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THE TERRIBLE DUKES.

II.

THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE BUDGET.

The leadership of the House of Lords in the coming crisis rests nominally with the Marquis of Lansdowne, acting in concert with Mr. Balfour. It is certain that what are termed the "backwoodsmen" or "vacuous hotheads" will insist on an appeal to Caesar. Their insistence is sound statesmanship. It is difficult to see what other course is open to those members of the House of Lords in a position to consider the destiny and circumstances of their country without reference to the sordid jargon of Party. The Front Benches in both Houses of Parliament have much to gain or to lose by a wrong decision. Several of the Dukes are beyond the reach of any reward coveted by successful politicians. The strawberry-leaf contingent of the "backwoodsmen" view the situation with more detachment than is possible to men whose careers hang upon the issue. Were the House of Lords to pass the Budget Bill, by accepting the principle of "tacking," they would enable any Government at any time to introduce into any Budget any measure for the abolition of anything and everything in the Constitution. It is generally agreed that if the Lords were abolished without the agreed substitution of a strong Second Chamber, the Monarchy, the Church, and private ownership of land would vanish with them. The Budget will be rejected not because it is unintelligible, not because it will not work, not because it recognises thirteen different kinds of value, not because it taxes the rich. It is to be flung out because under cover of a finance measure it substitutes revolutionary Socialism for Constitutional law, and establishes a Single Chamber. Before this change is made it is meet for the electors to decide for themselves what they really want. Politicians are fearsome, because always equipped with the quality of caution bordering upon cowardice. It is therefore comforting to know that, among the Dukes, at all events, there is still to be found a backbone or two. Free Trade placemen like Lord James of Hereford, Lord Cromer, and Lord Balfour of Burleigh, and sitters on the fence like Lord St. Aldwyn are tremblingly anxious to persuade the Peers to pass the Budget. But they have not much influence. The Dukes have the sagacity to see that the passage of the Budget will establish Single Chamber government. For that the country is not ready. It will cease to be a country when it is ready.

The patience of the working-people has been wonderful considering the nature of the contrast between the poorest and the richest. The sumptuous life of wealthy landowners is good for trade, is strictly moral, and is opposed to no law, human or divine; but when that opulent existence is placed side by side with the gloom of the Black Country or the unbeautiful areas of the working-class suburbs of Manchester or Liverpool the difference is so repugnant to many minds as to create moral nausea. The territorial magnate of our age is held to symbolise supreme vice in ownership, although he may be, and generally is, the most efficient guardian of property and of the home life which must rest on property. To paraphrase Lecky's famous passage on the most awful figure that has arisen in Society, we might say of the Dukes that on their noble and illustrious forms are concentrated passions that will yet fill the world with shame. While creeds and civilisations rise and fall the dual high priests of ownership are blasted for the sins of other people. They are lightning-conductors for other owners of property. A poor man's goods are sacrosanct, a rich man's safe; but a Duke may be plundered and defamed by any political Ananias paid £5,000 a year to lie nightly for the good of his party. Whatever may be the sanction for ensuring the sanctity of private property, the human mind is unable to bear the strain placed on it by the spectacle of enormous wealth side by side with men weltering in agony and withering in want. The property of ground landlords of great cities exists in a concentrated form that arouses not merely the cupidity of the vicious but the misgiving of the wise.

Nevertheless, the bewildering contrast between enormous wealth arising from rents and ground rents and the noisome and coagulated poverty is reshaping public opinion on the subject of wealth throughout the civilised world. In their country estates many great landowners have found it their duty to abandon

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the principle that "business is business" and to treat the management on other than purely commercial lines. It may have to come to that principle in English towns. Were all the great territorial Dukes or even one of them endowed with the imagination which distinguished the Whigs of the Revolution we might yet see new principles voluntarily introduced in the management and direction of urban property. It is ill to wait until one is between the devil and the deep sea: or between confiscation and legislation enacted with the consent if not at the instance of the most wealthy. The social revolution would be indefinitely postponed were the Dukes to couple resistance to the Budget with a constructive plan for dealing with the social enigma. So long as the Dukes are set upon by the wolves of Socialism they will be defended by the champions of everyone with property in anything. If land, however, were treated like any other commodity and the wealthiest men in the British Parliament who sit on the Radical side were taxed in the same way as the Dukes are proposed to be taxed, the problem of finding money for the Navy and the pensions will be solved. Wealth, even the Unionist papers admit, must pay, but unless the leaders lead the leaderless nation will stagger into the ditch.

A POPULAR AMERICAN SAILOR.

(FROM OUR NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT.)

Rear-Admiral Sperry, now retired, has served on various vessels in the navy, including the Kearsage, Worcester, Richmond, Quinnebaug, Chicago, Yorktown, New Orleans, Alabama, and Connecticut. At the beginning of the war with Spain he was on duty at the New York yard as ordnance officer. He asked for a command at sea, but was told by the officials in Washington that his services were needed at the yard. In November, 1898, he was placed in command of the Yorktown in Philippine waters. He directed the movements of the landing party on the eastern shore of Luzon. The landing party of the Yorktown was captured by Aguinaldo's men. Some of them were wounded, and all were taken prisoners. Then began the chase of the insurgents and their prisoners through the length of the island, resulting in the release of the men at Aparri, on the northern extremity. From the Yorktown Rear-Admiral Sperry was placed in command of the New Orleans in Asiatic waters, and when his three years of sea duty was at an end, in 1903, he was sent to Newport as president of the Naval War College. He remained at Newport for three years, and then his ability was again recognised in his appointment to The Hague.

NEWS OF THE WORLD.

LONDON, Thursday.—In the course of a speech delivered last night by Mr. Joseph A. Pease, M.P., Junior Lord of the Treasury, he stated definitely that the General Election would take place at the beginning of next January. The Government, he said, fully recognised that the Finance Bill would have to gain the sanction of the House of Lords and of the King also. But the House of Commons certainly did not recognise a right of the King or the Peers to reject proposals brought forward by representatives of the people.

LONDON, Thursday.—During yesterday's debate in the House of Commons on the Finance Bill there were several sharp verbal exchanges between Mr. Asquith, the Lord Advocate (Mr. Ure), and Mr. Balfour. Mr. Balfour, it will be remembered, recently delivered a speech at the Junior Constitutional Club, in which he emphatically denounced the Lord Advocate for suggesting that the introduction of Tariff Reform would endanger Old Age Pensions. In the House yesterday Mr. Ure defended himself against Mr. Balfour's charges and, amidst stormy applause from the Ministerialists, recalled a telegram sent by Mr. Balfour to a Conservative candidate last year, in which the leader of the Opposition said that the Radicals had indeed promised to provide Old Age Pensions, but that only the Unionists were in a condition to supply the money necessary for such a measure. In conclusion, Mr. Ure strongly denied that he had ever declared an intention on the part of the Unionists to cut off the pensions. In reply, Mr. Balfour, who spoke with unusual acerbity, said that the question was: Did Mr. Ure believe that any obligation placed upon the country by one political party would be repudiated by another political party. Mr. Ure's statements could be construed only as a declaration that the Old Age Pensions law was in danger.

Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, thereupon replied that Mr. Balfour's attack on the Lord Advocate had never been paralleled in public life, and concluded with the words: "Mr. Ure possesses the confidence of his colleagues and of the majority of the members of this House."

PARIS, Thursday.—The trial of Mme. Steinheil on a charge of murdering her husband and mother began yesterday in the Court of the Seine Department. As a result of the extraordinary measures taken in regard to the issue of cards of admission to the Court, there were only a very few spectators in addition to members of the legal body and representatives of the press. The accused appeared handsomely dressed in black, and appeared quite tranquil. There were no sensational developments yesterday.

NEW YORK, Thursday.—The National Geographical Society of Washington has awarded to Commander Peary a gold medal, at the same time officially announcing its belief that Peary reached the North Pole. The Society has appointed a committee of experts to decide whether it is possible, by the aid of documentary evidence, to prove that the North Pole was reached previous to 1909. The committee will institute a searching examination into Dr. Cook's evidence at the earliest possible moment.

(From our correspondent) NEW YORK, Oct. 24. The newspapers here are still busy with the Peary-Cook controversy. Public interest at the moment is chiefly absorbed by the new dispute as to whether Dr. Cook attained the highest peak of Mount McKinley during his expedition of 1906. His truthfulness and integrity are openly impugned by Commander Peary and his adherents. The alleged affidavit recently published here in which the guide Barrill denied that Dr. Cook had ever reached the summit of the mountain is, according to reports from the West, imputed to the malignants efforts of the Peary party in Montana. Dr. Cook has replied by affirming his intention of again scaling Mount McKinley for the purpose of recovering proofs of his feat. These consist of documents and flags which, he declares, he buried at the summit. Early in the spring this new expedition will start. Dr. Cook will be accompanied by Professor L. L. Dyche, of Kansas State University, and four or five other scientific authorities.