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THE RADICAL PARTY AND SOCIAL REFORM

THE Conference having failed to arrive at an agreement on the subject of the Lords' Veto the Prime Minister has announced his intention of advising an immediate dissolution of Parliament. The country will therefore again be plunged, somewhat gratuitously as some may think, into the whirl and excitement of a general election almost before these words appear in print, and for the second time within the year.

Mr. Balfour has, in a statesmanlike speech at Nottingham, outlined the Unionist programme, which includes efficient national defence, a reformed and effective Second Chamber, the maintenance of the Union, Tariff Reform, and an increase of small land-ownership; and he has appealed to the moderate and fair-minded opinion of the electorate, to the silent voter. Some electioneering manifestoes have appeared. There is one, of course, from Mr. Churchill. Also another from Mr. Keir Hardie, in which he bitterly attacks the Government, and evidently shows that, for financial or other reasons, a second general election within the year is not popular with the Labour party. Mr. John Redmond has returned from the States with 200,000 dollars of alien money for Home Rule electioneering purposes. Meantime the Parliament (Veto) Bill has been forced on the Lords without a possibility of amendment or adequate debate. Lord Lansdowne, in reply, promptly tabled five resolutions dealing with Second Chamber Reform. Although pressed in both Houses the Government have given no further information on the all-important subject of 'guarantees' beyond the Prime Minister's statement of the 14th of April last. It is also interesting to note that Lord Rosebery's resolution on House of Lords reform was unanimously passed by that assembly on the 17th of November.

We have here political issues of grave and far-reaching importance, and in effect a national crisis of the first magnitude, in which the Union and the continued existence of an effective Second Chamber are both at stake. For the next few weeks, in the

conflict and confusion of issues; it will be difficult to appeal to calm and dispassionate opinion. Nevertheless, I desire briefly to consider the attitude of the Radical party and its leaders towards Social Reform, which is here taken to mean a general material improvement in the condition of our wage-earning population. Apart from the questions of Irish Home Rule and of National Defence, the chief issues before the country, such as, for example, Free Trade or Tariff Reform, Radical and Socialist taxation or a scientific tariff, either directly affect and appeal to the industrial and material condition and prosperity of our people; or, like the abolition of the Lords' Veto, are merely a means to an end. The Irish Nationalists desire the abolition of the Veto in order to pave the way to Home Rule, and for the same reason are prepared to swallow Radical Budgets. The Labour-Socialist party also think they see in the Lords' Veto the chief obstacle to further Socialist legislation, such as the Right to Work Bill and the reversal of the Osborne judgment. Even the question of efficient national defence mainly resolves itself into a question of national expenditure and taxation. The hard practical facts of our social economics meet us almost at every turn. Under all these circumstances, therefore, it is not surprising that Radical leaders during the past two general elections, and since, have laid themselves out to appeal to the material interests of the industrial electorate, and even to its cupidity, in order to gain political support.

Let us, then, endeavour to ascertain, not so much from election oratory as from their calmer and more dispassionate pronouncements, what Radical leaders are really driving at when they talk of Social Reform, and by what means they propose to improve the material condition of the nation.

The appalling problem of destitution in our midst is, without doubt, a great blot on our modern civilisation. It would be very easy to pile up the agony on this subject. The daily published records of our police-courts alone supply all the material required for the most ardent social reformer. They contain every aspect and variety of human need and human tragedy, while the problem of destitution, of the actual want of the necessities of life, complicated no doubt by vice and crime, of which it is most frequently either the cause or the result, is inextricably woven through them all.

Discontent, we are told, is the mother of progress. If this is true, as no doubt within limits it is, then indeed is modern England on the path of lusty progress. Education has spread and widened; means of communication, of knowledge, and of international intercourse have vastly improved and increased since the days when Adam Smith advocated individual liberty as the foundation and the essence of political economy; and the result of it all

is that while the British Empire has increased in area, in wealth, and in power beyond the wildest dreams of the Early Victorian economists and politicians, and the aggregate wealth of the British people constantly arouses both the envy and admiration of the modern civilised world, yet the poor and the destitute and the discontented are with us still in steadily increasing numbers.

There are thus two essential factors of the situation, namely : (1) a national problem of unemployment and destitution of undoubted and grave dimensions ; and (2) heterogeneous political forces fully alive to this problem working by and through a Radical Government for their own diverse ends.

This brief and incomplete summary of the position, viewed mainly from a Social Reform standpoint, is not intentionally partisan. I write as an armchair politician with some practical knowledge of the exigencies of party warfare and electioneering oratory, but with a sincere desire to discuss, and even criticise, the speeches of the Radical leaders of to-day, so far as possible from a non-party view. The pressing and important nature of our social problems should raise them above party, if such were possible. For the same reason the speeches of the present Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and other Cabinet Ministers referring to them demand our earnest attention, mainly because of the political forces that those Ministers, for the time being, represent. An emperor may, or may not, be an exceptional personality, but if he is the head of, let us say, a homogeneous and well-trained army of several million men, whatever he may say or do is eagerly and respectfully listened to and noted. If the army be heterogeneous and ill-regulated the position becomes even more stimulating and attractive, because of the increased uncertainty as to what its leader or leaders may say or do in any given set of circumstances.

The particular speech to which I desire to call attention is that delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the City Temple on the 17th of October last. The circumstances in which this speech, subsequently described as 'immortal' by the chairman, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, was delivered are worth noting. The place was a church. The chairman a well-known Nonconformist divine. Its object was in support of the social work of the Liberal Christian League, an organisation with supporters among all political parties, Labour, Liberal, and Conservative, including Mr. A. J. Balfour, who had sent an approving telegram which was read by the chairman to the meeting. The church was crowded. The proceedings were opened with prayer, and Mr. Lloyd George then delivered a long and eloquent address on what he described as the problem of destitution. It is impossible to imagine circumstances under which party politics would have been

more out of place, or where a sober, earnest, and unbiassed pronouncement on a pressing national question would be more naturally expected.

Nothing of the kind occurred. Without being uncharitable or biassed, it is, I submit, impossible to read and examine Mr. Lloyd George's speech without a feeling of regret that a responsible Cabinet Minister, on such an occasion, and in a place of worship, should, with thin philosophic pretence, have spoken in so illogical and partisan a spirit. It is true that the Unionist Press, with some exceptions, were strangely kind and sympathetic in their criticisms of this 'immortal' speech next day. The *Times*, for example, described it in a leading article as 'sincere,' 'moderate,' and 'a philosophic handling of grave social questions.' In a letter published in the same paper a day or two after Mr. Amery, on the other hand, characterised it as 'in no sense meant to be a serious analysis of existing social evils, but—just "Limehouse" through the nose, preceded by prayer and followed by nauseous flattery.' The *Spectator* took quite a different view from the *Times*. In an article published in its issue of the 22nd of October much of the contents of the speech, we are told, was 'essentially mischievous.' This evoked a characteristic outburst of offensive personalities from Mr. Lloyd George (Crediton, the 22nd of October) directed against the editor of the *Spectator*, but he offered no reply to the temperate and reasoned criticism of the article.

Referring to this personal attack the *Spectator*, in its issue of the 29th of October, remarks that Mr. Lloyd George

has chosen a method of reply which makes it impossible for us to pursue the controversy. We feel bound, however [the *Spectator* continues], to express our deep regret that one who holds so high an office in the nation's Government should have been unable to control his temper under criticism which, whether merited or not, at any rate did not pass the proper bounds of political controversy. The nation has a right to expect from those on whom it confers a great public trust a high standard of conduct, and as a rule that expectation is fulfilled.

It is also worthy of notice that on the 27th of October the Rev. R. J. Campbell, the chairman of the City Temple meeting, wrote a letter to the *Times* emphatically repudiating the accusation that the meeting had been organised for political purposes. He pointed out that the meeting had been called to direct public attention to the problem of destitution and to ask for support for voluntary service among the poor. 'We hold,' writes Mr. Campbell, 'that the solving of the problem of destitution should be considered superior to the exigencies of party strife,' and he went on to state that efforts had been made to secure the attendance of some prominent speaker of Conservative politics on the occasion in question, unfortunately without success.

In view of these various and somewhat conflicting comments and incidents let us proceed to examine this historic utterance, always remembering that the speaker was a responsible member of high rank in the present Government, the guardian, for the time being, of the national purse; that the subject on which he spoke is of wide, serious, and even pressing national import; and that the views he then expressed, and the principles he expounded, may not long hence be translated into Acts of Parliament if the Radical party are returned to power.

Having disclaimed all intention of offending party prejudice or aiming at party advantage in anything he might say on that occasion, Mr. Lloyd George commenced by alluding to destitution among the masses of the people and also to the prevalence of labour unrest in civilised countries. This latter, he suggested, was caused by discontent of the workman with his lot, a recent article in the *Westminster Gazette* from a 'well-informed' correspondent dealing particularly with the workmen of the north of England being cited in support of this suggestion. One phrase here used by Mr. Lloyd George is worth quoting, for it seems to strike the main note of his speech and at once opens the door to hostile criticism. The prevalent labour unrest in industrial England, he suggests, is based upon the contrast between the workman's 'hard grey life and that of other more favoured, although not more meritorious, members of Society.' 'Are you sure,' asked the speaker a little further on, 'that there is no real justification for this discontent?'

Here at once is confusion of thought between industrial employment and destitution. The workman discontented with his lot and envious of the well-to-do is one thing; the unemployed and destitute another. I do not like to suggest that a Minister of the Crown, addressing a large non-party meeting in a place of worship, deliberately encouraged a violation of the tenth commandment. But I, for one, do not believe that the picture drawn of the British workman and his 'hard grey lot' is true to life. I claim some knowledge of the British workman of the north of England, having represented a Lancashire industrial constituency for twenty years in the House of Commons. I have had tea with colliers' wives, descended coal pits with their husbands, associated in sport and conviviality with glass-blowers and other workmen, and generally had much intercourse with Lancashire working men of all sorts. As a class they are healthy, happy, and as contented as is compatible with mortal lot; not concerned to envy the wealth of their employer, thoroughly enjoying their own amusements—rabbit-coursing, pigeon-flying, whippet-racing, football matches, &c., with social intercourse in their clubs. I rather fancy that many a sturdy north of England artisan might resent the veiled

imputation that he coveted his neighbour's house or anything that is his.

Mr. Lloyd George made a bad start, and, perhaps unwittingly—for great is the force of political training and party instinct—at once appears to have struck the note of class hatred and social discord. He went on to mention Tariff Reform and Old-Age Pensions, ingeniously bringing in the controversial statements that the former must raise the cost of living, has done so in foreign countries, will injure the fortunes of certain individuals (not specified), bring ruin to certain vested interests and trades, and is a 'raging and tearing propaganda.' Every single one of these assertions can be challenged by Tariff Reformers. Under the circumstances they were obviously and strikingly out of place.

The Old-Age Pension Act serves the double purpose of reflecting credit on a Radical Government and its sympathetic officials, and emphasising the amount of national poverty and destitution which these pensions are designed in some small measure to relieve. It is sufficient here to note that the great national problem of destitution in its most serious aspect touches early life and middle age, in regard to which any talk of old-age pensions is almost mockery. It is, in effect, to say to the destitute and starving bread-winner in the prime of life: 'You may be unemployed and starving now; but never mind—in thirty or forty years, if you live long enough, you may be eligible for a pension of 5s. a week.'

But I pass from these minor points to the essence and gravamen of the Chancellor's speech—namely, the causes of national waste and how, according to Mr. Lloyd George, this waste may possibly be remedied, how the wilderness may blossom like a rose, and all may be blessed with abundance. We are not only entitled, but bound, to infer from the serious public utterances of a Radical Cabinet Minister of the front rank, made on a serious occasion, the general lines of future Radical Social Reform policy.

There are three counts in Mr. Lloyd George's indictment on national waste. First, in respect to armaments; second, in respect to land; and, third, in respect to what he terms the 'idle rich.' First, as to armaments. Pending international agreement, the necessity for expenditure on armaments is reluctantly admitted, but this expenditure is condemned, on principle, as 'preparation for human slaughter' and as 'gigantic national waste.' Then comes the following astounding statement: 'Were this burden removed Great Britain could afford to pay every member of the wage-earning classes an additional 4s. a week without interfering in the slightest degree with the profits of capital.'

I submit that every one of these propositions can be directly challenged on both economic and ethical grounds as either abso-

lutely untrue or dangerously misleading, and if they were ever to be acted on by the Government of our country must inevitably lead to increased unemployment and national disaster.

Let us first take the simple economic proposition that 70,000,000*l.* spent on armaments is 'gigantic national waste,' and is depriving each wage-earner in the country of 4*s.* a week. If this were true, and believed by the wage-earners to be true, it is in itself a bribe to every such wage-earner in the country who has a vote to support through thick and thin a Government pledged to reduce national armaments whenever and wherever possible. This is the measure of its danger.

But the economic truth is all the other way. By far the greater proportion of the 70,000,000*l.* in question goes in pay or wages to the thousands of able-bodied citizens who constitute our Navy and Army. Some authorities put this amount as high as 90 per cent. of the whole. In addition to this, and taking our naval expenditure only, full work in our shipyards spells prosperity and good wages in our engineering shops, iron and steel factories, coal mines and other allied industries. The money is circulated in wages to many thousands of operatives and artisans throughout the kingdom, and through them to the small shopkeepers of our industrial centres, ay, and even to our publicans and tobacconists, who have as much right to live and thrive as any other class of the community. A battleship may or may not be 'an instrument of human slaughter,' but its manufacture means good wages and the means of living to thousands of bread-winners and their dependents. All this has to be set on the other side of the account. Had Mr. Lloyd George taken these economic facts into consideration, we are entitled to ask, when drawing his indictment on national waste and recklessly promising an extra 4*s.* a week—how to be earned or by whom to be paid not specified—to every wage-earner in the country?

Then there is the national education and training involved. War, with all its grim horrors, is one thing. Preparation and readiness for war is quite another. I have recently returned from the north of Scotland, and had opportunity while there of visiting a portion of our North Sea fleet in Cromarty Firth. I can vouch from personal intercourse and observation for the existence of scores and hundreds of able-bodied bluejackets, men of their hands, healthy, well-developed citizens of our Empire, trained to habits of temperance, obedience, and self-control, who, when their term of naval service is done, can be, and are, utilised in many a skilled and useful service of peace. Is the money spent in organising and educating this fine body of men, from boyhood up, into manly and useful citizens to be described as 'gigantic national waste'? Are not the virile qualities engendered by naval training

and service, particularly in this ultra-civilised and luxurious age, a lasting national asset of the greatest value?

Not long since I was talking to a Marines' instructor at one of our leading military depots. I had been admiring the physique and general appearance of the Marines' rank and file, who bear comparison with any regular troops in the Service. I was told of the extraordinary physical and moral improvement effected in the first six months' training; how raw, slouching, country lads were rapidly transformed by drill, physical exercises, and good food into well-set-up, healthy, and disciplined men. No doubt the same can be said for every branch of our military service.

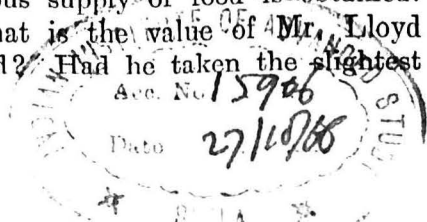
There can, then, be only one answer to all these questions. And we are entitled further to ask Mr. Lloyd George, if the policy of himself and those he represents is to decry naval and military service and reduce it on every opportunity to the smallest possible dimensions, what training and occupation of similar economic and social value is he prepared to substitute for it? How are these boys and young men, deprived of the training and pay involved, to be accommodated with the promised extra 4s. a week? And will the country lose or gain by the change? Particulars on these points are urgently required.

As a minor logical proposition I further submit that a battleship is not merely and necessarily an instrument for human slaughter. Its production is of economic value, just as much, proportionately, as is that of a motor-car, a rifle, or a fishing-rod. They all involve employment, circulation of currency, means of livelihood. Besides being a potential engine of destruction a battleship is a means of locomotion and Imperial communication, as well as a valuable training-school for some hundreds of men. If its production is 'gigantic national waste,' so also is the production of pleasure motor-cars, sporting guns and rifles, fishing-rods, &c., &c.; in a word, of all the paraphernalia which are not in themselves productive, but merely minister to the wants and relaxations of the well-to-do classes and in some cases are instruments of destruction. Mr. Lloyd George's economic logic on armaments, carried to its ultimate conclusion, would sweep away numerous industries, drive capital abroad, and add largely to the ranks of the unemployed.

Finally, on the armaments question, it is as well to clear our minds of cant on the subject of international agreement. I only allude briefly to this far-reaching consideration, which demands an article to itself. Ever since the day when Alexander the Great sat down and wept because there were no more worlds for him to conquer, the nations of the world have continued to arm and, on occasion, to fight, for their own hand. The measure of their preparation and means for national defence has always been their own

spirit and resources, and never any agreement with other independent nations. Does any common-sense man, off a political platform, really believe that after a thousand years or so of practical experience and evolution, during the last sixty years of which there has been a civilised war of sorts every three or four years, there is the least chance of any binding international agreement between first-class Powers on the subject of reduction of armaments? Will any self-respecting nation ever trust its position in the world of nations, and possibly its very existence as a first-class Power—I do not allude here, of course, to minor commercial questions—to the arbitrament of a Hague tribunal or abide by the result if its own sense of justice is outraged? ‘A nation only deserves to be free,’ said Colonel Saunderson on one occasion in a Home Rule debate in the House of Commons, ‘that is strong enough and brave enough to be free,’ and all history, from the days of the Israelites onwards, supports this sentiment. Preparedness for war, to use a hackneyed but vitally true expression, is the best safeguard of peace; and if this is true now, as it always has been, and as I for one firmly believe it to be true, what are we to think of Mr. Lloyd George’s talk at the City Temple of expenditure on armaments as ‘gigantic waste,’ and his wholly illusory bribe of an extra 4s. a week to every wage-earner in this country as the price of reduction of such expenditure, except as political clap-trap of the worst and most dangerous kind, entirely out of place in the building and under the circumstances in which it was delivered?

The second count in the indictment was waste of land. Having prefaced his remarks by the statement, in itself true, that the land of this country is not producing half of what it is capable of yielding, Mr. Lloyd George apparently found himself unable to avoid running a tilt against landlords and game preservation. ‘Land by the square mile,’ he gravely informed his audience, ‘is thrown away upon stags and pheasants and partridges.’ This wild statement, utterly at variance with the real facts of the case, has already been freely criticised and exposed in the public Press. I will only here repeat, what is familiar to all who have any practical knowledge whatever of the subject, that pheasants and partridges thrive best on highly cultivated land, do no damage worth mentioning to crops—in fact do some good by consuming insects; that if any damage is done by game the same is paid for at full value by the landlord or shooting tenant; while in the rearing, preservation, and pursuit of such game much healthy and regular employment at good wages is given to many thousands of people throughout the United Kingdom; and last, but not least, a most wholesome and nutritious supply of food is obtained. Under these circumstances, what is the value of Mr. Lloyd George’s criticisms on this head? Had he taken the slightest



trouble to inform himself of the facts? And what is the conclusion at which he is driving except that in order to reduce unemployment and destitution it is necessary to destroy a legitimate and widespread industry, do away with a valuable source of food supply, throw thousands of men out of work, drive capital to other countries where better sporting facilities can be obtained, all without conferring the slightest benefit on the agriculture of this country? Still, we have it on Mr. R. J. Campbell's authority that this was an 'immortal' speech.

The statement that 'land by the square mile is thrown away upon stags' is open to the same condemnation. In one sense even more so, because Scotch deer-stalking is a rich man's amusement, the sport of a privileged few, and mis-statements on the subject are more likely to be believed and to arouse prejudice and class-hatred. It is sufficient here to remind ourselves that Scotch deer forests comprise the coldest and most inhospitable mountain regions in the British Isles, more or less snow-bound and wind-swept from November to April, and are, in the opinion of all who have studied the subject, quite incapable of being put to better economic use. The recent Athol Forest Commission was conclusive on this point. Better far be a stone-breaker or crossing-sweeper than attempt to make a living by agriculture or stock-raising on any reasonable area of an ordinary Scotch deer forest. On the other hand, deer will live and thrive where sheep would starve and die, and it is open to conclusive proof that on economic grounds alone the preservation of red deer on the mountain slopes and in the rocky glens of bonnie Scotland brings more money into that country and gives more employment than any other use that could be made of the same areas. To legislate or tax deer forests out of existence means to drive capital abroad, throw large numbers of Scotch ghillies and dependents out of employment, and so increase poverty and destitution.

I confess that it is difficult to write in temperate language on the land philosophy of Messrs. Lloyd George and the Radical party. I believe that in the future intensive development of agriculture, in the increase of small landowners and yeomen farmers, in the establishment and encouragement of fresh agricultural industries, such as the growth of beet for sugar manufacture, and of tobacco, carried out by State aid whenever and wherever necessary and possible, lies one way at least towards the social reform and material improvement of our densely populated country. But no good purpose can be served by stirring up class war and attacking the amusements of the well-to-do. Mr. Lloyd George went out of his way to talk of the 'pure greed,' 'avarice,' and 'selfish niggardliness,' presumably of landowners and game preservers, and asked why 'men and women should have less

thought and attention given to them than cattle.' Not a single tittle of evidence or scrap of fact is or can be adduced to justify these offensive and sweeping generalities. Moreover, they are beside the mark; arguments *ad hominem* and not *ad rem*.

The hard economic laws that govern the situation will continue in force whatever Mr. Lloyd George may say or do. Land remains in grass and is cultivated and farmed in large holdings because this system pays best under modern conditions. The common difficulty of a small-holder with no capital is to avoid bankruptcy. Large landowners usually spend more on the land than they get out of it, generally because they possess other sources of income and can afford to do so, greatly to the benefit of their employees and dependents. How land cultivation is to be enhanced and extended and small ownership increased by piling additional taxes on an already overburdened industry, severely handicapped as it is by free foreign competition, is incomprehensible to any practical man who can free his mind from party bias and political cant. The proposal would be ridiculous and contemptible if it were not so dangerous to the prosperity and well-being of our country. Had Mr. Lloyd George, instead of flinging false accusations and unmerited abuse at landowners and game preservers who, in number, are a negligible political quantity, used his opportunity in the City Temple to indicate how land cultivation could be extended and improved by State aid, he would have proved himself better worthy of the occasion and of the responsibility of his high office.

The last count in his indictment was levelled against the 'idle rich,' an expression of which he may claim to be the proud inventor. They number at least two millions of our population, we are told, spend the whole of their time walking about with guns on their shoulders and dogs at their heels, or on golf courses, or tearing about in motor-cars; *withdraw a large number of capable men and women from productive work; and impose a serious charge on the community.* (The italics are mine.)

It is difficult to understand how any responsible Minister, particularly on a serious occasion and from a non-party platform, could have committed himself to such wild and highly imaginative social inaccuracies and economic fallacies as these. I hold no brief for the 'idle rich,' a body of citizens, if they exist at all, to which I lay no claim to belong. Nor do I venture to write on their behalf. Such of them as fulfil Mr. Lloyd George's description in the slightest particular can very well look after themselves. Let us assume for the sake of argument that there are some two million British citizens who spend their time and money in the manner described. As a matter of fact, Mr. Amery has already shown Mr. Lloyd George to be entirely wrong in his arithmetic on this point.

But let that pass. How do rich idlers impose a charge on the community and withdraw capable and intelligent people from productive work? On what principle or by what right does a Minister of the Crown set himself up to be a public judge of idleness or industry—in a word, of morality in private life—usually held to be a matter of private arrangement between the individual, his conscience, and his Maker? If any such principle is admitted, then there is an end to all individual freedom and responsibility. A Radical Government must tell us when to rise in the morning, at what hour to go to bed, what to eat, drink and avoid, and what pleasures and relaxations we may or may not pursue; and these regulations must apply not only to the idle rich, whose votes are a negligible quantity, but also to all classes of the community, including the wage-earners, on whose political support Mr. Lloyd George's high office depends. The logical results of Mr. Lloyd George's propositions have only to be stated in the simplest terms in order to show their utter and inherent absurdity. But the danger of it all lies in the economic fallacies these propositions contain and the great injury they would inflict on employment and industrial prosperity if acted on by Government. Accumulated liquid capital is the foundation of our material wealth and the source of employment. The individuals who own and spend most of this capital are rich either because of their own thrift and capacity or that of their ancestors. So far as we have got at present they are entitled to spend this capital as they like, either in their own country or abroad, subject to due observance of existing laws. Assume that some of them spend it foolishly or selfishly, though not unlawfully, again I ask: Does Mr. Lloyd George seriously propose to regulate their conduct and expenditure by Act of Parliament, and, if so, how does he propose to keep such individuals and their money within the kingdom, or to prevent them going abroad and outside his jurisdiction? And how can he confine State control of private expenditure to one particular class of the community? And will the wage-earners of the kingdom tolerate State control of their weekly wages, including the amount of beer and tobacco they may or may not, under the new *régime*, be graciously permitted to consume? Finally, if his propositions do not mean all this, as I confidently submit they do, what is the practical bearing of his talk about the expenditure and pursuits of that elusive class, the 'idle rich'?

But we are told they are a charge on the community, and withdraw capable people from productive work. I have always been under the impression that a very large number of our industries and the employment of millions of our wage-earners in our complex system of civilisation depend for prosperity and continuance on the spending power of the rich, whether idle or industrious.

Is the manufacture of motor-cars, sporting guns and rifles, fishing rods and tackle, golf clubs, unproductive work; and is it all to be swept away in the Lloyd George millennium? Are horse-breeders, jewellers, milliners, picture-hat makers, tailors, hotel proprietors, artists—to take at random a few of the thousand-and-one industries, trades and occupations that depend on the spending powers of the rich in our midst—to be suppressed and disappear, and the wage-earners and industrious workers who now live and move and have their material being by such means to find some other jobs under the new Radical *régime*?

One cardinal fact appears to be ignored by Mr. Lloyd George in his Utopian dream, namely, that we live in a world of competing nations as well as of striving and struggling individuals, and that the possessors of liquid wealth whom he attacks can remove their capital abroad by a stroke of the pen and at short notice, and themselves from his legislative grasp when Radical legislation has made this country too hot to hold them, while the wage-earners who lose employment in consequence must stay at home and suffer the consequences. This is the pity of it. It is only the possession of centuries of accumulated capital that justifies or makes possible the existence of forty-five millions of population on the small area of the British Isles. It is only by measures that will tend to increase the aggregate sum of that capital and encourage its employment at home and not abroad that national prosperity can be increased and unemployment and destitution diminished. Yet he and his school apparently prefer to make speeches and advocate measures that arouse cupidity and class-hatred on the one hand, create distrust and a sense of insecurity on the other, and so tend to increase the very evils proposed to be mitigated or cured.

His final counsel to the meeting, and the people, is to 'enlarge the purpose of their politics' with unswerving resolution, and presumably on the lines of internecine strife that he sketched in his historic and 'immortal' speech. So far as we can judge in detail of the purpose of Radical politics, which is to be enlarged *à la* Lloyd George until redemption is accomplished and material happiness for all obtained, its programme only includes State Insurance and higher taxation of land, in addition to the Labour Exchanges and the Budget already in being, also reduction of armaments expenditure whenever possible. In other words, their 'enlarged' purpose is still only concerned with arbitrary redistribution of existing wealth, so far as it remains or can be kept at home, but has no proposal of any kind that may increase the aggregate of national and Imperial wealth and prosperity; while Imperial and Colonial questions and relationship, that may directly affect material prosperity at home, are left severely alone.

The practical conceptions of Radical Social-Reform policy, when examined in detail, are in truth not only miserably inadequate, but almost contemptible in scope.

The dominant idea, as I have already observed, is internecine class strife. The minority who happen to own the capital that runs the various and complicated wheels of our great industrial and social machine are to be taxed and penalised, and possibly their private lives and expenditure put under State control (otherwise what is the sense of talking about their luxury and idleness?) in the vain and mischievous hope that the wage-earner and the destitute will be blessed with abundance, or at all events with sufficiency, at the rich taxpayers' expense!

Electioneering oratory may be freely discounted after the event. But we are not discussing oratory of this avowed character; and it is impossible to avoid the expression of a deep regret that Mr. Lloyd George did not attempt a higher and more statesmanlike review of the problem of destitution from the neutral platform of the City Temple when he had the opportunity. We are reluctantly driven to the conclusion that the heterogeneous political forces that now dominate the situation in the House of Commons are behind Radical Ministers, even on neutral and quasi-religious platforms; that Mr. Amery's description of the City Temple speech as 'Limehouse through the nose' is not so very far off the mark; and that Radical politicians may still continue to appeal to the cupidity of the working classes in order to gain votes. Mr. Lloyd George has already made a notable start in this direction—Mile End, the 21st of November.

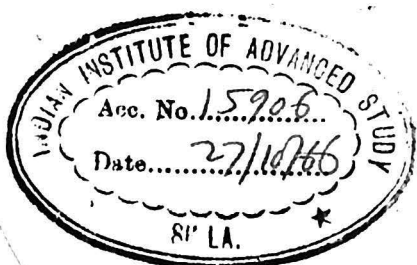
The problem of destitution is with us still, as it has been since the days of the ancient Britons, and as it will be, on the highest Authority, to the end of time. Is it presumptuous to suggest to Radical leaders that in its essence this problem lies outside the field of politics, and is mainly concerned with the frailty of human nature; so that he who would proclaim that the purpose of politics may be so enlarged as to deal comprehensively with the problem, and that material salvation all round can be obtained by Act of Parliament, is not a statesman but a political charlatan? 'Poverty is to be attributed,' says a recent Poor Law Commission Report, 'to failure in character rather than to any particular economic cause.' And the Liberal Christian League, at all events, appear to recognise this when, as Mr. R. J. Campbell states, they appeal for support for voluntary service among the poor.

Still, political action can take some share in the mitigation of this ancient social problem of evil. This is readily and generally admitted. But the unfortunate part of it is that Radical political purpose, as so far declared, remains strongly partisan in character and scope, and therefore deficient and incomplete. Why,

for example, has the Aliens Act remained unenforced and a dead letter, and why is the destitute or needy foreigner still allowed freely to aggravate our domestic problem? Why is no mention made of some practical economic means of improving the cultivation of our own soil, of securing more efficient co-operation in the marketing and distribution of our own agricultural produce, and of bringing people back to the land through the incentive of small ownership by the individual and not by the State? And, lastly, why is nothing ever said or attempted by the Radical party on the great subject of State-aided colonisation of our fertile unoccupied lands beyond the seas, that still await the overflowing man- and woman-power of the British home-born race?

The partisan answer might be that these are mainly Unionist proposals, and therefore useless for Radical vote-catching purposes. Nevertheless, these and other cognate questions imperatively demand the serious attention of the electorate in this time of political storm and stress, and especially of the fair-minded and silent voter, who is here particularly addressed; while we await the advent of an Administration who will attempt the solution of our social problems, so far as they are soluble by Government action, from a higher standpoint, and with a wider view, than anything yet put forward by Radical Ministers.

HENRY SETON-KARR.



IS THERE A CONSERVATIVE PARTY?

Is the existence of a Conservative party under the circumstances of to-day an 'organised hypocrisy'? This question is asked in tones of varying insistence in many quarters. In some it is turned with genial evasion; in many—and some of them the most unexpected—it is answered by an emphatic affirmative; in few it is met with a categorical denial.

It is the main purpose of this paper to review with candour the political situation and to consider whether there is any grain of truth in the above insinuation.

I

It is common ground that political parties are, to an unusual extent, in a condition of disintegration. At all times and in all parties there are disintegrating forces at work. Were it otherwise political atrophy would speedily ensue. 'Disintegration' is nothing else than the indispensable solvent which prevents the accumulation in the system of noxious acidity. Political health depends upon the preservation of a due balance in the party between the integrating and disintegrating elements. But there are times when the latter acquire a predominance which seems permanently to threaten, and does temporarily destroy, the party fabric itself. Beyond all dispute such a time is the present. To emphasise the fact would be to labour a commonplace.

To find any real parallel to the existing situation we shall have to go a long way back. It has, indeed, some features which recall the condition of political affairs after the disruption of the old Tory party under Sir Robert Peel in 1846. There are obvious points of resemblance, again, to the position of the Whigs in 1841, when the fate of Lord Melbourne's Ministry lay in the hollow of O'Connell's hand. 'The right honourable member for Tamworth,' said Mr. Leader, the Liberal member for Westminster, 'governs England; the honourable and learned member for Dublin governs Ireland; the Whigs govern nothing but Downing Street.'