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The Failure of Philosophy:—Mr. Will Durant, in *Harper's*

The Meaning of Liberalism:—Professor Ramsay Muir in the *Contemporary*.

IN the *Review of the Churches*, Sir Henry Lunn has some sharp things to say to Modernist clergy in the English Church. It is what the late Ian Maclaren would have called "faithful dealing."

The topic in dispute is the action of certain English bishops in regard to the coal strike. In association with leaders of the Free Churches, these prelates endeavoured to mediate between the warring factions. And unless the Church is to drop into the position of a mere purveyor of supra-mundane piety, divorced from all the vital interests of life on this earth, it is hard to see why such ecclesiastical peacemakers should have been visited with so much abuse. One seems to remember that peacemaking was included as the object of a beatitude for which even a "Modernist" must preserve some respect. It was quite open to a critic to argue that the bishops' proposals were unwise or unworkable. But it is not, surely, reasonable to argue that they were transgressing on a field not theirs.

Yet Dr. Hensley Henson, Bishop of Durham, has denounced his fellow-prelates. Their action, he says, is the result of an outworn and long exploded view of the Church. It is fatuous to think that "sentiment can dominate economics." An illustrious predecessor of his in the same see, Bishop Westcott, did indeed intervene in a like situation long ago, but the present Bishop of Durham thinks that sort of policy would not now be feasible. Such people as Bishop Temple, of Manchester, he says, only prolonged the crisis. There has been more, in the same strain, from other writers of Dr. Henson's school of Anglican Churchmen. "Can all our troubles be cured by warm hearts, or do we need cool heads as well?" The episcopal mediation was that of "obvious time-servers, who will have their reward when the Socialists come into power." "The new type of parson, sprung from the ranks, and soured by poverty and thwarted social ambition"!

Sir Henry Lunn points out that this is all sound and fury, signifying nothing. To the query whether all our troubles can be cured by warm hearts without cool heads, the obvious answer is in the negative, but it takes us a very short way, like obvious answers in general. "Common is the commonplace." And the men who are pontificating so furiously against their brethren have as much need as any Labour chief of a refrigerator for their own heads. They cannot complain, having chosen this line of debate, or rather of recrimination, when they are reminded by Sir Henry Lunn of the handsome incomes they draw from the public purse. The established order they defend has been kind to themselves. Did they procure their own rich rewards through "time-serving" to the political powers that be? No doubt it is unseemly to ask this, but for the provocation. But is it seemly that "one of the wealthiest ecclesiastics in England" should mock the discontent of his impoverished brethren? Such imputing of motives will carry us far in a direction most undesirable to choose.

It was time for something of the sort to be said about critics who so uniformly ascribe ignoble purposes to the men who honestly differ from them. Dr. Hensley Henson is comparatively restrained, but others of his school have broken every decent limit in their lapse into mere abusive personalities. And this raises a general question of great interest. Something very odd has happened to the school called "Modernist" in the English Church. Long ago, George Eliot remarked that those most dogmatic on inspiration were latitudinarian on fasting, and that while the rigour of a scripture text was enforced against persons who would modify the creed, the apparently "Socialistic" parts of the Gospels were diluted by a spiritualizing alembic into harmless truisms. But there has been a change. It is on social questions that a grim orthodoxy is now proclaimed, by the very men who are most flexible on the interpretation of the Prayer Book!

In truth, they are only half Modernist. They feel towards social reformers in the Church as orthodox Evangelicals feel towards the "Modern Churchmen's Union." An appeal for re-statement of the creed in terms of modern thought wakens all their zeal, and their hospitality to new scientific knowledge is boundless. But the appeal for re-enquiry into the Church's attitude to our quite new problems of Labour, of international relationship, of social opportunity and privilege, leaves some of them as cold as a nether millstone. The formulations of dogma centuries back are, in their judgment, no longer adequate, and they will not fetter their Christian liberty with the bonds forged at Nicaea or

Chalcedon. But to an industrial world that has been turned upside down they think it sufficient for the Church of the present to speak the language of long ages ago. The Christian creed, it seems, must take progressive account of astronomy, of biology, of biblical criticism, of historical research, of all that made the second half of the nineteenth century so different in thought from the first half. But apparently the Christian ethic need take no account at all of that terrific ferment of ideas about the function and character of the State which has made even the philanthropic and the generous of early Victorian statesmen seem callous or inhuman to the reflective mind of to-day. Dean Inge, for example, has told us that he would rather have been born at a different date. In truth, it might have been better. For he speaks with so much greater fluency the language of an earlier time.

Some of these Modernists are indeed perplexing. One may, for instance, be forgiven a certain amazement when one finds that, on the authority of a scripture text, the Church is forbidden to take official part in social or political discussion, whilst scorn is directed from the same source upon those narrow literalists who would quote another scripture against the extension of facilities for divorce. It may be that the case of Uzzah or the narrative of the Witch of Endor is decisive against psychical research. But he who argues so must expect to be asked how then the practice of birth control is legitimate for those who have been bidden to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Among the worst concomitants of a sombre outlook upon life is the doubt it so often involves regarding all manner of social reformers in respect not only to their wisdom, but also to their integrity. It is not enough for our mordant critic to show that the Socialist is economically deluded, that the Liberal politician is a doctrinaire, that the priest and college don on a Labour platform are men with tender hearts and not much harder heads. The Socialist must likewise be branded as in malignant alliance with the enemies of his country, the Liberal politician as having no thought except to bribe his way to a seat in parliament or a post in the cabinet, the Anglo-Catholic slum-worker as a charlatan who touts for popularity by flattering the masses, the radical don as deliberately instilling "the devilish doctrine of the class-war." America's adoption of a prohibitory law, Dean Inge gravely argues, was due to the greed of certain large employers of labour, that the money spent on beer might be diverted to those luxuries they had to sell, and for which they desired to create a demand! Suspiciousness of that sort is indecent.

It does seem important that our Modernists should be invited to show more genuine and thorough-going loyalty to their own chosen principle. They have said that there is always more light and truth to break forth from the message committed to their trust. Excellent. But such light must shine on every sphere of life and thought, not only on the ancient creeds for which the prophet is comparatively careless, but on the ancient usages to which he may be passionately attached. Not every Church leader, indeed, has an aptitude for such applications of his faith. One may suspect that Bishop Temple and the "Copec" men have it in larger degree than Dean Inge and Bishop Hensley Henson. And it does seem a pity that the Dean of St. Paul's at least, to whose vast powers in another field we are all so much indebted, should have become a storm-centre for this controversy. Many times he has bidden the shoemaker to stick to his last. But perhaps, like those very clergymen he is quick to brand for the corresponding fault, he has deserted his own last too often. And it was such a great instrument! Not even the lure of the newspaper press should divert him from work in which he has few living peers to other work for which his very gifts are his handicap.

MISS Edith Sellers has been touring through Northern Italy, and has got a tremendous impression of the strength of the Mussolini cult. Re-visiting places she remembered of old, places where she had been only a few years before, she seemed to see a world made new. Things had become "spick and span." Gone was the earlier drabness, squalor, depression of spirit. She saw an obviously flourishing town, with imposing structures for government and for industry and for education, with a general trimness and the tokens of prosperity in every countenance, where before—there had been a poverty-stricken village, the men unmistakable ne'er do wells, the women slatternly, not a school in the place, and the children taught no more than the devices of begging! People told her that they owed the transformation to one man. And their gratitude was painted or chalked on the houses. Everywhere this English tourist observed the hieroglyphics "V. V. M." or "V. V. D.", which being interpreted mean *Viva Mussolini. Viva, Viva Il Duce.*

It looked like a miracle. Enquiring, rather cautiously, about the wizard and his ways, Miss Sellers found that it was the result which mattered, far more than the method, to the imagination of Italian observers. One thing they knew, that whereas their men

had so lately lived on bread and onions or walked about in rags, now they have smart clothes on their backs and three square meals a day. And but for Mussolini, they said, the desolation would have become utter. One old lady, who had lived some forty years in the same town, put it in terse language:

Fascist? Of course I am a Fascist. We are all Fascisti here, adorers of Mussolini; and little wonder. Think of what he saved us from. Were it not for him, Italy might to-day be as Russia is, and what would then become of one's bits of savings? The Bolsheviki would soon have devoured the lot, had he not put them to flight. And think of what he has done for us. The men here, my own sons among them, all work hard now; and it is thanks to him that they do. He has made them understand that work they must, whether they like it or not; and that is a great thing. How he has done it, I cannot imagine; but he has done it, and there is no one else here who could have done it.

One can imagine how Thomas Carlyle would have celebrated an exploit like that. If he were here to give us a new set of *Latter Day Pamphlets*, beyond doubt we should have a companion piece to his famous *Dr. Francia, Dictator of Paraguay*.

But there are two sides, and even more, to every story worth telling, and Miss Sellers found other voices even in Italy. They were hard to find. People who had a paeon to sing sang it full-throated in public; the other sort looked nervously around to make sure that there were no open windows about, before they began. Once assured that no one was an eavesdropper, an occasional critic would open the vials of cursing. The burden of the curses was about the death of liberty and the enormous stimulus to Italian Chauvinism.

"For all the good he has done", protested one malcontent, "he could have done without strangling the freedom which our fathers gave their lives to secure." He had undone the work of Cavour, uprooted the seed sown by Mazzini. Italy's lawful King had been thrust aside, some of her most distinguished subjects driven from their own land. It might be that some of the worst Fascist crimes against human rights had been done without the knowledge or even against the orders of the Chief. But the régime had produced villainous effects on *morale*. It was all very well to point to the menace of preceding discontent, but the Italian proletariat—fed with radiant promises of better times after the war—had good reason to complain of having been deceived.

And the hideous development of militarism! Young Italy had gone mad for the battlefield. "The Prussians in their most bellicose days were nothing to them." Grandiose visions of annex-

ing half Europe, with a good share of Africa, were turning the heads of the Black Shirts. And another critic talked in the like strain: "Chauvinism is spreading like wild-fire throughout the land. It is demoralizing the whole nation. Mussolini never makes a speech but he fills empty heads with dreams of triumphant marches into foreign lands, great battles, warriors returning laurel-crowned and laden with the spoils, of course. And what will be the end of it all?"

Frequenting the theatres and shows of various kinds, this English observer found much confirmation of the view that the Dictator had displaced the King in public respect, and that the Fascist police are just personal devotees of Mussolini. Such power monopolized in the hands of a single person might be used, she thought, with the most terrific results in any cause which that imperious will chose to adopt. And if there remained, as clearly there did remain, any protesters in spirit, they had to keep their opinions to themselves. In a procession, for instance, Miss Sellers asked why some undoubtedly discontented and unwilling people were joining in the effusive loyalty. And here was the answer:

Because they must be there. Had an official absented himself, he would soon have ceased to be an official. Had a professional man stayed away, he would have lost most of his clients, and the chances are his life would have been made a burden to him.

It is not much wonder that Miss Sellers, with an Englishwoman's traditional habits of thought, came away "sorrowful." The flash and glitter of a Mussolini régime are such as the historically-minded can soon place in that sequence to which it belongs. A dictatorship, the heady fumes of military management, the "will to power" in a single overmastering personality,—all these are phenomena which Europe has witnessed before. And Europe has likewise witnessed many an aftermath, when those who had lately been ringing bells began to wring their hands. Already there have been various attempts to reproduce the familiar features of "Autocracy tempered by assassination." And already the Napoleonic spell of triumphs abroad as a sedative to disorder at home is threatening another appearance. But whether Mussolini is indeed Napoleonic, has yet to be shown on some field more spacious than that of a city riot. For the time, his success is rather like that of Napoleon III than like that of Napoleon I. As Mr. Lloyd George has pointed out, we have once again in Europe a directing personality like that of the Second Empire of France. And in the comparison there is perhaps an omen.

IN the American magazine world at present there are few writers more diverting than Professor Harry Elmer Barnes. His humour is not indeed intentional,—far from it. The rôle of Professor Barnes is uniformly apostolic. With desperate seriousness he looks out upon a world lost in superstition. And, with a persistence which nothing can daunt, he places the torch of new knowledge in one corner after another, hoping against hope that its rays will be appreciated before it is quite too late. Some time ago, in this *Review*, I noticed his clarion call to the Law Courts, bidding judges realize that no one is really to blame for anything he does, for those persons mistakenly distinguished as “bad” and “good” are alike fatally determined by a past they did not make and by an environment they cannot control. But there is at least more novelty about the latest raid Professor Barnes has made upon human traditionalism. This time he has been investigating “war guilt.” Needless to say, he uses the word “guilt” in that loose popular sense to which even the most philosophic must condescend, until such time as the forms of language shall have kept pace with the progress of enlightenment. To a *savant*, of course, no one is “guilty” for anything. So this *savant* prefers to speak of those who “originated” the World War. And he finds, to his intense distress, that the greater part of western Europe is still deluded by the fancy that Germans and Austrians originated it! On a recent tour through the Old World, he has noticed that in general only Austrians and Germans are now immune from this prevailing error. And he writes to *Current History* to make known this outcome of his learned research abroad. I suspect he might have ascertained as much, far less expensively, at home.

Yet all through Central Europe this pilgrim made his way, getting what Americans would call the “reaction” of those peoples whom he visited. He announces the result with a *naivete* before which few readers will be able to keep a grave countenance. There is joy, one hears, in the German heart because the recent verdict of “impartial” scholarship has vindicated that self-justification of the Fatherland which was “intuitive.” Here and there, indeed, even a Teutonic voice is heard repeating the Entente myth that guilt lay at the door of the Emperor and his advisers, but it is only an extreme Radical who talks thus, and the balanced judgment of the wise is still that Germany was fighting on the defensive against “the wanton attack of Russia urged on by France.” Passing to Austria, the investigator discovered that the Serbs are still held to have been the real villains of the piece in August 1914, and that there too a natural sense of gratitude is entertained

towards that learned research which has re-established the national character.

In France (strange to say!) our inventor found the light on this affair still making little progress against mists of delusion. Alas, among those misguided people all except "a few honest intellectuals" believe to this hour that the French were fighting for their country's existence! Wretched politicians keep up a patriotic error, and erudite professors—even from America—combat the myth in vain. Great Britain, except for some of the Labour group, remains utterly misled. And it is not British militarists, rather such "Liberals" as Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. A. G. Gardiner, Professor Gilbert Murray, who have nourished the complacent self-sophistication about a "holy war." Nor is there any great number of Belgians with adequate disinterestedness of mind to recognize truth when it is pointed out. And of course in Italy, under that lost soul, Mussolini, it is fruitless for even the most penetrating academic intelligence to attempt missionary work of any sort. So the note of disappointment is deep in the report of this eager pioneer for truth. Small indeed has been the harvest of investigation. It has refreshed and comforted only the spirits that were already convinced. For the rest, they are joined to their idols.

What has all this got to do with the title of the paper? Professor Barnes led us to expect an account of the European feeling towards Americans. And in truth he has cast some unintentional light on this subject. It is not difficult to guess in what parts of the continent an American of his own temper would be hailed with open arms, and in what parts he would be received otherwise. Moreover, this tourist tells us explicitly that Austrians and Germans are now quite cordial to the United States, because they look for moral aid from that quarter in lightening the injustice of the post-war treaties. Conversely, the French are quite irritated when an American insists (i) that it was France which made the war, and (ii) that it was American military prowess which won it. Great Britain has a similar mood of resentment towards apostles with this message, and is further annoyed over insistence on payment of the war debt.

These illuminating discoveries are followed by a definite piece of advice. There should, in Professor Barnes's opinion, be a cancelling of all war debts, but only provided that there is a cancelling of the whole bill against Germany for reparations. If this last term of the bargain is not accepted, America should for all time turn her back on Europe, and leave the inhabitants of that forlorn continent to get out of their difficulties as best they can. The

chief danger, our critic thinks, for the German republic lies in the handicap which Great Britain and France have laid upon it by the unwise policy of a vindictive peace. Professor Barnes has a word of admiration for Prince Rupprecht (whose exploits we seem to remember) and for "the brilliant and charming eldest son of the Crown Prince" whom he thinks the most likely potential candidate for the imperial crown if there should be a monarchic restoration. But he is naturally worried by the hopelessness of getting Englishmen to see the disagreeable facts and to act as such vision ought to suggest:

The monument of the Unknown Soldier at Whitehall is still regarded by the majority of Englishmen as the symbol of England's unselfish service in the interest of mankind, instead of a gigantic and tragic memorial of Grey's folly and dishonesty.

For the problem set forth in his title, "Hatred of America by her former Allies", these four lines are more suggestive of the solution than all else in the text of his article. But one remembers with pleasure that the real spirit of America has found channels of expression very different indeed from the articles by Professor Barnes.

Ridiculous as it is, a performance of this sort has an aspect at which one cannot laugh. For there is real danger in it. The writer is concerned, no doubt quite sincerely, to reform some judgments reached in the heat of war indignation, and to amend some policies which were determined by men still incapable of the calm unbiassed view. He has much to say against the Ruhr episode, much to urge against the temper of revenge which would prevent a beaten foe from re-entering the comity of Europe. And eight years after the conclusion of peace we should indeed all be capable of revising what we thought when the sound of the guns had scarcely died away. As Gladstone once said of war-swept areas, the kindly touch of Nature repairs many a ravage made by the wrath of man, and there is gradual healing in that same touch for those psychological disorders which leave a "devastated area" in the soul. But an article like that of Professor Barnes must work fatally towards the re-kindling of fires that have smouldered. For his professed results of "research" we may spare no more than a passing word of contempt. We have indeed no thought of re-arguing that case on which the world's tribunal has long since passed its final judgment. But such urging of a case we all know to be false may well prejudice our minds when the same critic advances a plea in which there is, no doubt, an important element of truth or value. Just as the advocates of real prison reform have

most to fear from those who say there is no such thing as guilt, so the advocates of a revision for treaties hastily concluded will find their worst obstacle in one who begins by declaring that the victors should never have entered on the war at all. One remembers a pregnant saying of Cardinal Newman, that no worse fate can befall a sound principle than that certain persons should get hold of it and try to use it.

ONE morning recently, I met a friend who asked me in tones of tense excitement whether I had observed the startling news given to the world by Mr. Will Durant. He had announced "the failure of philosophy"! It was but natural that I should receive this piece of intelligence with a measure of alarm—such as a man might feel on learning that the firm in which he was mainly interested had gone into sudden liquidation. My first enquiry was as to the probable fate of the holders of bonds and debentures, that professorial class which had to depend for a livelihood on an industry that must now be closed. It was all very well for the dilettante dabblers, those holders of common stock in the concern who were in it for no more than casual relaxation. But what of the class whose very existence was involved? However, I had the comforting recollection that this sort of failure had been announced many times before, and that—like some other bankrupt companies—this one had shown an amazing power of recovery. Perhaps, when the dust had blown away, philosophers might resume just as if nothing had happened?

But here is the article, in *Harper's Magazine*. Lively stuff it is. According to Mr. Durant, the philosophy that once rivetted attention is now fallen into woeful neglect. There was a time when this intellectual activity was regarded with such alarm by the powerful of the earth that it was thought needful to imprison its representatives lest they should overthrow a government. Think of the vogue of Hypatia in Alexandria, of the Pope's complaisance towards Erasmus, of the ten thousand students who made long pilgrimage to Paris to sit at the feet of Abelard! What has happened to this regal sway over human minds? The territories of the *regina scientiarum* have been parcelled out. One by one, the special sciences have stolen from philosophy some ancient realm:

Nothing remains to her except the arid deserts of metaphysics, and the childish puzzles of epistemology, and the academic disputes of an ethics that has lost all influence on mankind. Even these wastes will be taken from her; new sciences will rise and enter

these territories with compass and microscope and rule; and perhaps the world will forget that philosophy ever existed, or ever thrilled the hearts and guided the minds of men.

As Dominie Sampson would have said, "Prodigious."

So Mr. Durant goes on to poke fun at the various philosophical controversies of the past. He writes with striking felicity of phrase; and though he tells us very much the same thing many times, he does so with a varied diction and a succession of metaphors which may well make us forget how he is repeating himself. Moreover, he has recently published a volume called *The Story of Philosophy*, in which the progress of this degenerating investigation is traced with great vividness and very considerable knowledge.

But the article in *Harper's* is journalism, while the line of thought pursued in his volume is serious history. Mr. Durant would not, I am sure, desire that the account given in this short paper should be treated otherwise than as one treats a Preface by Mr. Bernard Shaw on the medical profession or on the profession of arms. Abundant evidence is provided in his *Story of Philosophy* to show that the writer understands the real point of many a debate among the schools of the past, far better than one might guess from the smart but often pointless fun which he has written to regale a tired railway traveller in the pages of *Harper's*. This alleged "failure" is in complete conflict with real facts. Never in living memory have so many minds of the first order been devoted to re-investigation of just those old puzzles which Mr. Durant declares to have passed away. Nothing, indeed, is easier than to burlesque the forms in which old philosophic enquirers used to put the eternal problem. But as this critic knows very well, and has elsewhere shown very clearly, while the forms have changed, there is the same inevitable issue with which the human mind can never cease to grapple until it ceases to think. And one must protest that, with all its wit, an article of this sort is but "tickling the ears of the groundlings."

Within the last few years a succession of books, which no doubt the general world has "failed" to notice, even as the same world always fails to notice that which demands a certain high tension of abstract thought, has proceeded from the philosophical labour of men in England, France, Germany, Italy, America, who are not unworthy to stand with the great leaders of the past. One reads all these paragraphs of jocosity about studies that have disappeared, and one's mind turns to Bergson, to Bertrand Russell, to Croce, to Professor C. D. Broad, to the late Josiah Royce. Tell any thinker of this class that the special sciences have absorbed the whole

fertile field of philosophy, or that its only function is to buttress up religious dogma, or any of the other smart things one finds in Mr. Durant's article, and the reply will be decisive. In truth, he knows well himself what that reply would be,—and how crushing to these jests of his. But he is a versatile man, and must enjoy his twofold rôle. From his journalism it is sufficient to appeal to his book.

TWO passages, from the works of two very different literary men, have been running through my mind since I read Professor Ramsay Muir's article on "The Meaning of Liberalism." The first is that in which Carlyle said that any long established cause must be in a bad way when people set to work to re-define what it means, or to show once more why it is necessary. Patriotism, for example, and religion, must have lost their hold when they cease to be taken for granted and have to be justified. The other passage is from Mr. G. K. Chesterton,—that it is bad enough to have lost one's way, but worse to have lost one's address.

Has British "Liberalism" ceased to hold Liberals, in any sense other than that in which the tribal totem holds a set of tribesmen? And has the party not only missed its route, but even forgotten its goal? It is as a contribution to making clear such points as these that the *Contemporary* article has been written. And Professor Muir writes well. What he has chiefly in mind is to show how the so-called *laissez faire* doctrine, often ascribed to Liberals as a reproach, has not truly been the doctrine of the men who passed most of the Factory Acts, secured State control over railway rates and fares, nationalized the roads where there were formerly turn-pikes, set up social insurance, passed innumerable Public Health Acts and Housing Acts. Were these "Socialistic" measures? The writer draws a careful distinction, and what he says here is worth quotation in full:

It (Socialism) means, first, a disbelief in private initiative as the motive power of progress, and a belief that organized State action can replace it; and it means, secondly, a disbelief in the moral or social justice of private ownership of property (at any rate, in "the means of production") and a belief that State ownership would remove many social evils.

Now, the reforms I have been cataloguing were in no case inspired by these beliefs, which are the essence of Socialism. On the contrary, they were inspired by the very opposite beliefs, which are the essence of Liberalism. For the Liberal believes so firmly that private initiative is the source of all human progress, that he wants to use the power of the community to emancipate

it, and to create the conditions in which not merely a few master-men, but the mass of men and women, will be stimulated to put forth their utmost efforts.

In the light of this admirable principle, Professor Muir proceeds to indicate those respects in which the good work of Liberalism in the past may be continued in the future, as against both Conservative inertia and Socialistic recklessness. He surveys the field of national resources, public utility, trade organizations (both of employers and of employees), land, poor-law relief, and much more. Space will not permit even a summary of his proposals. But his article is of importance as a sort of first aid to confused political thinking in his own party. For Professor Muir feels with great force that his party has got into a wilderness, where the thick brushwood needs clearing. And he has shown very plainly how the glib ascription of impotent *laissez faire* doctrine has done far less than justice to British Liberalism of the past. What he does not repel with equal success is the charge that those of our day who would rest "loyal" to the dogmas of a Liberalism of long ago are paying the poorest compliment to a school which was essentially one of progress. And one may suspect that he feels the sting of this. It has often been said that the "stability" men of one age are the true representatives of the progressive men of the age preceding. Not so, said a great Victorian Whig,—no more than a stag's hind legs can overtake its front ones.

H. L. S.