

TOPICS OF THE DAY

INDUSTRIAL "UNREST": RELIGIOUS EVOLUTION: CHRISTIANITY:
MODERNISM: PRESIDENT WILSON: AN EPOCH:
LENIN: SOCIALISM IN OFFICE.

DISTINCTION as discoverers and exponents of the perfectly obvious has been attained by the members of the Federal Commission appointed "to investigate industrial unrest in Cape Breton." Their report serves merely to emphasize once more the fact that Labour and Capital may as well be left to settle their own differences in their own way. Outside interference in their misunderstandings or disagreements is much like meddling between husband and wife, whose *modus vivendi* can be arranged only by themselves. We are facing changed or changing economic conditions, to which we must be content to readjust ourselves gradually, and not without difficulty or unpleasantness.

Capital naturally clings to many of its old ideas. It dislikes as well as fears to give them up. Labour is dominated by notions with which it appears to be bent upon experimenting recklessly. Both must come to their senses, realizing that Labour and Capital—so far from being antagonistic forces—are not only natural allies, but absolutely necessary to each other's existence. Neither can survive without the other. Without Capital, industry would cease and—in consequence—employment. A speedy end of civilization as we know it would follow, and a return to primitive conditions of life.

Capital has not yet fully grasped the fact that modern machinery has quite changed the conditions of employment, and that it can no more afford to disregard the nature and character of its employees than to neglect the mechanics of its machines. The man who operates the machine is by far its most important adjunct, and requires the most thoughtful care in handling. Labour has been fed on Marxian propaganda until it has become imbued with an entirely wrong conception of the nature and functions of Capital. It ignores the fact that industry is fundamentally dependent on Capital, and that industrial progress is to be attained only through co-operation between the two. Capital must supply not only plant and machinery, but also sufficient funds for the maintenance of workmen until the time when products can be sold in such quantity as to pay wages, maintain and extend plant, and provide

a profit. Without a prospective profit, there would be no investment of Capital, as surely as there would be no effective Labour without wages. Capital and Labour, therefore, are equally interested in the success of industry. Labour can no more afford to reduce too far the profit for which Capital will seek employment than Capital can afford to cut too low the wages which Labour will accept and for which it will perform proper work. If both could realize these simple rudimentary conditions, an end might reasonably be expected before long to the causes which have led to "industrial unrest in Cape Breton," and to the appointment of a Royal Commission which has given us a series of self-evident platitudes as its sole product.

THE names, Fundamentalist and Modernist, respectively assumed by or applied to participants in the "religious" squabble which has been "convulsing", or at least congesting, the press of this continent, and agitating the minds of a number of people, are diverting,—particularly the latter, with its implication of something new and unprecedented. Fundamentalism is inherent in the race. It was implanted in the first man, and will end only with the last. The ordinary Modernist is merely a modified Fundamentalist. He is a little more mobile than the mass of his fellows; has, perhaps, keener powers of perception and reason, and greater energy or less inertia. When a new truth, or, rather, a new insight into an old truth—for truth is eternal—is borne in upon him, he derives so much pleasure from it that he is impelled to communicate it to others in the expectation that they too will be gratified by it. That is where he is mistaken. Usually, he is merely disturbing his neighbours, who not only do not want to be disturbed, but resent disturbance and dislike the disturber.

From Eden until, say the New York Modernist pulpit, there has been an unbroken succession of Fundamentalists and Modernists. The Bible tells the tale more clearly than any other known collection of books. In it one may read, in and between the lines, the gradual evolution of a people from tribal barbarism and mental childishness to a high degree of civilization and intellectuality through slowly increasing knowledge and gradually extending powers of thought. It was the Modernists or prophets—they might be mentioned successively by name—who led, all the long way from Egypt to Nazareth. And it must not be overlooked that there were at least as great Egyptian and pre-Egyptian prophets, before Israel was, as were ever to be found among that nation's Children, until the advent of Jesus, the world Modernist. It was the Modernism

of Jesus which cost Him His life. His aim was not to destroy but to fulfill the highest spiritual longings of the prophets. He made war neither on the civil nor on the ecclesiastical authorities of His country. He was obedient to the Roman power. He conformed to the outward decrees of the Jewish hierarchy. He was a constant frequenter of the synagogues, reading and commenting on the priestly institutes. It was His ideas, not His deeds, that enraged the Fundamentalists of His day, and led to His execution,—to His ecclesiastical and judicial murder, as the outcome of a Fundamentalist plot.

JESUS, the All-Modernist, was infinitely more radical than most of those who now so ridiculously assume that name. Ordinary human institutions and conventions were so unimportant, so insignificant in His sight that He almost ignored them. He was concerned only with the nature of God, and the relationship of men to God and to one another. The repugnant primitive conception of God as a tribal deity, stern judge and "Man of War," still cherished by the Fundamentalist priesthood of that time, and impressed on the people, He abhorred and set Himself to eradicate. He presented God as the loving Father of men, whose eternal spirits, derived from Him, were veiled by their bodies. He introduced and insisted on a purely individual and spiritual religion, as opposed to a collective and carnal one. He referred to past teachings only when they were in harmony or reconcilable with His own. He assumed no more than to foreshadow the future as inseparably dependent on the individual's life on earth. He set up no standard of conduct which was not involved in proper relationship to and with God, and in that alone. He demanded no faith other than the acceptance of God, of His own teachings, and of the whisperings of the human spirit with regard to God. He promulgated no definite rules of life, founded no institutions, formulated no creed, preached no recondite doctrine except that God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. He said no word concerning His own nativity. Of Himself, corporeally, he ever spoke as the Son of Man; and, spiritually, as the Son of God.

THE fault to be found with the self-styled Modernist preacher, of the New York variety, is that, usually, he is not what his name implies. He is a compromiser. He is afraid to come out from among, and be separate from those with whom he radically disagrees. He lacks not only enthusiasm but courage and sincerity.

He proclaims what he says he disbelieves rather than what he believes. He insists on retaining connection with religious organizations while openly denying or disputing the main parts of the creeds on which they are based. He still pretends to view the Bible as a "holy book," while controverting most of its theological propositions. This is not respect-worthy. It is not honest. To use an irreverent but forcible metaphor, there should be a frank laying of the cards on the table, before the public, in this matter. An advanced Modernist regards the books of the Old Testament as no other than a collection of primitive Jewish and Eastern literature, composed of myth, legend, tradition, poetry, philosophy, and ecclesiastical law or custom. He reverences it only because of its associations, and as a record of the evolution of the religious idea from semi-barbarism to restricted civilization. He regards the New Testament as the expression of the personal views and beliefs of various good men of old. He accepts none of its assertions concerning things physical which are not in accordance with present-day knowledge of Nature and Nature's laws. He believes that Jesus was a purely spiritual teacher, that His mission was a strictly spiritual one, and that His earthly body, to Himself or His followers, was and is of little importance.

Believing these things, why do not newspaper-advertising Modernist preachers state them so plainly that even the most simple can understand and make immediate choice? Why have they not the courage of their alleged faith? Why should they seek to remain within the pale of religious communions which very naturally repudiate them and their opinions? How can a Fundamentalist be expected to tolerate a Modernist who openly rejects almost everything that the Fundamentalist holds sacred? Why do not these blatant American "Modernists" come out and be separate? To be ashamed of the truth as it appears to one's mind and soul is not only to deny vital faith, and be worse than an infidel, but to preclude all missionary possibilities. One can respect and admire sincere Fundamentalists, however widely one may differ from them. It is difficult to entertain like feelings for so-called Modernists who are obviously afraid to speak plainly, and determined to cling to ecclesiastical institutions whose heart is torn out by their doctrines.

THE excellent, old maxim, *De mortuis nihil nisi bonum*, is frequently misunderstood and often misapplied. It is usually interpreted as an injunction to "say nothing but good of the dead," which is not its real signification. Such an application of it would

silence criticism or censure even of monsters like Nero, Robespierre, and Lenin. Its correct, if free, translation is: "Say nothing of the dead *unless* good can be said." *Nisi*, as a Latin conjunction, differs quite as widely from *sed* as does *unless* in English from *but*, either as a conjunction or as a preposition. Moreover, the maxim is not of public application. It is addressed only to the private circle of the departed. Obedience to it in matters concerning States and their rulers or guides would prevent the writing of history worth reading. It can be, and sometimes is carried too far even in private life, when interpreted as an injunction to say all the good, real or imaginary, possible of one deceased, without regard to his shortcomings. At most, silence is advised, *unless* there is good which should be spoken. If there is no private, personal good, or if there are preponderating elements of badness—"the rest is silence," or should be.

The foregoing is *a propos* of the recent death of former-President Wilson, and the wild outburst of encomium, amounting to an orgy of eulogy, which followed. The only dissenting voices were heard from Germany where, if anywhere, there should have been gratitude, if not praise. In private life Mr. Wilson was no doubt an excellent man, well up to the moral standards of his fellow citizens. The compliments paid his memory in that respect were, so far as known, well deserved, and no one would willingly detract from them. His public life, in particular his historic life as President of the United States of America during the most dreadful and trying of world-crises, is another matter. With regard to it, even death cannot properly be allowed to seal the eyes, the ears or the lips of criticism. Mr. Wilson did not manifest himself as a great man, a great statesman, or even a capable politician. It is ridiculous, because it is grossly untrue, to speak of him as having led or guided the American people during the war. It would be as appropriate to speak of the prow as leading or guiding a ship. He was merely the prow of the ship of State. The American people were the rudder. As they veered, his course was changed. During the first long and dreadful years of the great struggle, he was "too proud to fight." Those were the years in which his constituents were coining money out of the life blood of the belligerents. He was then so aloof from the war that he publicly declared "We (the United States) must be impartial *in thought* as well as action." It was this declaration of his which almost broke the heart of Ambassador Page who, from London, was trying in vain to lighten the darkened mind and heart of his President. Mr. Wilson did not lead his country into the war in the end. He was pushed into it by the American people,

when they finally awoke to a sense of their own imminent danger. Ambassador Page has made that unmistakably clear. This good, however, can be said of Mr. Wilson, that, once driven into hostilities for the protection of the United States, he displayed great energy and activity in belated preparations.

Mr. Wilson's egregious self-conceit and unreasoning sentimentalism burst out anew towards the close of the war when he expressed a burning desire for "peace without victory," and finally ended the war in accordance with that desire by means of his personally-promulgated "Fourteen Points"—the foundation of most of the subsequent troubles of Europe. The colossal self-assertiveness, not to say egregious vanity of his personal invasion of Europe after the war, and his assumptions there, may perhaps be excused by reason of the apparent ignorance and obvious ineptitude of those who received him at his own estimate, political and individual, of himself. He went to Paris in spite of the protests of his own people and even his own party. He went as a freshly and severely defeated politician, with no official right of representation of the United States. That he was received at Versailles as the duly accredited plenipotentiary of his country, is discreditable to European statesmanship rather than to Mr. Wilson. If Mr. Lloyd George and M. Clemenceau had had as much knowledge of the American Constitution and of American affairs as the ordinary school-boy should be ashamed not to possess, Mr. Wilson would never have attained the position and influence weakly accorded him in the peace negotiations; and probably the Peace as well as the War would not have been lost, largely through him. Of Mr. Wilson as an American President some, but not a great deal of good can be said, as disclosed by the personally and politically friendly *Life and Letters* of Ambassador Page. Of him as a private man, none would willingly say ill.

THE death of Lenin is epochal. It marks the end of a world, as well as a Russian era. It may not be immediately recognized or recognizable as such, but recognition will not be long delayed. Already a change is perceptible in the moral atmosphere. There is a feeling of relief abroad—a feeling that the darkest hour is past, and that the dawn is nigh. The great nightmare of resurgent ignorance and barbarism is passing from the soul of civilization. Insanity has had its night; joy, through right thinking, cometh with the morning. Proletarianism has had its mad fling, has experimented with its theories to the bitter end, and convinced even itself

although it may still, a little longer, ignore or deny the fact. Lenin is dead. With him dies all that he stood for and did.

The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones,

is conversely true, in Lenin's case. It is as good as certain that Lenin himself will not live, except as Marat and Robespierre can be said to live. The manifest evil that he did—and the most horrible deeds of Marat and Robespierre fade almost into insignificance before his transcendent atrocities—may be as slightly regarded hereafter as the "horrors" of the French Revolution have come to be, on the short-memored, human ground that "all the dead forgotten lie," or that, as the French say, "the poor dead are very dead." But the unintentional good he accomplished, so far from being interred with his bones, will live and bear fruit indefinitely. The memory of the dreadful warning given through him to the world can never perish.

Lenin's warning is against the ever-possible danger that lies in the savage instincts which still lurk in humanity. It is a warning against effeminate sentimentality and foolish idealism. It is a solemn admonition to tread closely the well-chosen and well-marked paths of our forefathers, to depart from them rarely and only with the utmost caution and circumspection. Apart from them, on every hand lies the untrodden jungle with innumerable pitfalls and dangers. It was the credence which the world had accorded and is still according to uninstructed visionaries, to whom the practical social teachings of Jesus were and are far "out of date," that gave Lenin the opportunity of which he made such diabolical use. Imaginary "rights" had been elevated above and set in antagonism to essential social and economic laws. The people—"the proletariat," as its woovers love to call it—were persuaded that whatever was, was wrong, that "old experience was a fool," that not only their fortune but their happiness lay within their own reach, that they had but to stretch forth their hands, take and be filled. This was the *milieu* prepared for Lenin in Russia, and in many other lands as well, could he have taken wider advantage of it as he at first hoped. The popularized articles of social faith had become, that the individual was supreme; that all governance not in accordance with his will was despotism and to be resisted; yet strangely enough, while he at most should be expected merely to tolerate the State or community, the State or community owed him everything—which he might take by force, when he thought good. It was the

spade-work of tilling such soil and producing a noxious growth of poisonous social and moral weeds, of which Lenin, with the aid of Germany and favoured by war psychology, took advantage. He was not the creator of the opportunity which he grasped. It was the created opportunity that evoked the man suited to it, with the immediately disastrous results that the world has witnessed.

NO one need fancy that Lenin was a great, much less a heroic man, or that he had any warm enthusiasms for others than himself. As far as known, he was a cold-blooded cynic, well fitted by nature and disposition for "wading through slaughter" to what served him as "a throne," and for "shutting the gates of mercy on mankind." In the prosecution of his adopted theories, he was as callous to human suffering and as recklessly indifferent to human life as was ever the misshapen French monster, Marat. He was not an intellectual man, or he could never have accepted the crude theories of Karl Marx. He neither thought nor uttered anything original. He was not by nature an open or social man. He was physically almost repulsive—squat, broad-faced, coarse-featured. In habits, he was a semi-recluse. He wrote nothing but commonplace pamphlets on polemical subjects. He delivered no great speeches, and had none of the graces of the orator. He displayed no courage. He gave abundant evidence of shameless cowardice, by ruthlessly causing the destruction of all whom he feared—and apparently he feared intellectual almost as much as physical force. A true-born Slav, he was false even to his name, which was not Lenin but Ulianoff. He was simply, as has been well said, a bookish, crabbed, intriguing revolutionary, with little knowledge of the world or of men. It was merely as a theoretical extremist that Germany, in desperate straits, laid hands on him in his Swiss exile and sent him back to Russia to work such harm as he might or could, regardless of possible consequences to herself and the rest of the world, and wholly indifferent to Russia.

A more unlikely, surface-seeming man than Lenin for the task he undertook would be difficult to imagine. And yet he was pre-eminently the man for the occasion as affecting himself. Russia was in a state of incoherent anarchy. Every man suspected and feared his fellow. The hand of neighbour was turned against neighbour. A man's enemies were they even of his own household. Government had utterly failed. The cunning secret plotter's chance was supreme, and Lenin was a supreme secret plotter. He had an intuitive discernment for human weaknesses, which he had improved

much by practice among his fellow exiles. Although described by those who knew him best as cold, dry and sardonic, he was greedy for power. He despised what he called "romanticism," by which he apparently meant regard for anything but selfish interests. His experiments, begun and tried abroad, he simply continued on an immense scale on his return to Russia. He established himself as the centre of a chosen few who dictated his will to successive secret, organized groups until all within reach were terrorized and constrained to submit. This was the process by which he subdued nearly two hundred million Russians to his will as expressed through little more than two hundred thousand Bolsheviks. Fate favoured him further at the outset by presenting him with the spectacular Hebrew enthusiast, Trotsky, whom he was able to use as the organizer of a Red Army to clinch his secret conquests. Lenin despised democracy and liberty, as he despised religion and art. When his communistic system failed, as it was bound to fail, he scornfully repudiated it and laughed at his followers who still retained faith in it. Only the terror which his name inspired through an absolutism infinitely more despotic and cruel than the old régime, and the vigilance of secret agents more effective, because more directly interested, than the Tsarist police had ever been, saved him from the assassin's knife or bullet. He had been a sick man, in body as well as mind, for many years. He was dying visibly during his last year of life. Yet he continued to hold power, and uphold his system. Now that he is gone his works, it is safe to predict, will speedily follow. His was a one man political machine, and is not to be operated by commission. Russia, in all probability, is not at the end of her trials, but only at the beginning. She must pass through democratic struggle to democratic discipline before she can hope for final social order. A half-way house in the long, hard pathway before her may and probably will be a military dictatorship of some kind. One thing is certain, there is no present ray of light to relieve her darkness. The sufferings already endured by her people can serve only as a warning to other countries. The world has learned nothing else from her. The French Revolution evoked ideas from which has come much gain. Lenin did not even originate the Soviets, in which there may possibly be the germ of a political suggestion. He found them in existence, and merely seized upon them as tools for his work. Attila was no worse a barbarian—he was a less destructive one—than Lenin whose false name, like his false humanitarianism, can endure only as a by-word and a hissing to the peoples.

PERHAPS it is too soon to boast, and perhaps one of good British stock should never boast, but it is difficult not to observe and note that the English-speaking peoples have come most creditably out of the crises of the Great War and the anything but Great Peace which messed the ending of it. None of our peoples have done better than they of the Motherland. And in no respect has the Motherland been truer to herself and her traditions than in her easy transition from the old to the new order in domestic politics. Without convulsion, without "turning a hair," she has replaced a Conservative by a Socialistic government, and proceeds as calmly and regularly on her way as if a thing unprecedented in her history had not happened—a thing which, little more than a decade ago, would have been deemed incredible if not impossible. No one should be deceived by the appellation Labour Party. It is no real Labour Party that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald leads. It not only does not represent the great mass of Labour, but is actually antagonized by a large part of that mass as stoutly as by either Liberalism or Conservatism. In reality the Labour Party does not at all represent a class movement. It is more a revolt against the recent insincerity and inaptitude of the two old parties. It is inspired, and led in the main, by intellectuals who, if they ever were real workmen, have almost forgotten the fact. Mr. Stuart Hodgson, editor of the *London Daily News*, in the course of an article entitled "Labour and the Dragon," in the February number of *The Nineteenth Century and After*, writes:

Whatever the modern Labour movement may be, it is not the revolt of the slave, nor the violent uprising of the dispossessed. By no plausible arithmetic can the number of persons of property in this country be estimated at much more than two millions, even by allowing the possession of three hundred pounds a year to constitute a man of property. The number of electors under the existing Constitution is about twenty millions. In the last two elections, when it reached its present high-water mark, the Labour Party polled between four and five million votes. In other words, it has never so far commanded more than about a third of the working class vote. If the "proletariat" wished to dictate through the instrumentality of the Labour Party, there is not, and has not been for years, anything to stop them doing so. The plain fact is that the proletariat have not so wished.

This is the whole case in brief. It explains why no fear of Labour is felt in Great Britain. It gives assurance that little is to be apprehended from Socialism as at present constituted. As for the Communistic wing of Socialism, it is as contemptible as it is insignificant.

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