

CURRENT MAGAZINES

Wilberforce and the Anti-Slavery Movement:—Mr. W. Forbes Gray, in the *Quarterly*.

A Century of Factory Reform:—Mr. W. H. Stannard, in the *Fortnightly*.

Ten Years of Kemalism:—Mr. J. Walter Collins, in the *Contemporary*.

Two Great Centenaries, Bradlaugh and Ingersoll:—Mr. E. Thurtle, in the *Literary Guide*.

THE year 1933 has been rich in centenaries. It has had numerous points at which to recall some great personality or great movement, whose date was earlier by an exact multiple of one hundred years. The interests which have been gratified by such remembrance are of many sorts. Just now the names of Robert Ingersoll and Edward Burne-Jones are appearing in grotesque juxtaposition at the top of parallel columns in the press, associated only by the fact that these two very different men were born within a few days of each other in the autumn of 1833. While the Anglican Church last July was commemorating with appropriate ceremonial the rise of the Oxford Movement and the issue of *Tracts*, preparations were beginning in quite a different circle for celebration of the birth of Charles Bradlaugh, propagandist of *The National Reformer*. Going back three hundred years, the attention of one group is arrested by the death in 1633 of George Herbert, the poet to whom the Church owes some quaintly entrancing sacred verse; but another group, to which Herbert counts for nothing, will find the same year ever memorable for the trial and condemnation of Galileo. Fierce enthusiasts for world reform are now arranging to keep the 450th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther, while those of gentler—or perhaps more indolent—spirit have been thinking affectionately of Montaigne, born exactly half a century afterwards. In the ranks of feminism it is one section of celebrants that lately reminded us of the death of Hannah More just one century ago, and it is quite another section we watch now thrilled at the thought of the 400th anniversary of the birth of Queen Elizabeth. Among the so-called “epoch-making” events which come back to one’s historical imagination, a high place belongs, at least for those of British blood, to the abolition of slavery in the British Dominions one hundred years ago, and to the passage, in the same year, of the first great Factory Act, from which one dates the beginning of a long and beneficent series. A centenary which some of us had expected, and which the exigencies of the hour would have rendered most interesting, has not so far been observed.

Exactly one hundred years ago, the problem of poor-law relief was exercising the best minds in England as it is exercising the best minds now, and the causes of the industrial crisis were strikingly similar. But the famous Poor-Law Commission, from whose work arose so great a change in the method of relief, was appointed in 1832 and reported in 1834; so our mentors, having let slip the opportunity of a year ago, have no pretext for reading to us that particular "lesson of history" until a year hence.

I

To British students of social progress, 1933 has a twofold interest, because it has brought us the centenary both of the abolition of the slave-trade and of the death of Wilberforce. It is indeed round the dauntless figure of the Emancipationist leader than the story of the great crusade has been re-written this year in countless journals. They recall to us that second half of the eighteenth century during which the annual export of slaves from Africa was about one hundred thousand, and of these between forty and fifty thousand were carried in British ships! Wilberforce was a boy of thirteen when Lord Mansfield gave his famous decision, in the Somerset case of 1772, that no such institution as slavery can be recognized in England, and that any slave (so-called) who sets foot on English soil is automatically made free. But the effect of this decision was only to ensure that the traffic should never pass through England, and not until fifteen years later was there an organized movement for its abolition.

The movement began with a little group of Quakers, who in 1787 began to impress their humanitarian sentiments on the public mind. They were, of course, at once the object of that ribald abuse in which selfishness is wont to counterfeit wisdom, and those who were alarmed only for the profits of a shameful trade succeeded for a time in posing as men of superior intelligence in conflict with fanatics. They talked about the economic necessities of the situation; about the impossibility of cultivating tropical areas with white labour and the absurdity of supposing black labour could be free; about the mythical character of the tales of cruelty; about the "real truth", which they alleged was known to everyone with experience in the black belt, that negroes under an owner were far happier than they could ever be in independence; and finally, about the effect which abolition of slavery in the British Dominions would be sure to produce, in transference of the trade to other—probably less scrupulous—hands.

It is sometimes contended that slavery came to an end just at the point where slave labour ceased to be economically profitable, and the obvious inference always seems conclusive to those who hate to acknowledge in others an altruism of which they feel no trace in themselves. For these traducers of human nature the career and achievement of Wilberforce are among the hardest to explain away. It is equally certain that his was the dominant influence which swayed his countrymen to the great reform, and that during the half-century of his tireless agitation his appeal was not to material interest but to humane feeling. "For more than twenty years", says Mr. Gray, "he was the keeper of the national conscience, the one authentic voice in England on matters pertaining to the higher life of the people". His personal advantages—in social status, popularity, vast wealth—were all made to serve the cause to which he had devoted himself, and in his case even the ever resourceful malice of political opponents was at a loss for a plausible insinuation.

He was not immune, however, from mordant satire. His prestige and popularity, combined with his austere virtue, were in certain quarters an offence. The tale went round that Sheridan, when arrested one night in a state of helpless intoxication, gave the name "William Wilberforce", with a merry twinkle in his swimming eye, and was at once conducted, not to jail, but to the Wilberforce residence! What happened then is not on record, but Sheridan would tell the story up to this point with glee. One can imagine the mingled repute of the hero of Abolition in that circle of *blasé* men of letters. What a trial to the nervous system of William Hazlitt was this older contemporary, leader of the "Clapham Sect" of Evangelicals, professing a divine call to reform the manners of his age, and planning for this purpose a religious periodical which should admit "a moderate degree of political and economic intelligence"! So moderate was this degree that, according to Hazlitt, it was found possible to reconcile the warmest sympathy for the negro under oppression in the West Indies with cold disdain for the victims of oppression in Europe, and the key to a character thus very much a secret even to itself was the mania for universal esteem—"the pride of being familiar with the great, the vanity of being popular, the conceit of an approving conscience":

It is not enough that one half of the human species (the images of God carved in ebony, as old Fuller calls them) shout his name as a champion and a saviour through vast burning zones, and moisten their parched lips with the gush of gratitude for deliverance from chains:—he must have a Prime Minister drink his health at a Cabinet dinner for aiding to rivet on those of his country and of Europe.

A man of Hazlitt's habits could not be expected to appreciate fairly either the mission or the character of Wilberforce, and one must receive those witty paragraphs in *The Spirit of the Age* under the usual discount. The Emancipationists had, in all conscience, enough to absorb the efforts of a lifetime in their own task, and deserve no reproach for failing to see what other tasks should be tackled in a like spirit. Reformers are commonly men of one idea. Did not the high priest of the Oxford Movement, in this very year, content himself with a cynicism about England having paid down twenty millions sterling for "an opinion"? And did not the hymn *Approach my Soul the Mercy-Seat* come from the hand of the master of a slave-trading ship? Perhaps John Newton had greatly changed his mind about slavery before he wrote the hymn, and perhaps Pusey came to see the "opinion" in a more serious light. But their alterations of judgment are at least not on record. And who can afford to make mere inconsistencies a reproach?

Closely and curiously akin to the achievement of Wilberforce was another event of the same remarkable year. Not the very first British Factory Act, but the first of real importance, was passed in the summer of 1833. It is just now of peculiar interest because the centenary of this great reform in the cause of British childhood fell at the moment when President Roosevelt abolished child labour in the textile mills of the United States. Historically-minded journalists, on both sides of the Atlantic, have been comparing the two cases, in their content and in their manner.

Mr. Harold Stannard has contributed to the *Fortnightly* a most instructive account of what happened in England. He reminds us how revolutionary, how deep an offence against the whole creed of *laissez faire*, was the appointment in 1833 of the official known as a Government factory inspector. The nation was well accustomed to that harmless futility, the casual "Visitor" appointed by Justices of the Peace, who took note only of outrageous abuses which there was no attempt to disguise. But here was an official at a whole-time job of search into the working of the mills, with no precedents to guide him, and set to build up his own tradition by care, ingenuity and common sense. The law, for example, that all children between the ages of nine and thirteen must attend school twelve hours a week had to be applied in a country where the school buildings were utterly inadequate, the teachers far too few, and there was no compulsory registration of birth by which age could be determined. Mr. Stannard describes the methods of evasion for which the inspectors had to suggest a remedy:—the new trade in forged vouchers of attendance which an avaricious

employer did not too closely scrutinize, and the readiness of too many teachers to issue vouchers on request (like the notorious "medical scrip" of our Prohibition time). A humorous incident in the narrative is that of the school-mistress who was prosecuted for issuing false certificates, but got off on the plea that she could neither read nor write! And the following is, one should hope, not typical of many:

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Mr. Stannard notes the fact that it was the Churches of the country which at this critical time carried the chief burden, and that thanks only to them England had been covered with schools before parliament decided to make elementary education universal.

IT is only a decade which has passed since the new Turkey sprang to life, but the change has been so fraught with consequences as to justify an article in the *Contemporary* on its present upshot.

Mustapha Kemal is indeed among the most remarkable figures that have fascinated interest on the world stage since the end of the War. His achievement, justly considered, has been second to none. On 30th October, 1918, when the Armistice was signed by Turkish envoys on board Admiral Calthorpe's flagship at the entrance to the Dardanelles, it seemed as if the very spirit of the Ottoman Empire had been extinguished. One half of its territory had been wrested from its grip. The so-called "Turkey-in-Europe" had ceased to be even a geographical expression. In Asia the Turkish garrisons had been forced to evacuate every province south of the Cilician Gates,—the whole of Syria, of Palestine, of Mesopotamia, such cities of renown as Damascus and Jerusalem, Bagdad, Mosul and Aleppo. What would be the fate of the remnant, what would happen to Asia Minor itself and to the tiny strip still remaining Turkish on the European side of the Bosphorus, depended altogether on the will of the Allies, who were not only flushed with victory, but inspired by many an old hatred against the persecuting Moslem. There was nothing whatever to stop the advance of the French army from Thrace, and the occupation of Constantinople by enemy troops within a few days. Report had it that Armenia was likely to be reconstituted a sovereign State, partly to fulfil the Wilsonian law of self-determination, partly to serve as penitential discipline for the countrymen of Abdul the Damned. Still more exasperating was the suggestion that the Council of the Big Four

at Paris was planning to establish Constantinople as the seat of pan-Hellenism! While the Mohammedan side of the city was in the gloomiest darkness, lights were everywhere twinkling in the Christian quarter of Pera, and the photograph of Eleutherios Venizelos displayed in countless windows insulted the followers of the Prophet as often as they passed by.

The Greek occupation of Smyrna brought these internationalizing projects to a head. It likewise re-created the spirit of Turkish nationality, embodied—as such a spirit must always be—in a hero, the intrepid and resourceful general who had saved the Dardanelles. Mustapha Kemal's appeal was not to the ruling powers at Constantinople; above and beyond those timid compromisers, it went straight to the patriotism of the Turkish people. His regiments were few and ill equipped; the odds against him in the field seemed overwhelming; his official superiors forbade him to organize resistance, recalled him to Constantinople, then dismissed him from his command, finally outlawed and doomed him to death for disobedience. Never, surely, was there leadership of a more obviously forlorn hope. Never were the counsels of prudence and self-interest more plainly in favour of accepting the vassalage of one's country as a *fait accompli*. But what happened is written in the records of the years 1919 to 1922, culminating in the Treaty of Lausanne, by which the Turkish resistance to dismemberment achieved practically all that had been demanded in the "National Pact".

A victorious general is often anything but a successful administrator, but Mustapha Kemal has shone in both capacities. Mr. Walter Collins, the *Times* correspondent in Constantinople, has now taken the opportunity of estimating what Kemalism on the whole has done for the Turks. It is an autocracy; for though the Grand National Assembly sits six months in each year at Angora, the Dictator—appointed by statute premier for life—determines everything. Autocracy, says this English observer, is what the Turks require, and Kemal has been shrewd enough not only to choose excellent advisers, but to make real use of their help. Apart from two abortive risings by Kurds, the country has been at peace for ten years—no small gain in the eyes of those who remember how war followed war in the period prior to 1922. Domestic policy has been excellent; Turkish women in particular are blessing Kemal for their new freedom, typified by the abolition of the veil. They can now engage in industrial enterprises, go where they choose without surveillance, even obtain divorce from their husbands on reasonable and equitable grounds. Polygamy, we hear, had

long disappeared in the rural districts, owing to economic strain; it has now been abolished even in the cities, where at least some Turks could still afford several wives. One is glad to know that a motive higher than thrift has at length entered into the situation. Reformers should not have to depend too long on what an old satirist has called "the supplementary aids of an imperfect virtue".

These ten years have witnessed a great advance in education. Kemal has been "liquidating illiteracy", as the Moscow idiom would put it. He has changed the alphabet too, substituting the convenient Roman for the awkward Arabic characters, and at the same time he has shown his concern for the old Turkish literature by ordering the construction of a new national dictionary from which all words of Arabic or Persian origin will be rigorously excluded. Probably a more effective step towards the preservation of the language is the ordinance which requires the Koran to be read in mosques in the vernacular.

Here, indeed, we touch the most audacious of Mustapha Kemal's transformations. He has challenged the clericalism of the country. With the abolition of the Caliphate and the disestablishment of Islam, the prestige of the Moslem priesthood has dropped. The *otium cum dignitate* which used to attract young men to its ranks—like the charm of Holy Orders in eighteenth century England—has become a thing of the past. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters*, written from Constantinople, show how close was this parallel in her time, and indeed how hard it was two hundred years ago to distinguish the inmost beliefs of a cultured Mohammedan from those of an English Deist. Mr. Collins noted the same a generation back. But under the Kemalist régime the mosque is likely to be served only by those whose zeal is like that of the eighteenth century Evangelicals,—men who recall not Bishop Watson, but John Wesley. In Turkish circles just now such men are few. So we read of a shrinkage in *hojas*, what we should call elsewhere a dearth of candidates for the ministry. No wonder "the religious interests" are dissatisfied. Old-School Mohammedans too are shocked at the apparent profanation of their Sacred Books by reading them in Turkish, and a pathetic twisting of the new regulation cap into a shape at least suggestive of the forbidden *fez* goes to illustrate once more the tenacity of ritual.

About Turkey's financial position Mr. Collins writes with cautious reserve. Finance is one of the more elusive sides of dictatorship; and though the facts must come out sooner or later, the disclosure may be long postponed. Mr. Collins observes that the chief obligation of Turkey abroad is in her inheritance of the

Ottoman debt to France, that this has been written down by agreement, and that the Turkish exchange remains reasonably steady. He does not encourage the view that expulsion of Armenians and Greeks has proved ruinous to the country's commercial life. The Turks, it seems, have been acquiring under the stress of necessity such powers as were not theirs by nature, and a measure of success in trade is now being added to their old repute for farming and war. Great trunk roads have been constructed under the Kemalist régime, railway connections have been multiplied, and the brigandage which used to make Anatolia impassable for tourists has disappeared. Mr. Collins has to point out, however, how narrow is the dictator's economic policy abroad, how the conception of "Turkey for the Turks" and the prejudice against foreign trade are making into a very "provincial" community a nation with such possibilities of greatness. Visitors to Constantinople, or even to Smyrna, observe what a decadence is there. What a unique opportunity did Nature provide, and History illustrate, for the capital of the old Byzantine Empire! Its population is now down to 750,000, and its aspect is depressing. One realizes how the removal of the seat of government to the bleak village surroundings of Angora was a healthy return to the simple life, and one does not much commiserate the *jeunesse dorée* of the various foreign Embassies to whom appointment to Constantinople used to be "so very desirable", but "the other place is so different". Still, was it needful to sacrifice so much of the tradition of the past in order to curb the follies of youth? It is a hard question. Perhaps in this, as in other respects, Mustapha knows his own business best.

For the outer world the great question now is—shall Kemalism be permitted to advance to fortification of the Straits? It has thus far been adroit in foreign relationship, so that Turkey to-day has no enemies, but several good friends abroad—a great change for Turkey. Will international friendship stand the strain of the proposed re-fortification of the Dardanelles? Time will tell.

YET another centenary was celebrated a few weeks ago, with the sort of fervour which suggests that the celebrants are thinking of the future rather than of the past, less concerned to honour a memory than to exploit it. Under the auspices of the Rationalist Press Association the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Charles Bradlaugh was kept at various gatherings throughout England. The tributes of mingled eloquence and invective, pathos and satire, were such as are supplied to us in some form each year in the pages of *The Literary Guide*, as often as the members of the Association

have had their annual dinner at some London restaurant, and explained to one another once again how wonderful is their own place in the great series of intellectual liberators.

But despite all this flamboyant rhetoric, the story on which it rests is well worth recalling. It is a story of antiquarian, though not of contemporary, interest. Charles Bradlaugh was the son of a very poor solicitor's clerk, and had grown to manhood in the England of Chartist days. He had a gift of natural eloquence, and under the strain of family hardship he had taken to the public platform while still a mere boy in the cause which such men as Kingsley and Maurice were advocating under the name "Christian Socialism". At one time, indeed, Bradlaugh was an Evangelical Sunday-School teacher, and his first open-air speeches were in defence of religion! But before long his controversial antagonists had converted him to their side, and his profession of atheism involved him in such further difficulties as the pious of half a century ago thought it their duty to impose upon an apostate. Upon him the effect was the exact opposite of what was intended. For a livelihood he tried various lines in turn, including service in the army of the East India Company, next in the British national forces; at length—with the assistance of a legacy from an aunt—he was able to buy his discharge and rise to the rank of a solicitor's office-boy. But throughout these vicissitudes he never lost sight of the cause of free thought for which he had suffered, and to which his personal grievance served only to deepen his devotion. The twin objects of his abhorrence were the Christian Faith and the British Royal Family, which he assailed in turn not only in speeches, but in pamphlets written under the pseudonym "Iconoclast". It is a little difficult, in these happier times, to reconstruct the picture of those wrathful seventies in London journalism, when Swinburne was reaching the climax of blasphemy in *Songs before Sunrise*, John Morley was spelling "God" with a small *g* (while his opponents retorted by spelling "Morley" with a small *m*), and Bradlaugh was publishing in *The National Reformer* such articles as no friend to his fame, of whatever creed, would desire to see ever again in print. Only here and there do we now meet with some doughty survivor of those controversial wars, in which both weapons and strategy were so different from our own.

It was in 1880, just after Gladstone's triumphant return to power with the laurels of the Midlothian campaign circling his brow, that Charles Bradlaugh, the elected Member for Northampton, appeared at the table of the House, claiming the right to "affirm" instead of taking the oath required from all members of parliament. The oath had theological implications which he, as an atheist, could

not accept. Permission to adopt this alternative was refused by the House, and Bradlaugh at once brought the matter before the public in a letter to the press. He said that in discharge of his duty to his constituents, whom he could not leave unrepresented, he would submit to the legal requirement, but with the explicit understanding that the oath meant for him nothing whatever. Almost like Mr. De Valera's acceptance of the oath of allegiance!

But fifty years ago the public mind was not so familiar with that "well-greased morality" which has made our institutions—both civil and ecclesiastical—at least easier to work. Gladstone, with his unrivalled gift of explaining away whatever was awkward, had a formula almost ready for the occasion, when the Whips reported to him that he had better take care, because feeling in the House had become "uncontrollable," the Liberal caucus was this time by no means well in hand, and if the Prime Minister proceeded with his plan to move "the previous question" against the coming Tory motion to exclude Mr. Bradlaugh,—well, just anything might happen in the division lobby.

The repeated return of their favourite by the electors of Northampton gradually, however, wore down resistance, as the electors of Clare had worn it down in the O'Connell case more than half a century before, and the unbeliever was permitted to take his seat on his own terms. By common consent, as so often in British practice, an abuse was remedied without assignment of any logical reason for the change, and Bradlaugh in parliament during the next five years rendered admirable public service. The austere churchmen who contested his entrance might indeed have urged that they were but following the rule of the great philosopher of British Liberalism. Did not John Locke contend that toleration should stop short at Roman Catholics and atheists, because the latter could not take a genuine oath and the former—under a foreign allegiance—could not be faithful subjects of the king? We have come to understand these psychological connections better than Locke understood them. In Russia, it seems, they are still strong on "ideology." But elsewhere men have learned to value the evidence of so many concrete examples far above the conjectures of an abstract necessity.

It is indeed among the numerous ironies of this commemoration in *The Literary Guide* that the onslaught upon those who tried to coerce opinion fifty years ago in one interest should be associated with compliments to those who are coercing it now in another. One who values real freedom of thought cannot read with gravity the panegyric upon Soviet Russia's present method of promoting

atheism and then the reprobation of those safeguards for the Faith which Christian England employed half a century ago. Follies of the past, in a cause one dislikes, are so much more readily detected than follies of the present in a cause one has made one's own! Yet it is with contemporary, not with long obsolete, intellectual temptations that the true battle has to be waged. As Mr. Chesterton has so finely said, it requires no courage to attack hoary or antiquated things, any more than to offer to fight one's grandmother; the really courageous man is "he who defies tyrannies young as the morning and superstitions fresh as the first flowers".

H. L. S.