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WHAT in the world has happened to the faith of the American people? Here is a journal, so unimpeachably decorous as the *Atlantic*, which dares to publish an article on "Europe's Bursting Bubble of Democracy"! A few short years ago, Dean Inge was moved to criticize the political creed he had found prevalent in the United States. But when he had said a few sharp things about the democratic purpose, he stopped short with the acknowledgment that it is bad taste to laugh at one's fellow men when engaged at their devotions! A change, apparently, has come over the belief and the ritual of this continent. What was so lately a radiant faith has now become a "bursting bubble." An excess in one direction will often produce an excess in the direction opposite. And it may turn out that the last state of these glowing zealots will be worse than their first.

Mr. Robert Sencourt has been on a tour through Europe, and—like so many other travellers—he has seized his pen on his return, to record the strange things he has seen. He has been through Italy, where he noted the complete break-down of parliament. In a few rapturous sentences he has described how the worst mistakes of Fascism are preferable to the so-called successes of the régime which preceded that of Mussolini. It appears that fraud and faction had poisoned the whole administrative, judicial and financial system of the country, until democratic parliaments were abjured by the Italians, with an exultant sense of casting off an intolerable yoke. The Mussolini method, it is confessed, is not perfect, but so long as "parliament" is the alternative, it will remain secure.

From Italy our observer made his way to Spain, a land in which the democratic creed seemed to have all the support which could make it successful. Not only was there a wide franchise, but

voters were compelled under penalty of a fine to exercise this privilege at the polls. What happened there? Justice and administration alike collapsed. Secret societies, with the weapons of strike and murder, terrified the Ministry. At last the King of Spain himself announced the utter failure of the system, declaring that as one party succeeded another, there was no difference in the schemes submitted, but with a monotonous consistency each party when in opposition proceeded to wreck the proposals which it had promoted when in office. It was this state of national feebleness which led to the Directorate.

France, again, does not please Mr. Sencourt any better. Her people, we learn, will not tax themselves to meet the liabilities they have incurred. Her Ministries have been "not infrequently in the hands of rascals." Her multiplicity of groups necessitates ever some transient accommodation, and in her Chamber of Deputies it is usual to see free fights between "shouting and screaming members." Thus it turns out that neither in the "backward" nations, which have not yet ventured to try it, nor in the most cultured nations, which have tried it with such melancholy results, has democracy now a chance to be approved by anyone. Prince Charles of Rumania says that contempt for its uselessness was the ground of his own abdication. In England alone does it appear to prosper, but here is one of those apparent exceptions which "prove the rule", because they can be explained in terms of the rule. For in England, says Mr. Sencourt, a governing class still survives, still keeps control of the political machine, so that parliaments have been prevented—at least until recently—from interfering with that trade and finance on which the greatness of the country is built. Thus "England exhibits, not the triumph of democracy, but the oblivion of it."

In these painful circumstances, the critic reflects that one had better re-investigate the origin of an ideal which promised so much and has so grievously betrayed us. So he hunts the concept "democracy" through its successive stages, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, passing through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and casting what Gibbon would have called "a keen and lively glance" over the French Revolution. St. Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Abraham Lincoln, Mr. Lloyd George, are cited in turn. The net result of these researches by Mr. Sencourt is that democracy in that sense in which it is still valuable means government in which there is "consultation", and that the present problem of Europe is not how to rid itself of public opinion, but how to use that opinion to the best advantage.

Thus the mountain, after long labour, has brought forth not much more than a mouse! What interests one in Mr. Sencourt's article is the sudden emergence in his mind, under constraint by recent circumstance, of some problems which have indeed been threshed till they will yield no more intellectual wheat by eager harvesters who have preceded him. But he writes vigorously, puts very ancient points in his own way, and no doubt his discoveries are original for himself. It is cheering to learn that public opinion, in his view, is not to be wholly disregarded, even after Italian or Spanish regenerators of humanity have done their best with a bad world. How public opinion is to be expressed otherwise than through the discredited parliamentary system, he may tell us in some future article. But meantime I turn to a very different sort of prophet, with a different message.

AT length, in fierce disgust with the prevailing chatter about England's need for a Mussolini, Mr. Wickham Steed has addressed an open letter to Lord Inchcape, published in the current number of *The Review of Reviews*. It has been provoked by a communication of his lordship to *The Times*, in which this sentence occurs:

England, almost as much as France, wants a Mussolini, to put his foot down and stop all expenditure except for what is absolutely necessary for defence, justice, and economical administration for the next ten years.

Mr. Steed invites Lord Inchcape to explain a little more precisely what this means, for it has been his view that the advent of a Mussolini would be a disaster for England second only to the advent of a Lenin, and that the systems represented by the two names are not indeed very different from each other. He writes this as one who has taken deep interest in Italian politics and economic conditions for the past thirty years. Only once, indeed, did he meet the Italian dictator personally,—at a time when as a journalist in Florence he was alarming the business world with his radicalism! But Mr. Steed writes from careful study of the exact stages by which Mussolini has arrived at his present power, and enquires whether any valuable purpose would be served by having a duplicate of these proceedings in London.

The Peace Treaties, we are told, left Italy disappointed, and there was a vigorous attempt at revolution. Officers of the army were insulted in the streets, strikes became epidemic, financial and economic difficulties began to multiply. In particular, the Italian

railways, which depended so much on British coal, could not buy this at the prohibitive price it had reached. Demobilized men found it hard to get employment. So there was a very natural and growing discontent with the government, which—as usual—was blamed for all.

This is the situation which Mussolini is supposed, and declared by his propagandist press in various countries, to have transformed as by the wand of a magician! But the myth is one thing, the facts are quite different. Here is Mr. Steed's version:

Nobody fanned the flames of what appeared to be an incipient revolution more eagerly than Mussolini and his small body of Fascist "Black Shirts." He had studied to some purpose the ideas and the tactics of the Russian Bolshevists, and took them as his model. In his journal and elsewhere he preached violent revolution, and demanded the abolition of the Monarchy and the confiscation of property. He encouraged the populace to loot shops. When, in the course of 1920, some peasant organizations began to seize the land, and some groups of Socialist workmen afterwards took possession of factories, Mussolini urged them on, and offered them the active support of his "Black Shirts."

But, it appears, the Socialist workmen, having proceeded under this stimulation a certain way, soon realized that it was a senseless enterprise, and returned the factories to their owners. They declined the proffered aid of Mussolini. Enraged at his personal rejection, the Italian Bolshevik proceeded to make friends with the other side. He wanted to be leader of some sort of revolution; and if he could not have a working-class mob at his back, he would lead a capitalist horde against Socialism. And the capitalists, who had just escaped a peril, were glad to make use of anyone who could serve their turn for revenge.

What followed was an orgy of violence. The government distributed arms to the Fascists, provided them with transport, and turned a blind eye while Mussolini's irregular band of desperadoes burned buildings, bludgeoned or assassinated in a wild frenzy of vengeance the men whom a short time before he had failed to carry with him for the contrary cause. But the Italian government had made a bad mistake. As Mr. Lloyd George would say, these "wild pets" are dangerous to those who fondle them. Next item on the Mussolini programme was the march on Rome, the overthrow of the Ministry, the imposition of terms on the king, and the installing of *Fascismo* in power.

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What about the alleged restoration of Italy's finances? This took place after Mussolini rose to the dictatorship. But was it

Mussolini who brought it about? Mr. Steed points out that several other important things had happened at the same time. The price of British coal had fallen, and Reparations coal became available, so that factories and railways had a chance again. It is true that the dictator dismissed a large number of civil servants, apparently effecting economies both in that department and in the army. He dismissed such as could not be depended upon to do his personal will, and he diminished the army lest it should be a rival to the Fascist militia. But what he created was an armed force more numerous and more highly paid than the regular army had been, while the dismissed railway servants had their places taken by armed Fascist railway guards paid at higher rates. Mussolini is indeed popular with the industrial magnates, for he has crushed trade-unionism, and relieved the large interests of a heavy burden of taxes. Mr. Steed entertains considerable doubt about the Fascist "budget." Inflation, he points out, has been proceeding in Italy almost as fast as in France; on a recent "short excursion" of his own to Tripoli, the dictator spent something like one and a half million dollars! The spectacular rise in the value of Italian securities has been followed by a scarcely less spectacular fall. And the air is thick with megalomaniac projects for restoration of the glories of Imperial Rome.

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Returning to his problem, whether England really needs a Mussolini, Mr. Steed invites an answer to a few straight questions. Will Lord Inchcape tell him whether England would profit by a master who would induce the king to break faith with parliament, abolish freedom of the press, crush the trade-unions, and have opposition leaders murdered? Suppose Mr. Ramsay MacDonald were done to death by bludgeon-men, and Lord Oxford were cudgelled into silence? What would the popular reaction be?

It does seem time for someone to challenge all the frothy stuff that has been written about Mussolini in the *Morning Post* and the various Rothermere organs. Nothing can be more dangerous than to give the impression that the British propertied classes are longing for a chance to perpetrate a violence such as they denounce in Labour, but extol when it suits their own interest. One recalls that old contrast between trust of the people, tempered by caution, and distrust of the people, tempered by fear. It is just such an idea of the secret purposes of the capitalist in England that one would most wish to see dispelled. This whole tempest of ignorant gabble about Mussolini and his glories seems most likely to encourage it.

THE HIBBERT JOURNAL publishes a paper on "Religious Conditions in Russia", by one who writes from that country, and is thus forced by discretion to withhold his name from the public. One may assume that the *Hibbert* knows him to be a reliable witness.

At present, he says, the outward régime under which the Church has to carry on its work may be called "the period of expiring persecution." There is some abatement of class hatred, though there is still plunder and pilfering of private and State revenue, coarse materialism among the masses, depravity of the younger generation, and a wide-spread public heathenism. But the Bolsheviks have abandoned their first effort to break down the Church by sheer violence. The attempt failed. It is true that church processions are still prohibited, and that from time to time churches are closed. Among the multitudes who are constantly being exiled there are naturally some priests. But there is no longer a system of execution of the clergy, and the practising of worship is subject to few restrictions. The change is due to the fact that the masses were found to value the Church, and that further systematic persecution would defeat its own aim. Thus many exiled bishops and priests are returning to their former dioceses and parishes. There is still the "war against God", carried on through the schools, the theatre, and in such publications as *The Godless*. But the destruction of graves and cemeteries is not now encouraged, and some broken memorial stones have even been restored.

There is that curious institution known as "The Living Church", comparable apparently to the "constitutional priesthood" of French Revolutionary times, to which nearly all the cathedrals have been given over. But the audiences in such buildings are very sparse. The average preacher of "The Living Church" discourses about the duty of obedience to the higher powers as "ordained of God"—whatever that phrase may mean on such lips. Meanwhile, the clergy who have remained faithful to the old Church are doing their work with discreet avoidance of any needless conflict with the new authority, and they are attracting to their ministrations a great number of those "intellectuals" who had in former times been conspicuously absent from worship.

It is in the villages that the defection of the people from Christian habits is most obvious. "Generally speaking, only women and old men attend divine service." For the most part, marriages are celebrated with a religious ceremony as of old, and children are baptised. But the middle-aged and the younger generation have caught up the secularist creed with avidity. This writer

is prepared to agree that in many parts of the vast expanse of Russia there are places still quite unaffected in habits or beliefs by the Revolution, but he plainly feels that these are relatively few. He rejoices, however, in the thought that through the fires of martyrdom there has emerged a purified and intensified faith among the clergy, and that there is the nucleus of a finer Church than Russia had known before.

One reads this article with mingled feelings. It sounds extraordinary that the villages rather than the cities should be most conspicuously re-paganized. And it is clear that the writer is in no mood to admit the notorious subserviency of the Orthodox Greek Church to Tsardom as an explanation of its present plight. Tolstoy's account of what the Russian priesthood and the Russian religious practice meant in his day will come back to the mind of many a reader. And some will think of the exclamation of Carlyle about a like state of things in France: "Shall we say, then,—Woe to Philosophism, that it destroyed Religion, what it called 'extinguishing the abomination'? Woe rather to those that made the Holy an abomination, and extinguishable."

PROFESSOR Harold Laski, of the Department of Political Science in the University of London, was an eyewitness of incidents in the recent general strike. He dwells upon the completeness and the orderliness of the workmen's enterprise, in which over 90 per cent. of those called out obeyed the summons, and hundreds of thousands of those whom the Trades Council kept at their jobs were impatient to strike with the rest. There was scarcely any violence. At Plymouth the strikers and the police played against each other as rival teams in a football match!

In Professor Laski's judgment, the report that important services were adequately maintained by volunteers is far from the truth. Trains ceased running, he says, practically throughout the whole country, and the owners of private cars showed little desire to help the average pedestrian. They remained, in general, "owners of private cars."

Ministers vied with one another in denouncing this revolutionary conspiracy, in which no troops were called upon and not a shot was fired. What the man in the street thought, heaven only knows. The government said he was wholly on its side, and governments of course are omniscient. As it promised him, if he remained at work, all his union rights and security against victimization by the strikers, it was perhaps less secure in its belief than its protestations seemed to imply.

Plainly this critic has his own way of telling things.

He has his own interpretations, too. The government, he reminds us, had laid down the principle that the general strike must be dropped "unconditionally". But on May 6 it became known that "if a man of high authority were to find reasonable terms that the Trade Union Council could accept, terms which—it could be stated securely—the government would act upon later, a settlement might be had." Sir Herbert Samuel, who had been chairman of the Coal Commission, returned home hurriedly from the Continent. As a result of his discussion with miners, Trades Union Council, and the Minister of Labour, a memorandum was drawn up embodying what Sir Herbert Samuel thought to be fair terms. This was followed by a Trade Unionist deputation to Downing Street, and the arranging of a peace. Here is Professor Laski's account of the way it was done:

Formally, it was the "unconditional surrender" the government was compelled to ask after the position it had assumed. Actually, as everyone knows, it was the result of a "gentlemen's agreement" in which, without formal documents, the basis upon which negotiations were to be resumed on both sides was well understood.

Another way of telling a story!

In summing up his general conclusions from the whole affair, Professor Laski insists that the whole burden of blame for the stoppage of work rests on the shoulders of the government, especially upon Mr. Winston Churchill and Sir William Joynson-Hicks, who forced Mr. Baldwin's hand. He denies vigorously that the strike had any "political" character, and urges that it was mere government propaganda to represent it as a challenge to the Constitution. Its result, he believes, has been to give notable proof of the solidarity of the workers, and to leave the power of trade-unionism financially reduced but otherwise unimpaired. "On the other hand", he adds, "it is, I believe, pretty clear that a general strike for industrial purposes will not be called again in my lifetime."

Naturally, much of the discussion about what has happened has centred round the part which Mr. Lloyd George took in the whole business. That wonderful figure, object of such mingled eulogy and suspicion for so long, has drawn a concentrated fire once more. Mr. Lloyd George has been so often "killed" that one must be excused for reading his latest political obituaries with a certain measure of distrust. With one accord, his old enemies of various schools have been discharging in the London press the vials of their long pent-up indignation. But, as *The Manchester Guardian Weekly* said about his recent speech, "For a broken man,

cast out as unworthy from the company of the great and politically righteous, Mr. Lloyd George was in pretty good fettle on Saturday."

The storm became fiercer when Lord Oxford's letter appeared, practically excommunicating his old colleague from the Liberal fold. Into the details of the controversy one does not need to enter. But it has become plain that with one exception the whole Liberal press of England, as well as an overwhelming majority of the Liberal members of the House of Commons, is on Mr. Lloyd George's side. *The Manchester Guardian* has for long been by far the most powerful Liberal organ in the country, and in its judgment he differed from those who attack him just in this—that "he kept his head, while they lost theirs." That "Shadow Cabinet", says the great northern organ, "thus becomes only the shadow of a shadow; it has descended to the position of a family party of Lord Oxford's friends, and in future can claim only such authority and respect as may properly belong to a body so constituted."

As Mr. Lloyd George's years increase, the courage of attack upon him by some of his younger colleagues seems to be invigorated. But they may be still a little premature. One recalls the attack on the aged Edmund Burke, which provoked that famous retort called *Letter to a Noble Lord*. "It would have been more discreet", says the historian, "to have let the old lion die in peace." And Mr. Lloyd George is only sixty-four!

At all events, the assault upon him has called forth some sparkling repartee worthy of the old leader at his best, in the days when Sir John Simon was opposing conscription "in the public interest" during the Great War. He admits that he is still "unstable", with the instability that corresponds to a changing public situation. He feels that he has been rudely handled by that political "Holy Office", which—unlike another Holy Office—condemns a man unheard. Lord Grey, he regrets to find, cannot associate with him any longer, despite that book of last year in which he wrote in such eloquent terms of what the War Premier had done "in a much greater emergency than the general strike." Amid scenes of wild enthusiasm, in the great hall of the Manchester Reform Club, Mr. Lloyd George—far from expressing contrition—sounded his old clarion call of defiance:

There is only one question of principle, and upon that I stand. That is, if they mean to drum a man out of the Liberal party because he has erred on the side of conciliation with millions of British workmen in a great dispute, on that proposition I fight right through to the end.

Whether he was justified or not in his policy during the strike, I express no opinion. But that the fighting strength of British Liberalism is with him, as of old, is abundantly clear. In 1902 he was battling with the Asquith party on "Liberal Imperialism", and he won. In 1916 he won, to the country's immense advantage, against the same group again. And he is still only sixty-four!

One recalls the judgment of Lord Balfour: "I tell you, he is one of the greatest men in the history of the world. What is the use of abusing him?"

H. L. S.