captainless crew shouting their orders to each other) will not only continue but intensify.

## “WORN OUT”

It was a pathetic letter that the Prime Minister read out to the House of Commons, that in which Mr. Bonar Law so suddenly gave up office and political life at the imperious call of nature, outraged by the incessant strain of public life. For quite five minutes it stilled the ordinary passions within the House, for there must have been few there so dulled in mind and spirit as not to have felt the shock of a sudden realisation that in public life to-day the price is greater than the prize. There were, we have read, murmurs of sympathy at the reading of the letter, especially at the phrase, “I am quite worn out.” But I wonder how many there were among those murmuring their sympathy who had themselves immensely increased the strain and burden on Mr. Law’s official life, as Leader of the House, by their purely partisan activities and concerns.

I was told the other day by a prominent engineer from the North that those in control of big works no longer have the time to give to their external business, for most of their energies have to be devoted to putting straight the derangement of their internal economy caused by the activities of the shop stewards. In the same way we may say the Governments no longer have adequate time to devote to the country’s business and their actual task

of government, for half their energies are distracted by the petty and malignant activities of political opponents in whose minds the national interest is so obviously subordinated to the advantage of that political curse, "the Party." We have fallen upon days in which the task of opposition is held to be simply that of discrediting the Government, and in which the coarse insults of cartoons, and diatribes by mouth and pen that merely express the routine malignity of political opponents, have taken the place of the old responsible and reasoned criticism. The war itself, which should have exorcised this disgusting devil of political life for a generation, actually saw its activities intensified, and there is no more humiliating chapter in our history than that, still being written, which shows how the immense responsibilities of war and the vast problems in peace of a disorganised world have been deliberately accentuated by "party faiths," that are, in fact, national treacheries.

And so the strain and disgusts of public life must be well nigh unendurable to the conscientious and sensitive mind; and we are reaching the time when careers of public service will be supportable only to the cynic or the adventurer, but repellent to the honest servant of the public, and too wearisome to be borne except by men of supreme vitality. Meanwhile, the buoyancy and vitality of the Prime Minister himself have become a national asset. Amid gales of criticism, with their contrary winds, amid storms of sheer malevolent abuse, and throughout all the monotony of unscrupulous misrepresentation, he still carries on, taking all the obloquy, by some superhuman tolerance, as all in the day's work. Do

but think of all the changes the world has seen, and of the history that has been made, since he first took office (1916), yet they find him still bravely holding on, losing his right hand in the morning, enheartening his followers by launching a new organisation in the evening. Empires have fallen, dynasties have gone, governments have vanished, confrères in Europe and colleagues at home have disappeared, but he is still carrying his bat through, apparently unwearied, still debonair, sanguine, and unspoilt. His experiences should have made him either mad or a misanthrope, but he still goes blithely on, making mistakes, no doubt, but doing his country so much service by the example of his steadfast serenity that against his mistakes must be counted this one outstanding excellence of an undaunted spirit. The whole world is weary, and its creeds, its hopes, its leaders are "worn out," but he still "keeps going," so indomitable in his self-confidence that he deserves by that all the confidence he inspires. As a benevolent critic, I have had some hard things to say of him from time to time, and the occasions for them will increase, I fear, and not diminish, but I affirm that even his most malevolent critic, yielding to a passing spasm of honesty, should salute the serenity of a spirit which has not once lapsed into even that querulousness under intense provocation which would have been a most pardonable human weakness as a sign of the strain of these wearying years, when even the old world feels "worn out."

And where he gives way—not in temper or effort, but in policy—the explanation may perhaps be found in a fact of deep psychological interest and some philosophical



importance. It is that the world is so weary that zeal is now almost the monopoly of the fanatic, relentlessness of purpose is seen only in the revolutionary, and only the new and subversive creeds have vital energy and apostolic fervour. Old-established Right has become self-distrustful and apathetic, whilst the new ferment works unrestingly. It is only in a world "quite worn out" that the final surrender to Bolshevism which this week has seen in the completed Treaty could have been made. I regard it as a great national dishonour, and here make my final and consistent protest against it. But I, too, feel "worn out" on that matter, and am conscious of the futility of further protest in a wearied and apathetic world; and so I feel also that the Prime Minister's justification may possibly have been that the world is too dulled and exhausted to make the effort necessary to the stringent assertion of Right, too inert to brace itself up to assert the old standards and conceptions of government. He may have felt that the task of vindicating those old standards in a shattered and demoralised world was too much for him, and that it was better to "cut the loss" for even a contingent gain and accept the consequences forced upon him by the clamour here of an "idealism" which is really a degeneration.\*

And so there the forces of reaction (of *real* reaction, of reaction from civilisation and sanity to barbarism and incoherence, and not the trumpery "reaction" which is the reproach of petty political minds) have won; and

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\*An estimate of his policy and intention much too indulgent, as will be seen. The whole article, indeed, is more indulgent than I could now write; but I leave it as written on an occasion which afforded a welcome holiday from controversy.

they have won because the world is "worn out." And they will win, again, in Ireland unless there is a big recoil and rally by the old but tired forces of sanity and justice. For the new ferment works unceasingly to deepen the tragedy and confusion of Ireland until there, too, we may have to cut our loss; and there, again, the "party faith" becomes a national treachery. It daily insists only on the motive of Sinn Fein, as the pursuit of "justice" and "liberty," and remains silent about its deeds; whilst daily insisting only on the deeds of the Crown forces, whilst remaining silent on their motive and task, which is that of maintaining civilised law and the unity of our Empire. But can any one say that that case is presented and pressed with anything like the persistence or vehemence of the other? Does that task, also, find us too "worn out"?

## (“ LAUGHTER ”)

Long years ago (that is to say, shortly before the war) Professor Bergson wrote a joyless book on “Laughter,” in which he tried to analyse the unanalysable, to explain the inexplicable, and to reduce to a series of formulæ the mainsprings of laughter—as though laughter and humour were governed by mechanical principles, so that the comic situation  $A + B + C$  would always equal, or produce, the laughter  $X + Y + Z$ . Impossible in any case, this task of explaining why people laugh breaks down utterly before the baffling phenomenon of the “(laughter)” of public, and especially Parliamentary debate.

A London evening newspaper does the great service of rescuing this passage from the oblivion of the Parliamentary report:—

The Attorney-General said that the failure of the German Government to bring the war criminals to trial was one of the questions in respect of which the sanctions were now being enforced. (Laughter.)

Sir H. Brittain asked on what date the criminals would be brought to justice.

Mr. Mills: April 1. (Laughter.)

The Attorney-General said he was unable to say when the trial would take place. There had been great difficulty in collecting the British witnesses and persuading them to go to Leipzig. (Laughter.)

An Hon. Member: Would the list of criminals include the name of one Wilhelm? (More laughter.)

The London evening paper appends the comment: "This is truly an odd subject for mirth. If those abominable criminals had been punished promptly, as an American speaker stated yesterday, the world would have been spared much of the mischief that has accompanied the peace with an unrepentant Germany." I agree that it is an odd subject for mirth. The cynic alone is entitled to laugh at the ghastly joke of the promised peace of justice, but even he, if a decent-minded cynic, would hold his laughter before the humiliating revelation of that shoddy statemanship among the Allies which has made a joke of justice. However, let us be grateful for that American, so solemnly and respectfully quoted. If the London evening newspaper were to turn over its files, it might find many contributions to its own columns which said prophetically what the American is now finding out in common with the rest of the world. But it is very encouraging to the rather small band of English writers and speakers who have made this great moral betrayal their theme for two and three years, with the warning that there was no hope for human society if the old standards of right were not upheld before we started erecting higher standards still, to find that at last, when the consequences are becoming obvious in a demoralised world, the immense support of "an American speaker" should at last be vouchsafed to us. Hail, Columbia!

Meanwhile, the susceptible, hilarious House of Commons will have its little joke, and strew the Parliamentary reports with its "Laughter." Russia, like Germany, sets it "positively screaming," like the first-

night audience of "Nightie Night" the same evening. Last week (in what I meant to be a pleasant uncontroversial interlude) I was crediting the Premier with the only excuse and justification I thought possible for the entente at last established with the Bolsheviks. But he has now made it clear that he regards no excuse as necessary, and the House, we read, roared at his sallies :—

Speeches had been delivered quite recently by Lenin which might have been delivered by Mr. Churchill. (Laughter.) I am certain that if Lenin had delivered such speeches at the Trade Union Congress he would not have been allowed to go on. (Laughter.) Things he said about the desirability of getting the private capitalist with his enterprise and money to come to the country were remarkable. Lenin had asked, how could they get him there unless they gave him a suitable reward? (Laughter.) Lenin's speeches might be described as an antidote to the speeches and propaganda of the Labour party. (Loud laughter.) Lenin had thought he could run the State on the theories of Karl Marx, but you cannot patch up locomotives with the doctrines of Marx. (Loud laughter.)

If that is the result of praising his buoyancy, I am sorry I spoke.

Not that it apparently matters. Everybody seems to be quite satisfied with this merry and bright way of taking rather serious things, with this Easter Bank Holidayish readiness for laughter. "I have never doubted for a moment," says the Premier, "that Lenin and his colleagues were able men. The one thing that proves it is that they are giving up all their doctrines, and I can only appeal to the hon. gentlemen opposite (the Labour party) to follow their example. (Loud laughter)." Rather baffling for the Bergsonian philosophy, this. For how are you to account for laughter at the implication that the criminal whose crimes do not succeed becomes something less than a



criminal by making that discovery, or the fool whose folly fails becomes wise by regretfully modifying his lunacy? What has become of the sense and sanity of human justice, if gigantic folly expressed and pursued by stupendous crime receives no higher retribution than the laughter of a House of Commons equally unable to restrain its mirth over the question of punishing the criminals of the great war?

Still, there must be something wrong with a few of us, for the many seem to find everything quite normal. "The Premier," says the "Pall Mall Gazette," "expressed the common-sense of the Russian trade agreement yesterday, to the manifest satisfaction of the House of Commons." Satire is helpless before that overpowering fact. And the "Westminster Gazette" goes one better, for I am sure it intends a well-bred rebuke to Mr. Lloyd George for daring to speak of "Lenin" *tout court*:—"The House of Commons listened last night to one of the Prime Minister's lively, impressionistic accounts of the present phase of Bolshevism. . . . We wish we could think it as diplomatic in its references to M. Lenin as it was undoubtedly diverting to the House of Commons." M. Lenin . . . ! What exquisite manners! As you would say in Leeds, "The late Mr. Charles Peace, a virtuoso of the violin, who died somewhat suddenly in Armley Gaol. A gentleman of the name of Marwood—or was it Mr. Calcraft?—was present at his unfortunate demise." I can see that we shall soon be having Monsieur Lenin over in the drawing-rooms of the Wee Frees. "Two lumps do you take, my dear Monsieur Lenin? If I give you three will you

promise to speak at one of our Pleasant Sunday Afternoons . . . ?”

Well, there is no hope for us, except that perhaps in the year 1926 some American speaker will come forward to put us wise, and point out to us, whilst our heads nod sagely, that where we went wrong was that nobody had the courage to point out, or the discernment to see, that we are really no better than Lenin if Lenin is good enough for us—that England had become degenerate when the loud laughter of its empty minds was the measure of its emotions at the entente with that system of pillage, oppression, terror, and butchery over which M. Lenin so ably presides. For my part, I will say no more of it, but wait for the oracular delivery of Silas P. Chunk.

## SELF-SACRIFICE

Little wonder that authors in the fiction market are turning to paper-hanging. For not only does the printing bill leave no margin for such an unnecessary expense in producing a book as an author's royalties, but the competition of fact with fiction in a world where the newspaper headlines daily fatigue that melodramatic appetite which cannot be satiated, has practically killed the business of sensational authorship. When real life supplies its own fiction in the form of facts, the process of invention becomes simply ridiculous. Do you like a good detective story? Then read the reports of the police courts. Mysteries, scandals, sugary romances, lurid crimes? They are all to be had along with the rest of the day's news. Royal plots, with conspirators shot and otherwise foiled, or an ex-Emperor turning up in his old capital, disguised to the chin, calling to claim his old throne just as unceremoniously as you call at the lost property department at Scotland Yard to ask for your missing umbrella?\* You can buy it all for a penny so so, with the cotton and wool markets thrown in. Revolutions, assassinations, daylight street-murders, as casual as catching a 'bus, as callous as monotony can make

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\*The ex-Emperor Karl.

them? They are happening "for the love of Ireland" most afternoons, and you can read them in almost any newspaper—even in those which specialise in recording them in small type on the inside pages. No wonder the cinemas are finding business slack!

Amid these violent and lurid delights there occasionally comes something pleasing, yet just as strange. Mr. Leonard Merrick's pleasant novel, "The House of Lynch," showed the nice romantic mind at work skirting the sociological field. Mr. Whiteing's "No. 5, John Street," showed the sociological mind at work in the romantic field. But both had this in common: that they strove, in a dull age when such things did not happen and our excitements had to be invented for us, to beguile us with the fancy that they conceivably might. Mr. Austin Hopkinson, in the true modern spirit, just makes them happen. It is a very pleasing story, this of the young Member of Parliament, possessing an imagination and a moral courage which must make him feel rather out of his element there, giving his wealth away with both hands, tossing his personal luxuries to the crowd, forsaking his pleasant home to live in a barn on the canal bank. His "£30,000 mansion, Ryecroft Hall," now houses an Urban District Council, given "free of any condition, with twenty houses." His household goods he sells, "many people acquiring astonishing bargains," and (probably impatient at the comparatively slow process of sale) the rest he "gives away." "He has gone so far in his plan to live the life of a working man" (you will notice that even the prosaic record of this romantic event drops into irresistible poetry) "that a

short time ago he gave his Limousine car to his chauffeur, who has started a motor business." And all these truly fine things he has done partly in obedience to a truly philanthropic impulse, and partly as an example, for he believes that "revolution can be averted only by sacrifice."

I should like to think that History, which will have its work cut out even to condense the big events of these crowded and amazing years, could manage to spare the space of at least a footnote to this characteristic episode of our time—characteristic not because there is, or there is likely to be, any epidemic of this practical yet romantic philanthropy, but because it shows, with that flashing light which an isolated and personal incident often sheds, something of the vast perplexities and complexities of these heart-reaching days, when men are groping in the twilight of a great bewilderment and grasping at any straw that seems the final truth. Mr. Hopkinson believes that only by such acts of self-sacrifice may revolution be averted. It may be so, but that brings us into contact only with a transient fact, and does not bring us nearer to ultimate truth. For if the demon of revolution can, indeed, be propitiated only by such gifts and sacrifices, it proves nothing more ethically final and satisfying than that those who have must now yield to those who have not. That policy of self-sacrifice may, or may not be, incontestable as a matter of worldly expediency, but as an ethical test it is valueless, for it leaves quite unsettled the whole relevant point of whether those who have are in wrongful possession and those who have not are rightful claimants. Does the mere dispersal and



transference of possessions settle, or come near to settling, the great social problem?

I fear it is not so simple. The ethics of human ownership have to be settled finally, in this world, by human understanding; and only if it is wrong to own anything more personal than the nose on one's face does it become wrong to own material possessions and right to distribute them. Mr. Hopkinson has given up his mansion and gone to live in a barn. But is a barn, then, the final unit of legitimate human ownership? What test can be applied to the ethical right to the ownership of any property at all except that of the right of human law? There may be leakages and flaws in the legal plan, so that some men may own that to which they are not morally entitled; but on the whole, and in the main, can there be any simpler conjunction of the two rights than that a man may rightfully possess that which he has acquired by effort or without theft? To give Ryecroft Hall to an Urban District Council is as fine, on a local scale, as to give Chequers to the Prime Ministers of England.\* But does not an Urban District Council, after all, get all its rightful dues from the rates it levies? And for a man to give his Limousine car to his chauffeur is a most commendable act of personal generosity, but as a solution of the ethical social problem it does not carry us much further, because it immediately opens up the question of whether the chauffeur has any better right to the car than the original owner himself. It really does little more than pass the problem on to the chauffeur, who may probably (or, at any rate, just possibly) feel obliged to

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\*A recent public benefaction of Lord Lee.

renounce his possession in favour of some aged tramp who may one day ask for a lift. And the tramp might then offer to sell it to Mr. Hopkinson cheap.

This week a Somerset Board of Guardians has decided that as English beef is more nutritious than chilled foreign beef, the inmates of their workhouse shall have of the best. By all means. But the philosophical drawback to that arrangement is that the ratepayer, awakening to the fact that he is also entitled to English beef instead of the inferior foreign import, which is all that he himself can afford, may realise that it is better to be a pauper than a ratepayer, who has to keep paupers. And so the maze thickens in the philanthropic labyrinth. The miners ask that the State (that is, other people) shall bear a loss which otherwise would be partially and properly theirs. By all means. But they immediately and automatically incur the same obligation of self-sacrifice, and must pass on the swag to others equally deserving who, after all, may turn out to be the original owners. On the whole, then, rationality and coherence demand that legal possession shall be regarded as the most satisfactory working proof of ethical right, and that the fine virtue of simple Charity, to the sick, the helpless, the unfortunate, shall redress any unequal balance—which is exactly what ten thousand charitable organisations attest has hitherto been creditably done.

## THE WEAPON

It is curious how history shapes itself, passing from phase to phase, and turning our first incredulity into the fatalism that is not surprised by any development. Hardly a month ago Mr. Frank Hodges, the secretary of the biggest monopoly in the land, made a speech in which he said that as the mining industry could not, on its own economic merits, yield the miners their existing wages, the only thing to do was for the taxpayer to go on paying the difference. This speech excited very little comment at the time. It was apparently supposed that Mr. Hodges was merely thinking aloud, and expressing not a policy but a whimsy, and doing it, too, with the naïveté that is characteristic of simple minds. So the speech was commented on, I remember, not as something to be taken seriously, but as an illustration of the confused economic doctrines of our times. And, in bewildering days when anything may happen and nothing ought to surprise us, that seemed a just estimate and treatment.

But less than a fortnight ago the nation, returning home, so to speak, after its Easter holidays, was made aware that what had seemed a dreamy speculation was indeed a definite policy, seriously meant and pressed. From all quarters, except that of organised Labour itself,

there came the firm response that no Government could possibly concede such a claim. Then, just a week ago, the policy was enforced by a strike, and work ceased in every coal-pit in the land.\* The real issue, of course, remained exactly where it was, and was open to exactly the same final objections as were urged about it at first—"utterly impossible to ask the taxpayer to subsidise the uneconomic earnings of a well-paid industry"; "out of the question to concede such a principle"; and so on, from quarters where the recognition of such truths was welcome, even if a little surprising. But these are days in which principles (as some hold them) cannot stay the course of a week's wear and tear. And those prints and partisans having a political affinity with labour, and to whom nothing really matters except "smashing the

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\*So, on April 1 (ominous date!) began the great coal strike of 1921, which lasted three months, immediately throwing out of work thousands in dependent industries, added to increasingly each week, so that the unemployment problem (which necessitated a brief autumn Session) received its greatest intensification from this specific cause.

On April 8th, at the end of the first week, during which the "safety men" of the pits had been withdrawn, the Prime Minister read a proclamation from the King calling up the Reserves of the Army, Navy and Air Forces; against which Mr. Clynes, in a House almost solidly behind the Government in taking these precautions, could only stammer the protest that the precautions would cost the country more than yielding to the miners' demands by continuing the national subsidy.

During the course of the strike, which progressively paralysed the industries of the country, the general attitude of the Press and the politicians to the miners can only be called restrained and indulgent. The Government adopted a passive attitude, eager to "explore every avenue for peace," but practically "writing off" every citizen who was also a miner as beyond its influence. Perhaps a stronger Government would not have assented so readily to this *imperium in imperio*, but would at least have striven to go behind, or beyond, the miners' leaders and addressed the men themselves on their responsibility as citizens for the immense harm they were doing as miners to their country. However, they

Government," soon seem to have decided that it would be quixotic and altogether asking too much of political human nature, to pursue a course of pedantic consistency when it was becoming clear that the miners had raised an issue in which principles would be a hindrance to party advantage. So principles and main issues are side-tracked, and the small debating points, the irrelevancies, the side issues, are then brought magniloquently into the foreground of the picture.

Then another phase. It appears that the miners did not withdraw the "safety staff" as a mere formality, answering the mere formality by which they were given notice of the proposed revision of wages, but that they intend the serious threat of "flooding the pits." So the "principle" is then affirmed that it would be "unwise,"

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allowed matters to take their course, and were so passive that they did not even answer the taunts of the party-mongers, who strove to make the customary party capital out of the disaster by charging the Government with a responsibility that could not be rationally sustained—except on the ground of their costly punctiliousness in refraining from any "partiality" of criticism that might influence the strike.

The result was that much plainer speech concerning the strike afterwards came from the miners' leaders themselves than from any outside criticism during the strike itself. Two months after its settlement Mr. Herbert Smith, President of the Miners' Federation, addressing its annual Conference (Aug. 17, 1921) made a comprehensive admission that the miners had been in the wrong, and that "some of us" had thought so all along, but out of "loyalty" to the extremists in their counsels, had refrained from giving effect to their misgivings. Another admission was: "An error was made in withdrawing the safety men, and the consequences are seen to-day in those districts where employment is scarce"—through the pits being unworked. Another specific admission was that the motives of the strike were political, on the demand for "a national pool, with wages as a secondary consideration"—a demand that was meant to force the nationalisation of mines. Finally, Mr. Smith made the significant admission: "Under the economic position created during the war, a sense of power and importance was developed which was not altogether healthy—in



“rash,” “indiscreet” (and other harsh language) for them to do anything of the sort. A stage further, and “revolution” comes into the picture, on the warning of Lord Askwith that that is where we are drifting to. But by this time “principles” have dropped behind, and only the party mind is at work. So revolution is discouraged—or, as that is perhaps too strong a word for the mild reproofs, I will say merely “deprecated.” Revolution, of course, is very shocking—um—um, wiser counsels will, no doubt, prevail—um—um! (crescendo). *But after all, if the miners really do believe that even revolution is better than starvation, is it surprising?* A stage further, and it becomes clear, by demonstrations of riotous force in Scotland and Wales (a little measure of industrial home rule might give the saner elements of

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fact it gave a good many of our people an exaggerated opinion of their power.”

Yet a national calamity concerning which all these admissions had subsequently to be made, nearly led to a General Strike and therefore to the probability of civil war. For Mr. Herbert Smith admitted, what was publicly known, that on April 16th the Triple Alliance had “decided to strike with us,” and were restrained only when the other workers realised that “they were to strike to get us something they had not obtained themselves.”

The miners’ strike (which ended in the dissolution of the Triple Alliance of Labour) really marked the point at which the pretensions of Labour, with its self-confessed mistakes, should have abated and have led to “reaction” even in the counsels of Labour. But the significance of all these admissions made no permanent impression on the political mind, and even during the debate on unemployment in the autumn of 1921 they were not recalled in criticism of Labour’s claims for far-reaching measures to combat that unemployment which this very strike had done so much to create. It is true that Mr. Lloyd George made a passing allusion to it, merely to show that it had depleted the savings and reserves of labour, but his use of the word “strike” was immediately met by cries from the Labour Members of “Lock-out!” (an evasion on which they set much store) and Mr. Lloyd George immediately corrected himself, in the true spirit of governmental compromise, and substituted the word “stoppage.”

English trade unionism a better chance of asserting themselves), that it is the intention of the miners not only not to save the pits themselves but to prevent others doing so.

Here is a principle with a vengeance—an elemental, fundamental, simple principle that touches the first considerations of human justice and rationality. Here, too, is a great irony, for it has been understood that labour “repudiates the wicked doctrine of force” (when applied, for instance, to “capitalistic wars”), whilst now, apparently, making an entire reservation on that little principle by upholding the sanctity of force in its own affairs. Altogether, a very obstinate principle, and a very shameful irony. But both principle and irony are promptly and nimbly evaded. “After all, it would, perhaps, be too much to ask the miners that they should forego their principal weapon.” (“The Daily News.”) Another stage further, and it is made clear, in a conference between the Miners’ Executive and the Executive of the Nation, that it is the deliberate and considered policy of the leaders themselves to use the destruction of the pits as their weapon to force a quick decision. . . . I forget the precise day in March, 1915, when the Germans, showing us what they had up their sleeves to force a quick decision, if what was hitherto called “honourable warfare” were not more successful, sent a black cloud over the soddened, low-lying ground of Flanders towards the British trenches.

Whatever now happens, something happened at that conference which never happened before, and for one reason or its opposite, will not be likely to happen again.

A body of citizens, subordinating all the obligations of their citizenship to their own class and what they consider their own economic advantage, tell a Prime Minister to his face that the destruction of a great national industry counts less with them (so did Cant get behind the petticoat) than "the women and children"—who, however, are to suffer by what is now being done. And so the closest corporation of industrial workers in the land tells the Government through its spokesman (Mr. Herbert Smith) that they have adopted sabotage, active or passive, as part of their plan of campaign. Well, the fool and his paradise are soon parted, and it is just as well to know where we are.

This new weapon, the weapon of frightfulness, has come to naturalise and acclimatise itself among us solely because its first exemplars have not been adequately punished, solely because frightfulness has not been discredited and discouraged by a fearful Justice. Flooding the mines is, after all, only a slavish copy of that other frightfulness, and has for its motive exactly that of the submarine campaign, further resembling it in these respects—(1) that it makes the same blunder in psychological estimates that the Germans made, and (2) that it will fail for just the same reason. What was the final meaning of the submarine campaign, if not this: "Come to terms now, or we will sink every ship on the sea, so that when you want to come to terms there will not be a plank left on which to float all the food that may be rotting on foreign wharves, to feed your starving people." And this weapon of the miners has just the same intention. "Give in to our demands now, or when all industry is

paralysed, and you would be glad to get coal on any terms, there will be no coal to be got from the inundated pits." And so we learn our little lessons. The Germans destroyed the coal pits of France, and we let them discuss reparation as though it were a nice friendly little discussion about the rules of the International Ping-Pong Association. Bolshevism, which is sabotage in excelsis, at length sends its emissaries among us, and we conclude treaties with them in the usual diplomatic, ceremonious way. And so our chickens come home to roost, and the new weapon is one we have forged for ourselves by moral cowardice.

## THE LAST OF THEM

At the beginning of the week there was one of those little Parliamentary "incidents" which, though they generally go un-noticed, have really a great significance. The Leader of the House of Commons was explaining that we were not yet out of the wood of the industrial crisis, and that the real danger lay in the ulterior aims of those whose motives were no more shared by the trade union leaders than by the Government itself (which was probably more tactful than true, but was commendably said), and added:

It is vital for the community to show that in the last resort, if its life and existence are attacked, it has both the will and the capacity to defend itself.

Whereupon, "angry protests" and derisive laughter from the Labour members. "That's right! Get on to your provocative language!" shouted one. "Get on with your challenge!" cried another; and their leader (Mr. Clynes) deliciously rebuked the Leader of the House for "getting perilously near the controversial!" That sententious, humourless stupidity "beats the band." Mr. Clynes apparently thinks that revolutionary aims, with which Mr. Chamberlain was dealing, are not themselves "perilously near the controversial."



Early in 1918, when there was a wide assent to the belief that Labour was about to enter into its governmental kingdom, I prefaced an examination into that possibility by saying—

When the claims of Labour have been set so high, and when it is so largely taken for granted that the world, as the war leaves it, will be a world under the dominion of the proletariat, it would be cowardly and evasive to leave unexpressed a view which falls short of those enthusiasms (“Disloyalty,” Chapter VI.)

and I went on to say that my belief was, on the contrary, that Labour’s high claims would “*lead it to make big mistakes, which would be the prelude to inevitable reaction.*” An unpopular thing to say just then. Indeed, the Prime Minister himself (who ought to know something of these high matters) had just been counselling “Audacity, again audacity, and still audacity!” to Labour—which has certainly taken him at his word.

Now, the Parliamentary incident related shows why Labour cannot rule, and the simple explanation is that it apparently cannot reason. For if it could reason, and think reasonably, it certainly would not call “provocative” such an obvious statement of jog-trot and humdrum sanity as that if the community were attacked it would have both the will and the capacity to defend itself. For it needs only the beginning of a political intelligence to see that if a nation had not the capacity either to circumvent its internal enemies by law or to defeat them by force, then the nation must not only perish, but would not deserve to survive. And so that “incident” vividly illustrates the supreme error of modern

Democracy—the underlying assumption in all its claims that the State, or the nation, has no rights of its own to assert against those sectional “rights” which have now come to be the expression of the democratic idea. In other words, in little more than a decade Democracy has come into its inheritance and got through it. In ten years it has turned itself completely inside out, converting its basic theory of majority rule through constitutional channels into the hardened claim of minority supremacy, to be attained one way or the other.

This contempt of the State, this denial to it of even the right of self-preservation, this neo-democratic view that a people must be helpless before a political theory, and a theory actually turned inside out—these insanities have, in a thousand recent examples, so far been implied rather than stated. But now they are ceasing to be the implications of confused minds, and are becoming their actual contention. Thus Mr. Laurence Housman, a poet who brings to politics a mental attitude which is irrational without the excuse of being poetic, shows that this idea, which would dissolve Democracy in its own acid, is held not only by the conventional revolutionary and saboteur. Angered at the reproach against the miners that their mine-flooding tactics was “an attack upon the community,” Mr. Housman ridicules the idea that the community is “for some queer reason sacrosanct,” and indignantly asks why the community “should not be attacked”—why, indeed, it should not be “punished,” and “given a concrete object lesson” for its follies and crimes. As its follies and crimes are, in his view, “The Treaty of Paris” and “vindictive peace

terms," and as he calls the miners "a new band of conscientious objectors we have produced by our misuse of victory," and who are therefore now rightly punishing us, I do not argue with Mr. Housman, but merely disentangle from his unpoetical frenzies the fact that the latest political insanity thinks the community, the nation, ought to be attacked from within because a minority does not approve of all its policy, and apparently does not stop to realise exactly what happens when the community, thus attacked, retorts on the Communists—as these enemies of the community call themselves, "for some queer reason."

Then, at the other end of the scale, Mr. Bevin, "the dockers' K.C.," roaring in a Church pulpit (lent to him by an incumbent who seems to have forgotten what is incumbent upon him): "Hang the Kaiser, but hands off the German working man, who is as good as we are! And as for your Union Jack, that is going to be internationalised!"—and again it is assumed that the community is going to be helpless and passive before the threat. Next Mr. Bernard Shaw, with his sneers at the Defence Force—"Black and Tans" is, naturally to him, the worst he can say of them, and, just as naturally, he says it. He, too, puts the community they represent in the background. Finally, there comes a manifesto from a body called "The General Purposes Committee of the Civil Service Confederation," a body of whose existence I must confess myself to have been ignorant, whilst asserting that such a manifesto suggests that the sooner it is non-existent the better. For it proclaims "vigilant neutrality" in a case in which the interests of the com-

munity are directly involved, and urges upon its members to refuse to join "any volunteer force or special emergency organisation."

Well, we have at length reached the stage when the revolutionary elements of our society have obliged the calling together of loyal citizens in its defence, and we see that the principles of government are apparently so little understood, even amongst educated people, that a body of men, employed by the State, having no *raison d'être* except to serve the State, and having a special obligation to be loyal to the State and to give an exclusive allegiance to the community which keeps them alive, actually contend that the State's emergency is none of their business, but is to be met only by vigilant neutrality. And so I feel that affairs have reached a point when it would be an affectation to continue to express "unpopular opinions" which have, in effect, been the envisagement of these culminations, and so this must be the last of them. For, I submit, the march of events has largely justified them, so that they may now even be on the point of obtaining popular acceptance, or at least of seeing their unpopularity abated.

Or, if I am wrong in that estimate, and if such opinions as I have expressed are inevitably doomed to be unpopular, and must continue to be expressed (as these opinions certainly have been) against the grain of popular feeling—then the saving grace of self-criticism and of humour must deter me from continuing so futile a task. For, after all, I have expressed no opinions which are not consonant with and based upon the rational principles of constitutional government, the sanities of

controversy and conduct, or the principles of humanity and justice. And if these things be indeed doomed to prolonged unpopularity, then England, too, is doomed.

. . . But she merely sleeps.



## APPENDIX

### (REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE REBELLION IN IRELAND, 1916).

The Report of the Royal Commission appointed by the Government (Mr. Asquith, Premier), to enquire into the Rebellion in Ireland at Easter, 1916, in which the German-Irish plans for joint action went astray, is one of the most important State documents of our time. To read it now recalls, by its simple affirmation of what were then accepted principles of constitutional government, how far we have travelled since. Extracts from the Report, containing those given on page 137 are :

We are of opinion that from the commencement of the present war all seditious utterances and publications should have been firmly suppressed at the outset, and if juries or magistrates were found unwilling to enforce this policy further powers should have been invoked under the existing Acts for the Defence of the Realm.

We are also of opinion that on the outbreak of war all drilling and manœuvring by unrecognised bodies of men, whether armed or unarmed, should have been strictly prohibited, and that as soon as it became known to the Irish Government that the Irish Volunteers and the Citizen Army were under the control of men prepared to

assist your Majesty's enemies if the opportunity should be offered to them, all drilling and open carrying of arms by these bodies of men should have been forcibly suppressed.

It does not appear to be disputed that the authorities in the spring of 1916, while believing that the seditious bodies would not venture unaided to break into insurrection, were convinced that they were prepared to assist a German landing.

We are further of opinion that at the risk of a collision early steps should have been taken to arrest and prosecute leaders and organisers of sedition.

We are of the opinion that the Chief Secretary, as the administrative head of your Majesty's Government in Ireland, is primarily responsible for the situation that was allowed to arise and the outbreak that occurred.









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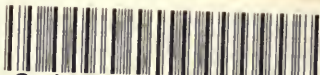
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