

CURRENT MAGAZINES

Lord Curzon of Kedleston:—Sir John Marriott, M. P. in the *Fortnightly*.

Lord Curzon; A Personal Recollection:—Sir Francis Younghusband in the *Nineteenth Century*.

Lord Curzon:—Mr. George Glasgow in the *Contemporary*.

Caillaux:—Major T. H. Thomas in the *Atlantic*.

The Budget:—Mr. F. W. Hirst in the *Contemporary*.

Mr. Stanley Baldwin, An Interpretation:—Mr. Wickham Steed in the *Review of Reviews*

IT is fitting that the English magazines should have been much occupied of late with estimates of the life and personality of Lord Curzon. For the forty years of his public career were crowded with movements and changes in which he bore a striking part; while his own peculiar blend of qualities presented an instructive study, just because he marked a transition between a period of British statesmanship scarcely quite past and a period that has definitely begun.

As one compares those personal tributes by friends in the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Fortnightly* with the judgment of a detached onlooker in the *Contemporary*, it is a figure of great interest that rises before one's imagination. Here was a man of whom it might be said—as was said of Lord Palmerston—that his profession was the government of his country. To that office Lord Curzon felt himself predestined, and for its successful fulfilment he was long preparing. He looked forward to it even from those early undergraduate years at Oxford so vividly described by Sir John Marriott,—the years when, as one of a group of twenty-five youths in the "Canning Club," he made special study of British foreign relations. Even then he showed those rare powers of clear and convincing speech which distinguished him in later life, and that indefatigable industry which every critic—whether friend or foe—has mentioned among his outstanding characteristics. He missed nothing through want of taking pains. Here, says Sir Francis Younghusband, was no such man as Lord Kitchener, acting on rapid intuition. Lord Curzon "invariably worked up a subject very carefully beforehand...weighed the *pros* and *cons*, made up his mind which line he meant to take, and then proceeded along it as if there were no question that it was right."

Sir John Marriott rejoices that at the touch of Death the scales have fallen from the eyes of men, that this great Foreign Minister's distinction has at length been generally recognized, and that the voice of the detractor has now been silenced. That there were detractors—a good many of them—he admits, and characteristically enough he refers to the case of Lord Castlereagh whose fame it required a hundred years to clear. Sir John points out that Lord Curzon was at no time attacked with anything like the same bitterness, but there are many admirers of the late Earl who will not feel obliged for even the suggestion of such a parallel case.

This *Fortnightly Review* critic depicts his hero as very different in temperament from the self-seeking aristocrat of the public imagination. As a friend of over forty years he dwells upon Lord Curzon's youthful promise, upon the thoroughness with which he familiarized himself with Eastern problems, upon the fitness he had displayed before he was forty years old for the great responsibilities of a Viceroy of India. We are reminded of the reforms he introduced into Indian administration, as well as of his educational and agricultural policy. Even his apparent fondness for display, so often turned into a reproach against him, is explained as a piece of far-sighted wisdom:

He had a genuine and well-grounded belief in the value of ritual and ceremonial, and both he and Lady Curzon were peculiarly qualified to play the central parts in splendid pageantry.

Reference is here naturally made to the majestic pomp of the Coronation Durbar at Delhi in 1903, and to the importation twenty years later of a like dignity into the functions of Chancellor of the University of Oxford:

To see Lord Curzon in his magnificent robes, leading the procession of doctors into the Sheldonian Theatre, was in itself a liberal education; and it was, moreover, an aspect of education sorely neglected in the careless and slovenly Oxford to which Lord Curzon was recalled.

Sir John Marriott, who delights in disconcerting comparisons, declares that he took the duties of Chancellor more seriously than they had been taken by any other holder of the office since the days of Archbishop Laud!

Many will feel that too much space and emphasis are devoted in these admiring tributes to the spirit of patriotic self-denial which made Lord Curzon resign himself to work in subordinate positions

after he had repeatedly missed some glittering object of his personal ambition. After all, a man who had been Viceroy of India before he was forty, and who was later entrusted with the Foreign Office, cannot be said to have been very deeply slighted in his public career; nor is our history so poor in cases of self-sacrifice that we must be amazed at a public-spirited devotion which could continue to work even though the premiership was unattainable. Whether as premier Lord Curzon would have added to his repute, let Mr. George Glasgow—a very different critic—offer a hint:

It was not his fault, any more than it is the fault of the rest of us, that the times we live in are what they are, nor that his temperament made him entirely unsuitable, in such times, for the position of British Foreign Secretary. . . . He acted under the influence of a personal simplicity which is one of the main charms of private life, but which unfortunately is expedient in a Foreign Office.

Yet allowing for the critical spirit of political opponents, and "subtracting the due subtrahend"—as Carlyle would have said—from the eulogy of his admirers, we are left with the picture of a great public servant, struggling through many years against physical weakness and pain, while he fulfilled with noted and conscientious resolution the dictates of *Noblesse Oblige*.

IT is a sinister figure that Major T. H. Thomas has drawn for *The Atlantic Monthly* and has labelled "Caillaux." This observer has lived long in France both in years of peace and in years of war, with a keen eye upon the manoeuvring of parties, and a distinct gift for describing what he has seen. Whether he has interpreted correctly, is another matter. With the utmost confidence he gives us not only a record of facts about Caillaux, but his own diagnosis of Caillaux's motives. And the diagnosis is at least full of interest.

One is a little shocked to hear that in the French Minister of Finance there is "a complete absence of the moral sense"! There is quick intelligence, breadth of vision, endless pluck and resourcefulness. But these seem dangerous talents in one perfectly innocent of "the *nuance* between right and wrong." Caillaux, in this critic's judgment, did not during the war desire a German victory, and he desired still less "as an end in itself" the defeat of France. Truly Major Thomas, in speaking thus of a French Minister, damns him with praise that is very faint indeed. What he believes to have been his ideal was just the success of Caillaux. Other objects

were a means to this end. It chanced that the war was being fought by the men who had kept Caillaux out of power, and so far as they succeeded in the war they would be better able to keep him in exile. Hence, he was a "defeatist":

Other French statesmen at times thought the war was hopeless; to Caillaux alone this prospect was itself a hope, for it offered the only means of his returning to power.

So it came about, says Major Thomas, that this man—once Premier of France and still a Deputy of the French parliament—made himself a vague headquarters for all the political underworld of Europe, "that queer war-time stratum of bungling spies and informers, German agents and defeatist propagandists, crooks and grafters of every description, and all the riff-raff of French politics." Clearly, while the devil himself has been declared not to know "the thoughts of a man," this analyst of motives affects a gift beyond the diabolic.

The value of such terrific interpretation lies, of course, in its power to bring together into a consistent whole many shreds and patches of data. So Major Thomas tells once more the story of Caillaux's strange political life, and we know how much depends on the way in which a story is told. This one is presented to us with subtle and impressive effect. The Finance Minister is son of an eminent French engineer, who later entered politics, and was among the chief supporters of the Royalist President MacMahon. Young Joseph Caillaux entered the office of the Inspector-General of Finance at the age of twenty-six, and five years afterwards showed his exceptional grasp of financial problems in a book on French taxation. Four years later he was in parliament, and by the time he was thirty-seven he had been chosen as parliamentary chief of the French Treasury.

From that time dates his devious career. We are told by Major Thomas how on the question of the Income Tax he has adopted in turn three positions, first opposing this tax in every form, next approving it in principle but resisting its application, and finally urging its adoption. One might guess that changing circumstances were enough to explain such changes in policy, without the presence of any dishonest motive. But Major Thomas has a letter to quote, written by Caillaux to *une amie*, and published by the *Figaro*, in which this curious passage occurs:

I have had a great success. I crushed the Income Tax, while giving the impression of defending it. I gained the applause of the Centre and the Right, and did not offend too much the Left.

Whether this puts him quite outside the pale of statesmanship, as the methods of statesmanship have come to be understood, is a point the reader must decide for himself.

We have once more the record of successive shiftings of front, of announcements about coming exemption of the *rente* from taxes, followed next day by a denial—with the intervening hours used for immense profiteering on the Bourse, of unofficial negotiations with the Deutsche Bank at Berlin, and all the "smoke of financial scandals." And of course we have the tale retold about the various persons called "Madame Caillaux,"—the divorce proceedings, and the assassination of the editor of the *Figaro* by Madame Caillaux II, after that paper had published the letter to an earlier lady-love signed "*Ton Jo.*"

Major Thomas has given us a vivacious article, presenting one view of the man who—despite such general distrust of his character—has been recalled for the sake of his alleged "financial wizardry" to guide French finance at this critical time. There must be a large volume of French opinion which explains him differently.

THE budget speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer is a great event, and the recent performance by Mr. Winston Churchill has stirred many critics to a mood of comparison. Naturally that veteran economist, Mr. F. W. Hirst, keeps a watchful eye on Chancellors, ever thinking about the need for economy which—one remembers—he urged three years ago in the pages of *The Dalhousie Review*. He begins his article in the *Contemporary* by recalling Finance Ministers he has known, and comparing the talents shown by each for lucid exposition of the country's business. The late Sir William Harcourt, he says, was more impressive in his budget speeches than any Chancellor who has held office since, and he quotes Lord Morley's comment on one of Harcourt's deliverances—"Every word weighed a pound." Those who remember that old Chancellor's physique will recognize a special appropriateness in this, for he shared with the late Lord Salisbury what has been called "the majesty of true corpulence." Since then, in Mr. Hirst's opinion, Mr. Asquith among Liberals and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach among Conservatives were the two men most effective in stating to parliament the country's financial position. But, he adds, "of all the financial statements in our time, that of Mr. Philip Snowden last year was, in my judgment, the best in matter, form and style."

This is indeed a high compliment, from a high authority, to the man chosen for such a trust in the Labour Cabinet. And it was not only the exposition, it was likewise the financial scheme he expounded, that won such praise. "By comparison with its immediate predecessor, Mr. Churchill's budget is a sorry jumble." Mr. Hirst regrets that the proposals were not as carefully prepared as the rhetoric in which they were framed. Such comment reminds us how Mr. Masterman has said that the present Chancellor is one who will talk rhetoric even to a hall porter.

What is wrong with the "proposals"? To begin with, Mr. Hirst quotes promises of economy in the King's Speech, and points out how within a few months the estimated expenditure of a Conservative Government exceeded by more than nine millions sterling "the predatory extravagance of their Socialistic predecessors." There is much profession of care for "the wage-earner," but it is income tax and super-tax that will be lightened, while customs and excise are increased. The working-classes are entirely excluded from the benefit of remissions, but allowed to participate in the burden of the new taxes!

It has been called "a rich man's budget," and Mr. Hirst justifies the description. Earned incomes up to £1500 a year are given relief, and also those far in excess of this amount. A tabular statement has been prepared showing how the relief will apply to a married couple with no children. We are told that if the income is £1,500, there will be relief to the extent of £45; those with £2,000 will gain £46; those with £3,000 will profit by £115; while the pair with £4,000 and £5,000 a year to live on will obtain abatement in their indebtedness to the State by £190 and £252 respectively. The appropriate text for such a proceeding is, in Mr. Hirst's view, "To him that hath shall be given."

Death duties are increased, bearing hard on "small estates of £12,000 and upwards." And to the lynx eye of this fierce Free Trader a whole series of other taxes reveal a protective policy. The Chancellor says they are on luxuries which everyone can do without; but Mr. Hirst, rehearsing the articles taxed, describes this, in an old phrase of Mr. Churchill's own, as "a terminological inexactitude." Duty is imposed on artificial silk, yarn and tissues, cinematograph films, clocks and watches. Is silk a luxury? Mr. Hirst thinks the Chancellor can be excused for his opinion only if we suppose him "totally ignorant of the clothing trade, and of the modern fashions in which a few lines of silk or artificial silk are interwoven with cotton and woollen cloth." And is a watch a luxury? Only, says Mr. Hirst, if we adopt Oscar Wilde's epigram

that punctuality is the thief of time. But "cheap" watches are now, under the Churchill duties, to be one-third dearer.

Similarly, says this nimble critic, since music and musical instruments are to be considered luxuries, books must fall under the same condemnation, and next year Mr. Churchill may lay a tax on foreign authors, strengthening the "tie that binds" by giving preference to books published in the British Dominions. In past days the Chancellor declared that "the principle of Preference is positively injurious to the British Empire and will create not union but discord." The objection to Preference, he said, was founded on "a profound political truth, which will not I think soon be challenged, and which I believe will never be overthrown." Mr. Hirst waits to see whether this profound truth of his former years will now be overthrown by Mr. Churchill himself, or whether it will overthrow him.

These old speeches are a great resource in controversy, and surely many a politician must be tempted to regret that his pronouncements of long ago were so elaborately reported or so faithfully preserved. The Free Trade critic in the *Contemporary* has naturally enough been roused to wrath, when he sees his favourite cause thus denounced by one of its former champions. That men may honestly change their minds, or that new events may call for new policies, he would not of course deny. But he is suspicious of concrete cases,—like the famous Scotsman who was open to conviction, but would like to see anyone that could convince him. And there is a note of asperity in the concluding lines of a paragraph by Mr. Hirst:

Consistency, after all, is a great virtue in politics. It is the outward and visible manifestation of a statesman's public character. Great as are the temptations of office, we must hope that the average politician will continue to resist them, when they involve a flagrant sacrifice of convictions publicly advertised and long cherished.

MOST British Prime Ministers have a tolerably well known personal history, and come to the highest office in the State with a reputation long established in the public mind. There is commonly at least a legend about them. In this respect Mr. Baldwin is exceptional,—like Melchisedec, in that his "beginning of days" is obscure. So Mr. Wickham Steed has rendered a service in dwelling upon some intimate features of his personality to those who think of him as little more than a political figure.

A few points are familiar to all,—that the Prime Minister was head of an engineering firm and Chairman of a great English railway; that he was a respectable, but not a brilliant, undergraduate at Cambridge; that he was brought up a Wesleyan; that he is the nephew of Burne Jones and cousin of Mr. Rudyard Kipling; and that he is much addicted to his pipe. Mr. Steed has all these traits in his portrait. He also mentions the first appointment of Mr. Baldwin to be parliamentary private secretary to Mr. Bonar Law, and the fact that he owed this opportunity to his being regarded as “safe” and “stupid enough not to intrigue.” When Mr. Bonar Law decided to give him a trial in the higher post of Financial Secretary to the Treasury, it was with the doubt—we are told—whether he “carried enough guns for the job.”

A notable incident in his career was that of his letter to *The Times*, written under a nom-de-plume, on June 24th, 1919. Mr. Steed reproduces this. It was to the effect that there are many objections to a “universal statutory capital levy,” but that a great chance is open to rich men who will lead the way in levying a contribution upon themselves. For his own part, the writer said, he had estimated his private fortune at £580,000, and had decided to realize 20 per cent of this—about £120,000—for presentation to the national treasury. He desired to do so without giving his name, or accepting publicity of any sort. Mr. Baldwin took this most magnanimous step in the hope that it might inspire other men of wealth to do likewise. But the £150,000 of War Loan which he presented to the Government was not the prelude to similar generosity on any vast scale. Altogether no more than £500,000 of such bonds was received by the Treasury for cancellation.

All the same, it was a magnificent gesture, made by a rich man to others of his class, and wholesomely impressing the onlooker though it failed to stimulate general imitation. It was thoroughly English, too, one likes to think,—in that Mr. Baldwin was doing good by stealth. And it is the picture of a very English Englishman that Mr. Steed throughout this article presents. The Prime Minister some time ago described schoolboys of his own race as happily “impervious to the receipt of learning,” and thus preserving their mental faculties into middle life and old age. “I attribute,” he said, “such faculties as I may have to the fact that I did not overstrain them in youth.” True enough, perhaps, and certainly popular doctrine at a school-closing. But not to be communicated over-freely to the young.

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