TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE FORGOTTEN MANDATE: BULLION AND BULLETS: THERE'S MANY A SLIP: THE UNIVERSITY IN A CHANGING WORLD: THE GOD FROM THE MACHINE.

WHEN the sick man turns from his family doctor to the glib purveyor of guaranteed cures, his case is usually sad indeed. Mr. Hoover has manifest failings, especially in the Argus-eyes of a democracy; but the very measure of his unattractiveness to children crying for the light is perhaps the measure of his safety as a guide who preferred to take no rash steps in the dark. His cautious warnings about the unwisdom of changing horses in the middle of the stream were sensible advice, under existing conditions, even if—a very hazardous supposition considering the only practical alternative—we admit the truth of the obvious rejoinder that such counsel suggests a tacit admission that we have mounted the wrong horse. The fear which his opponents assert to have been the basis of the President's campaign is half-sister to caution; and Mr. Hoover's pedestrian plodding up the grade, if not spectacular, suggests at least a leadership as safe as that inspired by a desire to mount the band-wagon just as it has topped the rise and begun to roll of its own momentum.

If prosperity is not much further delayed in turning its now almost legendary corner, the President-elect will be able to explain that he pulled—or coaxed—the reluctant damsel into the highway. But if the nadir of the depression is not yet, he may be faced with awkward questions as to what he promised to do, and how, exactly, he proposed to do it. Certainly anyone who listened with detached interest to the last-minute campaign speeches from either side could hardly fail to be convinced that the aspirants to power were preoccupied, after the manner of hopeful Oppositions, with criticism and promises rather than with any practical concern as to how the criticism might have been avoided by others or the promises fulfilled by themselves. But the popular logic is slight, and the populace is notoriously patient under flattery. The democractic slogan was a winner; it made every one who voted for him a personal friend of the future president, and elevated the old technique of baby-kissing to the dignity of a nation-wide campaign. Mr. Hoover, like Coriolanus, could not bow to the multitude:

Rather than fool it so,
Let the high office and honour go
To one that would do thus.

The President's campaign managers did indeed contrive to endow him with a certain factitious plausibility of manner entirely foreign to his natural gravity of temperament and demeanour and to his power and attainments as scientific organizer and engineer. But he lacked a flair for publicity and a campaign manager with a certain genius for the spectacular, such as made it possible for his opponent to mount the ladder of popular approval by a nicely calculated series of acrobatics. The aeroplane flight and the good-fellows' backslapping touched the great throbbing heart of the people at its softest spot. It is doubtful if Mr. Hoover, to save the country, let alone to save his own position, could ever have exchanged such pool-room puerilities as marked the outward reconciliation of his two Democractic opponents. The President-in-office had certain duties and responsibilities, and something to lose.

The new President's troubles will begin, if they have not already begun, when the election promises come home to roost. The forgotten man may be content for a time to reflect that at last he has been remembered, and to nurse himself into a pleasant delusion that he is of some importance to the government and is helping to run the country. The deposed government was pledged to Big Business, to which it was indebted for its power, and to which it had promises to fulfil. But in the States, as elsewhere, if it be true that Conservatism is allied to business, it may be equally true that Liberalism is allied to politics as an end in themselves and not as a means. The President-elect may find himself pledged to more numerous patrons than ever his supporters accused of dictating the policies of Mr. Hoover, and some of them may be equally powerful, if not so accessible to public investigation. When the "patronage" is to be distributed and the election promises fulfilled, the newcomer may wish for the happy days when he was required merely to offer promises to an electorate that had been intimidated by adverse circumstances into believing that any change would be for the better. Let Coriolanus speak again:

> What's like to be their words: "We did request it;
> We are the greater poll, and in true fear
> They gave us their demands." Thus we debase
> The nature of our seats and make the rabble
> Call our cares fears; which will in time
> Break ope the locks o' the senate and bring in
> The crows to peck the eagles.

THE first important decision of the President-elect is far from reassuring. One recalls that a major accusation against Mr. Hoover was that he had temporized in the matter of repayment of war-loans: "we are going to change all that." Now, with the long and unfortunate inter-reguum before the new President takes office, Mr. Hoover, according to present information, has made statesmanlike offers to his successor to co-operate in the settlement of a matter of the greatest present and ultimate importance. This offer, both in the general scheme of his committee of enquiry, and in the particular method of making its personnel acceptable to the President-elect, seems both wise and generous. And yet the offer has been refused, on the ground that "it is not my business". The most charitable allowance can hardly excuse this desire to wash the hands of all responsibility, or remove the suspicion that Mr. Hoover is being left to bear alone the burden of a most difficult negotiation, so that if it fail to please, as to some extent it assuredly must, he will bear alone the blame.

In the complex and difficult entanglements of war-debts, reparations, and disarmament, there is observable of late a very fair and judicious tone among serious American writers and publicists. The more sensational newsmongers continue to demand their pound of flesh, and to prate of the pious aspirations of commerce as contrasted with the bloodthirsty passions of an embroiled Europe. They have on occasion moved the present writer to vituperative emulation, and to vindictive tirades for the patient excision of his editor. But his recent reading has moved him almost to the defence of American self-denial, in the face of so many generous admissions that the payment of debts must be enforced in terms not of the desire only, but of the ability that may determine the desire; that America herself by joining the Allies accepted responsibility with them, though her loss in man-power was proportionately small; that the Allies made no plea of loss of life except under pressure and as a last resort, and that it is a poor reply to say that we are too noble to set figures for the priceless value of a human life, but a dollar is a dollar. It is generously admitted too that American loans can not be compared with the loss of property and capital occasioned to the Allies, that the war-time loans were spent and circulated in the States, and that much of the post-war borrowing was done at the insistence of the States themselves, to prevent a collapse of industries that might be shattered by a sudden cessation of production: in short, that the chief combatants had to prolong the expenses of war in order to prevent injury to the principal war-profiteer.

The question of reparations, being an economic one, is not so simply detached from that of war-debts as some critics have declared themselves to suppose. They seem rather to be part and parcel of the same balance sheet, and to be naturally bound to each other. The question of armaments, however, is a separable one, but by no means simpler because of its detachment. At first sight, Mr. Hoover's proposal for the remission of war-obligations in return for a reduction of armaments seems a combination of practical wisdom and altruistic idealism worthy of a Woodrow Wilson. But for America, in her fortunate geographical position of splendid isolation, to dictate disarmament to states with the frontier and litoral difficulties of the European nations is at the best Utopian, while to the cynical eye it may seem to be selfish. It is noticeable, for example, that the methods of warfare most condemned in the U.S.A. are those that would be most harmful to her from offense, least useful in defense. Mr. Hoover's desire to modify the weapons of war appears to arise in ignorance of the fact that different countries have different needs for protecting themselves, and that a brutal method of aggression for one may be properly retained by another as a safe measure of defence—as for example the use of mustard gas within one's own boundaries to prevent land invasion, or the use of submarines within the confines of one's own harbours. It is further inconsistent in trying to introduce control and restraint into something which is, by definition, an abandonment of the decencies, and an unleashing of passion. War is not what it used to be. Probably, like *Punch*, it never was. Certainly it is not susceptible to humanitarian improvement after the manner of prize-fighting, and in the last resort the means adopted to gain a victory will always be the means that necessity enforces, not those that chivalry allows. Apart from the fact that the proposal comes from the most conspicuous absentee from the League of Nations, or that the land of its origin is notorious for the freedom with which private citizens can acquire prohibited lethal weapons with the most scientific and military capacity for wholesale murder, the proposal condemns itself. It is comparable to an effort to reduce crime by allowing the criminal to commit murder with a revolver, but not with a machine-gun; to club his victim with a sandbag, but not with a bludgeon.

The reduction of armaments is inevitable, and America will undoubtedly do much to hasten it; but the curtailment will have to come by slow means, and by agreement on purely and obviously military expenditure, not by economic dictatorship or humanitarian ideals. Battleships, ordnance and standing armies may be checked, as being purely military, and hard to conceal. Militias and aeroplanes and poison gas, by reason of civilian policy, or commerce, or secrecy, may go unchecked. And unless each nation is confident against offence, she will demand the right of defence. It is easy, therefore, to understand the impatience with which the French greeted M. Herriot's response to American overtures for disarmament, and to attribute to this, in part at least, the reason why France with her reputed store of gold has headed the list of those who recently defaulted in payment. In the meantime, Great Britain, having made many objections in order to call attention to her merits, has made payment as usual, and shown that if she has not quite muddled through, she is still able to muddle along. Her refusal to accept New Zealand's voluntary offer to remit the advantages of her moratorium suggests that Britain will not be compelled too lightly to accept the reported offer of her richest oriental potentate, the Nizam of Hyderabad, to replenish the nation's gold store from his private coffers—subject to his own terms as to the government of India. In the meantime the payment of war debts, by reason of the constitutional anomaly at Washington, seems to have been made subject to a different kind of moratorium. One hopes that this does not presage too quick a proof of Mr. Norman Thomas's pertinent reminder that the only way to lose your vote it to vote for someone you don't want, and to have him elected.

ONE promise of the Democratic party that will not be hard to keep is that to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment. The Republicans showed lack of courage and foresight in hedging on this question, though Mr. Hoover and his associates doubtless saw that the repeal of the famous act would not solve difficulties in proportion to its power to raise votes. After all, there were certain difficulties before the amendment was introduced, and even while Prohibition, at whatever cost, has permanently removed the old evil of the saloon, it is not to be expected that the "liquor-traffic" as the prohibitionists delight to call it, will be purged of all its former grossness, or that it may not have learned a few new forms of wickedness from the alcohol industry that was developed under the Volstead Act. It will be amusing to watch the proofs and counterproofs that are brought forward to show on the one hand that all drunkenness since the repeal of the amendment is due to the return to license, on the other that sobriety has now begun to increase, and that any unfortunate lapses are attributable to bad habits learned under prohibition.

The most exacting problem is that confronting the bootlegger, who instead of charging as much as his district overlord permits, must now contrive to adjust his trading margin within the limits on the one side of adulteration, on the other of excise duty on the legitimate product. Whether he is driven out of business, now that he has been so firmly established, is a matter for doubt. It is hardly to be hoped that, if he does, he will take with him the horde of racketeers that his lawlessness has helped to establish. Defenders of prohibition may say, of course, that it is not responsible for the increase in crime with which it has been charged; and it may be admitted that there has been a general increase in crime even in countries in which drinking is permitted if not encouraged. But if it is false to argue the concomitant evils of prohibition on a basis of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* it is at least more difficult to explain them away by arguing *post hoc ergo* non *propter hoc*. The prohibitionists' argument appears to be that all drinking without prohibition is deplorable and should be prevented; under prohibition, they at least have done their part, and those who wish to drink themselves to death are at liberty to do so. The anti-prohibitionist simply reverses the argument; and each overlooks the fact that intemperance, whatever the law, is still intemperance, and that it is not confined to the consumption of so-called alcoholic liquors, whether 3.2% or 30 o.p.

Meanwhile, our hearts go out to the parching millions who were promised beer for Christmas and have been defrauded of their election perquisites by a dilatory senate. There is a note of irony discoverable in even the most serious writer discussing the disappointment of a populace facing yet another "dry" Christmas after so many patiently endured without solace from the vat or the still. Just how temperately this last prohibited and circumscribed Christmas has passed it is impossible to state at this present writing, on the festive day itself. But for the future one can hope that the removal of censorious interference will induce some deluded souls to abandon the heroic attempt to poison themselves with varnish-remover, to leave the negligible 3.2% to the fate it deserves, and to drink moderate quantities of water at a moderate temperature. If the repeal of the Volstead act could accomplish only the decline of that typically prohibitionist abomination of self-indulgence, the omnipresent effervescent soda-fountain, it would justify even the national disappointment of no beer for Christmas.

A SHORT but interesting work recently received from the Oxford University Press is a symposium, edited by Walter M. Kotschnig and Elined Prys, and entitled: *The University in a Changing World.* This book was planned and prepared by the International Student Service, with headquarters at Geneva. It presents surveys of the present state, and estimates for the future, of Universities in Europe and America. The style and treatment range from the descriptive and statistical methods of the college calendar and the Presidential Report, which characterize the major portion of Professor Ernest Barker's contribution on Great Britain, to metaphysical and psychological speculation in the articles on Germany and on the conception of a Catholic University. It is interesting to read in sequence the neighbouring articles on the University in the Fascist State and on the University in Soviet Russia. In Fascist Italy, "as a first move, every university was given the most complete autonomy in teaching"...... "a situation clearly favourable to a more rapid advance in culture. Fascism has fully realized the importance of education of the mind and considers higher education as the means of revivifying science and personal values. An attempt has been made to exclude every material aim by giving no professional value to the degrees, although the professions are always kept in mind in planning the studies." "The old method of compulsory examinations, subjects, and regulations has been replaced by a free choice of subjects and methods of studies, in accordance with the students' own learning. The Italian university is, in fact, a school of culture animated by the highest ideals, which inspire both its work and its ends."

This may be taken as a partisan account, perhaps unduly hopeful. But it is important to note the direction in which hope is seen to lie—liberty as a "nurse of noble natures." In Soviet Russia an equally partisan account also stresses, as one might expect, the idea of liberty. Alexander Pinkevitch, Professor of Pedagogy, formerly Rector of the Second State University in Moscow, traces the reform of Russian universities in four stages from the old bad days when there were entrance examinations and tests of literacy. Before the first of the revolutions the system was narrowly restricted, serving only the needs and ideals of the bourgeoisie. Under the new régime of liberty, "the progress made by higher education in the U. S. S. R. has all been directed towards the bringing of higher education into line with the building up of a socialist society and with the interests of the working classes, the peasants and the co-operative rural organizations." The universities have "become democratic. Access to them was made free to everyone. No diploma and sometimes not even an examination was necessary for entrance."....."Soviet universities were open to everyone in so far as the limitations of space in the laboratories permitted." With such ideals of liberty it is hardly surprising that the number of students has increased enormously, the proportion from the proletariat almost infinitely, nor that "the purpose of all these tremendous reforms was to interest the competent authorities and economic organizations in a higher education whose immediate object was to prepare specialists."

On American Education, Mr. Flexner writes three trenchant pages of criticism by way of curtain-raiser to Professor Stredd's longer descriptive article. Mr. Flexner finds that the confusion observable in the United States' meritorious effort to cope with the problem of higher education is due to a failure to distinguish two separate functions that cannot to-day be combined, as the American University with its graduate school and undergraduate college tries to combine them. The undergraduate college, for various reasons, tends ever to recede to the level of a High School. "In the graduate school, the mere teaching function recedes; research, investigation, the education of promising scholars in the technique of training and research come to the front. The Universities and their teachers are consequently distracted between two inconsistent responsibilities—teaching boys and educating men."

The most interesting paper, for the general reader seeking enlightenment as well as information, is that of M. Bouglé on the French conception of a University, in which history and description are excellently blended with constructive criticism. It is especially noteworthy, inasmuch as the French university system was reorganized under conditions not entirely dissimilar from those that gave rise to the new Russian régime. Nor was the reformed university system unlike that produced by the later Revolution, except perhaps that France has always insisted on a preparatory education equivalent to that produced by certain institutions that carry the name of University. France, like Russia—which still retains a few of her older universities to teach the despised humanities—has made a sharp division between her Universities, to which the path lies by way of the lycée, with fees, and the specialist schools, which are reached by free education through the normal schools. In spite of the high endowments and training of students from the higher specialized schools, "nevertheless, it is fear of the mortal danger run by that humanism which is the very strength and grace of French culture that incites some of the best minds to resist all efforts at enlarging the rôle of 'democracy' in our universities, all efforts at opening university studies to the largest possible number of gifted children from the lower classes."

In Russia at present the fear of contamination is all the other way; and it must be agreed that the old Town-and-Gown distinctions, like the University man's prescriptive right to the title of 'Esquire', retain diminishing validity in a changing world. But something may also be said for the retention of academies that are not afraid, or unable, to be academic, and to whom a field of enquiry may be the more attractive for being utterly useless for any purpose except the unpractical one of affording pleasure to the enquirer and development to his mind. Mr. Wells found Cambridge lacking in everything that seemed to him like efficient and practical education. But confronted with the necessity of seeing his son go to *some* College, he somehow reconciled himself to having his name on the books of Trinity. Even those who cannot afford the time or the money to waste on ancient useless institutions of learning may perhaps agree that for lazy persons, whose ambition is to achieve the patiently indurated patina of culture, they may still—as Shaw is reported to have said of Oxford and Cambridge—"be kept alive for stud purposes".

THE inventors of the newest catch-word are aware of the importance of a title. If we cannot cure our ailments, it is interesting to find a name for them, or for the treatment we are undergoing. "Technocracy" is not, as it might appear, merely a selling or advertising slogan, like "dual-automatic" or "super-heterodyne"; it carries the same sense of importance and scientific foundation, but not, for once, without some justification. Whether it designates a disease or the cure it seems a little difficult to determine, though its sponsors appear to see in it our salvation from all industrial and economic perils. Claiming its original impetus from Thorstein Veblen, and carried on by experts in engineering, business, science, and economics, it is now sponsored by Howard Scott, although it seems so far to tell us little that could not be surmised from the writings of Mr. Stuart Chase and some little attention to the published results of the excellent researches conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Standards. Briefly, the argument is that through lack of standardization of parts and fittings our industrial machinery is not keyed up to its highest pitch of efficiency. We are told in comparative terms the number of shoes, of bricks, of automobiles and of golf-balls that were made a few years ago, laboriously by hand, and of those that can now be turned out by one man, or girl, at the controls of a machine. But the machine can be made more nearly perfect. Valuable patents, as Mr. Chase has told us, are bought up and withheld to foster old inefficient technique. Antiquated methods of production are maintained to serve an immediate economy to the manufacturer. Extend the resources of mass-production, and we can produce all we need in one day a week, at less cost, and take a holiday for the other six.

What is not explained is what we are going to do for the other six days, or what we are to live on. Even if we were to ride around in the motor-cars, or to wear out the shoes (no very lengthy process if they are machine-made) or to lose the golf-balls, the machines would presumably keep well ahead of us. And there are those other critics who tell us, with some plausibility, that our present ills are due, not to too much work and too little produce, but to too much produce and too little work; that not lower but higher prices are required in the industrial world, and that for many people the solution, at least temporarily will lie—has in practice already lain—in a return to the primitive productive methods of the peasant-artificer and to the simple barter of give-and-take in kind.

Bearing this in mind, we are given to pause before surrendering entirely to the technocrats, in spite of their ultimatum of eighteen more months under the present scheme. The date fixed for one economic armageddon has already passed without adding any new horrors to the general cataclysm. The advice of the technocrats would seem to be that to protect ourselves from our Frankenstein's monsters, we should gear our robots faster, provide them with more powerful engines, lubricate them well, and drive them to the limit. The theory is no less plausible than the opposed doctrine of "back to the land", and no more likely to provide a complete solution for our ills. If it could devote its admittedly large endowments of specialized knowledge to the elimination of costly waste and to the reduction of such non-productive activities as advertising—which ranks with amusements and cosmetics among the really great industries—it would accomplish much. But it would seem that the first duty would be to provide the world not with less honest labour, but with more.

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