CURRENT MAGAZINES

Towards the Third Labour Government:—Mr. W. Newbold, in the *Nineteenth Century*.
The Revolt against Complacency:—Prof. H. J. Laski, in the *Nation*.
To Utopia on a Townsend Pension:—Mr. S. Oxley, in the *New Outlook*.

"Try Your Hap against the Irishmen":—Miss Muriel Sperry, in the *Atlantic*.

JOHN Morley once wrote of those who dwelt "in the tower of ancient faiths", looking around them with the hurried uneasy glance of men in constant expectation of an earthquake. Some such attitude seems to be that of the more conservative writers on social subjects just now, while the more radical at once enjoy and exploit the opportunity. The articles cited above will illustrate these alternate moods. But some of us, especially in the younger countries, are by no means satisfied with either label, and we too have our anxieties, distrustful no less of ruthless coercion than of paralytic indulgence.

It is well known that Canada has a Communist party. No doubt the alarm of those who constantly talk against it is as much exaggerated as the hope of those who constitute its directing inner circle. But at least its existence and vigorous activity may be realized by anyone who looks into a record so cold and unbiassed as last annual Report of the Department of Labour. One question of the moment is "What should be done about it?" For example, judgment is sharply divided as to whether deportation of a few leaders is an effective remedy or a gratuitous advertisement for an evil cause. A quest not less urgent, and more promising in definite results, is for the motive, surely not altogether discreditable, which has in many countries so increased the Communist following within the last few years. Twelve months ago, six million voters, belonging to the race reputedly the most highly educated in Europe, marked their election ballots on the Communist side. What are the sources of this amazing strength? The considerations against Communism are too familiar to call for repetition. To persons with our antecedents and traditional ways of thinking, the puzzle is to guess how anyone can believe "the materialist interpretation of history", or approve the fostering of "class-war". More important and instructive than rehearsing those

respects in which the Communist Creed is wrong would be the discovery of why, though wrong, it has spread so widely.

Its diffusion in Germany since the War is not very hard to explain. At the heart of Communism is the repudiation of nationality: its appeal is always to the workers of the world to forget the national frontiers which divide them, and combine in a class-struggle against their common economic enemy:—the proletariat of all countries against the capitalists of all countries. Sudden access of strength came to German Communism after two things: (1) a fearful experience of imperialistic nationalism in the War, and (2) a no less fearful experience of social distress following the nationalistic "settlement" of the Peace. The temper which was thus formed was not wholly evil, nor were its impulses in the least unintelligible. Parallels from other countries, and from the most widely separated epochs, come at once to mind. What occurred in France, especially in Paris, in 1871—after the Franco-Prussian War—will illustrate the same point. "Patriots" became generally and not unjustifiably detested. Two thousand years ago, when the Stoic School began to exert powerful influence on the thought of the Roman world, its denial of a narrow nationalism was one of its chief sources of inspiration. Disparagement of the ideals of the patriot, assertion of values higher and deeper than patriotic maxims, were at once the pride and the reproach of early Christianity. Is it the same impulse, bursting the same bonds, where those bonds are specially tight, which has given Europe its present spectacle of a return to Karl Marx?

This movement appeals to those who have suffered under either or both of two tyrannies,—the tyranny of a ruthless Nationalism, and the tyranny of a ruthless Capitalism. Historically they have often gone together. The strength of the new radicals comes from their picture of these horrors, which is so largely accurate, and their promise of a way of escape, which the passionate "will to believe" can at least render plausible. Their appeal, like that of Mohammed, has prevailed not by reason of the unworthy indulgences it offers, though it does offer a good many, but by its advance in moral power over the influences it displaced. All genuine observers of the present Russian scene agree that for the working class, who form the bulk of the cities, in provision not only for their physical comfort but for their education and cultural life, Communism has brought to the victims of the old Tsardom an enormous boon. It has effected, under the Five-Year Plan, a development of the country which, if far short of certain radiant expectations with which the Plan was launched, is at least equally

beyond anything that was dreamed of by the most advanced social reformer of Empire days. It has placed Russia in the position altogether unique of having no unemployed on whom to lavish doles. It has provided for a vast nation, long intellectually starved, such a diet of great literature as lands of higher tradition are beginning to envy, and what is called in Soviet phrase "the liquidation of illiteracy" has proceeded at a pace which very few outside critics judged possible. For all this the inspiration has come from that faith known as "Communism", which at least prescribes belief in the dignity of all labour and the indignity of being an industrial drone. Though the practical values thus created are detachable, and indeed much better detached, from the Communist system of dogma, we cannot wonder that the dogma thought so productive of the values has a hold not easily shaken upon the Russian mind. Finally, other countries and other classes played tremendously into Soviet Russia's hands by mistaking in their attack the real points of weakness, and failing to appreciate the points of strength. The materialist interpretation of history will not explain everything,—not by a long way. But it is demonstrably the key to a great deal regarding which other explanations have left thoughtful people unsatisfied. Economic self-seeking, as every acute historian saw long before Marx stated it as a principle, is the secret of many a national movement which has disguised it under other forms. And very specially, as the Soviet publicist has been quick to point out, and the Russian people to understand, it casts light on many an effort both military and industrial, by which—with loud protestations of a higher purpose—the capitalist nations have tried to bring Soviet Russia to ruin.

One often hears it said that Communism is a *religion*, and not even the fiercest anti-Communist need quarrel with such a statement, for religions have been of many sorts—from the highest to the lowest. The "Moscow Daily News"—which lies before me as I write—is rich in descriptive articles, decorated with illustrative pictures, to show how under "the Gospel according to Lenin" the world is being gloriously made new. There are other accounts of the same process, showing it very differently. Probably the coming historian will have to strike somehow a balance between what is said by Stalin about Soviet Russia and what is said by Kerensky, just as he will recognize the real Italy of these days as something intermediate between what is pictured in Fascist anniversary speeches and what is pictured in an article by Professor Salvemini. But my immediate point is a purely psychological one. My concern is why and how Communism has taken so strong

a hold in such countries as Russia and Germany—so different in other respects—and what is the reasonable, as well as judicious, attitude of the Canadian mind towards a possible development of it here. From this point of view it makes little matter even if we suppose that Communist enthusiasm is based mainly on delusions and fed incessantly with lies. What is important is to recognize the elements of truth and value by which the lies are so disguised, and with which the delusions are so mixed, as to excape detection. Next in importance is the contriving of means by which the demand for a social order better and more just than we have known shall be so met as to avoid this desperate alternative. It is a task in social pathology, followed by one in social therapeutics. Fortunately what has reached elsewhere the stage of advanced disease is in Canada relatively but a faint threatening of uneasiness. The best time, however, for treatment of all diseases is when they are incipient. One may say of Communism what Carlyle said of Chartism—that it is one of those boils on the surface indicating a virulent humor below, "ways of announcing that it continues there, that it would fain not continue there".

First and foremost, to pursue the medical metaphor, a genuine diagnosis must avoid facile dismissals of the Communist case. It lends itself indeed to these, but they do not help—they often rather hinder—an effective campaign against it, because to those untouched by its influence our light satire is superfluous, while to the enthusiast for it we are simply exasperating. We may easily point out how absurd it is to demand "dictatorship" for any group in the State, the "proletariat" equally with any other. We may laugh at the insistence that even within the proletariat there are a few specially illuminated individuals to whom alone—because they are the custodians of a mystic social revelation—even though as in Russia no more than two per cent of the whole people, all authority should be committed. We may point out that if there is among the many precarious "lessons of history" one which may with a certain confidence be asserted, it is the conduciveness of concord rather than conflict among the social classes to the happiness and prosperity of all. And we may show with numerous examples from the past how this doctrine of a "class war" is but the reappearance of that unlovely myth about economic selfishness as the only possible human motive which has expressed itself again and again in philosophic slanders on our race—no more convincing in Lenin's essays than when Thomas Hobbes undertook to disillusion us about gratitude as "the lively expectation of favours to come", and about parental love as far-sighted cunning to provide filial care for one's old age.

This is the stock-in-trade of all anti-Communist writers and speakers. But it is fair to assume that the cogency of such reasoning is not unappreciated by at least a large proportion of those who nevertheless remain obstinately by the Communist banner. Many remain there because they think, mistakenly, that the improvements they see in the one great country where the Communist Experiment has been tried are the products of Communism and could have been produced by nothing else. For others it is not the logic of their own case, it is the lack of an alternative method of social recovery, which keeps them attached to this as a method of social vengeance. Neither group has, dialectically, more than the shadow of an argument. But arguing will have little effect on either. For both, the remedy will be found in the removal of the conditions which predispose to the disease and foster it. Social reform is an enterprise less in curative than in preventive medicine.

MISS MURIEL SPERRY is one of an increasing number of tourists who have found the Ireland of old romance slipping away, and who have urged all desirous of a glimpse of its lingering remains to lose no time in getting there. In her *Atlantic* article she points out that the Celtic Twilight cannot long subsist side by side with the poles of the Shannon Electric Power Company. There is a side, however, of this change which her article does not notice, a passing of the Celtic Twilight and an invasion of stern Realism in the sphere of politics which—whether it be for good or for evil—impresses all tourists as a fact. It impresses the reflecting native too, as Mr. Stephen Gwynn lately showed to readers of the *Fortnightly*.

What these visitors, mindful of twenty years back, observe now on return is the changed political emphasis. The first have become last and the last have become first. In 1914, the dominant public men were Redmond, Dillon, Devlin, O'Connor. They are all gone, but their influence did not wait to be extinguished by their deaths. It vanished with tragic suddenness, and left them wondering what had happened. In the words of Scripture, their sun went down while it was yet day. Alice in Wonderland was not more perplexed than he who interprets Dublin now by his memories of the historic "Irish Party".

What first strikes the imagination of such a returning exile is perhaps the changed look of the capital:—the sight of the Tricolor floating over the old Viceregal Lodge: a Governor-General whose

humility of origin and still more patent humility of administration are meant as a satire on the pomp and circumstance of the former Lord Lieutenancy: the dark green uniform in Castle yards that so long blazed with the British scarlet. Queer and diverting little tricks to win national sentiment are part of the Free State's policy, as they belong to the policy of all administrations throughout the world. The red postal boxes of other days have become green. King's County and Queen's County have been renamed Offaly and Leix. Kingstown is "Dun Laoghaire" and Queenstown is "Cobh". There appears to be an objection to the use of all regal nomenclature, and odd transformations are said to have been made in the wording of law papers. A money prize was offered some years ago for the best new national anthem; but how far poetic genius was stimulated, I have no evidence to show. On postage stamps the royal emblem no longer appears, and the place of the king's head on silver coins is taken by figures of domestic animals—in ascending degrees of dignity—which suggest an agricultural State. These and many other details are noted with malicious accuracy in the North, and the English newspapers are duly apprised of all, much more than all, that they portend. Editors of Liberal sentiment are stirred by them to a measure of self-satisfied reflections. The American press correspondent is sent to his portable typewriter with data for glowing and emotional rhetoric. *Blackwood's* cannot regard the scene without rising rage, and the House of Lords "Die-Hards" are driven to yet gloomier vaticination. But there are changes more surprising than these to one who knew the country well some twenty years ago.

The most remarkable change is not in externals, nor even in Anglo-Irish relations, but in the Irish heart itself. A great dethronement, and a great exaltation! Omnipotent chiefs of the fairly recent past are now scarcely honored with the tribute of a conventional reminiscence. Abroad, the Irish Societies on St. Patrick's Night still toast "The Immortal Memory of O'Connell", and speakers just on the line between middle life and old age drift into stirring recollections of Parnellism. But at the Dublin headquarters of the race quite different are the names with which men now conjure. Parnell's statue still stands overlooking O'Connell Street, but the work of the party he created has passed almost into derision. To have fought wordy battles "on the floor of the House" means nothing for the men of to-day, when compared with fighting revolver battles on a bleak hillside of Tipperary or Clare. Politicians who promised to win by "holding the balance between British parties in parliament" are not to be named with volunteers who actually

won by holding hand grenades in readiness for a police patrol. Ambushing a majority at Westminster seems mere childishness to those who have ambushed the uniformed enemy in a narrow street or on a country road. Thus the whole Redmondite period is viewed as a stupid and most unfortunate interlude between two other periods that were quick with the pulse of genuine Irish life—the time of the old Fenians, and the time of the new Republicans.

An aspect of the change is seen in the indignant repudiation by Free State leaders of those who would apologise for the violence of the "war" days. They welcome a panegyric,—some comparison with the record of Emmet or of Wolfe Tone. But they will hear nothing of the English Liberal's plea in extenuation, as if there were a fault to be extenuated, or a tribunal anywhere qualified to sit in judgment.

Bygone Nationalist leaders used to urge that the refusal of moderate concession would drive the Irish patriot to "extremes". It is the general belief among good friends of Ireland abroad that the warning was a wise one, and that the thing foreseen was just what has actually taken place. The late Lord Morley, a former Irish Chief Secretary, refused to speak a word of censure upon the "gunmen". He used to recall the precedent of the followers of Mazzini, and to ask whether any other peasantry in the world, if treated in the same way, would not have done the same. But such apologising by British publicists is more offensive to the Irish Republican leaders than a fierce denunciation by Lord Carson, or a biting satire in the *Morning Post*. To suggest that England should have made "concessions" is to acknowledge that she had some sort of right to concede or to withhold. To argue that the Irish demand for independent sovereignty passed through stages, from the "moderate" to the "extreme", and that such passage was determined by obstinacy across the Channel, is to provoke the orthodox southern leader as a red flag provokes a bull. He treats this obtrusive philosophising as so much impertinence. It makes one recall the half-resentful and half-contemptuous tone of the natives towards their English visitor in *John Bull's Other Island*. Let the broad-minded English Liberal sympathise with an Irish Republican on the ground that he must have been "goaded by Carsonism", and the reply will quickly come that Carson deserves far more respect than the English Liberals. In a famous Tract which preceded the rising of Easter Week, 1916, Patrick Pearse said that the Orangeman with a rifle was a much less ridiculous figure than the Nationalist without a rifle, that firing a gun would count for more than making a pun, and that the obsolete weapons

imported by Ulster would at least be more dangerous than an epigram.

Hence, too, the laboured argument by which historians of the Irish Movement prove to us that the claim to independence has never once been abated. In what respect that claim would be lowered in force to-day if it could be shown that at any date in the past centuries some accredited champion—under duress or in a fit of absence of mind—had agreed to compromise it, does not clearly appear; but the patriotic historians are much concerned to demonstrate its flawless continuity. The claim of "Moderates" to have effected anything must be disproved. For, in the first place, Moderates never existed. And, in the second place, they invariably failed. Whatever else he is unable to do, an Irish disputant can always perpetrate a bull.

Yet the truth, as anyone who stands outside the conflict can easily see, is that only by such explanation in terms of reasonable hope deferred and unreasonable violence thus excited, can the outburst of the years after 1918 meet with a measure of the world's condonation. Even Mr. De Valera is still doing business in the markets of international opinion on the unexhausted Redmondite capital. Everyone who was on the spot twenty years ago knows that it was the Carson Movement which transformed the country. In 1912, the Republicans in Ireland counted for nothing. But within six years, it was Republicanism which had begun to count for everything, and—as T. P. O'Connor then said to me—before long, John Redmond's party was as dead as himself.

Political obituaries have often been prematurely written. Moreover, dead parties—unlike dead persons—have proved capable of revival. The tenure of office for ten years by Irishmen who accepted the Treaty of 1921 showed an effort to bring back the spirit of Redmondite nationalism. Not that Griffith, Collins, or Cosgrave would have dared to avow any return to so ridiculously limited a programme. But when their critics of the De Valera school fasten it upon them as a reproach that this is exactly what they had in mind, the charge is easier to deny than to discredit. The essence of Redmondite Nationalism was a desire to develop the Irish national spirit within the limits of partnership in the British Commonwealth: not what Mr. De Valera calls "some sort of external association", but partnership—an organic community of purpose. In the half-dozen years preceding signature to the treaty, such conciliators had been displaced by root-and-branch men, with the motto, "No compromise". But compromise was

the very heart of the scheme agreed upon at that midnight meeting in 10 Downing Street between Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Birkenhead, Mr. Winston Churchill on the one side, and Collins and Griffith on the other. What the Irish signatories then under specified conditions undertook was the rebuilding of international goodwill. It was a difficult, even a dangerous, enterprise. Collins was assassinated for attempting it, as he himself predicted to Birkenhead he would be. But the enterprise, though difficult and dangerous, was not altogether desperate, and it even seemed on the way to a slow success when it encountered that maddening obstacle known as "hard times". The demagogues familiar with the exploitation of hard times were in readiness to operate. It was so easy to argue that declining markets and shortage in jobs were due to the old enemy across the Channel, especially before an audience which had suppressed the ancient grudge with reluctance and would revive it with joy. So the farmers and the city unemployed became objects of Mr. De Valera's special attention.

Up and down the country he denounced the payment of "land annuities" to Great Britain, as a cause of rural impoverishment. The truth on the matter was that these annuities were but the legitimate interest on loan from British bondholders to Irish farmers, and that the part taken by the British Government had been no more than giving a guarantee, without which the loan could never have been obtained. When the orator called passionately for "no more carrying of the British National Debt", what he really urged was the repudiation of an Anglo-Irish contract, and the exultant abandonment of one's Note to be paid by a neighbour who had been rash enough or generous enough to endorse it. But the plea was effective. Its refutation involved various technical details about treaties of which Mr. De Valera's audiences knew little, and on which it was not his policy to inform them. This story of those land annuities is indeed vastly illuminating on the whole Free State situation.

A Minister in the Cosgrave Government described the project of repudiating interest on the Land Loan as one which would combine the minimum of profit with the maximum of dishonour. From the point of view of profit, this cautious statement proved nearer, at least, to the facts of the immediate future, than the sweeping forecasts of the British press. A penal duty was quickly imposed on Free State imports at British ports, in order that the debt wrongfully withheld might be otherwise collected. In the "Economic War" thus resulting, with its slogan, "Boycott British

Goods" resounding through the Irish cities and towns, it is clear that the Irish cannot win, but by no means clear that they have as yet been financially ruined. The *Birmingham Post* reported at an early point that the town of Bantry, in County Cork, was looking like a deserted village. When Mr. De Valera said England would feel the pinch at least as much as Ireland, it was scornfully replied that the loss of trade to the latter might well be 90%, while to the former it could not be more than 10% of her total business: moreover, exclaimed the *New York Herald*, how could England be "starved into submission" while tons of Danish food were ready for shipment, and French potatoes lay in vast quantities on the wharves, waiting to be bought at a shilling a bushel? The force of these considerations has become apparent from the eager response to a call for a farmers' association to demand that their English market be restored to them. It is apparent still more clearly from Mr. De Valera's desperate recourse to the payment of bounties in lieu of the farmers' losses incurred by the tax. How long that policy can last, a glance at the Free State budget is enough to show.

But the still tenacious hold of the De Valera Government upon its public forbids one to think that "stark ruin" has been so unmistakably at work as British press correspondents in Ireland represent. An enormous number of small farmers—the very backbone of Mr. De Valera's party—have never been accustomed to ship their produce to British markets, or even to sell it to dealers who were shipping it out of the country. They sold it for local consumption, and it would take at least a very considerable time for them to feel any difference in their business. It was not the small farmers, but the cattle dealers, that the penal duties would hit first—proprietors of those huge grazing farms into which so much of the previously cultivated land in the South and West of Ireland has been turned. No doubt their market has been largely destroyed; but, though influential, the graziers are not enormously numerous for an election, nor have they ever been the front line of Mr. De Valera's host. Labour, on the other hand, has been effectively conciliated by such expenditure on public work and doles as must surely make the Finance Minister tremble more and more as the budget day approaches.

In regard to British action in this matter, the returning exile hears discordant judgments, from the shrill complaint of Northern Ireland that Downing Street has shown the most lamentable weakness, to the fierce denunciations in Cork or Clare, of a tyranny which has grown only more intense with the progress of the years. He who is best acquainted with the facts will be slowest to pro-

nounce on the merit or demerit of British policy since 1921. About its earlier phases he may feel no such doubt, and he may even regret that some of the men chiefly responsible for creating so evil a conjuncture were no longer there to be troubled by their own handiwork. The grasping Ulster capitalists, reinforced by English feudal lords, manufacturers in the Midlands, and young English lawyers politically "on the make", who bedevilled the situation in 1886, and again in 1893, were the men one would have liked to see eat the fruit of their own doings, and be filled with their own devices. But the British Ministers who made the "Midnight Treaty" on 6th December, 1921, deserve more sympathetic consideration. They were struggling as best they could with a *damnosa hereditas*. The wound they were trying to heal quickly was one that generation after generation of their predecessors had inflamed, until it was well nigh beyond all treatment. A tithe of the readiness to conciliate which Griffith and Collins received with cold acquiescence would have stirred O'Connell or Redmond to transports of enthusiasm. So slightly had the old wound begun to heal, so fragile was the new tissue which had begun to cover it, that the industrial Depression has been quite enough to facilitate those who would poison it again. One's mind goes back to that pronouncement of uncanny prescience in which a great English historian summed up his country's Irish policy nearly 90 years ago. Macaulay was pleading in parliament for a slight enough measure of redress—nothing more than the disestablishment in Ireland of the Anglican Church, which still oppressed and scandalized the Roman Catholic population. He predicted, quite truly as the event showed, that the reform would yet come, but would come too late. His countrymen would manage, as usual, to hit the exact point at which they could neither refuse with safety nor concede with grace. When would they make the concession?

> I well know that you will refuse to make it now. I know as well that you will make it hereafter. You will make it as every concession to Ireland has been made. You will make it when its effect will be, not to appease, but to stimulate agitation. You will make it when it will be regarded, not as a great act of national justice, but as a confession of national weakness. You will make it in such a way, and at such a time, that there will be but too much reason to doubt whether more mischief has been done by your long refusal, or by your tardy and enforced compliance.

These were prophetic words, as the men who made the belated experiment thirty-four years afterwards were to learn to their cost. And they had a significance to be verified more than once again, as another half-century rolled away.

H. L. S.