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The Daily Record

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INTELLECTUAL BANKRUPTCY.

THE SYCOPHANTIC DEMAGOGUE.

There is in the new *Blackwood's Magazine* a consideration of the present trend of things political, under the heading of "The Intellectual Bankruptcy," which is well worthy the attention of all who are interested in the great question of the moment. It examines the case against the present British Government and the forces it represents with irresistible logic. There are, says the writer, two paramount tasks today before an intelligent Government. One is, to think out the true place of Socialistic methods in the British policy, to delimit on some solid basis of principle the true spheres of the community and the citizen. The second, and in a sense the more urgent, task is to revise the whole machinery of the Constitution. The mechanism is breaking down from sheer overwork. Discussion in the House of Commons has become a farce, and a scandalised nation waits to see what will happen. The problem is how to combine a new division and delegation of existing functions with the establishment of some consultative and executive machinery for the Empire. To the solution of these two questions the new Liberalism has made no contribution. In the case of the first, it has adopted some of the least defensible principles of doctrine. Socialism, muddled them a little, and embodied them in legislation, protesting all the while that Socialism is the enemy and Liberalism its only counter agent.

As for the second, the Liberal contribution to constitutional reform is a few heroics about that over-worked and creaky machine, the House of Commons, and a scheme for making the said House, with all its existing blemishes, the one absolute and supreme power in the Empire. As we have said, we are not discussing Liberalism on the merits. We grant to the Government the qualities of sincerity and patriotism. It is with the faulty intellectual equipment of the creed that we are concerned—the fact that it is impossible to find coherent principles at its base, or to avoid finding logical flaws in its exposition. What is the reason for this violent descent from the old proud rational Liberalism? The chief seems to be the confused notion of "democracy," which we have already mentioned. If you regard one class as the nation; and a majority as the final argument, you make a considered and continuous policy impossible, and you make catchpenny pleas the only ones worth troubling about. The original confusion in turn is increased by the reaction of its results, and the spectre of the "masses," omnipotent and terribly difficult to understand or please, haunts Liberalism like a nightmare:—

"As when a Gryphon through the wilderness,
With winged steps, o'er hill and moory dale,
Pursues the Arimaspians."

The Arimaspians, we believe, was one-eyed, which put him at a still greater disadvantage with the gryphon.

Let us state our point as fairly and clearly as possible. The present Liberal Government contains conspicuously able departmental chiefs; but Liberal policy lacks any kind of systematic and coherent meaning. This or that measure may have some justification in good intentions or in some urgent need, but because it springs from no system of thought it is liable to be self-contradictory, and it is defended in the House and on public platforms by palpably irrational arguments. The old Liberalism may have been far narrower in outlook, but it was sure of itself, and condescended to an intellectual defence. But the half-truths of the new Liberalism have to rely upon the demagogic powers of Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill; and in place of the solid backing of the older creed it can look only to the journalism of men like Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Masterman, the laughing and the weeping philosophers of this odd faith.

But, we are told, it is Democracy that is speaking, triumphant Democracy, which cares nothing for narrow reason. "Non in dialectica," runs the argument in the words of the medieval saint—"non in dialectica placuit Deo saluum facere populum suum." Well, at its best, this is only a new type of sycophancy.

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To have the vices of a courtier one need not toady a monarch. In the old days the sycophant clung to the skirts of a king or a cardinal, because he saw in him the embodiment of power. Nowadays it is the masses who are all-potent, and it is the demagogue who is the spiritual successor of Carr and Buckingham. Whatever the masses desire they must have, though it is in defiance of reason and justice—to such a pass has fortune brought those who claim to wear the mantle of Vane and Hampden. It is considered right for a member of Parliament to use language about peers and landlords which far exceeds the ordinary licence of politics. The unfortunate Duke is saluted on every Liberal platform with the choicest Billingsgate. But let a Duke lose his temper, as occasionally happens, and say something blasphemous about a trade union or a labour leader—instantly there is a scandalised hush in the Liberal Press, and then a torrent of protest against such sacrilege. It is the authentic style of the sycophant. This novel courtiership is not a dignified attitude, and we can well understand that many Liberals hotly repudiate the charge. But the thing is written large on their policy, and is indeed the inevitable consequence of the new "democratic" creed. They cannot escape from it once they reject reason as a standard in statesmanship and discussion.

Reason, indeed, is an ill thing to reject, for it is apt to return like a boomerang and hit the man who cast it away. We are on the eve of a General Election, when the whole armoury of demagogic weapons will be brought into use. It will be easy to deliver rhetorical speeches about freeing the land for the nation and making the popular will prevail; and no doubt they will have their effect at the polls. But we cannot imagine that thinking Liberals will be very easy in their mind when they see a policy which is professedly and, we believe, honestly anti-Socialist, drawing its only logical defence from Socialistic principles. No party can endure without principles; and until Liberalism foregoes its unintelligent worship of "democracy," and adopts a more manly and rational line of thought, it will remain estranged from the serious and thinking element in the nation.

NEWS OF THE WORLD.

LONDON, Wednesday.—Yesterday the House of Lords was again crowded to its utmost capacity with interested spectators, who followed every phase of the debate on this, the closing day of a great national drama, with visible excitement. Not since the historic rejection of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill had the Upper Chamber contained so many people. In the galleries a large number of distinguished strangers were visible, and it looked as though the peeresses had turned up en masse in their most dainty toilettes. The Duchess of Connaught sat vis-à-vis with the Grand Duke Michael of Russia; others present were the

Duchess of Wellington and the Duchess of Somerset, the Marchioness of Winchester and the Marchioness of Exeter, Countess Kenmare and Countess Waldegrave. To prevent anticipated disturbances when the result of the division became known, the police had taken extraordinary measures in the vicinity of St. Stephen's. Large crowds gathered towards ten o'clock, but the best of order was maintained. Mounted police patrolled Berkeley Square and adjacent thoroughfares for the protection of Lord Lansdowne's town residence. Police reserves were distributed throughout Mayfair, in which district are the residences of numerous peers.

LONDON, Tuesday.—In the course of this afternoon's debate, the Archbishop of York declared that he could not reconcile it with his conscience to abstain from taking part in the division, and if he did take such part, it would be to vote against Lord Lansdowne's resolution. He was unaware that any grounds had been brought forward for the assumption that the Budget Bill was so bad as alleged in some quarters, and he denied that the Bill contained any non-Constitutional or revolutionary principles. At the same time, he had to regret the tone of several speeches in favour of the Budget, and stated that if today's division resulted in a serious conflict, the whole responsibility for it would not rest on those who had voted for Lord Lansdowne's resolution (Opposition applause). He exhorted the peers to examine well the probable results of their action, because if they sensibly pictured those results they would draw back in dismay. A time would come when the whole question of the position occupied by the Lords in a constitutional régime would have to be submitted to the popular judgment. Would not the authority of the Upper House eventually be immeasurably greater if it gave the nation proof that, while conscientiously striving to defend its privileges, it did not attempt to trespass upon the people's right to control their own taxation? Lord Curzon, the next speaker, emphatically denied the insinuation that pressure had been put upon Lord Lansdowne to compel him to introduce his resolution. Lord Lansdowne had taken no step without making it the subject of comprehensive and careful thought or considering the enormous difficulties it was likely to create. He (Lord Curzon) did not believe that by accepting the Budget the Lords would have escaped a share in the constitutional struggle, because in any case the question of the Upper House would be the chief point at issue in the pending General Election. It was to be hoped the Lords would not permit themselves to be condemned without a hearing. He urgently advised them to hold public meetings throughout the country in order to convince the electorate that they had dealt with the Budget on strictly constitutional lines. If the House of Lords were to profit by Lord Roseberry's speech and to accept the Budget, it would not be treating the country fairly. The people would subsequently say that the Lords had sought only to save their own skin; and when a General Election came the Upper House would be condemned for its cowardice rather than for its courage in opposing disastrous measures.

The nearer the debate drew to a close, the more peers took their seats in the House. The last to speak on the Opposition side was Lord Cawdor. He criticized the budget severely and said that the people had a right to express their opinion. The Earl of Crewe then defended the budget warmly.—The result of the division was 350 for and 75 against Lord Lansdowne's resolution.—

About midnight the police who had received reinforcements all the evening, closed around the House and then drove the crowds towards Trafalgar Square. There were no remarkable manifestations of feeling when the result of the division became known.

LONDON, Wednesday.—Many of the Liberal papers today have headed their columns: *Suicide*. This sufficiently characterises the contents of the papers.

PARIS, Tuesday.—*Le Temps* reports from Verdun that a dastardly crime was committed there in the barracks of the Hussar regiment. The soup prepared for a squadron of the men was found to be poisoned, happily before any of the men had partaken of it. The doctors have declared that the whole of the eighty men would have died. A sergeant has been arrested on suspicion.