

CURRENT MAGAZINES

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A Mormon Boyhood:—Mr. N. B. Musser in *The American Mercury*.

The Indian Scene: Lord Lytton, in the *Nineteenth Century*.

RECENTLY, with immense journalistic tumult, we were told of a new League. It was to persuade Great Britain to adopt a protective tariff against all the rest of the world, together with a scheme of free trade among the constituent peoples of the Empire. One might have gathered from *The Daily Express* and *The Daily Mail* that this proposal was sweeping the country. It was to cement imperial patriotism, to remedy unemployment, to open up previously neglected parts of the treasury of the earth. From the papers that opposed it, one learned—in Sir Herbert Samuel's words—that it had "attracted some measure of support here and there." But within the last few weeks we have been startled by the news that the League in question has been dissolved. Its promoters have even taken the decisive step of returning subscriptions to those who had contributed towards its war-chest. Lord Beaverbrook professes himself contented with the assurance Mr. Baldwin has given,—so contented that he will no longer lead a revolt, but will return to his place of docile lieutenant in the Conservative party. A glance at the guarantees he has actually got is enough to show that what was specially desired was a way-out, or what the Chinese call "saving face." For the Empire Crusaders have been promised no more than this, that if and when the Conservatives are returned to power, this question will be referred to two tribunals, each of which has already, over and over again, decided in the most emphatic terms against it! Nor will Mr. Baldwin attach his own political fortunes to its success.

Yet the plan may be a good one, though it is not at present feasible. A Scottish judge, hearing that his decision had been sustained by the Privy Council, said "It might be a' richt for a' that," and the unmistakable mood of Demos shows only whether a thing *can* be done or not. Whether it *should* be done, when it becomes possible, is still to be debated. Sir Herbert Samuel dis-

cusses this more profound question in the *Contemporary Review*. He begins by pointing out that the name "Empire Free Trade" suggests the very opposite of what the plan means. Here are the very words of Lord Beaverbrook:

We propose to put a tariff wall round the Empire, taxing all goods that come from outside, and allowing free interchange between the different peoples that acknowledge the sovereignty of King George.

Why not call this "Empire *Protection*"? The amount of trade brought for the first time under duties would be immensely larger than the amount relieved from duties that are now imposed. It is suggestive that, in a pamphlet intended to spread this new gospel among farmers, the policy is called "The New Empire Protection." Those magnates of the press have not failed to profit by their experience in framing advertisements. Others may wonder what is in a name, but it is no secret to them.

Naturally Sir Herbert Samuel, as a convinced free trader, approves of any scheme that would remove tariffs anywhere. He predicts a unanimous support for this side of the project, if the Conservatives at home and overseas can indeed be got to take down tariff walls between different parts of the Commonwealth. Suppose, for instance, that Indian import duties on Lancashire cotton were removed! It would do wonders for the present depressed state of Lancashire; and if the Bombay mill owners will consent, no Liberal at least will withhold his gratitude. What a splendid thing to get free entry into Australia and Canada and New Zealand for British-made shirts and hosiery and boots! But have the leaders of this project any reason to suppose that in India and in the Dominions the long-established belief in the need for protecting local industry against such competition has been changed? Australia has replied to the crusade by erecting a still higher tariff wall against the mother country. No response of the sort Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Rothermere desire has come from any Dominion,—but rather the contrary.

Again, Sir Herbert Samuel points out that the acknowledged condition of this Empire Free Trade is the taxing of foodstuffs and raw materials imported from foreign countries into Great Britain. This is a pre-requisite because the Dominions have little interest in a duty upon foreign manufactured articles, against which they scarcely compete. What would be the result of a duty on foodstuffs and raw materials? In 1928 the British consumption of these when imported from "Empire countries" was one-half of the con-

sumption of like products from "the foreigner." They now come, in almost all cases, duty-free. Impose a tax, and the price goes up at once. It must do so, where not only is the cost to the importer raised, but the sources of supply are limited. "Germany," said Lord Stradbroke last year in the House of Lords, "is a country with a protective tariff, and consequently the price of wheat in that country is higher than the world price, and higher than it is in Great Britain." Moreover, is it not as plain as the proverbial pikestaff that unless prices are raised, this project must fail of its avowed purpose? Producers within the Empire are to be "encouraged". And how shall they be encouraged unless by the prospect of getting a higher price than they are getting at present? One remembers Mr. H. G. Wells's jest about the protectionists. "They tell us, he said, "that home production will be stimulated if foreign imports are excluded by a tax, and that at the same time an immense revenue will be obtained from collection of the tax. Two birds, flying in opposite directions, and yet brought down by the same stone."

Thus, this keen critic argues, the Empire Free Trade scheme means an immediate and sharp rise in prices for the whole British people, especially in their food,—at this moment when the dole is the only remedy against destitution! It will further mean an increase in the price of raw materials, by which the manufacturer will be still further hampered just now when he is struggling with great difficulty. It will inevitably mean a loss of foreign markets for British exported goods, for if you exclude what your neighbor has to sell to you, it is certain that he will curtail what he has been in the habit of buying from you. Imports are paid for by exports, and what is the prospect of obtaining within reasonable time such a market within the Empire for British exports as will compensate for the huge loss of markets in foreign countries? "Even if every acre of this island were cultivated to the highest point, it would still be necessary to import the greater part of our supplies of food and raw materials." And unless you keep up your export business, how are you going to pay for them?

Sir Herbert Samuel concludes his article by expressing the gravest doubt whether imperial patriotism is going to be stimulated by a change that will make the cost of living immediately higher for the average British household, and will likewise convince such countries as India and South Africa that their interests have been sacrificed to the selfish purposes of Great Britain:

Straightway the complaint will be made in the native press of scores of territories, in the discussions in thousands of towns

and villages, that British Imperialism is exploiting the native peoples for its own profit; that they are no longer free to buy the articles that they require wherever they choose, unhampered by discriminatory tariffs, that the trustee of native interests is using the position that he holds to promote, not the welfare of his ward, but his own advantage.

Such is the main tenor of this critique. Let us hope that, as the debate proceeds, the other side will put its case with equal clarity, and with a like freedom from personalities.

TO all who are interested in religious history, the reconsideration of Mormonism should now make special appeal. For April 6, 1930, marks its centennial. Just one hundred years ago was founded the Society which still calls itself *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. The current magazines are, of course, publishing articles about it, and it has indeed been an enterprise worth careful study. To the psychologist, as well as to the historian of religions, every such experiment has a suggestiveness of its own.

Moreover, this one has been explored far less thoroughly than we might have expected both from its intrinsic interest and from the zeal of investigators in our time. Where shall we find a really competent book on Mormonism? What writer has rendered intelligible the strange cult which arose, apparently, in the wild delusions of one Joseph Smith, which inculcated a body of dogma too ludicrous to be repeated with gravity even by those most practised in dogmatic incredibilities, which soon developed social habits outrageous to the whole feeling of the western world and drew on itself in consequence the fiercest hostility from "the powers that be," and which nevertheless, after a hundred years of mingled ridicule and persecution, is now at the peak of an amazing prosperity? Impatient of explanations which did not seem to touch the real problem of this development, I turned with some eagerness to two articles in *The American Mercury*, the first of which began with a refreshing acknowledgment that the secret of Mormonism was worth penetrating and had not yet been penetrated. I am bound to add that though it remained undisclosed by what these writers deliberately offered as the key to it, they shed a great deal of light, unwittingly, on the environment against which even Mormonism is an intelligible reaction.

Before commenting on these articles it, may be profitable to recall the sequence of events that began in April, 1830.

Joseph Smith, who was born in 1805 in an obscure village of

the State of Vermont, came of a family both superstitious and neurotic. In his childhood his parents settled in the State of New York. There is evidence that he was himself epileptic, and the "visions" he habitually reported were no more a surprise to his relatives in the nineteenth century than they would have been to the relatives of Joan of Arc in the fifteenth. Divining rods, crystal-gazing, and the eternal search for "hidden treasure," which might be recovered by such uncanny means, were as much a part of the Smith family concern as politics or commerce to the New York family of to-day. But for Joseph the object of quest ceased to be thought of in purely material terms. His mind began to run on that treasure hid in a field of which Scripture makes mention, and he pictured it as a possible new message from heaven to himself. It was a time when such conjectures, in the rural New England States at least, did not encounter check from what Gibbon called "the sober discretion of the present age."

The visions he had previously described were reduced to utter insignificance when Smith told of the visit of an angel that gave the name "Moroni," and bade him look on a neighboring hill called "Cumorah" for a priceless volume buried there in the ground. Going to the spot indicated, he dug up—according to his own tale, and that of three friends whom he took with him—a stone box which was found to contain certain very remarkable articles. It had a breastplate of gold, a collection of thin gold plates with a great deal of inscription, and a pair of spectacles with obviously supernatural properties, for with their aid Joseph Smith was able to decipher the inscriptions on the plates, and translate them out of the unknown tongue in which they were composed. When this had been done, and the dictated translation was complete, the Angel Moroni took the plates away. Hence came the *Book of Mormon*, first printed in English in 1830.

Its contents proved to be of the most sensational kind. Naturally it began by providing Joseph Smith with credentials, as the bearer of a new divine revelation. Next it recounted, in singular sequence, the history of America, beginning with the great dispersal after the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, and continuing down to A. D. 5. According to the *Book of Mormon*, it was not to the Eastern hemisphere alone that the Christian religion had been revealed. There had been a like mission of Christ to America, and a Church had been founded there, but it had fallen into such unholy strife that revelation had been withdrawn, and darkness had been allowed to descend upon its unworthy members. Among other punishments, dark skins had been imposed, and herein was

the origin of colour among the North American Indians who were the first known inhabitants of the continent. In a general war, only two persons—one "Mormon" and his son "Moroni"—escaped, and they made it their task to construct a faithful record of what had happened up to their time. This they buried in a convenient spot of the State of New York, and it was the spirit of the son that came to inform Joseph Smith of its whereabouts when a seasonable moment had arrived for revival.

Various analogies will occur to the historically-minded. It is probable that no religious movement ever had a more grotesque beginning. Tolstoy indeed, in a cynical mood against bibliolaters, once praised those who said they had dug their sacred scriptures out of a hole in the ground, above those who said they had got theirs by descent from heaven. But when compared with the story of Joseph Smith's reception of the *Book of Mormon*, that of Mohammed receiving the *Koran* sounds sweetly reasonable. The contents of the *Koran*, too, are on a level so different. And how in the world did the idiotic tale of authorship escape exposure? We think it bad enough for men to be tricked into mistaking Macpherson for Ossian; but what shall we say of those who, reading this supposed fourth-century product, were unable to identify the tone of early nineteenth-century camp meeting revivalism,—not to mention numerous citations from the *Westminster Confession of Faith*?

It was not, however, a critical circle to which this message appealed, and its vitality in our time is explicable only by its having changed in many respects. Those who now stray as visitors into a Mormon service find it difficult to believe that such were the beginnings of the cult. How the proportions of delusion and deceit are to be assigned among the first pioneers, it is impossible even to guess. But at a very quiet service conducted by Mormon missionaries which I had the opportunity of attending, there was nothing singular,—scarcely anything indeed to suggest a creed different from that of Christian churches in the same vicinity. A certain strong emphasis on the prophetic books of the Old Testament, a little touch of what is called in the United States "Fundamentalism" in referring to the authority of Scripture, and an occasional allusion to Joseph Smith as a messenger specially favored and commissioned by the Most High, were the chief points noticeable. But this is the Mormonism of missionary effort to-day, no doubt different from the cult at its headquarters, and certainly very different from many a feature in its historical development.

Readers of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's tale, *A Study in Scarlet*, will remember how it depicts a Mormon community of gross and

savage habits. The little circle, inspired with belief in a new revelation, and expecting soon the end of the world, with special advantages to those who shared this latest disclosure of the divine purpose, grew fast and spread far. It was among their chief tenets that the series of the prophets is never closed, that the *Book of Mormon* was the Bible of the West, and that the messenger who began his apostolate in 1830 was but the last in series of those who had begun to come many centuries ago. In the strength of this conviction, they were prepared—like many in earlier generations—both to act and to suffer on a great scale. Nor does their assurance that there *may* be yet another messenger commissioned to extend man's knowledge of precious truth seem intrinsically out of the question, for those who believe that such messengers have come in days gone by.

One has to speak in less charitable terms of the new translation of the Bible which made its appearance among them, with prophecies of the coming of Joseph Smith and the delivery of the *Book of Mormon*, neatly inserted in *Genesis* and *Isaiah*. There is an un-savoury story, too, about Mormon banks, which resisted prosecution on the ground that they were mere "associations" requiring no charter, and which in due course suspended payment. Brigham Young, who succeeded the founder, was plainly a man of capacity for affairs, and the story of the long trek (as the Dutch would call it) from state to state, of persecutions endured in one place when they were few, and inflicted wherever the Mormon community had power in others, is an interesting section of American history. "Danites," "Daughters of Gideon," "Brothers of Zion," are names that probably now bring a smile more easily than one can justify to the faces of those who have read unmoved about the Ku Klux Klan in their own time.

What stirred the most bitter opposition was, indeed, no tale however fantastic about the discovery of a new sacred record, but the announcement in 1852 that there had been a further revelation not only sanctioning but enjoining polygamy. The *Book of Mormon* had forbidden this practice, but it was reported to a horrified world that herein was an authorized amendment. Moreover, the principle of progress in spiritual insight required Latter Day Saints to receive submissively what the apostle of their faith might communicate as his message. It was part of the amazing creed that women cannot be saved except through their husbands, and thus the only chance for an isolated spinster was that she should be "sealed" to a Saint who had been married already. Not the only point of resemblance with Mohammedanism! Did not the *Koran*

intimate, among its other revelations, that there is a majority of women in the abode of the lost? Brigham Young, who died in 1877, leaving two million dollars of fortune, besides twenty-five wives and more than forty children, has a recent parallel in Abdul Hamid, both for material and for family abundance. But the tarring and feathering episodes showed that the American mind could tolerate weird revelations only up to a certain point, and that this point had been passed when Asiatic notions of the family began to be inculcated under plea of a prophetic message.

The visitor to Salt Lake City, with this record in his mind, is now perplexed both by what he sees and by what he does not see there. Perhaps he feels special interest in the bizarre experiment in polygamy, and he is quickly told that this is now given up, not only because of the interference of the Federal authorities, but because the Mormon Church has had that 1852 disclosure canonically cancelled. Whether right or wrong three-quarters of a century ago—a point on which the theologians of the sect seem to differ—it is no longer valid. But the visitor may hear from Mormons of another type that polygamy is just suspended, in consequence of hardness of heart in a persecuting outside world! Like Empire Free Trade in Mr. Baldwin's mind, it remains the ideal, but under existing circumstances it is judged impracticable, and the Latter Day Saint is not to be blamed for leaving it in abeyance.

One thing is plain,—that the strength of the system does not come, as used to be supposed, from its catering to dissolute passions, but from a certain quasi-Puritan rigor of thrift, and industry, and self-restraint. Whatever else may be said of the Mormons, they shine in civic virtue. Their communities are noted for their temperance, for their vigorous elimination of those whom their code judges unworthy to be among them, and for their insistence on hard, honest work. Something of the spirit of those Old Testament patriarchs, who were such patterns to the soldiers of Cromwell, but whose habits the Cromwellians did not copy with quite the same slavish exactness! Or one may compare them to the champions of Islam at its best, to the Cameronians, to any who have adopted—with whatever accompaniments of superstition—an austere self-control, and a sense of responsibility to over-ruling Providence, without which—as Carlyle said—no nation has historically come to much. They have had their period of blood-stained, savage evangelism,—and in this, again, they are not singular. But it was neither their follies nor their savagery that constituted their strength. Did not Voltaire remind us that *arsenic and incantations will kill sheep*? It is a saying full of instructive possibilities for many a psychologist of religion.

Its suggestiveness has never, apparently, entered into the mind of either Mr. DeVoto or Mr. Musser, who profess to tell us all about this Mormon business in that bright, emancipated magazine, *The American Mercury*. We are bidden to remember that this was only one of many forms of religious excitement which marked the New England states about the same time. Mr. DeVoto speaks of "hundreds of True Churches" produced in those "forty pentecostal years," and of the "myriad competitors" of which this one alone has survived in strength. He thus puts a reader on the *qui vive* for an excursion along some untrodden ways of spiritual anthropology. It is disappointing to have no more than three of this great multitude named, and those quite well known to us long ago, namely, the Shakers, the Adventists, and the Disciples. Mr. DeVoto, apparently feeling that the sparseness of his list compares ill with the expectation he has aroused, goes on to include Christian Science, on the ground that, though it did not flower till the second generation, it was a seed of the same planting! Moreover, it seems that locality had to do with it. This critic has not read his Hippolyte Taine without effect. He knows the significance of place, and points out to us that a circle described with a radius of a hundred and fifty miles from such a centre as Pittsfield, Mass., would include an area in which nearly all the American religions have been produced. "The coincidence," he sagaciously adds, "is too great to permit any idea that only chance has been operative." One must find the cause, it seems, in some climatic subtlety of the New England hills, the Adirondacks, and the lake regions of New York, which "has fertilized the soil and made the air fecund." I cannot remember any hypothesis equal to this even in the more speculative sections of *The Golden Bough*. But Sir James Frazer belongs to a backward country, and the psychology of religion, if not religion itself, has been abundant in varieties in New England.

Mr. Musser contents himself with jests, in extremely bad taste, at those usages of worship in which what he calls his "Mormon boyhood" was not very different from boyhood in a rural Christian church of his time, and with insinuations exactly after the style so familiar to us in the ribald secularist press. Mr. DeVoto, with a great show of profundity, confides to us that Mormonism succeeded because it was "a wholly American religion," and he must be left to settle accounts with his fellow-countrymen as to what he means by this, in the light of all he has told us of the Latter Day Saints. Then, of course, there is much about the paranoia of Joseph Smith—as if paranoia by itself is the key to anything but failure! What is of vital interest in Mormonism is the proof

it affords—like Confucianism and Islam and many another cult—that what we may call the active principle in every faith cannot be wholly destroyed by the superstitions and the extravagances of any.

THE *Spectator* took the opportunity on St. Patrick's Day to publish several articles about Ireland by representative Irish leaders, northern and southern, together with one by Mr. Stephen Gwynn who, though no longer in the politics of his native country, is an observer with keen interest in its fortunes.

Mr. Gwynn points out that a great deal has been achieved in the seven years during which President Cosgrave and his half-dozen untried colleagues have worked for the Free State. Courage has been shown, and shrewdness, and generosity towards old opponents. Order has been established, in the South as in the North, so that in both areas the country is peaceable, debts can be recovered as well as anywhere else, roads are good and transport service is competent. Electric development on the Shannon is so far advanced that already nearly half the total power available is contracted for, and an extension will be required before long. The great Ford factory in Cork is to be run exclusively by electric power from the Shannon. And the reform of agriculture has been pushed ahead, where it was so sorely needed, by one whom a keen critic has called "the best Minister of Agriculture in Europe."

But Mr. Gwynn's estimate is not all rosy. He dwells on the fact that both in the northern and in the southern area there has been no change of government in all these years, and that in both places it is assumed that the Opposition cannot under any circumstances be trusted with power. Lord Craigavon has convinced his followers that if he should have to give way, his rival would at once contrive organic union of the North with the Free State, while in the South it is the constant argument of the Cosgrave group that Mr. De Valera's return to office would mean a tearing up of the Treaty. Discontent with an administration is normal. But no system is satisfactory or wholesome when this discontent is checked by the thought that there is no way of change. It then turns to "sourness."

Again, Mr. Gwynn feels that more might have been done by southern statesmen to conciliate northern feeling,—for instance, that the insistence on Gaelic in the schools was a mistake, that a site should not have been virtually refused in Dublin for a war memorial, and that the resolve to render nugatory by legislation

any successful appeal from Free State courts to the Privy Council was a needless obstacle that has stopped a growing friendliness in the North. However, we learn that on the whole there has been a great deal of progress in Ireland, that it is still "a country where people have a good time," and we are permitted to hope that there as elsewhere men will learn from their own errors.

In more definitely sanguine strain, as befits their official responsibility, are the articles by the President of the Free State and the Minister of Finance of Northern Ireland. They speak about industrial development, about the fortunate disappointing of many a gloomy expectation with which the "partitioning" of the country was received, and of how much has been done in both areas to inaugurate better times than the men of the past ever knew. President Cosgrave deliberately avoids rhetoric, sentiment, poetry, and talks sheer business with his British readers. Herein is a good sign from a southerner. By a curious paradox, it is from the prosaically-minded North that a ring of the old flamboyant appeal is heard here and there,—a touch of congratulation upon Ulster's noble past in imperial politics! Was it not Chesterton who said that Belfast is very like Berlin, and that these are the only two cities of his acquaintance in which humility has ceased to be a virtue?

WITH fresh news coming almost every day about Gandhi's campaign of "civil disobedience", there is special interest in Lord Lytton's article about India. A perceptible hardening of opinion, he says, has been seen on both sides within the last few months. Both are nervous lest their representatives may give away too much, and naturally terms have been formally set by each as high as possible—just by way of precaution.

Lord Lytton dwells upon the now notorious speech of the Viceroy of India, forecasting "Dominion status". This, he says, was delivered after careful conference with the home authorities, and with the object of dissipating the atmosphere of suspicion by which the work of the Simon Commissioners was surrounded. Nationalists had cast doubt on the sincerity of the British declared intentions to advance self-government in India, while the Indian princes had become restive about the probable outcome of reforms already accomplished, and still more about what might happen if reform proceeded further. So Lord Irwin, after his visit to the authorities in Downing Street, intimated on his return to Delhi (1) that Dominion status as the goal of policy for India was im-

plicit in the Declaration of 1917 and in the preamble of the Act of 1919; (2) that when the report of the Simon Commission should have been received, a Conference would be summoned to discuss it, and the Indian princes would be invited to present their view of any proposed constitutional change to the other two parties—the British Government and British India. This speech, says Lord Lytton, had a most salutary effect, except in England, where it was represented (quite falsely) that Lord Irwin had announced the Government's purpose to forestall the Simon Commission's report. Not Lord Irwin's speech, but the attacks on it by such men as Lord Birkenhead, may well have produced a deplorable result, in hardening the extremists and making the task of conciliation much more difficult.

Such is yet another view of "the Indian scene". But events in that distracted country change with such speed that to trace them in detail in the pages of a quarterly magazine requires a caution which robs the picture of either interest or value.

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