CURRENT MAGAZINES

TWO CENTENARIES: LOCKE AND CHRIST CHURCH.

John Locke:—Editorial in *Times Literary Supplement.*
Locke after 300 years:—Editorial in *Times Educational Supplement.*

John Locke Tercentenary:—Mr. C. R. Morris, in *The Observer.*

John Locke:—Professor J. L. Stocks, in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly.*

Christ Church:—Mr. E. Beresford Chancellor, in *The Observer.*

THE magazines this autumn on both sides of the Atlantic are laden with articles called forth by the tercentenary of the birth of John Locke. As is fitting, it is in the English reviews that most attention is bestowed on a philosopher so typically English both in the sagacity and in the limitations of his thought. After the very spirit of the writer they commemorate, these tributes, while apt and enthusiastic, have shown also the national virtue of restraint, choosing to err on the side of the under-statement in praise. It was not to the advantage of Locke's fame with succeeding ages that his birth fell in the same year with that of Spinoza, and perilous indeed was the contiguity thrust upon him last month when a joint celebration of these two thinkers was held by the *Societas Spinozana* at The Hague. But his work, though of so different an order, was highly productive both in achievement and in stimulus. At the commemorative services in Westminster Abbey on 28th August it was indeed—to borrow a happy epithet of Morley's—a "far-shining" figure of English thought whom his countrymen recalled with gratitude and pride.

I

He was the son of a country attorney in Somersetshire, and his boyhood was spent not far from Bristol, in one of the most disturbed areas during the Civil War. One Sunday, in the parish church, when the *Protest* of the Long Parliament was read, his father rose in his pew, announced his approval of that famous document, and joined the parliamentarians. For the six troubled years which followed, John Locke was a pupil at Westminster School, and it was a very natural reflection of his old age that he had

no sooner perceived himself in the world than he found himself in a storm. To a schoolboy whose father was a Cromwellian captain, the London of 1643 to 1649 must indeed have been a centre of constant alarms. Quite likely on a certain memorable morning, when he was sixteen, Locke may have watched from the school playground the procession conducting Charles I to the block. And he must many times have marked the austere countenances of men hurrying past to their place of Assembly in Westminster Hall where, day by day, the successive chapters of *The Confession of Faith* were being submitted, amended, and adopted.

From school he passed to Christ Church, Oxford, which by the time of his arrival in 1652 was under Puritan control. Only a few years before, the king in his hour of desperate need had fallen back upon the devotion of Oxford, and the college plate of Christ Church had been eagerly melted down to replenish his war chest. The atmosphere of the place as Locke found it must still have been heavy with memories of the Royal Martyr,—like those "ghosts" in *Woodstock* with which, only a few miles off, royalist ingenuity was able to torment the republican army of occupation. But the new Dean, installed under the Protectorate, was a man of liberal mind, who enjoined on both sides a tolerance of all speculative opinion provided it did not prompt to projects against the State. The influence of Dean Owen may well be guessed in those *Letters on Toleration* which prescribe the same freedom within the same limits. But, on the whole, John Locke as an Oxford undergraduate had little esteem for the teaching he received. Like Hobbes in the same place half a century earlier, like Bacon and Milton at Cambridge, like Swift later in Trinity College, Dublin, he disliked and despised the traditional thought, and spent as little time as possible at what were called "the disputations". He very much envied a friend whose good fortune it was to have as tutor not an Aristotelian but a disciple of Descartes. Cartesianism was the attractive heresy of the time, for Hobbism was then just beginning to be known; and even when it was well known, it had little appeal for a Puritan. But Cartesianism was advancing less in Oxford than in Cambridge. Gassendi's book on Epicurus had appeared not long before, though to little effect in England. Two publications which were making their illicit way, apart from all college endorsements or vetoes, were Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* and Hobbes's *Leviathan*. It was recalled long afterwards, by Locke's college friends, that at Christ Church he had been "clamorous and discontented," that he had scorned to take notes of lectures, and that he had spent much of his time in novel-reading. His independence of mind, too,

was marked by his special friendship and intimacy with the most outspoken royalist in Oxford.

He must surely have liked the place more than he cared to admit, since he stayed there so long. Locke remained at Oxford, in various capacities, from 1652 until 1666. In those closing years of the Commonwealth and opening years of the Restoration, the desultory undergraduate became an eager and a systematic student. Dull as Oxford was, it was the intellectual home appointed for him, and in due course he took his part—as lecturer on Greek and on rhetoric—in the instruction he esteemed so lightly. In another mood he entered on the study of medicine, and ultimately he qualified as a medical practitioner. But what specially fascinated his interest was neither literature nor the practice of a profession. It was that outburst of genius in scientific enquiries, not at Oxford so much as at Cambridge and in London, which so distinguished the men of his race in the second half of the seventeenth century.

During those years the foundation of science after science was laid. Boyle was inaugurating chemistry, Newton was transforming physics, Wallis was anticipating in its broad outlines what was later to be known as differential calculus, Halley was not only charting the tides of the Channel and the monsoons of the tropics but showing how even the appearance of a comet in the heavens might be predicted by astronomical calculation. The Royal Society had grown out of that small group of scientific men, called by Boyle "The Invisible College", who as early as 1645—amid the clash of arms—used to meet each week in one another's rooms or at some hospitable tavern to exchange ideas, compare apparatus, and scrutinize experiments.

Overshadowed by the vast speculative achievements of a Boyle or a Newton, and yet not less worthy to rank as intellectual advance, was the progressive application of science to life. Side by side in the Royal Society with men who had explored stellar space were such naturalists as Ray and Woodward and Sir Hans Sloane, such builders as Wren, such statisticians as Sir William Petty, even such gardeners as John Evelyn. To the biologist and the architect, the economist and the scientific farmer, these are the names of pioneers each in his own field, and the coincidence in time between high theoretical and eager practical progress is indeed remarkable. It was significant, too, of the spirit of the age that the demand of parliament for an enquiry into the blasphemous writings of Hobbes as a possible cause of the Great Plague and the Great Fire was met by a decision of the Royal Society that the architecture and drainage of the capital should be investigated.

Poets and satirists present companion pictures of the prevailing enthusiasm. Dryden spoke of astronomers who would yet conduct an expedition to "the last verge of the earth," and place us in closer intimacy with "our rolling neighbours." Cowley, passing from one biblical similitude to another, thought of Francis Bacon as the Moses of mankind's intellectual deliverance, the guide through an arid desert who had to content himself with a Pisgah view, leaving it to the Royal Society (few but fit, like Gideon's chosen band) half a century after his death to enter in and possess the milk and honey. To such exuberance, some mocking voice was certain to respond. Shadwell's satiric pen was not dangerous to anyone, but in *The Virtuoso* he made the Fellows of the Royal Society look as foolish as he could. More formidable was the author of *Hudibras*, when he turned from burlesquing Puritans to burlesque scientific investigators in "The Elephant in the Moon". It was a gentler wit that played around these figures in *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*,—describing them as dull pedants, inappreciative of "polite" genius, but fitly applying to harmless pursuits such fierce energy and subtle talent as might in politics have set the country in a flame. And of such power in caricature as gave us Gulliver's "Voyage to Laputa" one can only wish that Swift had been more fortunate in the choice of its object.

A glance at either Locke's correspondence or his commonplace books will show the eager but cautious interest with which he was following the progress of these years. Before such a spectacle he was as little inclined for dithyrambics as for satire. But the results of chemical and meteorological observation are carefully noted; and though he was not himself an investigator in the natural sciences, he was always on the alert for new scientific knowledge. He was convinced that in his own generation this was accumulating fast, and that the methods of the men at work in the Royal Society called for a theory of cognition very different from any he had heard of in the philosophic schools. The *Essay on the Human Understanding* had begun to shape itself in his mind.

II

In the winter of 1665-66, Locke's attention was diverted from his intellectual pursuits to public business. He was chosen as Secretary to the British Embassy at the court of the Elector of Brandenburg, and he spent a winter abroad in this position. Whether he discharged the duties well or ill, there is nothing to show, except the fact that in later years he had repeated opportunity for similar work. The letters he wrote from the Embassy to his friends in

England reveal keen interest in the national traits of the German people, and especially in the differences of Lutheran, Calvinist and Catholic. They reveal, too, more interest in the local disputes of monks on abstract problems of theology and metaphysics than is commonly found in an ambassador's Secretariat. Soon after his return home, there occurred that meeting, pregnant with such consequences for the future, in which he attracted the notice of Lord Ashley.

It was a chance engagement, in the way of Locke's professional duties—something about the use of medicinal water at Oxford—that brought him into contact with the most influential and the most unscrupulous of the early Ministers of Charles II. Medical consultation soon led to confidences on public affairs, and the strange intimacy lasted through all vicissitudes of fortune—from the splendour of the Lord High Chancellorship to the flight in mean disguise, *via* a sailors' lodging-house at Wapping—until Ashley's death in 1683.

What was the bond between the two men, so utterly different, it is hard to guess. Intellectually, of course, they would be impressed by each other, and to the fierce Protestant spirit of Locke the author of the Exclusion Bill might even seem a prophet for the times.* But it is doubtful whether it was not the struggle over the Exclusion Bill itself, and the bitter consequences ensuing, that made Locke so fierce a Protestant in later life; and if he ever thought Ashley a prophet—for his own or for any other time—he must have missed in close friendship those treacherous qualities which were obvious to others from afar. Nor does one like to think that the loyalty of the philosopher to the nobleman was due merely to the succession of favours in office and income which that powerful patron bestowed. Locke became not only Ashley's physician but his confidential secretary, moving with him from residence to residence, and often entrusted with high responsibilities. He drafted a constitution for the British colony of Carolina, in which he inserted clauses of philosophic tolerance for every kind of Christian faith—clauses so broad as to shock the men of that generation, and which even their framer, twenty years afterwards, would not endorse. Three years later Ashley had been advanced to the Lord Chancellorship, under the title "Earl of Shaftesbury," and Locke became, first, Lord Chancellor's Secretary for the presentation of benefices, then Secretary to the Board of Trade,—with an income and an influence enough to make him temporarily forgetful both of Oxford and of the Royal Society. Throughout the years 1666-1675 he figures as the modest intellectual dependant on

* More probably, perhaps, Locke's admiration was for the framer of the *Habeas Corpus* Act.

a great family; something like the Greek librarian-physician in the house of a Roman noble under the early Caesars, or like Swift of his own period in Sir William Temple's establishment at Moor Park. In this capacity Locke served three generations of Shaftesburys—the first Earl, who originally employed him; the second to whom he was tutor and whose marriage he negotiated; the third, the famous author of "Characteristics", at whose birth he was the medical *accoucheur*.

Having shared the great Minister's heyday of success, he could hardly complain of suffering by the later downfall. When the enterprise of the Exclusion Bill had failed, Shaftesbury—growing desperate—conspired with a group of like mind to raise an insurrection in favour of the Duke of Monmouth, and when this too proved abortive, he barely managed to escape to Holland in time to save his head. Naturally suspicion fell on all who had been his intimates, especially on Locke, whose steps were watched, whose conversations were reported, and upon whom—to their lasting shame—his academic colleagues at Oxford deigned to act as spies for the Crown. He certainly seems to have favoured the Bill to exclude the Duke of York, as a Roman Catholic, from the succession to the throne. But so, for that matter, did a majority of the House of Commons, and no charge of treason could be rested successfully upon that alone. There is not a shadow of evidence, however, that he shared the purposes of the conspirators. On the contrary, the spies who reported upon him had to acknowledge that every effort to inveigle him into compromising language had failed, and that all they had to argue from was "mysterious going and coming." He was wary enough to arrange that when the blow he foresaw should fall, he would not be present to receive it. Late in 1683 he left for Holland, that constant refuge of the persecuted in the tumults of the seventeenth century.

III

FOR the next five years he lived among the Dutch. Not only the hospitable kindness, but the atmosphere of freedom of thought and speech for which Holland was then so remarkable, made a deep impression on his mind. Some months after his arrival Locke learned that, by constraint of King Charles, his Oxford colleagues had expelled him from their Society, for "factious and disloyal behaviour." When James II succeeded his brother, and especially after the Monmouth rising had collapsed, no indulgence could be expected towards men who had been friends of Shaftesbury, and it is not surprising that the philosopher's name was

included in a list of those whose extradition was demanded by the British ambassador at The Hague. Dutch ingenuity, however, was equal to the crisis, and without any diplomatic offence the country contrived to continue the privilege of asylum to her distinguished guest. It is clear that some semblance of disguise was thought necessary. We hear of an assumed name, and of rather frequent changes of residence, but on the whole Locke suffered no hardship, and when the negotiations of British Whig nobles with the Prince of Orange culminated in the events of 1688, it was his pride and joy to have a part in the great scheme. He returned to his native land in the ship that brought Princess Mary.

In a letter bearing date February, 1686, he admits that of late politics had left him little time for literature. The great "Plan" was then thickening. But in the first years of his residence in Holland he had lived a quiet speculative life, much occupied with questions of biblical criticism and with the theological views of those Dutch "Remonstrants" who had broken the hard crust of Dutch Reformed orthodoxy. Those were the years of his close friendship with Limborch, a theologian of the type we should now call Modernist, who exchanged with Locke numerous letters upon the problem they had alike at heart. His mind was working, too, upon a general question of which this was but a particular case—the question of the limits of human knowledge which are set by the constitution of the mind itself.

Into the answer he gave, in the *Essay on the Human Understanding*, after brooding more or less fitfully for twenty years, this is not the place to enter. Without, however, raising technical issues which do not belong to a general review, one may observe that with Locke began the great debate on the place which justly belongs to psychology in philosophical construction, and that, however we may dissent from the conclusions he reached, it was a most notable service to have initiated so fruitful an enquiry. It was no accident that the appearance of the *Essay* has thus ever since marked a turning-point in the history of British thought.

That book saw the light in 1690, two years after Locke had settled again in England. During the previous months he had declined offer after offer pressed upon him by William III in admiration and gratitude. Locke urged various reasons for refusing such a post as the ambassadorship at Vienna. Sometimes he pleaded poor health, no doubt quite genuinely, for his weak chest made him a chronic invalid, and on various occasions he had to winter in sunnier climates than that of England. One rather memorable pretext on which he fell back was his incapacity for the

deep potations which an ambassador is expected to share with his guests abroad, and without which the more delicate tasks of diplomatic service could not be successfully performed. In general, he impressed upon his sovereign that his talent lay rather in the field of literature and of abstract thought, which could be cultivated better at home than abroad.

Of the years which followed, and the quiet old-bachelor existence "wholly given to studious pursuits", there is little to record. Yet few philosophers are quite so well known to us in the intimacy of their relation with friends, and in regard to few have we quite so convincing a picture of the little personal traits which make an historic personality real. The life of retirement with the Cudworth and Masham family in Essex has been reconstructed for us in minute detail through the work of a Nova Scotian scholar upon the piles of Locke's correspondence. To Dr. Benjamin Rand this tribute of thanks may fitly be paid in a magazine published in his native province, for such signal service to those who would not willingly miss any accessible facts about so notable a thinker.

IV

In appraising the significance of Locke's work, too exclusive attention has commonly been given to the *Essay on the Human Understanding;* and even there, recent critics have been so absorbed in pointing out what is wrong that the parts at once original and valuable have been neglected. Someone coined a foolish maxim that "Modern philosophy begins in contempt of Locke," forgetting that it is a contempt which Leibniz at least did not share. But besides the *Essay* one should remember his achievement in three quite distinct fields. In the first place, he was the philosopher of the Revolution of 1688, defining its grounds and setting forth the principles of civil obedience which underlay it, with unique clarity and power. In the second place, he was the philosopher of Toleration, stating the true basis and fixing the limits of that still novel virtue with a skill which later writers have surpassed and with inconsistencies which they have corrected, but with a discernment which no previous writer had even approached. In the third place, at least half a century earlier than Adam Smith, he had bethought himself of Smith's problem, and was unmistakably anticipating ideas on taxation and currency which were to bulk large in the coming science of economics. Rendering historical justice to a philosopher means judging him in the light of his predecessors and contemporaries. Compare Locke's account of civil obedience, not merely with that of Filmer, but with that of Hobbes or Milton;

his account of the limits of State interference in religion with that of Chillingworth or Jeremy Taylor; his letters on usury and on inflating the coinage with almost anything written on such subjects before the appearance of *The Wealth of Nations*. To dismiss such contributions to the analysis of those problems of the time which almost every other writer was confusing, on the ground that "they were not in strictness philosophical", is to conceive philosophy after a fashion by which Plato at least would have been amazed.

There is a continuity in Locke's treatment of these matters at first sight so remote from one another. It has become customary, and no doubt it is best, to consider his system as part of a sequence. He was the first of that remarkable group of three—an Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman—who developed the so-called "English Philosophy." Their personal differences were at least as striking as those speculative agreements which made us think of them together. The Celtic enthusiasm of Berkeley, the missionary, was far removed from the doctrine of Hume that a philosophic temper is marked above all by freedom from zeal, and that suspense of judgment is not only its beginning but its end. Locke, in turn, had neither the religious passion of the Irishman nor the intellectual detachment of the Scot, but displayed throughout life that concern for the practically judicious by which the English temperament is supposed to be marked. Philosophy was for him neither an apocalypse of supra-mundane realities nor a sedative to spiritual emotion; it was a guide to life, not only checking extravagances of purpose, but forbidding carelessness and sloth by setting forth what man may really accomplish within the limits prescribed by "the intellectual mediocrity" of the race. This last term is indeed characteristic of all Locke's thinking. It is the key by which one may bring his several speculative systems under a single conception.

Whether he is writing about knowledge of the universe in its ultimate nature, or about forms of government, or about the proper attitude to adopt towards those whose opinions differ from one's own, there is a unity in his method. On metaphysics, on political science, on toleration, he speaks as one impressed with the need to forswear search for "absolute" truth, and content oneself with shaping both thought and action within the four corners of our intellectual mediocrity. How much can we know for certain, and on what matters must we content ourselves with a more or less probable judgment? What is the best form of government, not "intrinsically" or "absolutely" (for no man can ever be sure about that), but with our special necessities in view? How should we

behave, if we are in a majority, towards the religious beliefs of those who differ from us, bearing in mind that religion is a hard subject of enquiry, with manifold ways of going wrong? Thus the *Essay on the Human Understanding*, the *Treatises of Civil Government*, and the *Letters on Toleration* show in different fields a single habit of thought. It is a habit which the history of British social legislation ever since has gone to illustrate and to vindicate. To have left so deep a mark on the national life of his countrymen, for the generations which intervened between the Revolution of 1688 and the rise of Socialism in the nineteenth century, was indeed an achievement to immortalize any thinker. And for those whom Edward Caird persuaded that it was Kant and Kant alone who showed how the true middle course between "Dogmatism" and "Scepticism" is "Criticism", it is timely to point out that the idea, though not the method of its development, was anticipated by Locke.

THERE is another secular anniversary which may well be kept at the same time in academic memories. John Locke was born just one hundred years after the founding of the Oxford college which is proud to count him among its *alumni*. Macaulay once called him the greatest *alumnus* of whom Christ Church could ever boast; and although Macaulay was writing in 1848, one may doubt whether the succeeding three quarters of a century would have made any difference to his estimate. This adjudication did not become harder when the names of Ruskin and Salisbury, of Rosebery and Lewis Carroll, had to be added to a list on which already stood those of Burton and Sidney, of Wellington and Canning, of Mansfield and Gladstone and Peel. At least to Oxford men who feel more than an antiquarian interest in such matters, the name of Christ Church suggests Locke as surely as the name of Pembroke is connected with Dr. Johnson, that of Magdalen with Gibbon, or that of Balliol with Wycliffe. Advantage has been taken of the present opportunity by Mr. E. Beresford Chancellor to recall the glories of "The House", whose record, he says, in the production of famous men is "probably unparalleled by that of any other college in the world." The old, familiar tribute, admitting no reply, but producing no conviction! Who can possibly judge such a claim? But a large latitude in compliment is always granted at a college centenary, and to the eloquence of a quater-centenary it would be ungenerous to fix any limit whatever. Perhaps the article in *The Observer* will make Christ Church men all over the world not only proud, but just a little apprehensive. The recital

of even one century of college achievement is commonly a prelude to circulars, which point out how the tradition might be not only continued but enhanced with the help of additional endowment. *Alumni* have become quick to suspect some further motive in such "stirring up of pure hearts by way of remembrance."

In strictness, it is not the founding by Wolsey, but the re-founding seven years afterwards by Henry VIII, that this year 1932 recalls. In 1525 the original license was issued, the necessary funds were obtained by the suppression of twenty-two convents and priories, and a small army of workmen began the kitchen and dining hall which—perhaps characteristically of the founder—were to be erected first. It was to be called *Cardinal's College*. Chapuys wrote at the time that on nearly every stone the great Minister's arms were emblazoned—an old reproach for an old fault; did not Constantine say of Trajan that he should be called *Parietaria* (wall-flower), because his name was on so many walls? The Wolsey statue, set up at the gateway by Sir Jonathan Trelawney two centuries later, still tells a like tale to visiting tourists. Although the endowment came through confiscation of monastic lands, no trust was created, and the college in its earliest years had no legal personality. To His Eminence and his heirs "in fee simple for ever" the deeds were made out, so that under the subsequent attainder of Wolsey the whole lapsed to the Crown.

When Henry VIII assumed charge of the enterprise in 1532, the beautiful dining-hall had been built, and the armorial bearings of the Cardinal—already conspicuous on its roof of Irish oak—were allowed to remain. But the royal architect had his own designs for the completion. First he changed the name, to *Henry VIII's College*, dedicating it to the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Virgin and St. Frideswide. He further assigned for its upkeep a revenue of £2,000 a year. As its development proceeded, the workings of the king's mind were more and more intimately revealed. The college was to be at once an ecclesiastical and an academic foundation; its chapel was to be the cathedral of the contemplated new diocese of Oxford; but the Dean and Chapter were to be appointed by the Crown; His Majesty was to be the Visitor; and the Bishop of Oxford was left without control within its precincts. Still, as it supplied the bishop's cathedral, it seemed even to that extraordinary king rather outrageous that it should continue to be called *Henry VIII's College*, and in 1546 the name was changed to *Christ Church*. It remains indeed an anomalous institution, the product of a time when Church and State in England were united—as Anatole France would say—not in an embrace but in a grapple, and neither dared for a moment to let go.

In the four centuries which have passed since then, Christ Church has reflected as in a mirror the higher developments of the national life, not excluding its more passionate and tempestuous sides. It is true, as Mr. Chancellor says, that a list of the men educated there would supply a roll of fame. This apostolic succession may well be recalled with pride by those who now continue the historic ritual of study, social intercourse and sport under the shade of its noble architecture or on the river that flows nearby. One hopes and believes that most of its later *alumni* feel more indebted than Locke felt to the genius of the place. Neither ecclesiastical nor academic prestige ever counted with him for much, and in *Thoughts Concerning Education* he is as ironic toward the Oxford disciplines as in the *Letter to the Bishop of Worcester* toward the episcopal pretensions of Edward Stillingfleet. One remembers, too, what he wrote from Brandenburg about the Franciscan friar he had met, "a good plump fellow that had more belly than brains," and about whom Locke's first guess was that he might well be the head of some college! Yet as these two centenaries are kept in the same year, one reflects how the lapse of time has softened conflict. Christ Church is proud to exhibit among its library treasures the royal letter of expulsion, not so much because it is a royal letter, as because it shows that the philosopher expelled was once an active member of the college. And Locke's critics, from Leibniz down, have been at pains to disclose how much nearer than he himself knew was the thought of the founder of "The English Philosophy" to the intuitionism of the school logic he despised.

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