CURRENT MAGAZINES

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

The General Election:—Sir Evelyn Cecil, the Right Hon. Ian Macpherson, Dr. H. Dalton and Sir Alfred Hopkinson in the *Contemporary*.

The Continuity of Foreign Policy:—The Right Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald in *The Spectator*.

Politics and Personalities in France:—Mr. Sisley Huddleston in the *Atlantic*.

Bernard Shaw Defends his War Record:—Mr. G. Bernard Shaw and Mr. Archibald Henderson in *The Century*.

IT is perhaps unkind to recall those "last words" before the General Election which Mr. Masterman issued in the pages of the *Contemporary*. But they have a certain pathological interest, and they present with the writer's well known rhetorical vigour some persistent claims of British Liberalism.

Mr. Masterman then spoke of a possibility that the Liberals might come back to power as the largest party in parliament! He rejoiced, of course, at such a prospect; for he assures us that in talent, energy and experience Liberals are superior to both the other parties combined. It seemed to him an outrage—and a wanton outrage—that there should be an Election so soon again, for the "Campbell case" was a matter of little gravity. The lurid stories about that abandoned prosecution clearly never impressed Mr.. Masterman, and he says nine out of every ten Liberals had no desire to defeat the Labour Government on such an issue. Parliament "blundered into" the crisis. "Chance once more seems dominant in human affairs." So the House had to be dissolved, and millions of money expended, because an "enquiry" into that horror of *The Workers' Weekly* had been refused, and because enquiry must—at whatever cost—be demanded. Yet, no investigation whatever having taken place, it seems that now none is intended. "Campbell," we are told, "has disappeared, beyond plummet's sounding." For what, then, the nation paid such a huge bill and suffered such intense inconvenience we are left to conjecture. But Mr. Masterman helps us a little.

Apart from such articles as his and such speeches as the later ones by Mr. Lloyd George, one might have supposed that the Labour Government was turned out owing to deep disbelief in its policy. It is at least quite plain that such conscientious conviction moved multitudes to vote anti-Labour at the polls. But this interpreter has

a different story of his colleagues in the House, a story that has reappeared in many a Liberal article or speech.

We may hope that the motives of such writers and speakers are not so small as they appear, and that their way of expressing themselves does them less than justice. But one would gather from such critics as Mr. Masterman that there would have been no General Election if Mr. MacDonald had been more discreet in his distribution of "frowns" and "smiles." Again and again we hear about what Labour "owed" to the Liberals for the gift of office. Such debt being undischarged or repudiated, the political creditor held himself free to act as he would not otherwise have acted on national policy. The premier, it seems, was disrespectful to Mr. Asquith, and declared his preference for the Conservative nobility as contrasted with the Liberal middle class. So the driving cause was petulance! As the Hibernian aphorism has it, there is indeed a great deal of human nature in man, and a special allowance in political man. One is moved to protest that those little artifices of personal conciliation which it may be necessary to practise at Westminister are far better left undiscussed. The public will suspect more than the truth, and in this case they are being encouraged to suspect without limit. Whether Mr. MacDonald was polite to Mr. Asquith was a point that should really have been disregarded in decision on the merits of the Russian Loan. Whether he spoke depreciatingly of Mr. Lloyd George had no proper bearing on the Campbell case. What sort of business do such leaders suppose themselves to be conducting? Would any one of them vote on such personal grounds at a shareholders' meeting where his commercial interests were at stake? One cannot be surprised that the country gave so sharp a decision for those who at least appealed on grounds higher than wounded vanity. Just now it has no use for gamesters.

SO much for reflections in advance. What of reflections afterwards? Four writers, representing Conservatism, Liberalism, Labour, and a certain remarkable mixture of all three, have unburdened their minds in the *Contemporary* for December.

They concur in the belief that the Election was fought on Anglo-Russian policy, and on nothing else. Sir Evelyn Cecil says the country did not mean to approve any very specific programme, but to condemn the propaganda of the Soviets in England, and turn out those who were yielding to it. Mr. Macpherson holds that the Zinoviev letter was just a culminating revelation

of what had long been suspected, that it disclosed the "unknown force" which had been at work in guiding British policy from outside, and that once the silent voter had read this document he had no longer the least interest in anything except the defeat of those who were playing into the hands of a foreign enemy. Dr. Dalton says the "scarlet letter" was an electoral stunt to serve a base purpose, and that *The Daily Mail* had more influence on the result than was ever before exerted by a newspaper in the whole history of journalism.

But the Liberal party denounced the Russian treaties and was practically wiped out, while the Labour party which adopted them came back in very substantial strength. Why was this? Sir Evelyn Cecil suggests that the electorate could not forgive Mr. Asquith and his followers for putting Socialism into office a year ago. Mr. Macpherson explains that Liberalism decided—in view of a national emergency—to sacrifice itself, and that it deliberately withdrew 97 candidates because—on the whole—Conservatism had a better prospect of defeating Labour, and the situation forbade patriotic men to take any unnecessary chances. Sir Alfred Hopkinson believes that the country was right in destroying that degenerate Liberalism which since 1884 had been false to the national interest, and that the historic Liberalism of earlier years will now be able to revive. This last critic is of such hospitable mind that he rejoices in the victory of the Conservatives, hopes it may lead to a resurgence of genuine Liberals, deplores the selfishness of certain Tory die-hards, would welcome manual workers in high public office, detests the creed of Lord Birkenhead, and wants a "truce to party warfare for three or four years to come." Sir Alfred Hopkinson is hard to place. His chief grievances against the Liberal party since 1884 are in regard to its Trade Disputes Act and the taxation of "unearned increment."

Dr. Dalton invites his readers to observe that the Election means first and foremost a return to the two-party system. A three-party arrangement has been found as unsatisfactory as a football match in which there are three teams. So the weakest group has been eliminated, and the two with really contrasted programmes have been left confronting each other. The Labour vote in the country rose by over a million; the Conservative rose by nearly two millions; the Liberal fell by more than a million. Moreover, the five and a half millions who voted Labour and the seven and three-quarter millions who voted Conservative are two quite solid blocks, but "the Liberal vote of three millions is largely an illusion." More than half the Liberals returned had straight

fights with Labour, and received large blocks of Conservative votes Dr. Dalton suspects that perhaps only Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Alfred Mond out of the little party of forty-three would have been reasonably sure of election by Liberal votes alone in a three-cornered fight. "The remainder are Conservative hostages." If they grow restive under the Conservative whip in these next years, they will be given short shrift another time.

There are some bits of humorous gossip in the articles, such as the proposal to suppress rowdyism at meetings by an announcement that a collection will be taken at the close, and the alarm of a lady canvassed in the Labour interest who immediately retreated inside her doorway with the exclamation "Good God, let me put the chain on." Mr. Ian Macpherson quotes Greek twice and Latin twice in his contribution, after the good old fashion of academic Liberalism, and Sir Evelyn Cecil outlines a Conservative policy as admirable in its ideals and as void of practical commitments as any exponent of "wisdom of our ancestors" could desire.

In the same issue of the *Contemporary*, the section conducted by Mr. George Glasgow on "Foreign Affairs" makes merciless sport of "the Zinoviev pantomime." The writer points out that there was absolutely nothing in the notorious letter—whether genuine or forged—which had not been proclaimed a hundred times by Zinoviev before, and repeatedly welcomed by British Communists at public meetings in London. Hence, he argues, the Election fever over it was "a wholly unintelligible phenomenon on any ground of common sense." But Mr. Churchill, he adds, mobilized Russia all too well for his Election purposes, and the Cabinet is now wondering how France—which has likewise recognized the Soviets—is to be prevented from sweeping up all the profits of the Russian market. Mr. Ponsonby deplores the plight of those British shareholders in Russian securities, those who have property interests in Russian cities, and those who aspire after trade with Russian farmers, for whom the proposed treaties had arranged terms of the most favourable kind. "No property owner, bondholder and other claimant will now receive a sixpence, and the orders for ploughs, electrical plant, grain elevators and machinery of all kinds will not come to Great Britain."

WHEN Mr. Lloyd George resigned office, he declared exultantly that the burden was off his back and the sword was in his hand. Innumerable newspaper articles since then have at least proved that the *pen* was in his hand, and opinions have differed as

to the propriety of an ex-Minister using the pen with such freedom on public affairs of which he had confidential knowledge. However, the example seems to have been contagious. Lord Birkenhead has become almost a journalist by profession. And now Mr. Ramsay MacDonald has been writing for *The Spectator!*

There are no thrilling disclosures, but there is much sound wisdom in this article on "The Continuity of Foreign Policy," and there are some hints of which those who read between the lines can make use. The general thought of the article is that while foreign policy must in a special sense and for special reasons be more uniform than the policy of other Departments of State, this must not be taken to mean that the Foreign Secretary is just a kind of civil servant. Such was the principle of the old Russian régime, but it could be introduced only under a kind of government that is "personal and despotic through and through." The verdict of the country at the polls must be reflected in abandonment of old foreign projects it has condemned or pursuit of new projects it has enjoined.

But, Mr. MacDonald points out, a Foreign Minister who transforms things without violence or sharp breaks with the past is likely to do far more good than one who "demands for his work a clean slate, and can write nothing in history except what begins a new volume, or at least a new chapter." Such abruptness is indeed an impossible policy, at least for the representatives of first-class Powers. Unlike other Departments, the Foreign Office has to take into account the opinions and wills of foreign governments. It is thus entitled to an immunity from partisan criticism that can be fairly claimed by no other branch of the Administration. And in commitments with Powers abroad it would be intolerable that no reliance could be placed upon the country's pledge, beyond the lifetime of the particular Cabinet that signed it.

Mr. MacDonald warns his readers that the next twelve months will settle, not whether there *may* be another war, but whether another war is inevitable. All depends, in his judgment, on whether Great Britain decides to champion the League of Nations "not as an alliance which, should a war break out, would secure victory to one side, but as a combination of nations to create the machinery and the obligations necessary to maintain peace." He declares that the two views here indicated are contending at this moment for the mastery, and that world peace will be made or marred by England's choice. She must clearly show whether she means to honour her signature at Versailles. "We shall have to make up our minds whether, when we signed that Covenant, our tongues were in our cheeks." The reader may guess for himself just what

politicians Mr. MacDonald means to stigmatize as doing mere lip-service to the League of Nations. His article is impressive, and ominous. It derives special strength from the fact that the author's own administration of foreign affairs, by the verdict alike of friend and foe, was on the whole notably successful and judicious.

MR. Sisley Huddleston's long and intimate study of French politics while he has acted as correspondent in Paris for the London press gives him special authority to speak about the change from the Poincaré to the Herriot régime. This, he says, has meant a sudden rehabilitation of France in the eyes of a world that had come to suspect and distrust her. The Ruhr episode had incurred general reproach, and the country so long in the vanguard of progress was being denounced as the latest apostle of "Might." Especially embittered had become the relationship between France and England.

But under Herriot something like a miracle has been wrought. More peaceful relations have been established with Germany; the League of Nations has been suddenly "rediscovered" in Paris; the growing hatred between Paris and London has been "swept away as if by magic"; and the old respect for France as peace-loving, idealistic, inspired by high ideals, has come back as with a flood. Who effected this? Mr. Huddleston gives much credit to America, and to the Dawes Committee in whose proceedings America participated. United States financiers saved the situation in 1924, as truly as United States soldiers in 1917 and 1918. But the MacDonald Ministry in England had its share too,—a Ministry which "in nine months accomplished more for the pacification of Europe than all the preceding governments had accomplished in five years."

According to this critic, Mr. MacDonald proved himself the best Foreign Secretary that England has had in recent times. "Lord Curzon and M. Poincaré between them had made Anglo-French relations worse than they had been for many years." Bullying and threatening would never have dislodged M. Poincaré, who would have been supported even by the French Radicals if Lord Curzon had continued in office in England. But Mr. MacDonald tried a method of friendliness:

> The great merit of Mr. MacDonald was to rediscover the elementary truth that to come to terms it is necessary to talk reasonably; that it is impossible to talk reasonably in an atmosphere of hostility; that a common policy can be discovered only by nations who are animated by good feeling towards each other.

This was a "signal service rendered to Europe," and it determined the victory of Radicals in France. The French became as anxious for a good understanding as they had appeared anxious to perpetuate misunderstandings. "The London Conference was the most helpful one that has yet been held."

Among contemporary public men the President of the Republic is mentioned as notably superior to his predecessor in the impartial attitude he adopts towards rival factions. M. Millerand had interfered so much as to be suspected of aiming at a sort of dictatorship, and it was really a strike of Ministers that forced him to resign. France is still afraid of the Bonapartist tradition, and insists that her President shall be a figurehead. President Domergue makes pleasant speeches, and allows the Cabinet to govern as it likes. He is a man sprung from humble beginnings. His father was a small farmer, and it was only by considerable family sacrifices that he was given a good education. He became a lawyer, then a judge in Cochin China, and after a colonial career he entered politics. Unlike his predecessor, he will work harmoniously with whatever premier is chosen by the people.

It was M. Painlevé that opposed M. Domergue at the presidential elections, and who was made President of the French Chamber. He is a Radical of the Radicals, also one of the best mathematicians in France, thoroughly acquainted with the policies of Great Britain and America, a master of compressed and concise exposition. Although not a member of the Herriot government, he has had more influence over some of its decisions than any other man. M. Herriot himself is the most unconventional of men, "not afraid to be a shirt-sleeved Prime Minister," incapable of animosities, a sound author and journalist, enormously industrious, with a fine administrative record both at Lyon and at Paris. He above all other men gave the impulse for better relations with England, with Germany, with Russia, and with America. He has been the instrument of the emancipation of France from "war mentality", and from its drift towards isolation. His homeliness of habit has shocked some of the more straight-laced sticklers for political etiquette, but it is due to him that France "again walks freely and splendidly abroad in the wider world."

Mr. Huddleston has something to say, too, about M. Loucheur, whose vast wealth has been made a reproach against him, and whose effusive rhetoric has to be discounted; about M. Henri de Jouvenel —editor of *Le Matin*—who has made himself a chief spokesman for the League of Nations; and about M. Briand, whose gifts so closely resemble those of Mr. Lloyd George—the persuasive, opportunist tactician, always on the look-out for a chance of coali-

tions, who has established a unique record by having held the French premiership seven times. And there is still a better chance for coalitions in France than in England.

A considerable section in the article is devoted to M. Caillaux, from whom the "ban" has at length been lifted, but who has still to live down the charge of pro-Germanism. Mr. Huddleston thinks he may enter parliament again, and may even become a Minister. Even while he was in banishment, "his power, exercised openly or occultly, was indeed formidable." Some call him "the new Necker," and it is in the skilful handling of finance that his talent lies. But we are reminded how even Necker did not manage to avert the crash in the years before the great Revolution, and how France's financial problem is just now tremendous.

IN the January number of *The Century* Mr. George Bernard Shaw and his well-known biographer, Mr. Archibald Henderson, conduct a dialogue on G. B. S.'s "war record." It takes the form of question and answer, the questions being based on current reproachful criticism, and the answers being based—just on Shaw.

Did he support the British side during the war? What about his article in *The New York Times*, in 1914, entitled "Common Sense"? How far did that help the Germans and divert public sympathy from the Allies? Have the opinions it expressed been justified by subsequent events? What about his attitude on the *Lusitania* case? These are some of the queries, clearly put to give a chance for Shavian sparkle.

The sparkle comes. Mr. Shaw replies that he did a great deal of good to the Allied cause by repudiating the foolish pleas that were being put forward on its behalf—all about the unpreparedness of the British lamb and the long preparation of the German wolf, all about respect for treaties, and the sanctity of neutral soil, and "the rest of our recruiting propaganda and Jingo tosh which naturally did not impose on anybody but ourselves." Seventy-five thousand copies of "Common Sense about the War" were sold, and Mr. Shaw says he had to get cards printed to acknowledge the resolutions passed all over the country in thanks for his outspokenness.

But *The New York Times* blundered almost incredibly in the way it published the article. It was designed for American consumption, and hence began with a frank disclaimer of those flimsy pretexts which British patriots were using so freely at home, but by which detached Americans could not have been deceived. Having abandoned the spurious reasons, the article went on to assign genuine reasons why German imperialism must be smashed. It declared that a German triumph would "shut the gates of mercy

on mankind." But *The New York Times* published it in two instalments, separated by a month! Many people, of course, read the first part only. It never occurred to Mr. Shaw that such a blunder was possible, and he concluded that the newspaper was indifferent about the war, but bent on scoring British hypocrisy.

What he had really in mind from the first, he tells us, was to make sure that the diplomatists and militarists who had brought about the war should not get credit for having saved the world from the peril which they had, in fact, created. But he did not say all this, or more than the merest fraction of what he thought, while the struggle was going on. Not until the election of 1918 did he really let himself go, and after one of his speeches in that year a returned soldier said to him: "If I had known all that in 1914, they would never have got khaki on *my* back." "That," replied Mr. Shaw, 'is precisely why I did not tell you in 1914."

Subsequent events, we are assured, bore out the contentions of "Common Sense" not only in the part that was based on complete evidence, but in the part that was shrewdly guessed. In their haste to prove an innocent British unpreparedness, patriots had brought the most shocking charges of neglect against the War Office, the Foreign Office, and the Admiralty. But Lord Haldane made it clear that there had been a survey of the whole ground in Flanders years before; Mr. Churchill declared that England had five years' accumulation of ammunition for this very purpose; Lord Fisher's autobiography revealed how the navy had been pressed in Edward VII's time to "Copenhagen" the German fleet without notice.

So far as the *Lusitania* case is concerned, Mr. Shaw says that what shocked him was the prevalent indifference to the frightful slaughter in the trenches, as if it were a mere cinema show, while the blowing up of "a pleasure-boat" sent the public stark, raving mad. He was not moved by the plea that the case was exceptional because the *Lusitania* carried only non-combatants. As if a ship, in order to run the blockade, had only to carry saloon passengers and sing "Yes, we have no munitions"! Even if it has a Red Cross emblem, with wounded soldiers, this time, it will carry sound soldiers next time. A blockade is a blockade, and the net must have no holes in it. Fancy a public that came to regard the war for the first time as a fearful thing because the *Lusitania* had been sunk! "It was the first incident in the war that was small enough for their minds to take in."

When Hall Caine was editing the *King Albert Birthday Book* for the Belgians, the Belgian Consul came to Mr. Shaw and asked him to write that nation's appeal to the world, with an eye specially

on the Americans. He did so; and when he read what he had written in proof, he felt so moved by it than in consistency he had to send in a substantial subscription himself! So the dialogue goes on, with endless strokes of humour. Mr. Shaw is asked whether he thinks the war did good on the whole, and he enumerates many points that have been gained. The unspeakable abomination of the Russian Tsardom has been destroyed, together with the German Empire and the Austrian one. Ireland has been settled, women have got votes, and Prohibition has won its way in the United States. Another war, if frightful enough, might reform spelling. The last one benefited the world as the San Francisco earthquake undoubtedly benefited California.

His interrogator plies Mr. Shaw with questions about his own native country. Is Ireland satisfied? Not at all, says this paradoxical Irishman. She is less satisfied than ever. But she is on the road to settlement. She is coercing her own citizens, as they never were coerced in the days of British rule. The fiercest English Coercion Act on record is a Magna Charta compared to the one imposed by the Free State, whose little finger is thicker than the loins of the Castle. But the great thing is that Ireland is doing it herself. Some day Labour will drive the northern employers and capitalists to seek union with the south, where the agriculturists will suppress their city proletariats for them.

So G. B. S. is unrepentant. What he wants is apparently a national vote of thanks, instead of national anger. He tells us he suspected the Germans would find in Brussels all sorts of documentary evidence that Great Britain and Belgium had a secret understanding, and he wanted to get rid of the false "moral" case in advance, that the true moral case might have a hearing. The Germans found those documents, and published them. But they were too stupid to use this weapon as they might have used it, and to take advantage properly of the chance that unwise British propagandists had put at their disposal. Wilhelm got poor servants. In his service it was not the fittest, but the "snobbiest" that survived. Among the neatest of Mr. Shaw's jests is one on strategy. The great war strategies, he says, are invented afterwards by war historians. Generals can hardly think a kilometer ahead of the front line.

One never knows how far G. B. S. is joking. It occurs to me that, like war strategies, his own journalistic strategy may be an after-thought of explanation. And one is provoked at being told again that the war guilt was equal on all sides. Perhaps in the article "Common Sense" the most facetious element was the title.

H. L. S.