

CURRENT MAGAZINES

The Political Situation:—The Right Hon. C. F. G. Masterman in the *Contemporary*.

The British Muddle:—Mr. A. G. Gardiner in the *Atlantic*.

France's Treatment of Her Negroes:—M. Aron in *Current History*.

Lenin:—The Right Hon. H. A. L. Fisher in the *Cornhill*.

Lord Morley:—Professor J. H. Morgan in the *Quarterly*.

THE advent to power of a socialistically-inclined government is entirely due, says Mr. Masterman, to the fact that the first Conservative government in office for this century “decided, after less than twelve months of unchallenged position, to commit suicide.”

During the debate on the Address, the Baldwinites were tried with every conceivable proposal,—to remain in office with Liberal support, to give their own support to a Liberal Free Trade government, to drop Protection and protective food taxes. All of these suggestions they met with a vehement refusal. So it was inevitable that the king should turn to the largest party in opposition. “All the ravings of hysteric millionaires are unable to criticize him for acting on strict constitutional lines, or to suggest any other alternative.” And from the point of view of the Liberals, though the choice may be of the second best, it must be remembered that all through history politics has been in the main an accepting of the second best against the ideal or the impossible.

There has been a scaremongering attempt, Mr. Masterman tells us, to make a fearful bogey out of “Socialism.” Proprietors of syndicated newspapers have managed to frighten some small investors into a search for “safer” places to put their money; and yet British securities will remain—whatever government is in power—the best securities in the world. Mr. MacDonald has no real ground for complaint in the fact that Mr. Baldwin did not resign immediately after the election, instead of remaining in office for more than six weeks. The premier has indeed made a grievance out of this, to satisfy his own more extreme supporters. But he knows very well that it was just this six weeks’ delay that ensured to the Labour party a substantial lease of power.

For the Labour Ministers needed above all to get “time to

turn round," to gain experience, to understand departmental administration, to learn the procedure of carrying bills through the House of Commons. The breathing-space ensured that the Estimates should all be prepared, so that in substance it became impossible to alter them. A new Chancellor of the Exchequer can fairly plead that there is no time before the beginning of April to compile a Labour or a Socialist Budget. The financial proposals already prepared by Treasury officials, with some minor changes in detail, will have to be accepted. There may, Mr. Masterman conjectures, be some eliminating of vicious elements of Protection or Preference; and there may be an increase in the super-tax or the death duties. But the great substantial features will be untouched. And there is probability of a considerable surplus. This may be used for removing the limit for Old Age Pensions, or for the help of the unemployed, or for reducing the taxes that still remain upon food.

Thus those who might embarrass the Labour government, by premature demands that the millennium shall reveal itself at once, can be shown with special ease that just now these demands are very premature indeed. And this is true in regard to legislative no less than financial adventures. Five years at least of parliamentary time might be used in passing measures upon which Labour and Liberalism are agreed. Such matters as housing, valuation and taxation of unimproved land, wages boards and industrial credits are a few of these. And Mr. MacDonald will be able to quote countless Liberal speeches to support his contention that foreign affairs are so urgent as to compel the postponement of the more controversial questions of domestic policy. As for the levy on capital, it can be "referred to a Royal Commission."

Nor, in Mr. Masterman's view, is there any ground to fear that dangerous socialistic measures may be put into effect through the administrative powers of the Executive. There is always available the weapon of refusing to grant supplies. What England may expect to see for a time is really government by the permanent officials of the great Departments. And the British Civil Service "in its indifference to cash reward and its whole-hearted devotion to the public good stands unrivalled among the nations of the world."

What about the "Red Squad from Glasgow"—so disturbing to the quiet sleep of people south of the Tweed? They are desperately in earnest; but they are likewise a jovial, light-hearted crew, full of a humour rather occult to the southerner. Trouble will not arise from this quarter until the more fiery agitators have to go back to their constituents "with all their great promises unfulfilled." Even then, much may be made of the impossibility of doing any-

thing on a vast scale because of the Liberal opposition. Perhaps a crucial difference will come over the Budget of 1925. Such is Mr. Masterman's forecast.

MR. A. G. Gardiner notes the fact that the most gentle and unadventurous of prime ministers has produced a convulsion without precedent in the British political record, and recalls Gladstone's remark that "there is no animal so dangerous as a mad sheep." Mr. Baldwin, according to this critic, has given an unexampled display of running through a handsome fortune with reckless speed, disinheriting a prosperous party and shattering a personal reputation.

For what a chance he had! Discordant Liberals, a Labour group still in the adolescent stage and concerned chiefly with the annihilation of Liberalism—what in the world had the Conservative leader to do but "sit tight and enjoy unchallenged power"? But perhaps it was his very security that misled him. Why not take the chance of capturing the Free Trade position by surprise? The guardians of it, if not asleep, were at least at variance among themselves. Mr. Gardiner conjectures that it was the "Die-Hards" who forced the pace, and that one of the ex-premier's own followers was right in saying "Baldwin turned on the tap, and then found he could not turn it off."

No one, it seems, expected that the result would be so catastrophic as it turned out. The Free Traders hoped for, at best, an indeterminate decision. But forthwith there was a great reunion of Liberal forces. Seven years had passed since Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George had been allies, and they could well say—

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn
 Frae morning sun till dine,
 But seas between us braid hae roar'd
 Sin' auld lang syne.

But the action of the Conservatives made these two estranged leaders fall into each other's arms at once!

Mr. Gardiner refers to Mr. Lloyd George's personal attitude on Free Trade as more or less precarious; for, he says, Free Trade rests on a theory, while the Welsh sharpshooter prefers a case which rests on an emotion, and which can be stated in a resounding headline like "Make the Foreigner Pay." Mention is made, too, of the rumor—so freely circulated in Conservative quarters—that Mr. Lloyd George had intended to return from America with a great

Imperial Preference "stunt" of his own, and that when the move was anticipated he changed his tactics. At all events his first week-end on his return was spent at Lord Beaverbrook's, in company with Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Lord Birkenhead!

However, once he was in the field, Mr. Lloyd George "exhibited all his astonishing electioneering gifts, and became easily the most picturesque figure in the fight." How far he influenced the result, Mr. Gardiner thinks, may be doubted. That he sent many Liberal votes to Labour is admitted, but even this unfriendly critic believes that on the whole he added substantially to the volume of the Free Trade tide. "He is the master showman of politics."

Anything like a formal coalition between Liberalism and Labour is impossible. The two parties have won a battle together, but they do not love each other. The effort to enthrone Mr. Asquith as leader of a Liberal-Conservative government was a failure, though the Harmsworth Press "insulted him with flatulent praises and lectured him on his duty to save the nation from imminent peril." To have accepted such a rôle would have been dishonouring and fatal to the Liberal party. The immediate result would, Mr. Gardiner is sure, have been a landslide from the Liberal ranks to Labour. Mr. MacDonald, we are told, has been one of the half dozen outstanding figures in the House of Commons for nearly twenty years; he is distinguished alike for his powers of speech, his vast industry, and his wide range of political activity. Mr. Gardiner adds a significant passage about him:

Indeed it is common opinion that the speech in opposition to the war which he delivered on August 3, 1914, in the House of Commons—a speech which made him almost a political pariah for years—was believed by him to express the views which Mr. Lloyd George had held up to the previous day, and which Mr. MacDonald supposed that he still held.

What will be the outcome? There are various possibilities. The premier might, for the purpose of propaganda and as a bid for support in the country, introduce proposals the House would reject. But, on defeat, he could not be sure that the king would grant a dissolution rather than send for Mr. Asquith. He may instead pursue a moderate policy, to show the public that Labour is an efficient instrument of government. On foreign affairs Liberalism and Labour are not in opposition to each other; and if Mr. MacDonald falls, it will probably be on internal affairs. He can hardly escape formulating measures that will sooner or later drive enough Liberals into Tory ranks to bring about his overthrow.

And it may be that, before many months are out, Mr. Asquith will be back in Downing Street, with —possibly—Mr. Lloyd George as his next-door neighbour. So says the piquant author of *Prophets, Priests, and Kings*.

THE Editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* has contributed to *Current History* a remarkable defence of the French against those who complain of the presence of black troops in the Ruhr. Writing for American readers, M. Aron makes it clear that the feeling towards the negro in the United States is likely to mislead opinion on this subject. The Great Revolution, with its gospel of the "Rights of Man," changed all the old arrogance of a "superior race." There is to-day in France no sentiment on the colour question comparable to that which still prevails south of the Mason-Dixon line.

In Paris four negroes are members of the Chamber of Deputies, five are practising law, more than twenty are physicians, one is lecturing this winter at the School of Social Science. Mixed marriages of blacks and whites are permitted, and in the latest competition of a well-known journal it was denied that there is any reason at all against the union of a black husband and a white wife. Professor Charles Richet is the only French scientist who has said that all contact between the races should be avoided. The General who commanded the American army of occupation in Germany has avowed his discovery that in France there is no such desire "to keep the white race pure" as is known to exist in the United States. When a negro was recently insulted in a Montmartre café, Premier Poincaré took occasion to state officially that no difference could be recognized between the rights of citizens separated only by colour, and the director of the café was fined 200 francs.

The reproaches levelled against black troops in the Ruhr, and the charges that they have committed outrage upon the German population, are dismissed by this writer as mere propaganda. There will always be occasional offences by an army of occupation, but in more than two years only 77 complaints were made against the black troops, of which 52 were substantiated, and the culprits were immediately punished. This proportion is no higher than that which is found among white soldiers. In deference to public opinion, all black troops were withdrawn from the Rhine in 1922. But this was "the first time in modern French history that a distinction was made between white and black French citizens."

Whether this argument will improve the case in the judgment of American readers is, perhaps, open to question.

MR. H. A. L. Fisher draws attention in the *Cornhill* to the extraordinary coincidence between Lenin's actual career and the forecast which that revolutionary leader gave as far back as 1907 of the rôle he was destined to play. Lenin predicted a great European war, the downfall of the old Russian empire "under the burden of its flagrant infirmities," and his own seizure of the helm amid general confusion. "If the Tsar," he said, "does not accommodate himself to my system, he must find a nail from which to hang himself." These were strange, apparently megalomaniac anticipations. But they were not so strange as the truth.

The qualities which gave Lenin his power are acutely analyzed in this article. Intellectually, the dictator was "quite third rate," a *doctrinaire* like Mr. de Valera, with no wit and no imagery and no eloquence in what he said or wrote, just a "strong, dogged, pedantic insistence on certain cardinal ideas, such as the class war, and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and world communism." He had no patriotic love for Russia as a country, a home, a native land. But such qualities, which in other places and at other times would have been a source of weakness, were among the chief sources of Lenin's strength.

For he had a creed, clear-cut, definite, which he never doubted or challenged, but was prepared to follow to the very last extremity to which it might lead. No consequences frightened, or even seemed to annoy him. To arouse opposition and shock prejudice was his delight. Not "the sweet murmur of praise" but "wild shouts of rage" were to him a tonic and an inspiration. Lenin had adopted a sense of values utterly different from that which prevailed in the world around him, and it was his intense joy to see the crash of that fabric of institutions in which the old values were symbolized. Luxurious cities ground to powder were a fair sight in his eyes. In the economic dislocation "the worthlessness of Russian paper," says Mr. Bertrand Russell (who knew Lenin) "struck him as comic."

By what strange paradox did a man of such character win leadership? Just because he was so thorough, and the Russian people had come to disbelieve in all schemes that were compromising or moderate. A man who has no country that wakens his patriotism will be unpopular with those who are still patriotic; but Tsardom had made the Russians very ready for citizenship of the world, and Lenin fired their blood by preaching a world-revolution. They are a "mobile, impressionable, religiously-minded" folk, ready to respond to one who shows unity of purpose, force of will, and "a certain Messianic intensity of character". Lenin knew his

own mind, and the support given by foreign powers to the counter-revolutionists rallied to his standard those Russian "patriots" who might otherwise have stood aloof.

As a young man, says Mr. Fisher, Lenin had built up the first working-class association in Petrograd. It was his great purpose to destroy all faith in those "constitutional" methods by which some thought to establish popular government gradually. For this purpose he was equipped—as was said of Robespierre—with "a foundation of bitterness." The obstacles of temperament which might have opposed him were "a faint heart, a deficiency in natural bile, a disabling dash of geniality or good humour, a gift of impartial social analysis." Lenin personally had none of these disadvantages, and he set about removing them from the disposition of other men in his group. Disappointment was in store for him as he looked for the class war throughout the world, particularly when he received the chilling reports from "Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst" about slow progress in England, and it became clear that "the Hendersons, MacDonalds and Snowdens were hopelessly reactionary." But the concessions which Lenin ultimately made, and his abatement of his original programme, were due to no change in his own mind. "The twenty per cent or so of tribute we shall have to pay to Capital" he observed, "is the ransom of our ignorance and technical incapacity." His communist experiment failed, and Mr. Fisher wonders just what will be the final outcome of the attempt. A peaceful transformation, as in France a century ago? An outburst of anti-Semitic fury that will sweep away the whole fabric? One thing is certain, that the old Russia has disappeared and will never return.

THE late Lord Morley explicitly prohibited anyone from becoming his biographer. But Professor J. H. Morgan sees no reason why he should not give the world some personal reminiscences of his old friend, feeling that in doing this he will not add to the popular type of "Memoirs" which—he admits—have "added a new terror to social life."

The London *Times* is responsible for the statement that Lord Morley was not ready with retort, and explains that wit and humour are seldom to be found dwelling in so serious a mind. On the contrary, says Professor Morgan, he was a master of dialectic, and in the thrust and counter-thrust of argumentative duel "his mind was as supple and his wit as keen as the wrist and eye of a good fencer." Especially "his characterizations in talk of his political colleagues... would make a piquant and disturbing

volume." He had indeed "an abnormally thin skin," and his critic remarks that this might have disqualified him from the life of politics, where—according to Lord Balfour—every participant should be pachydermatous. One recalls the remark of Dickens about the unfortunate plight of a person born with a skin too few in a world where most people have a skin too many. Mr. Thomas Hardy said to Professor Morgan that if Lord Morley had let politics alone, he might have been the Gibbon of his age. But that choice for him was impossible, and he propounded to his friend the alternative thus: "Which would you rather have been, Gibbon or Pitt, Macaulay or Palmerston?"

A number of surprising judgments by Morley have been made public in this article for the first time. He said that if he had been at Oxford in the days of the Oxford Movement, he thought he would have joined Newman, and that if he were an Irishman he would be a Sinn Feiner. The articles in *The Morning Post*, with almost every paragraph of which he disagreed, seemed to him the best polemical writing of the kind since *Junius*. Despite all his hatred of "compromise" in opinions, he was a constant compromiser in action; despite all his zeal for popular government, he loved personal power, and "no more autocratic Secretary for India ever reigned in Whitehall; none ever consulted his Council less, and assuredly none ever admonished a Viceroy more." He was a pacifist, but "had no words too profane for the ark of that covenant which men call the League of Nations." In the fiercest period of Sinn Fein outrage in Ireland, he would never condemn the horrors, but rather quote the parallel of Mazzini, and ask whether any peasantry would not do the same. For, says this writer, "of all his political affections, Ireland lay nearest his heart." He would have liked to go down to the House of Lords on January 6, 1921, and ask whether it was not now seen to have been an error to reject Gladstone's Home Rule plan. And, having asked this, he would have liked to fall dead—like Chatham.

On his views regarding the great war, and the motives which prompted his own resignation from the Cabinet in August, 1914, Lord Morley had drawn up a written statement, but could not be persuaded to allow its publication. He put the matter thus:

No, the truth can never be known. It will never overtake the legend. I have read many books of late, dealing with events in which I took some part, and all of them are wrong. "History" always misleads. Far more depended on the conversations of half an hour, and was transacted by them, than ever appeared in letters and despatches.

Some stray hints of what he thought are indeed preserved. He reminded Professor Morgan that every war since the time of Hannibal had been pronounced "inevitable," and asked "Was it our *casus belli*? Did we put that straight to Germany? Did we give the Kaiser half an hour? Didn't we play into the military party's hands?" And he told Mr. Asquith "We are only playing Russia's game."

These opinions and suggestions sound strange. Strange and unfortunate too was the forecast that Mr. Winston Churchill would win far more glory out of the war than Mr. Lloyd George. When the ex-premier fell at the election of 1922, Lord Morley declared that he felt like opening a bottle of champagne. And he said more than that, which the critic refuses to repeat.

On the whole, the article leaves one with the feeling that "Honest John" was a good friend, an amiable and most entertaining companion, a brilliant *raconteur*, a man of letters with infinite charm and width of knowledge, but that the step he took in August, 1914, was not more advantageous to his own peace of mind than to the interests of his country. Books and reflective theory were his field. But it was well for England and for the freedom of the world that Mr. Lloyd George was made of different stuff, and that to him it fell to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm.

H. L. S.