

THE NEW AGE

INCORPORATING "CREDIT POWER"
A WEEKLY REVIEW OF POLITICS, LITERATURE, AND ART

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NOTES OF THE WEEK.

By the use of what it refers to as "stimulants," *G. K.'s Weekly* has staggered on to the issue of one more number. It reminds its supporters that "time is the essence of the contract," and that of the 400 half-crowns a week necessary to make good its losses only about one-eighth of that amount has yet been promised. Among a selection of quotations from letters sent in by its readers, the following seems to us to be by far the most pertinent:

"I think Mr. Penty is right in saying that the first concern of Distributists must be to get their philosophy right and to find some common ground of agreement."

The need for such a reminder is exemplified in an article appearing in the same issue. The article is entitled "Distributism at Work," but a careful study of it leaves one in pitch dark so far as any hint appears as to what Distributism is. According to the author, Mr. Hugh Jones, the doctrine is being applied by Denmark, of whose citizens he says, "No single principle of Distributism has been omitted by these far-seeing people"; but in a whole page of eulogy there is no mention of what these principles may be. Even the editorial article on the front page, which purports to be a "last dying speech and confession," brings no enlightenment. The nearest approach to a clue is in the closing lines in which it is stated:

"We wish to turn the proletarian into a proprietor; and to permit the business man to mind his own business. For that purpose he must own his own capital; but he must also, as far as is reasonably possible, do his own work. This is the substance of what we have to say; and nobody else is even trying to say it."

This passage, presumably written by Mr. Chesterton, is typical of the brilliantly defined indefinities which animate the critical writings of *G. K.'s Weekly*. Here, at first blush, is a very definite picture. It portrays the business man endeavouring to do his own work—producing without the co-operation of the proletarian. But immediately the painter of the picture heavily varnishes it with the reservation "as far as reasonably possible," thereby turning it into a mirror in which every onlooker

sees something different according to where he happens to be standing. In this instance, however, no particular harm is done, for the dilemma in which Mr. Chesterton is trying to place the business man happens also to represent a condition of affairs which the business man is actually striving to reach. That it to say, Capital is continuously endeavouring to displace labour by machinery—i.e., to "do its own work." A "Distributism" which tends to stimulate that process can hardly be of much practical use as a corrective of Capitalism. The very reasons that impel capitalists to try to dispense with the proletariat would also oblige a proletarian proprietorship to dispense with the proletariat—unless, coincidentally with that administrative change, there was a radical change in the fundamental principles of national finance. We quoted Mr. Chesterton last week as observing that finance could fractionise the purchasing power of a shilling in a man's pocket. That power would be in no wise impaired by a proletarian proprietorship of the plant of this country. The control over economic policy does not reside in the ownership or administration of productive processes, but in the control of the credit on which those processes are dependent. And economic emancipation (which we take to be the ideal enshrined in "Distributism") would not necessarily be guaranteed even if Mr. Chesterton himself became the supreme controller of credit. There would yet remain for him the problem—"How shall I use my power now I have got it?" Unless he ignored certain fundamental postulates of "sound finance" he would find that no benevolent intentions on his part would impede that fractionising of purchasing power to which he has called attention. To prevent it he would have first to discover how to expand the volume of credit without raising the price level. That done, he would not need to plan out a programme of Distributism—he could simply sit back and watch the business man and the proletarian fraternising in much the same manner as they did last Wednesday evening when the newspapers came out with the magic formula—"Australia, all out, 125." Only now the magic

would not arise from the news that one team of players had scored 289 runs more than the other, but that the measured rate of natural production had exceeded that of national consumption by three to one, and that the National Price Factor for food, clothes, and shelter would therefore be "one third of cost"—that the purchasing power of existing personal incomes was going to be trebled. When "Distributism" is lifted up on to the plane of Credit it will draw all men unto it, and there will be no need for Mr. Chesterton to indulge in such halting reflections as he does when he says:

"We propose that, so far as possible, the owner should labour with his own capital and the capitalist apply his own labour. This cannot be ideally achieved under human conditions; but neither can Communism nor Capitalism. The only difference is that ideal Distributism would be too good for this world; whereas ideal Capitalism and Communism would be much too bad for it.

It may occur to his readers to ask what is the use of forming a League of Distributists to advocate something which is beyond the deserts of humanity, and in any case ideally unattainable. They had much better contemplate this ineffable thing in a Distributist convent.

Since the recent suicide of Mlle. Regine Flory in London, an account of her life by Max Viterbo, the Director of the Cigale Theatre, has been running in the *News of the World*. One episode is narrated in which she comes into contact with Jaures, whose intervention at a police-station saved her from the indignity of detention there. Some time afterwards, having fallen a victim to the drug habit, she overhears a plot between three of her male acquaintances to destroy the career of the great Socialist:

"Beppo protested that he did not care for the proposal, but quickly came to heel when Baron de Huc reminded him that he could be expelled from France within 24 hours as an undesirable. It was first of all suggested that Beppo should persuade Regine Flory to invite Jean Jaures to dinner at the flat of d'Archange, where cocaine, morphia, and opium would be dispensed to disreputable men and women who would also be there. Then, at a given signal, the police would raid the flat and Jaures would be compromised beyond recovery. 'It means power for my father, and perhaps the Prime Ministership,' exclaimed d'Archange, who unfolded the plan—a hundred thousand francs for me and thirty thousand for de Huc."

"'Forty,' corrected de Huc.

"'And five for Beppo.'

"'Ten,' corrected Beppo.

"'If you like. I shall make it good out of the secret funds.'

The plan was subsequently modified, as it was thought Jaures would see through it; and instead it was proposed that Regine Flory should make Jaures fall in love with her, and subsequently try to convert him to drugs. Neither plan was adopted, for Regine Flory, holding Jaures in high esteem for his disinterested service to her, was so disgusted at what she had overheard that she broke off her relations with Beppo, who was her lover at the time.

We must take the details of this story on trust, but there is nothing at all improbable in it, especially in view of the murder of Jaures just at the outbreak of the War, when he was on the point of revealing diplomatic secrets. The significance of the tale lies in the fact that it is a reminder that "Mrs Warren's Profession" is as integral a part of the governmental system as are the professions of finance and politics themselves. If Jaures had been found in the flat it does not follow that his presence there would have been revealed at once to the public. He would probably have been allowed the option of betraying his supporters, while ostensibly remaining their leader. Nothing would be easier—once he gave way and assented to the proposition. All that would be

necessary when a crisis arose would be for him to become a "realist" and advise his supporters to "face facts." Should he even sound a retreat when all looked ripe for an advance, he could always get away with it by a judicious use of that favourite tag of the traitor—"Reculer pour mieux sauter." So long as his blackmailers kept silence no one could prove his insincerity. And as in Paris so in London. Occasionally flats are raided in the West End. Sometimes the names of the "guests" appear in the newspapers. Sometimes they do not, for there are occasions when such publicity is considered by the principalities and powers in high places to be against public policy. On these occasions one may be quite sure that the Elders of the Servile State have secured some more hostages. Yet the innocent public goes on working for these hostages, voting for them, and trusting them in the vain belief that they still retain the freedom to carry out the policy with which they have hitherto been identified. Occasionally some innocent, straightforward person accidentally stumbles up against the curtains of this underworld of intrigue, gets a momentary peep inside, and begins to make trouble. Whereupon he is quickly denied facilities for further investigation or agitation, under the pretence that he has a bee in his bonnet. For instance, there is every probability that some such explanation as this lies behind the case of Miss Douglas Pennant, the reasons for whose dismissal from her post have never been seriously investigated.

"Mr. Maddocks: 'Therefore, as soon as the bottom began to fall out of industrials, the bank came on the scene and demanded a reduction of the loan?'

"Witness (Assistant General Manager to Barclays Bank, Lombard Street): 'We always hope to be there before the bottom falls out.' (Laughter.)"

This episode in the Bevan Trial, reported in the *Star* of November 21, 1922, is recalled by the appearance of a pamphlet* entitled "The Facts of Industry: The Case for Publicity." This publication is the joint work of an unofficial committee, the nucleus of which is represented by Lord Astor, Mr. W. T. Layton (Editor of the *Economist*), Mr. Kenneth Lee (member of the Samuel Coal Commission), and Mr. W. L. Hichens (Chairman of Cammell Laird and Co.); and the satellites by Mr. Frank Hodges, Mr. J. T. Brownlie, Professor Bowley, Mr. B. Seeborn Rowntree, Mr. J. J. Mallon, and a few others. The purport of the pamphlet may be summarised in the statement that it comprises various recommendations which, if carried out by the Government, would greatly assist the banks in their objective of arriving on the scene before the bottom falls out of industries. Of course, in a large general sense, the banking system is able to recover its loans and advances, for the simple reason that it alone has the power of kicking the bottom out of industrials, and of deciding when to do so. The banks have inflated, the banks have deflated: blessed be the name of the banks. Nevertheless, banks have in the past not entirely escaped being afflicted by the same kind of sores as they were visiting on the Jobs of industry. Instances are whispered about where overdrafts running into six figures were written off during the Great Slump; while it is notorious that, for instance, many of the South Wales shipping enterprises are still being nursed by the banks. To term "the Bankers' Fleet" will be familiar to readers of THE NEW AGE. Now, though the banks have thus shared Job's affliction, they are constituted of too fine material to share his patience. Something has got to be done, some prophylactic discovered, so that the sowers of economic diseases shall not again receive infection from their seed. This beneficent serum is obviously Publicity—and plenty of it. "Facts; facts—feed me on facts," cried Thomas Carlyle: and such is the demand of the banks to-day.

*Macmillan and Co. 62 pp. 1s. net.

There are two ways of dining on facts—one is *à la carte* and the other *table d'hôte*. It is the *table d'hôte* method that has let the banks down in the instances where they have been let down. In other words, the business enterprises which lost their bottoms before the banker could arrive panting on the scene had been misleading their money-lending creditors with balance-sheets of their own making. Instead of tabulating all their dishes, they tabulated only the specials. As the present signatories say in their pamphlet:

"The defects of the present methods are obvious enough. The published balance-sheet need not, and frequently does not, indicate the true financial position of a company. . . Profits may be concealed by the piling up of hidden reserves, and losses may be concealed by failure to write down the value of assets to a figure representing their true value. . . It means that . . . unwise courses can for a long period be persisted in, the blissful ignorance of the shareholders."

(not to say bank managers)

"—being disturbed only when the breaking point at last comes and the bulk of their capital written off as lost."

Hence the demand to every industry: "Turn up all your cards." (We notice that nothing anywhere in the pamphlet even hints at the idea of outspoken bank balance-sheets.) But needless to say, the administrators of businesses have some practical objections to raise, the chief of which are (1) that if they were to disclose misgivings about certain aspects of their concerns they would by that act damage their enterprises; (2) that if every failure had to be publicly confessed, directors would shirk the risks which are inseparable from enterprising management. And lastly, that "in good years shareholders would press for the highest possible dividends and would resist the allocation to depreciation and reserve of the sums the directors regard as prudent." The authors of the pamphlet allow weight to these pleas, but think they are more than counterbalanced by the disadvantage of the present system. Speaking of the last-mentioned objection they remark:

"Moreover, we think that directors exaggerate the importance and influence of the shareholder who criticises the directors' policy at a general meeting."

Shades of Vickers—that's a trump truth if you like! A little later they say that at present—

"A declining concern may actually be able to raise fresh capital."

a possibility too awful to contemplate, and one which the authors single out in the following terms:

"This last point is one with which we are closely concerned; for we regard it as most desirable . . . that the capital available for new investment should be directed into channels where it will prove most productive."

Quite so. We will give a hypothetical case. Suppose the miners went back to work on lowered wages representing in the aggregate a reduction of £10,000,000 per annum. That sum would be reflected in loss of revenue received by concerns which supply these men with the means of life. To that extent they would be "declining concerns," and their decline ought, on the reasoning of the authors, to be immediately confessed, so that people with capital should not be misled into keeping—much less putting—their money in the production of food, clothes, and shelter. It does not sound too nice, does it? But our authors are not squeamish—

"The public interest demands that new capital should flow promptly into those industries where there are big profits, partly in order that prices may be reduced (!) and partly because the very existence of big profits indicates that there is a public demand for the goods concerned which is in excess of the supply (!)."

The writers here are off their guard. If the above mixed reasoning has any intelligibility at all it amounts to the general proposition that new loan-

credit ought to flow most readily to those concerns which most rapidly reduce the purchasing power of existing credit. It needs little reflection to see from this that the present low scale of consumption (which is the cause of the workers' dissatisfaction with their money wages, and of consequent strikes and other troubles) is not a natural consequence of real scarcity, but is the result of a conscious policy—which deliberately encourages low output and high prices. Yet there are people who ought to know better going about saying that morality has nothing to do with economic problems. Canon Hensley Henson is one of them.

"Why is it," says this eminent divine, "that sincere and devout men . . . are ever prepared to dogmatise 'in the name of the Lord' about practical problems of which neither morality nor religion can provide the solution?" (Letter in *The Times* of August 13.) His reference is to the intervention of the Ten Bishops in the mining crisis—an intervention which he says elsewhere has "done much harm," "prolonged the crisis," "obscured the true issue from the miners," and "stimulated their natural but unfortunate disposition to think of themselves as the victims, not of economic conditions, but of oppression." To comment on these remarks in their order—the question of whether morality or religion can provide a solution need not be discussed; for the solution has already been discovered. How far the Ten Bishops are acquainted with it we cannot say, but we are acquainted with it ourselves, and assure Canon Henson that their intervention tends to do much good, to shorten the crisis, to reveal the true issue to the miners and the public generally, and to justify the contention that it is oppression, and not natural law, which has bankrupted every miner's home in the country. He is the victim of a very common misunderstanding. He thinks that the scientific technique of the present economic system is unalterable; and since he cannot see how the demands of the miners can be fulfilled by means of that technique, he concludes that they cannot be fulfilled at all, and blames the Ten Bishops for raising vain hopes. For example, he says:

"Neither justice nor religion requires, and neither justice nor religion could long enable, any industry to be carried on at a loss. Whatever these august factors may effect, must be effected within the limits prescribed by economic law."

But that conclusion is only true on the assumption that the economic lawyer is superhuman—beyond good or evil—either all-blind or all-seeing. There is only one economic law which can be termed inexorable in that sense, and that is the law that consumption cannot precede production. Every other "can" or "cannot" in the sphere of economics is a "shall" or "shall not" prescribed by men like ourselves, and hence a proper subject for those who desire to apply to it the test of justice or morality. Of the mining industry Canon Henson observes:

"The facts have been ascertained by an independent authority, and are not really in dispute. Those facts . . . determine the unpalatable demand that, if the mining industry is to continue, the miners must for the time being either work for longer hours or work for smaller wages."

The only sense in which this "authority" is "independent" is that its fortunes do not depend upon those of the British mining industry. That is hardly a recommendation of its findings. The facts that it has ascertained are not all the facts, and not even the most relevant of them. The facts it puts forward can be summarised in the statement that the mining industry cannot collect enough money in prices to cover the wages required by the miners. To Canon Henson this closes the argument. But to those who know their subject it opens it. The latter contend that the above statement is only

conclusive on the assumption that there cannot be another way of paying miners than through the payroll of the mining industry (except by taxing other classes of the community to provide a subsidy, which is, by common consent, ruled out). They challenge such an assumption, and demand to hear from the said "authority" the evidence and reasoning on which it is based. Moreover, they demand facilities for arguing their case against the very experts whose word Canon Hensley accepts as Gospel on the issue. It is for that reason that we contradicted his opinion that the Ten Bishops had introduced confusion. For one thing, by suggesting a renewal of the subsidy they have provoked the present controversy about it. This will bring us nearer the discussion of the *National Dividend*, which is destined to supersede the subsidy and become a permanent fulfilment of the existing financial technique for distributing personal incomes to the community. If Canon Henson will give due weight to the reflection that when twenty million men stopped work and commenced destroying and killing, they and their relatives at home were more comfortably off than they had been at any time in their lives, he would at least question the "inexorable law" which decreed the beginning of their impoverishment directly they returned to work. It is beside the point to argue that money was lent and borrowed, and that humanity mortgaged the future. The point is that, in spite of all the idleness, the *actual means of life were forthcoming*. In practically no instance have the physical sources for these products been damaged; on the contrary they have been widely extended. He ought to see in this paradox grounds for questioning the necessity of the financial inhibition against consumption which lies at the root of the present crisis. Even if he thinks it is not the proper function of the clergy to devise an economic solution (and we would agree with him here if those whose official function it was were efficiently attacking it) he must realise that his sitting down helpless under conditions which are inexorably tending to create in the minds of the masses an association between prosperity and bloodshed amounts to an abnegation of moral responsibility. Only last week we saw an itinerant conjurer turned out of a public house near the Oval for collecting a copper or two from the customers after performing a trick. "I'll tell you what it is," was his parting shot to the potman, "what we want is another bloody war; and I hope it'll come soon." Though his need for a meal might be considered a problem for the economist, his formula for getting it is undoubtedly a problem for the moralist.

On encountering a new work on finance nowadays we find it needs an effort to suppress a groan. We are glad, therefore, to say a word in praise of a pamphlet* by Mr. Vowles, an old contributor to THE NEW AGE. He has justified his entry into an overcrowded field, firstly, by being brief, and, secondly, by working to a new plan. The plan is to imagine a series of questions which an unsophisticated person might naturally be supposed to ask on first coming into contact with current controversies on financial issues, and then answering them by short selections from authoritative writings, most of them orthodox. An appendix is added which is a "Who's Who" of the authorities so drawn upon. We have often said of the New Economics that if the sponsors of the Old could only be got together it would be quite possible to prove our case merely by cross-examination. Mr. Vowles has done the next best thing in this pamphlet. He has contrived to discredit many orthodox concepts out of the mouths of the

* "The Web of Finance." By Hugh P. Vowles. Obtainable only from the publisher, John Bellows, Gloucester. Post free, 1s. 2d.

orthodox. Here we have Sir Drummond Fraser saying that the Governor of the Bank of England "must be the autocrat who dictates the terms upon which alone the Government can obtain borrowed money"; followed later by Mr. Austin Hopkinson, M.P., who complacently remarks that "a great amount of unemployment" is "the very greatest help towards a downward adjustment of money wages." This pamphlet will be exceedingly useful to speakers and writers on the subject of bankers' economics.

To those who recall our several references to the "A. B. C. Alliance" in South America, a report upon Chilean affairs from a *Times* correspondent will be of interest. It appeared on August 6. Chile, he says, is more than ever suspicious of North American ascendancy in South America. National feeling is expressed

- (a) in a "revival of the old distrust of the economic preponderance of the United States in Peru and Bolivia,"
- (b) in a "sentimental rapprochement with Europe,"
- (c) in a resumé in the Press "of the history of the relations between the United States on the one hand, and Mexico, Cuba, Colombia, Panama, and Haiti on the other."

While Great Britain and France get some benefit from this, the principal reaction has been directed towards Spain. The newspapers follow Spanish affairs eagerly, and King Alfonso is "almost a popular hero." Great interest is taken in the League of Nations, but for the curious psychological reason that the United States appears to neglect that institution. In spite of strained relations with Peru and Bolivia, "a belief in the solidarity of Latin America" is growing up in Chile.

"In the Chamber of Deputies Señor Edwards Matte recently evoked general applause by advocating a new version of the Monroe Doctrine. 'The moment has come,' he proclaimed, 'in which we should say, not America for the Americans, but Latin America for the Latin Americans.'"

The value placed by Chile on representation at Geneva is "connected with this doctrine of Latin-American solidarity."

"It is realised that all Latin America has suffered, and may still suffer, because its want of liquid capital and its paucity of population," coupled with its natural wealth, make it, "first, a field for the investment of the capital of the great nations, and, second, a dumping ground for their superfluous emigrant citizens."

So Chile and her neighbours hope by their solidarity to make their common objects prevail at Geneva.

To appeal to the League of Nations against American economic permeation sounds very much like appealing to the House of Commons against the policy of the Bank of England. Though Washington ignores the proceedings of the League, it would be a mistake to suppose that Wall Street has not a fairly strong hold on its policy. That policy is a gold-standard budget-balancing policy, and as its visitation on European countries obliges them all to get a favourable balance of trade, they must look for it between themselves (manifestly an impossibility), or they must find an outlet in South America as well as elsewhere. Now, while the Latin countries in South America cannot resist this permeation, they can no doubt, if they combine, exercise some choice in the matter of which European countries enter, and perhaps get more favourable conditions than if they bargained separately. The situation is highly dangerous. On the one hand the United States requires Europe to pay her debt. On the other, Europe cannot pay it without coming into South America. But even if Europe, with her separate national trade rivalries, manages peaceably to arrive at an understanding as to which nations shall finance and exploit Latin America, there still remains the formidable problem of the United States' ambitions in the same

direction. If logic ruled the situation the American exporters would waive their claim, recognising that since Europe needed the profits from this trade to pay the American debt, the Americans could not expect to do the same trade themselves. But logic does not rule—or, at least, that particular logic does not. There is another logic which decrees that, war debts or no war debts, the Americans must increase their overseas markets as a normal condition of solvency under the existing laws of financing and costing. The instalment-purchase system in that country has served to delay the facing of this external issue; and it is not unreasonable to suspect that that is partly why American financiers allowed such profligate advances of consumer loan-credit to be made. But the latest indications are that the American consumers' expectations of future income have been now mortgaged to the hilt of safety, and that the process is to stop. What will America do? One thing she could do would be to say to herself—"Wal, if these guys gotta dig up their debt on my continent I guess I'll let 'em off and dig it up myself." And European listeners-in to the American Press are beginning to hear intentions of the sort suggested, although set to ethical rather than to tactical music. As a matter of fact, we believe that America has always contemplated an all-round cancellation of debt, and has only been waiting the right moment to offer that benefaction. The "right" moment is the moment when, to this high moral act of financial renunciation, Europe will respond with a moral act of military renunciation. In a word, Europe is expected to buy back her IOU's with Disarmament instead of Dollars.

PRESS EXTRACTS.

Views on the British General Strike from New York correspondents:—

"Bankers (in New York) and the other craftsmen of the Money Market literally hung upon the cables in their anxiety. They realise—at least, the leaders among them do—how inextricably intertwined the economic-financial structures of Great Britain and the United States have become, in consequence of the long time co-ordination, not to say, dovetailing, of the discount and related policies of the Bank of England and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York."—*The Statist*, May 29.

Meanwhile, a high proportion of the industrial plants of the country are rusting in comparative idleness. Contracts taken in the world's markets are, as often as not, being taken at a loss. It is not the ordinary commercial loss which is experienced occasionally, even in normal times, by reason of under-estimating the cost of a complicated contract or by reason of unfavourable and unforeseen circumstances arising in the course of executing the contract converting an estimated profit into a realised loss. To-day it is a case of taking orders even though one knows at the outset that the price obtainable must necessitate a loss. It is a case of taking the order at that price rather than having no work; of working at a loss rather than closing down and throwing staffs and workmen idle, and surrendering such prospective goodwill as attaches to a going concern as compared with a concern that allows its personnel to be dispersed and its plant to depreciate.—(Sir Alexander M. Kennedy, Head of the Fairfield Shipbuilding Company, of Glasgow, which built H.M.S. Renown and the great liners s.s. Transylvania and s.s. Balmoral Castle. Article in the *Evening News*.)

"We have eliminated the old-time business inflation, but are now paradoxically embarking on a new inflation by a new method based upon the credit of the individual, which is admittedly a vaster reservoir of credit than commercial credit. This deeper reservoir of individual credit is actually a more serious problem if stirred out of its centre of gravity than commercial credit, which is under much better control. It is generally admitted that the volume done on instalment for 1925 is between 20 per cent. and 30 per cent. of the total retail sales volume. This would make nine or ten billion dollars for instalment buying. The total volume has nearly doubled in the past year. 'No consumer credit orgy must be permitted; for it will surely have a bad flare-back in more ways than the surface thinkers realise.'—*Barron's Weekly*, (U.S.A.), April 26.

Interplanetary Communication.

There almost seems to be a promise of rivalry between Russia and America as to which shall first despatch human beings from the Earth into space. While the highest peak of the Earth itself is yet unscathed, and within only a few years of achieving, with mortal difficulty, the conquest of the Polesmen have already the hardihood to project visits to the Moon or to Mars, tasks which must be at least a million times more difficult, and even of a higher order of difficulty. They cannot be actually proved impossible: our state impels us to dream of them. We are at once exalted by our wonderful knowledge and depressed by the loss of the mystery, of which that knowledge seems to have robbed existence. We want the thrill of a new audacity which no earthly adventure could now arouse. The thought of reaching the Moon or another planet has a certain emotional value as a fantasy; much intellectual interest as a scientific problem, and the assurance of terrific difficulty as a physical project. But in relation to Cosmosophy it also becomes a spiritual problem. Once, when I raised this question to a learned astrologer, he made some surprising objections to it.

Man is at present, he said, almost wholly ignorant that his very consciousness—the focus of his subjective being, by which he is able to have any intellectuality at all—does not belong to him. He has it upon a temporary loan from the Earth; whence he has the use of it, but never the possession. Beyond the limit of the Earth's own individualising power he would simply cease to be conscious of anything in any human sense. That is one objection to the proposed journeys, wholly insuperable in the present state of humanity. And there is another which is closely related to it. The heavenly bodies themselves have not the same kind of existence as they appear to have from the standpoint of earth-consciousness; so that, even if we could reach them, our experience upon them would not be of a kind which we could report or interpret for the humanity of the Earth. You will remember that higher mathematicians have united space and time in the conception of the *interval*. Certain intervals, they say, appear to us as time, and others as space, but they are the same kind of interval in reality. We astrologers consider intervals as something between psychological realities. Things which are remote from us in space are so because of their remoteness from our kind of consciousness. It would be quite impossible, for instance, to cross the gulf of space which exists between ourselves and Mars, except by traversing the corresponding spiritual chasm.

The claims which have been made by certain seers or mystics, to have visited the heavenly bodies while in a more ethereal state of consciousness, are perfectly allowed by astrology. Swedenborg announced that he had several times visited planets, and once went so far as to reach a heavenly body entirely beyond the solar system: which must have happened in a supreme feat of prolonged and pure concentration, without thought of any kind. Buddhist seers frequently reached the Sun's corona, in certain states of contemplation.

In this way, the essential experience to be gained by visiting the heavenly bodies is already within the reach of individuals, perhaps of all individuals if they cared to attain it. As to an actual, technical connection between the Earth and other members of the solar family, of a kind we should be physically conscious of—that may not be impossible in the distant future. But it cannot happen without a conscious co-operation by humanity in a sense of need and purpose; and this seems at present as remote as the interstellar spaces themselves. P. M.

Germany and the Future of Europe.

By John Gould Fletcher.

IV.

Byron and Shelley were hounded into exile, Keats was driven into consumption, Blake was starved and silenced, Carlyle found London an inferno—every great European soul that England has produced in the nineteenth century has been made to suffer by English provinciality and Philistinism. But every one that Germany has produced has been European first, and German afterwards—from the time of the nineteenth century to the present day the European genius has been the German genius.

Let us look at some examples. Goethe and Beethoven represent the Germany of the time of the French Revolution. Goethe's genius was plastic, concrete, philosophic rather than metaphysical. His great admiration was for French, that is to say Latin classical culture. Having outlived his own brief Sturm and Drang as represented by the first part of Faust and Werther, he became more and more a positivist, a sceptic, a critical spirit, a psychologist. Beethoven, on the other hand, never outlived his Sturm and Drang epoch. His work is profoundly saturated in mysticism, in metaphysics, in esoteric religion. The nine great symphonies are like the months of gestation that have to precede the birth of a new and greater humanity. At their end comes the human cry. The mass is the offering and sacrifice of Prometheus. The last quartets are Socratic dialogues—be it remembered that the myth that closes the greatest Socratic dialogue, the Republic, is German.*

These two great men, greater than any that our hyper-mechanicalised, over-capitalised, tragi-comic, unstructural, amorphous, rotting, devirilised and devirginated time of hell's-buffoonery can show; these two great men, great in aim and achievement, in pathos and in magnanimity, represent the two poles of the German soul. Goethe is a resumé of Classicism, as Beethoven is a resumé of Romanticism. They lived side by side, met, and retained some measure of respect for each other. For they are complementary, not antithetical. Such a thing is not possible outside of Germany.

About these two poles the whole German soul has revolved throughout the nineteenth century. In Kant and Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the same balancing of opposites is found in philosophy; the critical side of the German genius is immediately answered by the synthetic and metaphysical.

Nor is the great life-saving task of the Teutonic soul finished in our days. Recently there have appeared two works of more than local and national importance, works world-wide in scope, and attempts on the part of great German scholars and philosophers to give life and form to the society of Europe, now so seemingly moribund and lacking in vitality.

Both Count Keyserling and Oswald Spengler are students of the forms of social organisation and of their resultants in art, literature, religion, politics, and human values generally. Of the two, Keyserling is critical, rational, analytical. He is interested in the potentialities that exist rather than in the development of their future. His book is rather suggestive of thought than creative of a new way through the present chaos. His treatment of facts is plastic rather than harmonic, dispassionately philosophical rather than passionately metaphysical.

Spengler, on the other hand, rests his immense survey of the world's history and destiny on a standpoint above reason. He describes himself as a morphologist, that is to say, he is not interested in the single fact, but on the relation of form to fact, on

* Vide "Zeus," by E. T. Cook.

the interrelation of groups of facts. Out of this interrelation he draws an argument that can only be described as pessimistic by those whose optimism consists of a vacuity of thought, purpose, and spirituality; but which is in reality, the first mystical view of the world's history—a view as mystical as the view of the Apocalypse, but which, unlike the Apocalypse, is not grounded in symbol, but in fact. Spengler is to Keyserling as Beethoven is to Goethe, or as Nietzsche is to Schopenhauer. As he says, he has reached a perspective which is that of destiny, not of causality—a perspective that is no longer critical, but synthetic.

In comparing and contrasting these men it is necessary to point out that they are Europeans first and Germans after—that they have the respect for life, the respect for humanity, the respect for the world which is lacking in our shallow, superficial chatter about motor-cars, suicide, sport, and Mr. Stanley Baldwin—that their aim is both high and wide, serious and worthy of respect and study. And in all their European—indeed, world-wide range of knowledge and allusion—they retain a consciousness that is German in its completeness as it is human in its outlook. The germ of Keyserling's Protean search for wisdom is to be found in Erasmus, as the germ of Spengler's fatalistic following out of destiny is to be found in Luther. It is to England's credit that it hailed Erasmus and Luther in the dawn of the Reformation. It is to England's discredit that it ignores Keyserling and Spengler to-day.

These two great men have been greeted with hoots and howls of triumphantly vulgar laughter by the Philistines, who pretend to represent the critical genius of England to-day. Their work has had to be put into an English dress before it could even be read by the illiterate British public, and when it finally appeared, the result has been one of ignominy to any man who pretends to know anything about what Europe has achieved in the past four centuries. These are the results of our democracy, of our popular education, of our philanthropy, of our Great War. It remains for us to ask ourselves: Has England to-day either a soul or a mind to realise where she is now drifting? I could wish that someone better equipped than myself to judge the English would attempt to answer this question.

APHORISMS.

If you see not well, hear the better; if you see not far, hear the more.

A rule in practice is a notion incarnate, made like to us.

The state of religion lies in a good mind and a good life, all else is about religion; and men must not put the instrumental part of religion for the state of religion.

Among politicians the esteem of religion is profitable, the principles of it are troublesome.

Reverence God in *thyself*: for God is more in the mind of man than in any part of this world besides.

He that neither knows himself, nor thinks he can learn of others, is not fit for company.

A man cannot be at peace with himself while he lives in disobedience to known truth.

BENJAMIN WHICHCOTE (1609—1683).

A Vagabond in Denmark.

By Leopold Spero.

THE CLERKLY COUNT.

XVIII.

After all, the appeal of quaintness is not to be resisted. And of all the quaint islands in the Danish archipelago, Lolland, like a cut from the joint, Falster, like a cutlet, Moen, like a kidney, how can one resist paying a visit to Lange Land, which looks like a new French roll, and has the additional attraction of being less than six miles wide at the nearest point to Svendborg, so that from Rudkjøbing, on the coast of Svendborg Sound, to Spodsbjerg, on the Lolland Sea, is a distance one may take in one's stride and then boast and say, "On such and such an afternoon, for want of better to do in a spare hour or so, I strolled across a Danish island."

And what is there wrong with this tiny flea of a boat, straining at its cables to get out and away, and sniff the salt breeze, instead of sleeping in this drowsy harbour? A sparkling day for such a journey, first round the corner of Taasinge into the narrow water that swells up to the shores of Thüroe, and so with a triumphant hoot to the little landing stage of Frederikstad, where more busy travellers wait and bustle aboard just in time to settle down before she backs her way towards Thüroe again, and then with a sweeping turn curves out towards Lange Land away from the enticement of these caressing shores.

The wind and the water dance together, and here a sombre housewife hugs her cardboard-boxes, a young husband and his bride stand close to each other, pretending that it does not matter, offering each other sandwiches and titbits from a sham leather attaché case, while this stout director of who knows what terrific business opens his black portfolio, takes a peep inside to see that all is well with his affairs, snaps it close again, and lights an alarming cigar, from the blue trail of which you must escape to a safer quarter. How soberly they sit, these good-natured, peaceful people, gladdening their eyes with the pleasant sights around them, waving good-bye to the receding shores, and turning to see the other land that waits for them. And now the traveller finds by his side the smartest young man he has yet seen in Denmark, slim and elegant in a golfing jacket and plus-fours, but never a hint of a club about him, only a huge and dusty motor-bike, at which he glances tenderly every now and then to see that it is enjoying the journey. He answers your question about the time in perfect English, and tells you how far it is to Rudkjøbing, and soon you are talking together, fast friends, pouring out confidences as if you had your whole lives in partnership before you.

This is his holiday. He is a clerk in a shipping office in Copenhagen, and he has been careering round on this giant machine of his visiting friends in castles all over Denmark. You have no doubt that his castellated acquaintance is extensive enough, for by his card you see that he is a count, and there are not too many counts left in Denmark. Nevertheless, he is a shipping clerk, and must work hard and justify himself for a year or two before they will have him in the family business and make him a director with a black portfolio and a freehold estate of his own.

He tells you something of himself, and you begin to see how strangely mixed must have been the tendencies and fancies of the neutral northern aristocracy during the war. His name is a German one, but he tells you that his father was born in England

and brought up there, and as a young man desired most fondly a commission in the Guards, and would have had one too had the King of Denmark not forbidden it. That is strange, but it squares with the rest of the puzzle, why the Hamiltons and Stuarts of Sweden should all want to be serving with the German Army, while the bearers of names like this, historic in the annals of German victory, should clamour to serve King George. And then you remember that Denmark's history eighty years ago was one of families at strife over that tragic borderland of Slesvig, some standing by their German duke, whilst others rallied to the Danish king. Amongst the men of iron who made Germany in the 'fifties and 'sixties of the last century you will find not one Dane but a score, and foremost of all the grey, the tireless, the hawk-eyed, unforgetting Moltke. So the fruit of that distracted generation lives to-day in Danish names that love Berlin, and German "Vons" whose sympathies are centred in that Denmark which looks to Windsor and Sandringham, and not to Potsdam, for its comfort and guidance. It was no fault of the father-in-law of Europe, sturdy Christian VIII., who sent one lovely daughter to reign in St. Petersburg, and one to queen it in her crown of beauty in London, that his boys and girls could not preserve in formal diplomacy the simple friendliness of an afternoon in Amalienborg. He did his best, and perhaps Geneva itself will not do better.

So this young man, with his English speech and his English ways, and his obvious admiration of everything that is cut in London town, must be a shipping clerk instead of going to Sandhurst. For these are the days when the sons of Denmark must bestir themselves on the thoroughfares of the world and drive a useful pen instead of idling in a fine uniform waiting for trouble to brew. With great glee he tells me of the rag they had in Copenhagen the other day when the students met the Bolsheviks and the big policemen begged them to fight it out in side streets and not smash the plate-glass of Frederiksgade. Someone was ducked in a fountain and somebody else got a crack on the head, and the police-court magistrate held his familiar parade the morning after, and the newspapers fulminated against each other in dire annoy. But nobody was very much the worse, least of all our friend the count, who likes a scrap as well as anybody, and has very little more than a technical objection to Bolshevism of the Copenhagen brand, which is about as violent as the late-lamented Herr Jacobsen's excellent lager. But with politics done for the moment, he talks of other things, of business and sport and travel, and most of all of books and bookish things. What are the great writers of England like to look at and to talk with? How do they have their fun at Oxford and Cambridge? Who is who in football or in tennis? Yes, and even in cricket. For here at least, after scouring all Europe and America in vain, you find a corner of a foreign shore where they have heard of cricket, and play it in a formal, proud, exotic sort of way. Of course, they also play *Fodbold* in the summer time, and give it their own Danish name, since no true Scandinavian will borrow his sporting terms even from the language of sport, save where sheer incomprehensibility compels him.

And the time goes by so swiftly in the clean chatter of eager youth that we are caught unawares by the nodding warehouses of Rudkjøbing, and our young count must be up and ready, for no one else can coax ashore and land that mighty mass of metal upon which ere long, while you plod your dusty way out of the straggling town, he roars by with the wave of a hand and a smile across this spare-rib of arable field and pasture to sleepy Spodsbjerg on the Lolland Sea.

Solitaria.

By V. Rósanov.

(Translated from the Russian by S. S. Koteliansky.)

III.

* You look at a Russian with a sharp little eye. . . . He looks at you with a sharp little eye. . . . And everything is understood. And no words are needed. That's just what is impossible with a foreigner.

* * *

Our literature began with satire (Kantemir), and then the whole of the 18th century was fairly satirical.

The middle of the 19th century was sentimental. And then, from the sixties, satire reigned again supreme.

But never was it so predominant as in the 18th century. Novikov, Radischev, Fonvizin, and half a century later—

Schedrin and Nekrassov had such a success, as even Pushkin had never enjoyed. During my school years Pushkin was not even mentioned, let alone read.

But Nekrassov was read to the verge of craziness, every line of his was familiar, every verse was caught up. I had an unaccountable taste for not reading Schedrin, and up till now I haven't read a single "thing" of his.

"Provincial Sketches" I haven't even seen. Of his "History of a City" I read the first three pages and gave it up in disgust.

My brother Kolya (a teacher of history in a public school, a man of positive ideals) was always reading Schedrin, and loved to read him aloud to his wife.

And, in passing, I heard: "Gloomov said." "Balalaikin answered," hence I know that those are characters from Schedrin.

But I was never interested to hear what Gloomov said, nor to see it for myself. I think that thereby I spared my soul a great deal.

That abusive Vice-Governor is a loathsome phenomenon. And it needed the sheer tastelessness of our public to endure him.

I'll allow myself to be a bit inquisitorial. Indeed, young Schedrin did not choose to be a civil servant, a magistrate, a teacher, but like Chichikov (1) or Solakevich (2) "he chose a stool which doesn't tumble down," that is, a post at the Ministry of the Interior.

And he kept on being promoted till he became a Vice-Governor—not a paltry job. Then "he had a difference with the authorities," "interceded on behalf of the Old Believers," or "defended the young students," and was given the sack.

He became a famous writer. Loris Melikov himself sought his friendship, and as to Governors—they were "mere nobodies" to him.

How different from the fate of Dostoevsky!

(Examining my coins.)

* * *

With a little beard, with a tender, girlish face. A. P. U. was arranging his cassock, fingering it here and there.

"Do you want any pins? What are you doing?"

"No, I took some with me from home. I'm fastening on my medal with the portrait of Alexander III, so as to go to the Metropolitan Bishop. Here's also my order."

At last he's ready: with the cross and the portrait of the Tsar. He stands, smiles, just like a girl.

How I love him, and I do love him unceasingly, this wisest priest of our time—with his word firm as iron, with his thought direct and clear. It is he who ought to compose the "catechism."

And how many centuries old he is—he's all "ours," a "Russian priest."

And in addition to this he comes from a prophetic family, and is all apocalyptic. A perfectly wonderful phenomenon.

I desire that after my death his letters to me (which I preserve to the very last one) should be published. Then will people see what a righteous and honourable man he was. I thank God for having given me this friendship with him.

(Examining my coins. A. P. Ustinsky.)

* * *

In "My Friend" there has been given me a guiding star. . . . And for twenty years (ever since 1889) I have followed it: and all the good that I had done, or what was good in me during that time, it all came from her; and all that is bad in me came from myself. And I was obstinate. Only my heart always cried when I deviated from her.

(Examining my coins.)

* * *

And mere bragging only, and only the one question in everyone: "What part am I to play in this?" If he is not to play a "part in this," then may it go to the devil.

(On politics and the Press.)

* * *

"Man talks amusingly about a great many things, but with relish—only about himself" (Turgenev). At first we smile at this expression, as at a very felicitous one.

But then (in a year's time) we grow rather sad: poor man, they want to deprive him even of the right to talk about himself. He must not only undergo pain, suffer, but . . . he must also keep silent about it. And this witticism of Turgenev's, who meant by it to convict man of cynicism, itself appears cynical.

I, on the contrary, have observed that good people can in no other way be distinguished from bad people than by the way they listen to a man's talk about himself. If one listens willingly, without being bored, it is a true sign that the listener is a good, clean, straight man.

One can be friends with him. One may trust him. But do not trust the friendship of the man who is bored when he listens to you: he thinks only of himself and is preoccupied with himself alone. Just as good a sign is talking about oneself: it means the man senses fellow-men in those around him. Talking to another person of oneself is an expression of sympathy with the other.

I am very sorry to confess that I neither loved to listen to such talk nor to utter it. I am incapable even of doing so. This is the sign by which I consider myself a bad man.

* * *

Shperk said to me once: "not in your intentions, nor in your ideas, but in you as man, there is something wrong, an impure alloy, something muddy in your organisation or in your blood. I don't know what it is, but I feel it."

He was very fond of me (I believe, more than anyone else, save my own people). He was very penetrating, he knew "the roots of things." And if he said so, it must be true.

* * *

The bad in us is our fate. But it is necessary to know the measure of that fate, its direction, and to reckon "the degrees," as we do with thermometers, which also lie, all of them; but learned men cope with this, making corrections.

Should I like to be only good? It would be so tedious. But what I should not like to be for anything on earth—is to be evil, harmful. In such a case I should prefer to die. But I was always clumsy. There is in me a terrible monstrosity of behaviour, to the point of not knowing "how to get up" or "how to sit down." I simply do not know how.

And I do not understand when it is best to do all this. No awareness whatever of planes. Hence in life the nearer I get to people, the more uncomfortable I become to them: their life through my approach becomes uncomfortable. And very many have suffered through me, and very much so; without the slightest wish on my part.

That, too, is fate. * * *

On the problem of man's being out-of-place. Once I stood in the little chapel, near the Square by the Vladimir Church. Perhaps I was inside the church, I forget now—it was fourteen years ago. And I noticed that I did not even hear what was being sung and read—that I did not even listen. And yet I had come with the intention of listening and worshipping. A thought flashed through me then, "like a foreigner—at every place, at every time, wherever it was, wherever I was."

Everything is foreign to me, with a strange, as it were, predestined estrangement. Whatever I do, whomever I meet—I can't fuse myself with anything. A non-copulative man—spiritually. A man—solo.

All this was expressed in the word "foreigner," which came out within me in a whisper, as the greatest condemnation of myself, as the greatest grief for myself and within myself.

That, too, is fate. * * *

"As we are born so we go down to the grave." Involved in this must be some particular laws of conception. Here, in this must be some particular laws of conception. Here, in this must be some particular laws of conception. Here, in this must be some particular laws of conception.

When my parents conceived me they must have been afflicted by some hiatus of thought, by some fog of thought or lapse of thought: and in the child this has become irrefragable.

"The inevitable." . . . "Where one has been hurt there one feels pain"—is it not because of this that I boundlessly love?"

"What do you love?"

"I love my dreams at night," I shall whisper to the wind I meet.

(Late at night.)

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"La Ultima Moda."

By "Old and Crusted."

The society of girls is a very delightful thing. It's not professional, but it's very delightful.

—David Copperfield.

For, also sicker as In principio, Mulier est hominis confusio; Madame, the sentence of this Latin is—Womman is mannes Joye and al his blis.

—The Nonne Preestes Tale.

We have never hesitated to express our profound admiration for Signor Mussolini. . . . But respect for the Duce makes it more difficult to feel at ease about his latest edict, which seeks to regulate feminine fashions.

—Morning Post.

"As Montesquieu wrote a Spirit of Laws," observes our Professor, "so could I write a Spirit of Clothes; thus, with an Esprit des Lois, properly an Esprit de Coutumes, we should have an Esprit de Costumes. For neither in tailoring nor in legislating does man proceed by mere Accident, but the hand is ever guided on by mysterious operations of the mind."

—Sartor Resartus.

Every perturbed father who has struggled in vain to apply the brake to the rapidly retreating skirts of his daughter, or endeavoured manfully to cope with the increasing juvenility of his wife, will share the Morning Post's uneasiness.

If it be more than idle rumour that the Duce intends to standardise Italia's petticoats, then—to use a convenient bit of Yankee slang—he has cut off a bigger chunk than he can chew. Even if he should be successful in imposing a regulation cut, or in restricting the range of materials to be used, let him not suffer delusion.

The descendants of those vivacious ladies who grace (or disgrace, according to taste) the pages of the "Decameron," may be trusted to manipulate both style and material out of all recognition; thus preserving that infinite variety in the outward and visible expression of their inward and spiritual charms, which make "Womman" "mannes joye and al his blis." As for "la ultima moda di Parigi," not the highest tariff-wall or the most implacable of sumptuary edicts will ever keep it out.

Now, touching this same "ultima moda," the report of the Morning Post's Paris correspondent is worth a penny of any woman's money; and even a man may read it with profit and interest. To begin with, we learn that "red is the prevailing colour. In every shade it is used—from deepest purple to flaming scarlet"; which should not surprise us, for red was ever a popular colour in France, from the vivid crimson favoured by Mme. Defarge and the industrious ladies who did their peaceful knitting under the shadow of the guillotine to the insolent imperial purple donned by that other hero of Italian blood, who also dabbled in decrees and drastic methods. And Paris fashions spread. If Senator Borah has his way New York and Chicago may also adopt the prevailing tint, when the crazy structure built on debt collapses by its own weight. Truly, red is a brave colour—but it has associations—yes, it has associations.

Passing from colour to costume, this same correspondent continues:

"A poet might say that woman, having lost the habit of talking in soft, well-turned phrases, has resorted to dress to express her tender thoughts; since all this season's dresses are of a gentle, tender nature."

A poet might, but it is highly improbable that he would, for he knows full well that it all depends upon whom the lady is wasting her words; but it is good news about those frocks, and still better that "the softest, tenderest dresses worn by women are designed by men." And, prithee, why not? Did ever mortal lover desire to see the incomparable face clad as a frump? No, not even Diogenes von Teufelsdröckh! But let us hear what a real poet has to say on this subject of perennial interest, Herrick for choice, on "Julia's Petticoat":

Thy Azure Robe, I did behold, As ayrie as the leaves of gold: Which erring here, and wandring there, Pleas'd with transgression ev'ry where: Sometimes 'two'd pant, and sigh, and heave, As if to stir it scarce had leave: But having got it; thereupon, 'Two'd make a brave expansion.

Such conduct in a modern petticoat is inconceivable; there is not sufficient material in the Parisian confection to permit of "a brave expansion," but it can do its bit on occasion if our "Fashion Correspondent" is to be trusted. Let this sink into your complex, O dancing partners:

"A little chiffon frock, with floating draperies from the shoulders, from the hips, which rise and sink entrancingly as the lady walks or dances."

Some frock, that. It also is reminiscent of Julia:

When as in silks my Julia goes, Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flows That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see That brave vibration each way free; O how that glittering taketh me!

Same here. But it is not all praise for Dame Fashion in the annals of English literature, as witnesseth No. 127 of the Spectator, dated July 26, 1711, and cruelly headed,—Quantam est in rebus inane! Hear what the great Addison has to say:

"the fair sex are run into great extravagances. Their petticoats which began to heave and swell . . . are now blown up into a most enormous concave, and rise every day more and more."

The author of this complaint strikes me as being somewhat peeved; perhaps he had been overbold and received a snub from Lydia or Sophia, else why carry on in this strain:

"I find several speculative persons are of opinion that our sex has of late years been very saucy, and that the hoop-petticoat is made use of to keep us at a distance."

For the rest of his scurrilous comments let the curious consult No. 127—but a word of caution—they are by no means "Notes for the Weak."

This same grave Joseph, in a later number, also girds at the fair sex—as he will persist in calling them—for aping men's dress; which fashion he observes,

"was first of all brought to us from France, a country which has infected all the nations of Europe with levity," whereas; "Modesty is our distinguishing character, as vivacity is theirs." It is. I have noticed it, and are we not celebrated all over the Continent for this charming quality? As for Marie, why, she was always a saucy baggage.

Just one word about the philosophy of clothes to justify the reference to Sartor Resartus. If clothes are symbolic, what signify these airy garments, these abandoned corsets? Why, freedom of course! Never since Atalanta ran races in "the all-together," and had the lads hopelessly beaten, have the lasses enjoyed such untrammelled liberty of limb, never attained so nearly to the classic simplicity of garb of Clymene's daughter, as in this blessed year—whether it be in London, Paris, or Rome.

As for Mussolini and his belated Puritanism—for that is all it amounts to—he may induce the Italians to work nine or even ten hours a day, he may go down to posterity as the last and greatest of the work-and-grow-weary school, he may even send Italy goose-stepping down the via damnosissima of Imperialism, but—he will never succeed in compelling one single sloe-eyed contadina make a fright of herself to support a rotten financial system—no, nor even to introduce a sound one.

Life in Prison.

PAST AND PRESENT.

The publicity that has been given to the recent changes in administration of small local prisons has led some people to fear the possibility of prison becoming a fairy land of enchantment and a centre of attraction to those who other-wise would keep on the right side of the big, high walls. There is no immediate danger of such a happening. The innovations are by no means wonderful in themselves: they appear startling only in contrast to the indescribable gloom of prison under the old regime. Five years ago prisoners were completely cut off from the great world of human affairs. Other than a visit once a month from his friends—if he had any—he had no point of contact with the world outside. The result was disastrous both to the man and to the State. When the man was discharged, after perhaps many months of imprisonment, he was entirely unfitted to resume his position as a citizen and earn his living. In prison his individuality was stripped from him: he was never called upon at any time to act on his own initiative. Every faculty was suppressed, and all things came to him automatically from the mechanical giant known as the prison system. Suddenly he is thrust back into a world of fierce and often ruthless competition where there is an imperative demand for bold initiative, strong self-reliance, perceptive activity, and thoughtful assertiveness. In many cases the man found it impossible to adjust himself to these bewildering conditions. Faculties long suppressed and almost dormant refused to respond to the sudden demand made upon them, with the result that the man became a further liability to the State. The introduction of concerts, lectures, evening classes, and unofficial visitors into local

* These sections reprinted, by courtesy, from the Calendar of July, 1926. (1), (2).—Characters from Gogol.

prisons represents the beginning of an effort to enable the discharged prisoner to face the world with at least a little of his manhood unimpaired. So far the Prison Commissioners have only touched the fringe of a vast problem. The whole scheme is curiously incomplete. There is no indication of a vital change of policy. Indeed, one is tempted to think that there has simply been a small concession made to a growing body of public opinion. There is no new spirit animating the prison system. The relentless grip of a cold, tyrannical routine in the everyday life of the prison is as firm as ever. The desperate need in prison is not for creature comforts, but for the infusion into the whole administration of the warm glow of a human understanding. This is the whole issue of prison reform. The problem has been handled in a cold, calculating, hard fashion that has frozen all life out of it. There need be no fear that a man who goes to prison will not be punished. The punishment suffered by the law-breaker is not loneliness, solitude, physical discomfort, for these are minor matters. The real punishment is (1) the sense of failure that is the man's constant companion throughout his sentence, and (2) the gulf that the State sets up between a man and his kind, bringing in its train the sudden murder of every social instinct. It is this crucifixion of the social impulses that renders a man unfit to resume his place in Society when discharged from prison. Prison reform will never become actual until the Commissioners base their administrative system upon the necessary preservation of these social instincts and impulses. At present a little light is periodically introduced into the gloom and then withdrawn. It is generally understood that the light is a tremendous concession, and the real thing that matters is the gloom. I am reminded of a story—it may be a legend—of a farmer who grew a beautiful "Frau Karl Druschki" in the middle of a field of swedes. When asked for an explanation, he replied: "I just wanted to show that the field really belongs to the swedes." The great value of the new ways in prison is that they serve to remind men that they really belong to the great throbbing heart of life, and that the State, having punished them for their anti-social conduct, recognises that there must be a definite attempt to prepare them to earn their living and resume their place in life. It is with this object in view that the recent changes have been introduced. Not to make prison a cosy place for a plausible scoundrel, but to give to the increasing number of men of promise who desire it a real chance to recover. There is a different type of man in prison to-day. Many of the old hands remain, but local prisons are constantly receiving cases of ordinary plain men who have yielded to some pressing temptation at a time when circumstances proved too strong for them. One of the great problems in small local prisons is the difficulty of separating men of distinct promise from the old hands who are hardened in crime and whose characters are set. I know a recent case of a young fellow of twenty-three years of age, serving a sentence of three months for theft. He had two previous convictions, both of short sentences. He had been unemployed for a considerable period, was of fair education, well behaved, and apparently anxious to make good. The occupant of the next cell was a man whose father had been hanged for a brutal murder; his brother had served two terms of penal servitude, and he himself had served one penal term and several shorter sentences. This man was stolid, unemotional, confirmed in crime, and looked upon imprisonment as an inevitable part of the game he played. Although, officially, talking is not permitted, men have many opportunities for stolen conversation, and these two men were in frequent and close contact.

Despite these difficulties and limitations, the new schemes are doing much good. Needless degradations are being slowly removed, a point of contact has been established with the world outside, there is a small measure of relief from the monotony of a life lived to order, and a break in the silence of the cells. The introduction of the new clothing has had a marked effect upon the general bearing of the men. There is a philosophy of clothes in prison. To-day the men are dressed in a decent suit of grey, with a neat, black tie. Gone is the old degrading broad-shouldered uniform, and gone with it the old hang-dog look worn by the men. The old fugitive look is disappearing, and there is a healthy manliness showing in the average prisoner that could not be seen before. These men are generally quick to respond to any kindly human touch, and the tremendous enthusiasm exhibited at any small departure from the fixed routine is at the same time both pathetic and hopeful. It is to be hoped that the new schemes in prison, which are experimental and not untouched by fear concerning the result, may develop into a ministry of healing which will strive to make of men who have broken the law, citizens who will be an asset to the State.

HARRY J. WOODS.

Drama.

Reviews: Merrileon Wise, *Trifles*.

The series of plays by contemporary dramatists published by Messrs. Benn in paper covers at 3s. 6d. a volume, or in cloth at 5s., continues to grow in variety and attractiveness and contains now some fifty volumes. Some of the plays have been produced, and the volumes serve for consolation to those who were unable to witness their performance. Many are still unproduced, and serve to indicate in some measure what sort of work is being turned out by dramatic authors, and rejected by theatre managers. Obviously, only a small fraction of the plays written could possibly be produced on the professional stage, but book production is by no means so limited. In addition, the increasing number of amateur dramatic organisations, especially in the provinces, are enabled by the literary production of contemporary dramatists to get into touch with the sort of work they are seeking; and thus not only to live on the past, but in the present also. Besides assisting to bring the living actors into touch with the living author, and to render the present-day amateur theatre in many instances a more truthful representative of the dramatic expression of the time than the professional theatre, play-reading is an enjoyment for its own sake. The reader is his own theatre, his own producer, and all the actors, although he may discipline himself by casting the play with the living actors and actresses he knows.

When Mr. Miles Malleon composes a play he also keeps a watchful eye on its production. His stage directions, interpolated among the text, add considerably to the ease and enjoyment of reading. Play-reading can be a very dangerous game. The imagination, unhampered by the technical necessities of the stage, is not spontaneously inclined to restrict itself even to the bounds of the film, while in the matter of characters it melts away their flesh in idealisations, with the result that no subsequent production can be satisfactory. Plays become pure literature. When an author's stage-craft is as good as Mr. Malleon's he is wise to keep his readers on right lines. Mr. Malleon's *Conflict* played long enough at the Queen's Theatre to be accounted a success; it was undoubtedly one of the few thoughtful plays running at the time. *Merrileon Wise*, by the same author, now published by Messrs. Benn, ought also to be produced. The action develops from the raising of the curtain; the stage is set, the characters are defined, and decisions are taken whose effect on character in their outworking the reader keenly anticipates. There are a few lines I think the play could spare. There seems no reason, for example, for Merrileon Wise to hate her father at the end of the first act. That hate is necessary neither to her character nor to her tragedy. But I am more concerned—I am deeply concerned—about the way in which Mr. Malleon seems at times to avoid rather than to overcome the real questions of his plays. In *Conflict* Tom Smith had no right, except as an excuse to claim acquaintance, to his university education. In this play Merrileon Wise had no right to that private fortune of over a thousand a year when she became twenty-one. Such an income liberates anybody who wants to be liberated from all the conventions and ordinary necessities of life. When the man for whom she sacrificed parents, family, and friends, proved incapable of living with her, the reader was inclined to remind her that she would be able to live pretty comfortably in any way she pleased, well rid of her people. Being endowed with the means of minimising the penalties of one's decisions is too much like being born with a silver spoon.

Mrs. Glaspell's *Trifles* and *Other Plays*, by the same publishers at 7s. 6d. cloth, is somewhat literary. It is purely satire on psycho-analysis, while very amusing drawing-literary, and could be produced in a highbrow drawing-room. *Trifles* itself is excellent drama. The important things which the clever men importantly engaged were trying to find—and kept quiet. Mrs. Glaspell is not a feminist in her dramatic attitude. The play of the young prisoner who would not prove an alibi against a charge of murder for fear of betraying some woman's honour, and who becomes the centre of a horde of women competing for the honour of having lost their honour to him, is first-class farce at the expense of human nature in general.

PAUL BANKS.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

The Subscription Rates for "The New Age," to any address in Great Britain or Abroad, are 30s. for 12 months; 15s. for 6 months; 7s. 6d. for 3 months.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

THE SUBSIDY.

Sir,—In view of the controversy now raging in the columns of *The Times* and elsewhere, over what in its essence is the question of "the subsidy," would it not be desirable to publish a carefully worked out plan how—according to Social Credit principles—the subsidy could be granted, without having to come out of the pockets of the rest of the community? Also, in order to avoid the odium connected with the name of subsidy, can you suggest another name—non-irritant?

RICHARD HAWARTH.

[The real problem is to convince influential politicians of the soundness of the principles on which our advocacy of the "subsidy" is based. If they do not accept these principles they will not be converted by a formula for their practice. On the other hand, when they do accept the principles they will not need any outside advice as to how to apply them. That is a job for which Civil Servants are trained and paid. Apart from that, it is bad tactics to publish any particular plan, because directly that is done, a controversy springs up around it, in which every little dabbler in economics considers himself equipped to take part; and, far from giving point to the underlying principles, submerges them in a welter of amendments to the particular plan put forward. There are scores of alternatives to any conceivable plan. Again, a plan proposed to-day might be obsolete in three months' time—for every day the situation is slipping further out of the grasp of those who are now trying to control it. The only thing for New Economists to do is to keep the fundamental issues clear. This we are doing to the best of our ability. Our 4-page emergency issue during the Strike was one example, and other attempts will be made from time to time. As to the word "subsidy," one might mitigate the difficulty by speaking of it as "non-contributory"—but there is no short term which completely obviates misunderstanding.—Ed.]

WORKING CLASS BANKS.

Sir,—In the absence of immediate Government action there are good reasons why the possibilities resident in a working-class loan bank should be explored, viz.:

1. It is imperative that the Social Credit Movement should devise some weapon for effective work more expeditious than that of propaganda.
2. Power at present actually resides in a loan bank, and, as far as I can see, in that alone.
3. Our educational work would receive tremendous impetus from some such popular living example of our theories in practice. Indeed, if such a bank were a *fait accompli* our tasks as educationists should become much easier.
4. With a loan bank in the hands of Labour we could exert a larger influence and possess a weapon of considerable power even though such a bank were run on orthodox lines, provided that its independence were assured.
5. Many of the younger men of the Labour Movement are attracted by Social Credit arguments and many are becoming interested in banking.
6. The logic of the situation is therefore clear. If we cannot bring sufficient moral pressure to bear upon the Government, they may be more tractable to pressure exerted by a rival financial force, backed by millions of voters, possessing an alternative industrial policy, and prepared to apply it.
7. The existence of such an organisation, with such a policy, in a national crisis might mean the salvation of the country.

There are, of course, difficulties. If there were not there would be nothing to discuss. But as I am more interested in seeing Social Credit theories in practice than in making too much of difficulties, I put the following queries with a view to initiating what should prove to be a profitable discussion on "tactics."

1. Did not Major Douglas propose some time ago the creation of a consumers' bank?
2. Assuming a loan bank of any kind practicable, why not a "labour" bank?
3. Would not a "labour" bank be, for all practicable purposes, a "consumers" bank?
4. Would the T.U.C. or the Co-operative Society be a convenient body by means of which such a bank might be organised?

5. Has Major Douglas anything to say on the feasibility of the suggested bank or on the reception considered proposals on those lines are likely to get by the bodies named?

ALEXR. THOMPSON.

[We do not believe that under existing conditions a labour bank is at all likely in practice to afford an example of the soundness of Social Credit theories. If the T.U.C. established a bank we are afraid that Mr. J. H. Thomas would be its chairman and the Privy Council its board of directors. At the best it might attempt to function as an implement of the Birmingham proposals. This is no argument against Labour starting banks if it wants to, but it is an argument against the Social Credit Movement's spending time, energy, and money in "featuring" such a project. If any readers have reason to think otherwise we shall be pleased to print their views—but let these be reasonably condensed.—Ed.]

"GERMANY AND EUROPE."

Sir,—Mr. John Gould Fletcher should surely stick to his trans-Atlantic last. His articles on America were amusing and instructive; but his treatment of Germany is not even destructive; it is simply fatuous. The silliest schoolboy would be incapable of some of his howlers of anachronism. How are we to take seriously the generalisations of a writer who sends Gregory the Great—one of the Fathers of the Church which Mr. Fletcher says the Germans saved—to Canossa in 1077? That venerable Roman missed his appointment by nearly five centuries; and the Emperor Henry V., too, would have required a time-machine to be "hailed by Dante as the forthcoming deliverer of Italy." What would Dante have said had Mr. Fletcher, by a reversal of that same machine, been able to congratulate him on his German descent and his Teutonic world-sense?

But if the historical background of all this makes one blink, Mr. Fletcher's appraisal of cultural values is positively blinding. Does he really think that French classicism has anything to do with bourgeois industrialism? Shade of Racine! Shade of Ingres! Has nothing come out of the Eastern Mediterranean since Aristotle? And have Prussian vigour and realism counted for nothing? "They only produced one king, and he was both miserly and wicked." Mr. Fletcher leaves us wondering who that bad fellow was. Perhaps Frederick the Great, or maybe Nebuchadnezzar, or yet again Montezuma! These wild flights may be exhilarating, but one must master a few of the facts before setting out to condemn the whole of Latin civilisation. Mr. Fletcher might ponder over the scholarship of some of his Teutonic giants, before claiming for their race certain qualities which are only dubiously theirs.

A. J.

"SMOKE AND CITIES."

Sir,—Mr. Montgomery has been addressing his mind to one of Queen Elizabeth's problems—the size of London. In 1580 she forbade immigration and new buildings, a policy followed intermittently for a century afterwards. In 1678 it was proposed to put a penal tax on new buildings because labourers came to London and got easy jobs, forcing cause farmers to treble wages, whereby they could only afford small rents. In the eighteenth century complaints continued, and Cobbett's abuse of *The Great Wen* (not yet extinct, and Cobett's abuse of *The Great Wen* is well known. (He tended over the swamps of Pimlico) is well known.) The proposed, but did not originate, that term.) The problem is not peculiar to England. New York, Buenos Aires, Sydney, and Melbourne are familiar examples.

I think there have been two chief reasons for the perennial influx from country to city, which affected Imperial Rome and medieval Paris equally with the modern capitals. Firstly, to vast numbers of people country life seems so much duller than city life, and, till recently at least, that in small towns was hardly more attractive. Secondly, there is a substratum of fact in the tradition of "going to London to make one's fortune." People have managed to make poverty more bearable by fleeing to the town. There it is easier to shift from one occupation to another.

In the past, too, the large town has been the refuge, inadequate it is true, for those who wished to escape local oppression. Now it is pre-eminently the place where one can do and live as one likes with least interference or social pressure from one's neighbours. Most of my acquaintances who praise country life aspire to afford a flat in town concurrently with a country cottage. The resources of civilisation are at present most available in the very big city.

The everlasting problem of distribution is one economic factor at work. Is London become or becoming the national organ of Salesmanship?

HILDERIC COUSENS.

Finance Enquiry Petition Committee

This Committee has been formed to organise the collection of signatures to a Petition for an Enquiry into Finance.

It is not connected with any particular scheme of financial reform, and its object can therefore be consistently supported by everyone who believes that the fundamental cause of the economic deadlock is financial.

Among eminent signatories are the following :

The Rev. Lewis Donaldson, Canon of Westminster.
 The Right Rev. Bishop Gore, D.D.
 The Rev. P. T. R. Kirk, M.A. (Secretary, Industrial Christian Fellowship).
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Copies of the Petition, together with leaflets and sets of instructions, are immediately available from

THE JOINT SECRETARIES, Finance Enquiry Petition Committee, 303, Abbey House, Westminster, S.W.1

The Social Credit Movement.

Supporters of the Social Credit Movement contend that under present conditions the purchasing power in the hands of the community is chronically insufficient to buy the whole product of industry. This is because the money required to finance capital production, and created by the banks for that purpose, is regarded as borrowed from them, and, therefore, in order that it may be repaid, is charged into the price of consumers' goods. It is a vital fallacy to treat new money thus created by the banks as a repayable loan, without crediting the community, on the strength of whose resources the money was created, with the value of the resulting new capital resources. This has given rise to a defective system of national loan accountancy, resulting in the reduction of the community to a condition of perpetual scarcity, and bringing them face to face with the alternatives of widespread unemployment of men and machines, as at present, or of international complications arising from the struggle for foreign markets.

The Douglas Social Credit Proposals would remedy this defect by increasing the purchasing power in the hands of the community to an amount sufficient to provide effective demand for the whole product of industry. This, of course, cannot be done by the orthodox method of creating new money, prevalent during the war, which necessarily gives rise to the "vicious spiral" of increased currency, higher prices, higher wages, higher costs, still higher prices, and so on. The essentials of the scheme are the simultaneous creation of new money and the regulation of the price of consumers' goods at their real cost of production (as distinct from their apparent financial cost under the present system). The technique for effecting this is fully described in Major Douglas's books.

The adoption of this scheme would result in an unprecedented improvement in the standard of living of the population by the absorption at home of the present unsaleable output, and would, therefore, eliminate the dangerous struggle for foreign markets. Unlike other suggested remedies, these proposals do not call for financial sacrifice on the part of any section of the community, while, on the other hand, they widen the scope for individual enterprise.

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