

England's War Government

A POLITICAL crisis is generally over by the time the news gets out, and its real causes are never those that are made to appear. This maxim of the seasoned politician should be kept in mind by all who follow the cables from England. It serves as a useful corrective, though you need not assume that it is wholly applicable to the sensational developments which will make the month of May, 1915, memorable in the constitutional history of England.

It would be possible to argue that the central fact of the situation should be stated thus: The torpedo that sank the *Lusitania* destroyed also the Asquith Cabinet. It transformed the temper of the nation, turned the searchlight upon Whitehall, and led to an insistent call for national reorganization and the making of a government representing all parties. A crisis was upon us in any case; but it may be doubted whether, if the *Lusitania* had not gone down, the form of the crisis and its approach would not have been very different. Hardly more than a week ago the Prime Minister was asked in the House of Commons whether the government was considering the advisability of admitting into the Cabinet representatives of all the political parties. Mr. Asquith said no, and he added that such a step would not command general assent. In two or three days he had turned round, held in his hand the resignations of all his colleagues, and was engaged in the difficult and most unenviable task of forming a coalition. What had happened?

A government in wartime stands, of course, by virtue of two of its departments—the War Office and the Admiralty. England entered upon the present war in a state of almost perfect confidence with respect to both. In response to a call which may fairly be described as national, Lord Kitchener was, at the beginning of hostilities, made Secretary of State for War—notwithstanding the principle, never hitherto infringed in modern England, that the supreme control of the army must be kept in civilian hands. The Board of Admiralty was presided over by Winston Churchill, to whom was due the swift mobilization of the fleet last summer; and with him was associated as First Sea Lord, or chief expert member, Lord Fisher, the creator of the dreadnought squadrons and the most famous admiral of our time. The country was satisfied that both departments were in the ablest available hands, yet trouble arose in both and came to a head simultaneously.

At the Admiralty things had been going wrong

for months. Perhaps it was inevitable that two men like Mr. Churchill and Lord Fisher—the one a headstrong politician, the other a sailor of commanding personality—should clash. Ever since last autumn Mr. Churchill's enemies have been accusing him of overbearing his colleagues in the Cabinet and defying his expert advisers, and when the terrific difficulty and cost of the Dardanelles adventure were revealed, the split became irreparable. Lord Fisher resigned and the Prime Minister saw disaster to his government immediately ahead.

Concurrently a still sharper crisis was being precipitated in the War Office. Three months had gone since Lloyd George uttered his grave warning as to the imperative need of more rapid and efficient manufacture of munitions. He coupled it with a demand for a rigorous control of liquor, to which the country did not respond. On the subject of war munitions the government spoke with contradictory voices. While the Prime Minister announced that all was well and Lord Kitchener confessed himself satisfied, Mr. George repeated his warning and cited disturbing figures in its support. The public was puzzled, and was without the clue until, on May twelfth, the military correspondent of the *London Times*, Colonel Repington, delivered the stroke that completed the government's overthrow. He announced, in a despatch from the theatre of war, that the lack of high-explosive shells was a fatal bar to British progress in the field. Then, one after another, the astonishing facts came tumbling out. Sir John French had been imploring the War Office to supply the right kind of shells for trench warfare. Lord Kitchener, wedded to the beliefs imbedded in him by his South African experience, took no heed, continued to supply shrapnel, and kept the facts from his colleagues in the Cabinet. Sir John French, finding that his demands made no impression, called in the help of Lord Northcliffe and the *Times*. The leaders of the Opposition, using their knowledge of the situation as a political weapon, threatened to destroy the government; and the heads of the Cabinet, in desperate straits, evaded open and complete disaster by inviting their opponents to come in and take their share of the burden of responsibility.

The results, immediate and remote, of this momentous departure cannot be set down here; but a few of them may be indicated. Organized opposition in Parliament disappears, and with it the possibility of an alternative government, which is the strongest check upon the attacking party. By

a majority vote of the whole body, the Labor men have resolved to be represented in the government: this means the disappearance of the Labor party as such. The Irish remain outside. It is difficult to say whether the outlook for Home Rule would be more or less dismal than it is if both Redmond and Carson had gone into the government. The Tories, at first opposed to coalition, will accept it as a victory when they realize the power that is put into their hands by the possession of half the Cabinet seats, and will rejoice at the prospect of imposing conscription. The Liberals are rebelliously acquiescent. They recognize, for Mr. Asquith put it to them with the utmost candor, that the choice was between coalition or defeat. There are evidences of an extraordinary complexity of influences below the surface. A strong body of Liberals, for example, would, if they could, make it impossible for either Mr. Churchill or Lord Kitchener to be in the new administration. They give two reasons: the existence between them of the personal feud, and the fact that both alike have betrayed the essential principle of Cabinet government.

There remain, I think, when all is said, two questions uppermost in the minds of reasonable Englishmen. First, how is the country to free itself from the intolerable dictatorship of Lord Northcliffe and his journals? Secondly, how will the political transformation in the midst of war affect the standing of Great Britain before the world? Lord Northcliffe is, plainly, the destroyer of the Asquith Cabinet. That is serious enough; but after all, the government was tired and stale. It had been in office for over nine years, and multitudes of people felt that not to such a government, representing one party in the state, should be entrusted the colossal responsibility of conducting a war in three continents. But what of the effect of all this upon the world? We are emerging from a political and administrative crisis more severe than any known in the history of modern England, and to observers at a distance it must seem that the country is being preyed upon, its very existence imperilled, by selfish and factious individuals and groups. But that, as all who know anything of our public life will agree, is emphatically not so. It is true that we have no liking for coalition cabinets; this generation has had no experience of one. But the fact which matters is that out of the distractions of the present there will emerge a government thoroughly national in constitution and purpose. It will be harder to run than a party team; but it will be an impressive symbol of the national solidarity.

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The Golden Story

IT is a current impression that there are no general laws for love. Poets have always delighted in depicting the tender passion as wayward and lawless, and even sane business men are prone to agree that love is mysterious and its problems baffling. The peculiarity of its manifestations are accentuated in every work of fiction, so that the average reader who seeks illumination is compelled to extract it from fiction with all the labor of extracting gold from quartz. That this incertitude is mistaken will be welcome news to many troubled souls. Hypercritical people may scoff at the affirmation. There is no certitude to which the sceptic or the cynic will not take captious exception. But the joyous fact remains: there are certain definite principles governing every impulse and every manifestation of love, and they need only be known to be accepted.

This profound assurance is justified by an estimable but little-known work issued in Philadelphia some fifteen years ago. The author is Miss Grace Shirley, and her production is termed "Shirley's Twentieth Century Lover's Guide of Love, Courtship and Marriage. A Complete and Reliable Handbook." Published in the same popular series as the "Fun Doctor" ("blessed are those who laugh for they shall grow fat"), Professor Hoffmann's "Tricks with Dice, Dominoes, Etc.," Doctor Ellsworth's "Key to Hypnotism" and Mme. Claire Rougemont's "National Dream Book," it is well buoyed on its way to the public. But though Miss Shirley has been widely read, she has never won full appreciation. Although deep in the finest social and amatory tradition, she has been ignored in literary and philosophic circles. For this result her subject rather than its treatment must be blamed. It is hard, in this self-conscious and sophisticated age, to find an audience which will admit its admiration for a Houdini of the human heart.

Marriage, says Miss Shirley, has been termed a LOTTERY, but it is a lottery in which only the reckless need lose. "In the category of human attributes, reason stands pre-eminent; and when once love is relegated to her control, the tyranny of the passion will be subdued, and all evil results from unwise loving will be avoided." The relegation of love to the control of reason is therefore Miss Shirley's scheme, and no one who follows it can fail to be a wiser and gayer man.

Are you in doubt as to "whom to marry"? Miss Shirley has no perplexities for you. "A drunkard, habitual or otherwise, should not be considered as a candidate for matrimony, as his appetite can only bring misery and sorrow." "It is wise, from many