

CURRENT MAGAZINES

The Divided House of Russia:—Count Sforza, in *The North American Review*.

Who are the Great Men of To-day?:—Lord Oxford, in *The World's Work*.

The House of Lords:—Mr. Harold Cox, in the *Edinburgh*.

Too Much Democracy:—Mr. C. H. Bretherton, in *The North American Review*.

India's Degradation Denied:—Dr. J. J. Cornelius, in *Current History*.

COUNT Sforza, who has contributed to *The North American Review* an article on "The Divided House of Russia", is one of those Italian politicians of the old régime who—under Mussolini—now have leisure to write. He was Italian High Commissioner in Turkey during the latter part of the great war, and he was afterwards Minister for Foreign Affairs. Now, we learn, he is devoting himself to lecturing, to travel and to literature. It would be of interest to hear from him about the whole group of such persons who are, like himself, "unemployed" at home. But for the moment he has chosen to speak of a despotism elsewhere. Last summer the Americans, with their quick eye for available lecturers, brought him out to discourse to the Institute of Politics at Williamstown about that sad mess of European affairs in which they have refused to be entangled.

The first point this writer makes about Russia is that the Soviet government is very like the Tsarist system which preceded it. For Lenin's epoch is gone, and the frantic idealism by which it was marked has given place to hard-headed contriving,—what the Germans used to call *Realpolitik*. Stalin, Rykow and Bukarin have brought shrewdness rather than enthusiasm to their task. At all costs they must keep their hold, and they remember too clearly the effectiveness of Tsarist measures to try an experiment with freedom of thought or expression. So one who had been a visitor to Russia in the old days would find the present atmosphere familiar enough,—the same espionage, the same shackled press, the same "mental suffocation." Kalinin has defended this with great frankness. He looks forward to a time when it will be possible to set up more popular methods. But he points out that the necessary condition has not yet been secured. Until a natural respect for law and justice has been formed in the public mind, the

only weapon by which those masses can be governed is the weapon to which they were accustomed for centuries. "We must confess", he says, "that we have made no serious progress since Tsarist times." The machinery is thus unchanged, though it is worked by a different sort of people, who at least profess a very different sort of purpose. Of course there is a new vigour of grumbling among those whom the continuance of such a régime has disappointed. It is met, when it becomes dangerous, by changing the officials in a discontented district, and herein is at least an external appearance of a new order, for officials of the imperial epoch used to remain long in the same job. But though the persons are often moved, the rigour of the system is the same no matter by whom it is administered.

What is really novel in the situation at present is the schism that has arisen between the two great parties by which Bolshevism is supported,—the workmen and the peasants. The former constitute perhaps fifteen out of one hundred and thirty millions of Russian people; the remaining one hundred and fifteen millions are peasants. Ten years ago, when the "Communist party" seized power, it numbered no more than thirty thousand; to-day it numbers eight hundred thousand, and it would be far larger but for the fact that admission to that charmed circle is somewhat vigilantly guarded. Count Sforza estimates that of the 800,000 about 350,000 are workmen or ex-workmen, 450,000 are "ex-bourgeois, assumed workmen, and—in the lowest proportion—peasants." Thus only the most insignificant fraction of that class which constitutes immensely the largest part of the Russian people has been admitted to the ranks of the governing party—which, again, is in the closest resemblance to the old way of doing things.

But how could it be otherwise? The peasants are not Communist in spirit, and they have a clear insight into the incompatibility of Communism with their personal interests. They wanted, indeed, to drive the old proprietors from their estates, and to parcel out the land. As Lenin was the one leader who could and would make this project successful, they threw in their lot in 1917 with Leninism. But, as that far-seeing chief indicated in a speech as far back as 1919, the Communist programme was irreconcilable with the peasant's wish not only to sell his grain freely but to *speculate* in grain. "We shall never agree", said Lenin; "we will die rather than yield on this essential point." The peasants retaliated by leaving half the soil uncultivated, and thus produced the famine of the years 1920 and 1921. Since then, despite the brave words of the first dictator, commercial freedom has been restored, and

the peasant—employing workmen during harvest time—is, in his way, just a bourgeois or a capitalist of the old sort. But the cleavage between the parties has not been closed.

It appears now in the devious policy by which the Moscow leaders try to play to each side in turn. One hundred and fifteen millions of peasants cannot be treated as negligible, though very few of them have been admitted into the governing party. Like the same class in France after the Revolution, they are Conservative in temper, with no flaming zeal for projects of world-regeneration. But unless the Lenin gospel were to be entirely repudiated, some such project must be at least apparently pursued in Soviet schemes abroad. The Russian is temperamentally a dreamer, except in so far as he has been made prosaic and practical by ownership of a small farm. In the cities, and among the workmen, Leninism remains a religion even more than a form of politics. There is something impressive about this fervid cult:

The mystic nature of the Russian soul reaches, with its longing for sufferance, a degree of sincerity not to be found elsewhere. It is with a sort of religious ardour that the working classes of Leningrad and Moscow believe themselves to be the vanguards of a new world, of a happier humanity. When they suffer, they find some consolation in thinking that by what they are enduring they advance the blessed day of universal happiness—the happiness of all the slaves and pariahs of Europe and Asia.

Hence the effort of Moscow leaders to show, from time to time, that something is in process, that the faith of Lenin is still kept. There have been escapades in China, in Indo-China, in India, and elsewhere. Now, it seems, a bureau has been created at Mecca, to work in the Bolshevik interest upon the minds of hundreds of thousands of Moslem pilgrims! According to Count Sforza, it is wrong to suppose that this is just scheming of the old imperial kind for a larger "place in the sun." It is rather the gesture which must needs be made, for a project known to be in vain, if the chiefs at the Kremlin would hold their followers' allegiance.

A new sort of fanaticism! We have abundant evidence that wars thought to be "holy" are the hardest of all to repress, and it is but fair to grant these Leninists credit for a conscience of their own sort. This Italian critic warns his readers that anti-Bolshevik action outside will only strengthen the Bolsheviks at home, as it did "when the London and Paris Cabinets supported Kolchak, Denikin and Wrangel." He thinks that the raid on "Arcos" and the severing of diplomatic relations by the Baldwin Government

helped tremendously in consolidating the Moscow bureaucrats. For their internal disputes had then reached a critical stage:

Lenin's widow was at once put on the scene. With a voice broken by emotion, she showed the enemies as already at Russia's doors. All opposition was quelled. A new union was sworn in, or at least a long armistice, among the violent opponents of the day before.

Since then, Trotzky has fallen, all the same. Whether he would have fallen sooner if the Baldwin Government had been more judicious, is an interesting speculation. In these matters one can guess at will, with comparative certainty that no one else can prove him wrong.

IN the December number of *The World's Work*, Lord Oxford—like Carlyle long ago—has “undertaken to discourse for a little of great men.” It is a perennial theme. One recalls how Emerson used to distinguish a *contemporary* from an *eternal* man; how De Quincey contrasted that receptive power which is mere talent with that creative power which is genius; and, to come to more recent prophets, how President Nicholas Murray Butler—with a sudden self-effacement that surprised us all—has given it as his considered opinion that there is not now one great man living in the world!

Lord Oxford does not attempt any of these delicate distinctions. It is not of the hierarchy of master minds for all time that he has to speak, but of the competing claims of living individuals *inter se*, which is plainly a discussion on a lower and narrower level. The very title of his paper suggests this. He does not ask whether there are great men now among us, but—assuming that there are—he asks for their identification. And first he mentions the inveterate tendency of every age to suppose that an earlier time was richer in talent. He agrees that the assumption has in certain cases been right, as when Plutarch lamented that his own lot was cast among small persons and small things. Probably no men ever felt with greater truth than the contemporaries of Plutarch that they were living in a senile period. But such pessimistic regrets, Lord Oxford points out, have often been groundless, as when Ben Jonson judged so meanly of a period in which Cromwell and Milton were yet to show their powers. And he retains a robust faith that Nature is not even yet barren of the high human products with which she has so often enriched our British race.

Among great men of letters, Lord Oxford enumerated Mr. Hardy, Mr. Bridges, and Mr. Kipling; among great scientists, Sir

Joseph Thomson and Sir Ernest Rutherford. He is aware that if judged by the crude test of popular appeal and by the size of audience which they address, the writers of fiction would have highest place (except perhaps for the competition of writers of plays) in literature. But our critic is not sufficiently "democratized" to accept a count of heads in such adjudication. He has a misgiving about Mr. Bernard Shaw, whom he does not very much like, but whose "originality and distinction" he does not feel able to dispute. Mr. Wells and Mr. Arnold Bennett, though their books circulate so widely, do not keep pace—he thinks—with the novelists of the Victorian age. And Lord Oxford reminds us of the curious outcome of a recent library census in an industrial town of the north of England, where it was found that the novel in steadiest demand is still *East Lynne*.

Passing to a field where his judgment is perhaps more entitled to confidence, he speaks of the orators of to-day—of Sir Edward Clarke, whom he declares to be the most eminent of living advocates; then of Mr. Winston Churchill, Lord Balfour, Lord Birkenhead, and Mr. Lloyd George, all of whom he dismisses with a compliment, though the reader would probably have welcomed some more minute account of their varying styles. But this would be to ask too much from our veteran critic's discretion, just as we have to be content with the very non-committal recognition in the sphere of men of affairs that he has paid to the driving force of Mussolini. Lord Oxford rather deplures the lack of pulpit orators fit to be placed in the same rank with a few men he can remember in his own earlier days. He thinks that the pulpit has still great possibilities, and mentions the outstanding talent of two contemporary preachers, the Bishop of Durham and Dean Inge. I should have thought his warmest admirers would not have placed the second of these in the oratorical group. And it is interesting to learn from Lord Oxford how Admiral Fisher had a passion for hearing sermons: "He would often go to church as many as three times on a Sunday; but I doubt whether even he, if he were alive to-day, and had to spend his week-ends in London, would not find it necessary to curtail his favourite relaxation." Our critic often surprises us with an out-of-the-way and singularly apt literary reference. I confess that this from Dr. Johnson was new to me. It seems that the venerable lexicographer justified his dislike for hymns and sacred poetry on the ground that "repentance is not at leisure for cadences and epithets." Lord Oxford suggests that herein may be a creditable reason for the neglect of the arts of eloquence in the contemporary pulpit. Let us hope so. But other explanations suggest themselves.

ABOUT a quarter of a century ago the name of Mr. Harold Cox was very familiar in political circles, and there were not a few who regarded his sturdy independence as a pattern to be admired even when they were sure that it could not be imitated. He used to disagree with all groups alike, so that it was impossible to attach a label to his extraordinary blend of opinions. But those who thought, twenty-five years back, that there was a great future for that kind of public man have been disillusioned. Mr. Cox, apparently, has been disillusioned himself. He is now a journalist, editor of *The Edinburgh Review*, and in the present issue of his magazine he contributes a mordant analysis of that public corruption in which men of his own temper have so little chance to influence national affairs.

It is very refreshing to hear from him again, and to observe that whatever modifications may have been made in the thought of other men by time or experience, he at least stands where he always stood. That passage of the years which has left so deep a mark upon others has in vain operated upon the mind of Mr. Cox. It is probable that no leading man, of any political group, would venture on the recommendations which he has made in his last contribution to the *Edinburgh*. For unless I quite misunderstand his drift, he wants the Baldwin Government to introduce at once a measure to repeal the Parliament Act! And however one may disagree with Mr. Cox, it has always been hard to misunderstand him. For chief among his gifts is that of a sparkling lucidity of statement.

There is nothing very new in his article. Apparently believing that the old songs are the best, he calls that roll of the vices in a democratic order which has been called in more or less strident tone by innumerable prophets for the last sixty years. It was in 1867 that Carlyle published his lurid paper entitled "Shooting Niagara", in which democracy was given just half a century to complete its doom. In vain did R. H. Hutton protest that, though the doom might be comparatively near, it was not certain that England had "suddenly put on the pace of the Gadarene swine." But Mr. Cox has the sad experience of that intervening period upon which to draw, and once again it is the vaticination of dark things that he has to offer. Though he may remind us of the invincible assurance with which prophets have assigned a date for the end of the world, and though it is for ever true that one cannot argue with a prophet but must be content with disbelieving him, there is at least a psychological interest in this fresh repetition of the old forecast.

It is indeed, in the opening paragraphs, a little tiresome. Mr.

Cox reminds us that though legislative power is nominally shared by king, lords and commons, the king no longer interferes with bills, and thus in the absence of an effective second Chamber we have the spectacle of single-Chamber rule. That, as Sam Weller used to say, is a self-evident proposition. Next we are asked to consider the disturbing fact that we cannot "always be sure of the patriotic intentions of successful politicians"—a fact which is sad, but which only the most optimistic will controvert. Again, even if the politicians were always patriotic in spirit, they tend to become conceited by the possession of power, and to forget the obligations of fair play. They get into parliament in virtue of qualities which do not always fit a man for managing a great empire, and they are thus often party hacks, becoming servants rather of the party machine than of the nation. "There are 615 members in the present House of Commons; of these, only four register themselves as independent." Alas, the experiment made by Mr. Cox in other days has not been much followed of late! Finally, the rise of coalition governments and the multiplication of groups in the House have still further widened the breach between a member's personal principles and the principles for which he is found to vote.

All this, which will probably be granted at once, prepares the way for an account of the splendid record of the House of Lords by which, it seems, the terrible danger from such a situation was counteracted in the past. That House prevented the passage of Gladstone's Irish Home Rule proposals,—an achievement which Mr. Cox thinks immensely to its credit. For he is convinced that those proposals sprang from no high motive of justice, but simply from Gladstone's need for the votes of Irish Nationalist members to keep him in power. Again, the House of Lords resisted Mr. Lloyd George's land taxes, but—by some lapse of the high intelligence with which Mr. Cox credits that Chamber—it did not resist in the right way, and the Parliament Act was precipitated. No words can do justice to what he feels about the degrading of the Lords under that infamous measure. We are reminded how a peer has, on the average, more knowledge and more sense of responsibility than the average member of the House of Commons, and how he has not the same temptation to sell his conscience. Mr. Cox would reduce the size of the Upper House, and he would put an end to the premier's power of coercing it by the threat of new creations. Moreover, as a sort of vestigial trace of his old creed in the days of his Liberalism, he would introduce the referendum to arbitrate when the Houses are in conflict. Of the manifold objections that have been made against this expedient, he says nothing. But first and foremost, the Parliament Act must be

repealed, and this must be done now, without an election on that issue, despite the "joint scream" that is to be expected from Liberals and Labour men.

Judging by the recent experience of Mr. Baldwin's tentative proposals, so soon withdrawn, for "House of Lords Reform", one may think that no project would bring greater joy to Labour and Liberals alike. But Mr. Cox has at least the courage of his convictions, and puts his case with incisive force. Not for him any servile flattering of the spirit of the age! His intrepidity is splendid. One remembers the brigadier in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's romance, who had fared badly in the boxing bout, but of whom his opponent said "He is a game cove. He came for me like a bantam."

ANOTHER Englishman, writing in *The North American Review*, has suggestions equally spirited and far-reaching. Mr. C. H. Bretherton thinks as little of democracy as Mr. Cox, but it is upon the distressing case of the United States that he has to speak. There, it seems, the "will of the people" has run riot, passing laws innumerable which no one respects, multiplying crime in proportion to inhibitions, and generally falling into the hands of the crank or the faddist. What would Mr. Bretherton do about this? It may last a long time, he thinks, but it must be stopped, unless the United States can accept the impending doom:

They will surely sit back and ask themselves whether their present political system, with its freak laws, its graft and corruption, its ten thousand murders a year, its lynchings, its universal bootlegging, and its universal contempt for the law—all directly attributable not to human but to constitutional weakness—is worthy of the greatest, the richest, and in many respects the most civilized people in the world.

When they thus reflect, they will reach—in Mr. Bretherton's view—some very radical determinations. They will abolish the federal system, setting up an all-powerful Congress, in place of the local legislatures. Next they will repeal all laws, except those of this single authority. Their President will be appointed for life, subject only to removal by a two-thirds majority of both Houses of Congress. The Senate will be changed into "a small Upper Chamber of legislative experts appointed for life from a post-graduate College of Statecraft, as members of which they will have devoted a number of years to study or to the practical work of diplomacy, arbitration and so forth."

It sounds like Plato's Republic. Or, to quote another eminent authority on social changes, the immortal Dominie Sampson, we may ejaculate "Prodigious!"

IT is most unfortunate that Miss Katherine Mayo's book, *Mother India*, should have furnished material far less for a serious study of India's social condition than for a campaign of political boasting on the one side and political abuse on the other. Now at length, exclaims one sort of publicist, the fraud of Indian Nationalism has been exposed, and the glories of the British overlordship have been demonstrated. The inevitable reply follows, and in *Current History* Dr. J. J. Cornelius, formerly Professor in Lucknow University, argues that these horrors of child marriage and the like are combatted by a responsible native opinion which the foreign rulers, so far from assisting, are actually obstructing.

It is impossible for anyone to judge this issue without evidence on the spot, and the transmitted evidence is conflicting. Dr. Cornelius reminds us how this is not the first campaign by Miss Mayo against Nationalism, for she produced a famous book called *The Isles of Fear* in which the dominance of the United States in the Philippines was supported by a like analysis. And of course, we hear again about Amritsar, about the division of Bengal, about the crushing of indigenous industries, about the "strangling" of native leadership. Miss Mayo's book, according to this article, is packed full of half-truths and no truths; it is littered with overstatement, with suppressions and distortions. Other critics have said that a like indictment might be drawn against America by one who obtained material exclusively from observation of the Chicago stockyards. Dr. Cornelius does not scruple to interpret *Mother India* as just a piece of pro-British propagandism, recalling how Mr. Lionel Curtis wrote a preface to *The Isles of Fear*, and how Miss Mayo herself explains that she was furnished with information and records by the India Office in London.

Who shall decide what to believe, when grave discussions of social improvement are so confused by thought of the case that can be made out in the course of them for this or that political or national party? I offer no opinion on this particular debate, preserving a reticence—where I know nothing—that I trust is at least in contrast with the volubility of so many critics whose independent knowledge seems to be no greater. But Dr. Cornelius has at least been an eye-witness far longer than Miss Mayo. I should wish that his article had been more free from that impulse of detraction which has been stirred by the impulse of eulogy in the book he criticises. Irritants and counter-irritants are, in such matters, alike inimical to the ascertaining of truth.

H. L. S.