CURRENT MAGAZINES

The Edinburgh Review, 1802-1929:—The Editor, in the *Edinburgh*.

Is Religion to be Disestablished?—Mr. J. H. Tuckwell, in the *Hibbert*.

The Political Situation on the Home Front:—Mr. G. H. Shakespeare, in the *Contemporary*.

Scottish Hopes of Home Rule:—The Hon. R. Erskine of Marr, in *Current History*.

THE name of yet another famous British magazine has now to be added to the obituary column. With the issue of its last number, the *Edinburgh* took leave of its readers, after continuous appearance ever since 1802.

In a mournful farewell, the editor reminds us that times have changed. People now want their reflective criticism of affairs in quicker succession than once a quarter. A hundred years ago there were no monthlies; our age has a plentiful supply not only of monthlies but of weeklies, whilst well trained critics are at work for even the daily newspaper, and the British Broadcasting Corporation threatens to reduce the field of the journalist ever more narrowly. Remembering, however, that certain quarterlies still manage to survive, the editor cannot withhold an admission that is surely most painful of all. "The Review," he says, "was founded to conduct an active Whig policy, and to the end of its life it has continued to bear the blue and yellow party colours. But the political views that it was intended to support have ceased to play any part in the national life." No one who knows Mr. Harold Cox will suppose that this implies any abatement of personal confidence in the creed he has so long espoused. His obstinately cross-bench mind is not to be shaken by storms from every side. Like M. Bergeret, he might often conclude a contemptuous paragraph with the remark: "These are my opinions, but I have no expectation that they will be shared by any large number of people." Not, however, by the wisdom of the policy it advocates, but by the sustained flow of advertisement it commands, must a magazine now live. Although in a perfect society these two advantages should involve each other, in our present imperfect order of things they don't. Thus a glance at any recent issue of the *Edinburgh* was enough to make its friends feel uneasy.

The flow of advertisement must always depend on circulation, and the persistent advocacy of unpopular opinions is sure to make subscriber after subscriber "discontinue", unless the writing is so brilliant that its disagreeable import is forgotten or excused. Controversies of the editorial office here reflect the controversies of parliament. In these fierce times, with their clear-cut conflict of Socialist and anti-Socialist in the House, where even the matchless skill of Mr. Lloyd George can scarcely keep Liberalism a vital force, what wonder that things outside should go very hard indeed with Mr. Harold Cox and that "Whig policy" he so strangely describes as "active"?

It is indeed the tradition of the *Edinburgh Review* to oppose many a dominant tendency of the age. One does not forget how it began as the champion of parliamentary reform when reformers were in general disrepute. Its chief purpose, in its earliest and greatest days, was to insist on free discussion at a time when the press, as Sir George Trevelyan has said, was gagged in England and throttled in Scotland,—when "every speech, or sermon, or pamphlet, the substance of which a Crown lawyer could torture into a semblance of sedition, sent its author to the jail, the hulks or the pillory."[1] Not for twenty years following its establishment in the northern capital could a resident of Edinburgh remember a single public meeting held to debate any public question there, and—says Lord Cockburn—to suggest such a meeting would have been to incur at once the charge of Jacobinism! With pride indeed, at this moment of its demise, may *The Edinburgh Review* recall how great a part it took in fighting the battle of intellectual and social freedom.

In those days, too, its very audacity contributed to its success. Mr. Garvin might quote it to illustrate his favourite paradox, that a magazine prospers most in the long run by giving the public what they don't want. But at least three features of the early *Edinburgh* preclude Mr. Cox from taking such encouragement from the example of Thomas Jeffrey. In the first place, Jeffrey's campaign was for opinions profoundly popular with the masses, but temporarily under the frown of privilege and power, while the opinions of Mr. Cox, somewhat contemptuously tolerated by the class that Jeffrey attacked, are deeply offensive to the masses whom Jeffrey inspired. In the second place, there is a piquant thrill about revolutionary propaganda in a conservative period, but can one imagine anything more flat than propaganda for the *status quo* in an age that is restless? What Jeffrey proposed was

1. Trevelyan, *Life and Letter of Macaulay*, p. 113.

alarmingly novel; what Mr. Cox proposes is always alarmingly familiar,—and it needs no journalistic seer in our time to appreciate what that contrast means. In the third place, think of the writers a hundred years ago and the writers now! One means no disparagement of the judicious and well-informed *Edinburgh* in our own time when one points out that it will bear no comparison with that golden age of British magazine literature. It would have been indeed an undiscerning public that should have allowed the old *Edinburgh* to languish, no matter what its opinions, at a time when in a single chance issue one might have read articles by Carlyle and Macaulay, by Nassau Senior and Sydney Smith, by Sir James Mackintosh and Henry Brougham. The magazine editor of to-day feels like saying of that period, as Macaulay thought the present-day sculptor might say of the period of Pheidias, that it has left us masterpieces we must long contemplate "with admiring despair".

But even as the passing of the age of Pheidias did not forbid other sculptors to work within the limits of their talent, there is a place for the magazine still—and who knows when its golden age may return? It is the high distinction of Mr. Cox that he has indeed maintained the spirit of the old *Edinburgh*, its courage, its independence of mind, its quasi-apostolic conception of its right to instruct. If the public taste is for the tabloid press and for trivial causerie, all the more credit is due to an editor and a staff that have preferred the suppression of their magazine to a base compromise of its ideals. It is fitting to recall now at least one of the splendid services to the reading public, altogether apart from either social or political propagandism, which Jeffrey began and his successors have strenuously continued.

The practice of keen and competent literary criticism, such as one sees in the best English magazine of to-day, must be traced back to the *Edinburgh* as its originator. Those who did book-reviewing for Jeffrey never mistook their job for that of producing "readers" to accompany the publisher's advertisement—as one occasionally suspects of a reviewer in our time, especially on this side of the Atlantic. They felt it as much their function to depose literary impostors as to enthrone those whose title was good; and no doubt in revolt against the habit of shouting with the crowd, they sometimes passed to the other extreme of captiousness. The *Quarterly* in its attack on Keats was but reproducing the spirit of the *Edinburgh* when it began a notice of Wordsworth's "Excursion" with the historic words "This will never do". Macaulay's criticism of Robert Montgomery, like his account of Barère, was

a typically *Edinburgh Review* piece of work, with that wildly artistic satire which the men of Jeffrey's circle had made their own. None ever acted better on the Shavian principle that "unless you say a thing in an irritating way, you may just as well not say it at all." On the other hand, one may easily mistake for "the *Edinburgh Review* spirit" what was really something personal in the writer. Macaulay, says Mr. Birrell, had adopted a style in which it was impossible to tell the truth about anything. But this choice was his own, not imposed by the group with which he worked.

Moreover, even in that early period the first features of the *Edinburgh* were undergoing a change. The mantle of Jeffrey passed to men of milder as well as more conventional disposition. What a change, for example, to Empson (Napier's successor in the editorial chair), of whom Harriet Martineau could write that he was incapable of having opinions, and consequently afraid of those who had! Full of literary knowledge, an omnivorous reader, with weak intellectual digestion; not generally the wiser for what he read, but able to pour forth talk with a profusion that had a certain charm; and the charm extended "even to his articles, which had no other merit except indeed that of a general kindliness of spirit."[1] One never knows how far to rely upon a judgment by Harriet Martineau on her contemporaries; so much depends on the way the contemporary in question had first spoken of Harriet. But the change must have been enormous when so near a successor of the first Edinburgh Reviewers could be described by any contemporary as noted in the main for his "general kindliness of spirit."

The complete story of that great Review will no doubt be written, as it abundantly deserves to be written, and it will provide a chapter of the very first importance both for social and for literary history. Meanwhile reminiscences and anecdotes of it from many quarters might be collected without limit. I shall here content myself with adding but one more. Cautious as it professed itself to be, the early *Edinburgh* was much suspected of that most dangerous sort of radicalism which affects a conservative disguise. Probably the temper of the time was not quite outrageously caricatured in the remark of a reflective Scotsman in *The Ayrshire Legatees*, who deplores the fate of a free-thinking friend:

> I never had any comfort or expectation of the free-thinker since I heard that he was infected with the blue and yellow calamity of *The Edinburgh Review* in which, I am credibly told, it is set

1. Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* I, p. 213.

> forth that women have nae souls, but only gut and a gaw and a gizzard, like a pigeon-dove, or a raven-crow, or any other outcast and abominated quadruped.[1]

No doubt Mr. Cox would remark that the opinions of a serious magazine even yet are liable to be reported with no less extraordinary latitude.

WHILE the *Edinburgh* is gone, the *Hibbert* still continues, and in the pages of its current issue Mr. Tuckwell—with a truly journalistic *flair*—has challenged his readers by the very title of his paper. He too knows, apparently, that the paradox is an intellectual irritant. When we are asked to consider "Is Religion to be Disestablished?" our first impulse is to protest that he who thinks it can be either established or disestablished by parliament has yet to discover what religion is. The enterprise of Constantine, fittingly followed by that of Julian, belongs to a very ancient way of dealing with the spiritual life of man. Perhaps the "anti-Evolution laws" lately passed by certain American states come nearest to a revival of it. But the shock they have caused is proof of the completeness of its disappearance.

Mr. Tuckwell finds a text for his discourse in the Anglican Prayer-Book controversy. He reminds us how the House of Commons last year overrode the will of the Established Church on a proposed change in the forms of worship. It has often been said, even by those who disapproved of the Church's proposals, that this infringement of her autonomy was intolerable, and that whether right or wrong—within reasonable limits of national safety—she should in such matters have her own way. But Mr. Tuckwell holds just the opposite view. To him the important thing last year was to show those bishops that the House of Commons was not to be commanded by them. He likes the decision, not because the point at stake was so vital as to justify an otherwise deplorable conflict between Church and State, but apparently because a conflict between Church and State is so much to be desired as to be worth welcoming on almost any pretext. This he holds to have been the fundamental purpose, beyond any concern about Sacramental Reservation, which made parliament so determined. The time had come to strike a blow:

> Seldom, if ever, has so democratic a verdict been delivered by the People's Chamber on the subject of religion.

So that was the real story, was it? *Le clericalisme, voila l'ennemi:*—one can almost hear the voice of Gambetta! Mr. Tuckwell's

1. Galt, *The Ayrshire Legatees*, p. 205.

interpretation of what occurred at Westminster has at least the charm of originality.

But still more original is the plan for the future which, to his mind, that occurrence suggests. The nation, having flouted the Church, must be willing, if need be, "to take the responsibility for its religion, for good or ill, henceforth upon itself." And the nation in this matter must plainly act through parliament. But parliament "has long since ceased to be a definitely Christian assembly." Moreover, since the Prayer-Book was drawn up as an expression of the national faith, the nation has grown from a comparatively small people of four or five millions to a great empire in which the faiths as well as the nationalities are beyond counting. The Church of England as originally established has thus become an anomaly, and is fast becoming a grievance. It affects to speak for the whole empire. It holds under its sole direction many magnificent and venerable shrines to which just as good claim could be made by those who would utterly repudiate the faith called "Anglicanism." What, then, is to be done about it? One remedy is Disestablishment. But Mr. Tuckwell has bethought himself of an alternative, whose main features will be here set forth, with as much gravity as the present writer can command.

As his concern is with National Religion, the critic begins with certain paragraphs of prolegomena on what a *nation* is and what *religion* is. The former, Mr. Tuckwell tells us, is (as Renan once said) "a living soul," no mere aggregate of individuals, but itself a quasi-person. One can observe, he thinks, the development of personality beginning with the lowly bacteria, rising through unicellular to multicellular life, then through the spirit of the hive and the group-soul of herds and crowds to the soul of a people or nation. There must be a symbol or bond of this national self-hood, if it is to be preserved, and such unity is represented by religion. This is what keeps together the family, the tribe, and in the end humanity itself, as is seen in the communal rites which mark religion everywhere. To the personal sense of this, developed inwardly through meditation, Mr. Tuckwell gives the name "Cosmic Consciousness." If the reader so far has found this exposition a little obscure, he must allow for the difficulties of summarizing such an article. Mr. Tuckwell's resolve to define *religion* and *a nation* separately, before bringing them together under the title "National Religion", reminds one of the famous effort at making an article on "Chinese Metaphysics" by combining a paper on metaphysics with a paper on China. And, truth to tell, the success attained is much the same in the two cases.

But, though far from successful, the spectacle of this enterprise is instructive, and it becomes at the close of the article extremely amusing. This "Cosmic Consciousness" must somehow be fed, and for some recondite reason of Mr. Tuckwell's own, it is judged that its nourishment is a very different problem in "a mature and ancient people" such as the English, from what it is among the "newly arrived and comparatively inexperienced" such as the people of the United States, and still more different from what it is in "any one of our colonies or dominions." Two strains are distinguished in the record of this mature and ancient people, one a Latin or Southern strain, whose civilization is Mediterranean, and whose temperament is docile to authority, the other a Teutonic or Northern strain, resolute for personal independence. It was the former that was dominant when the National Church of England took shape, and the conservative instinct has kept it as it was then constructed. But the latter is dominant now, and the National Church must make room for it. All the faiths of the empire, in short, must be able to express themselves within the hospitable shelter of the establishment. For are they not all different manifestations of "Cosmic Consciousness"?

This is a little vague, but Mr. Tuckwell has no objection to becoming quite concrete and practical. He sympathises with the suggestion that Shakespeare's plays might be presented in a cathedral or a parish church, for the sake of those—one must suppose—whose Cosmic Consciousness is better interpreted by *Hamlet* than by the New Testament. Moreover, Professor Radhakrishnan from Calcutta University a few years ago lectured at Oxford on *The Hindu View of Life*. Why, asks Mr. Tuckwell, should not Westminster Abbey have been put at his disposal for the delivery of such a course? The nation, according to this critic, has become definitely non-Christian, but he would be sorry to see it become definitely irreligious. In a nerve-racking age there is need for times of retirement, and it is good to have the cathedrals and churches open all day for silent thought and prayer. But why limit them to *Christian* uses? A Hindu, a Buddhist, a Mohammedan, all side by side with Christian worshippers in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's, each stirring up his Cosmic Consciousness by the methods most suited to his peculiar case, is a picture in which Mr. Tuckwell does not apparently see anything grotesque. No comment is here offered,—beyond the suggestion that in comparison with this, the most dreamy projects of abolishing nationalism in a "Federation of the World" appear sober and practicable. One remembers the "very irascible" character in Dickens, who held

it to be his mission in life to be everybody's brother, but who seemed to be on strained relations with the greater number of his large family. Those who condescend to a study of the history of religions, in preference to spinning cobwebs about it out of their heads, will welcome a companion portrait of Mr. Tuckwell, in some coming *Bleak House*.

MR. G. H. Shakespeare contributes to *The Contemporary Review* a reflective article about the position and prospects of the British Labour Party. He points out that although five months' tenure of office is not enough for great achievement, it is enough to justify a forecast of what may reasonably be expected in the future, "the probable yield of fruit from the blossom that has bloomed."

Naturally the first item in his inspection is unemployment. Great Britain, he reminds us, is now approaching the tenth winter of acute distress; for with the exception of a week or two, the figures of the unemployed have remained above a million ever since January, 1921. Governments have come and gone, but there has been no serious variation in this. If the record of the Labour party is examined here with a specially searching scrutiny, this is not because they have been behind other parties in grappling with the problem. It is because they made particularly loud professions of their ability to deal with it, and indeed fought the last election on this as the dominant issue.

The specific remedies offered a few months ago by the three parties at the polls are summarized. Mr. Shakespeare recalls how the Conservatives urged "the de-rating of industry," so that production costs might be lowered and trade in consequence be stimulated. The Liberals had a daring programme of National Development out of public funds, and pledged their word that they could reduce unemployment to normal dimensions within a year. Labour, on its side, adopted the same doctrine of National Development, but gave no pledge as to time, promising rather, under the slogan "Work or Maintenance," that while industry remained slack there would be more generous doles.

It was Labour that got a chance to make its undertakings good. If five months cannot be taken as time enough, what of the eight months in 1924 when a like opportunity was given to the same men? The Lord Privy Seal, says Mr. Shakespeare, has told the country what Labour now in office will do for the unemployed, and to people that had been taught to expect great things

his speech brought a shudder "like a sudden gust of wind over a field of wheat." The old, familiar consolations—"over a million unemployed, but half that number is only temporarily out of work"—just what Sir A. Steel-Maitland used to say! And what is to be done? A road programme, loans for public works, a colonial development fund,—some of these schemes will not be in full operation for a year, while most of them will spread over three to five years or more! Meanwhile, three or four millions of people are short of the necessaries of life; and since the Labour Government took office, the number of unemployed has increased by 151,000. Mr. Shakespeare does not contend that other parties could have done better. But he sees in this enough to explain the fierce disappointment of those led to believe that a Labour cabinet had either wisdom or character immensely beyond others. While Mr. Lloyd George mocks, the Clydeside group threatens, and the Conservatives remark "We told you so."

Turning to foreign affairs, this critic acknowledges that the MacDonald Government deserves nothing but praise. A formidable legacy of problems abroad has been handled with conspicuous skill. He notes how in one respect at least the traditional relations of foreign and domestic policy have changed for the better. "In remoter days of our history, statesmen faced with insoluble home problems promptly declared war. In the wave of sentiment that ensued, all domestic grievances were submerged. The present Government has improved upon this subterfuge—it has been declaring 'Peace'." But suppose the disarmament plan should be carried out—think of the heavy discharge of dockyard labour, and the unemployment among workers in armament firms! Moreover, it seems plain to Mr. Shakespeare that the present Administration will act on the theory that the more public funds are used for national development, the less will be available for industrial expansion by private enterprise. Thus Mr. Thomas halts between two opinions, or at least between two policies. And in the coalfields the nationalization programme presented to the electorate a few months ago seems to have disappeared.

Altogether, this survey of "the political situation on the home front" is not encouraging for the Government forces. It is here set down without comment, as one way of viewing the case. But no doubt Mr. Shakespeare, like other observers, has seen much that he desired to see, and much that he did not desire to see has been omitted from his record if not from his vision. He is himself "in politics."

WITHIN the last year we have heard curious rumors about a demand that a separate parliament be set up in Scotland. Back to the state of things prior to 1707! It is known that the leaders of this movement include a duke, a successful novelist, and a commonplace laird or two, while of course there is enthusiasm—real or fictitious—among university students, who like to be in the van of a sensational novelty. But how far the proposal has caught the popular imagination, is not clear. The Hon. R. Erskine of Marr, son of the fifth Baron Erskine, and writing with the authoritativeness that belongs to the President of the Scots National League, has given us, in *Current History*, some idea of what is afoot.

Mr. Erskine reflects upon the long-continued efforts made by England to subdue Scottish, Welsh and Irish national spirit to her own, and to make the rest of the British Isles an elongated shadow of herself. A great part of her history, he observes, is taken up with the tale of how this was attempted and resisted. How Scotland made the project impossible is recalled with pride, and the name of Robert the Bruce is duly commemorated. A parallel is drawn from the Irish struggle, whose successful issue was so much longer postponed. But though the original purpose has had to be modified, it is not even yet—in Mr. Erskine's view—abandoned.

For example, look at the English newspapers. Don't they discuss all questions of British policy even now from a strictly English standpoint?

> This springs from several causes. First, there is national pride which, rooted in the dogma of English ascendancy within the British Isles, ever seeks to discourage all political manifestations of individuality on the part of the other nations that inhabit those Isles. Secondly, there is indifference (which might easily be mistaken for ignorance, and is possibly not without some admixture of it) to all politics save those that take their rise from English party interests and projects. Thirdly, there is the general persuasion among English political writers that (assuming they are better informed than they usually appear to be) it is good policy in the interests of English ascendancy not to discuss aspects of British politics which, were they debated in public, might give rise to the impression at home and abroad that, after all, there are issues in the British Isles that are not in origin essentially and always English.

Really Mr. Erskine must get help in his statement of Scottish Nationalism. I should suggest that such a sentence as the last quoted be revised before publication, say by Mr. Compton Mackenzie, if the reader is to understand what the Movement means.

One thing that it is explicitly stated to mean, however, is the revival of the Scottish national language. Wales has never let her language drop. Ireland is reviving hers now, on a great scale. What about the Celtic idiom of Scotland? To preserve a native civilization, we are told, it has been shown essential that the native language be kept; and with all things Scottish settled at Westminster, this would not be practicable. It is, in short, a scheme of thorough decentralization that Mr. Erskine has in mind,—a plan under which the parts of Great Britain itself would be associated together like the Dominions in co-operative partnership. He would see the Commonwealth of Nations idea pressed still further. The same objections which have proved fatal to "Imperial Federation" and the projects of the Round Table enthusiasts ought, he feels, to be fatal to that over-concentration at Westminster that has made England dominant over Wales and Ireland and Scotland, to the great loss of national cultures.

A good many comments come into one's mind. That "predominant partner" speech by Lord Rosebery, long years ago, sprang from just the spirit and temper which Mr. Erskine reprobates. Lord Rosebery, too, was a Scotsman,—hence all the more to be blamed. More, for example, than Mr. Baldwin who, quoting that other representative of English vanity, John Milton, said that when God has specially difficult work to do, He "tells His Englishmen"! It is a long, long story that has to be recalled about the way in which English grip was gradually (at times rather vigorously) loosened from the collar of the partner nations so long treated as subject. But has not the loosening process developed pretty satisfactorily? If the Scottish people really want to have "the Celtic idiom" reintroduced into their schools, as Erse has been reintroduced in the schools of the Free State, does any sane man suppose that John Bull now either could or would stand in their way? Notoriously at Westminster whatever the Scottish members have agreed to ask for their country has been granted for generations, no mere "Saxon" daring to object, and herein has been the crucial difference between that Scottish case, which has led only to doctrinaire murmurings, and the Irish case, which led to Sinn Fein. Again, might not the Englishman fairly urge, as Mr. G. K. Chesterton has done, that the more "Home Rule" is granted to Scotland and Wales and Ireland, the better becomes the prospect that the poor Englishman—so long displaced from control even in his own part of the island—will have a chance to get what he wants done there? Look at the long roll of Prime Ministers and Primates and Lord Chancellors, and say—if you

can—with a grave face that Scotsmen don't get their fair share in the British partnership.

Mr. Erskine has talked in general terms. Will someone tell us, concretely, what a restored Scottish parliament in Edinburgh would be likely to do, or attempt to do? I am so far in the dark, except that obviously it would promote the use of the kilt, stimulate the Gaelic idiom, and keep the Irish from coming in larger numbers into Glasgow. But that programme seems too slight to inspire a revolution.

H. L. S.