

THE subject of the representatives who are to compose the Washington conference is fittingly introduced by Lord Northcliffe. Personalities are the life of journalism, and it is proper that the world's first journalist should raise the question. It should be answered, however, by public opinion. The people of all the nations concerned are perfectly honest in regard to the original subject of the conference, disarmament and peace. It is of the first importance to them that the delegates shall be honest men. Some centuries ago the author of the Psalms asked the same question as Lord Northcliffe, and his answer may be taken as literally and verbally inspired.

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?

He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully.

Whether this admits Lloyd George, Curzon, Balfour, Viviani, Tardieu and the Versailles crowd in general let public opinion answer.

THERE is little doubt that people are just now bored to death with politics, particularly foreign politics. They care less and less for the dry bread of news, and more for the raisins, for "financier's lovenests," for freakish crime, eight-legged calves, and other things of "human interest." For man cannot live by bread alone. The newspapers perceive this weariness, and have been increasing the proportion of juicy raisins. Take the foreign correspondence of the New York Times, for instance. In the last few weeks we find longish, expensive cables from Paris, headlined "Confesses murder at victim's grave: French criminal confronted with the corpse, long buried in his garden"; "New police prefect has odd adventure: accused of stealing his shoes by man who saved woman from Seine"; "French prisoner and jury enact a drama worthy of W. S. Gilbert"; "Singing as a cure-all works Paris wonders"; "Finds bearded women abound in asylums"; and "French physician declares he can read character infallibly by phrenoscopy." Such items are a barometer of public attention, which yawns at mention of the League, the Treaty, reparations, cabinet crises. Idealists and political reformers will never get very far unless they learn to recognize and respect the saturation point of the people's interest in their wares.

MR. WALTER LIPPMANN, who has been on leave of absence since March, will not return to the editorial board of the New Republic. On January 1, 1922, he will join the staff of the New York World.

## The Russian Famine

THE Russian famine approaches in vastness the greatest historical calamities which have fallen upon the human race. The extent of the area involved, the multitude struck by death, the attendant phenomena of whole populations fleeing from hunger and plague and hurling themselves blindly and desperately against the barrier of bayonets which the instinct of self-preservation forces other populations to set up against them—all this gives a certain majesty of horror, such as forms the inspiration of De Quincey's *Flight of a Tartar Tribe*.

The causes of this catastrophe are two. First there is the unparalleled heat and drouth in which the crops of the whole Volga region have been burned up. But famine is not a new phenomenon in Russia. Almost every year there is a local shortage somewhere, and perhaps once in a decade this extends to several provinces, but surplus in other portions of the country circumscribes the famine and relieves it. This time there is no surplus anywhere. The peasants, discouraged by the policy of the Soviet government in commandeering their crops for the cities, have limited their planting to what is necessary for their own subsistence. Once more it appears that Lenin's theory is ahead of practice, and that public service as an economic impulse cannot take the place of private gain. His change of policy permitting free trade in food has come too late. In this situation, however, it is peculiarly heartless to fall back on causes. To blame Lenin is as much beside the immediate point as to blame God. The one instant and immediate question is relief. There is one chief source of help—America.

The Soviet government has constituted a Non-partisan Public Famine Relief Commission, the individual members of which command the confidence and respect of the world. The Patriarch of Moscow and Maxim Gorky have issued appeals for help which are eloquent in their transcription of the suffering of a whole people. There would ordinarily be no question of the spontaneity and volume of the response of America to their prayers. But the case of Russia is extraordinary. We regard the Russian government as the enemy of civilization. We have tried to destroy it by arms; we have attacked it by false propaganda; we have refused to recognize it, or to permit its representative to remain on our shores. We have arrested Russians in this country for expressing sympathy with it, and many of them are now in our prisons. Altogether we have wronged Russia so deeply that in self-justification we are compelled to persist in re-

garding her as an outcast nation. And our punishment, if we could but see it, is that we are not spiritually free to grant that spontaneous and generous relief which is so greatly needed.

Mr. Hoover, answering the appeal on behalf of the American Relief Administration, lays down conditions which permit us to continue to ignore the existence of the Soviet government. The American prisoners in Moscow are to be released without formal negotiation, which would imply recognition, and control of distribution of relief is to remain entirely in the hands of Mr. Hoover's agents. Doubtless these conditions seem perfectly fair to most Americans, but from the point of view of the Soviets their acceptance implies a sacrifice and a danger. For Mr. Hoover has admittedly used the power of food in the past to control revolutions and overthrow governments of the Soviet type, and has been upheld by American public opinion in so doing. Against his promise to abstain from political activity the Soviet government must anxiously reflect on the behavior of the American Red Cross, committed to neutrality, but active in support of Wrangel and Yudenich. Altogether its acceptance is an evidence not only of the extremity of the crisis, but of a trust in our generosity and good-will—a trust which under the circumstances is both magnanimous and pathetic. That faith must not be betrayed. Mr. Hoover is the guardian of the conscience and purse of America in the matter of foreign relief. No single agency in the raising of funds has anything like his potency. What he decides will be accepted. It may be that he holds in his hands greater power of life and death than any individual ever consciously wielded before.

There is no use, however, in minimizing the difficulties that lie before Mr. Hoover and the "honest people" to whom Maxim Gorky appeals. We have ourselves raised great obstacles in the way of aiding Russia. We have become so used to thinking of Russia politically that we are scarcely shocked by a protest of the New York Herald against even the offer of assistance before the American prisoners are released, or by the suggestion of the Tribune that Mr. Hoover should add to his conditions the retirement of the present Bolshevik government. It is politics against humanity. Two peoples, one in agony, one in prosperity, one suppliant, one lordly in its generosity, are separated by political intolerance. It is necessary for the Russians to receive; it is no less necessary for America to give. To speak of politics is to sin against the Holy Ghost.

There is, as Maxim Gorky declares, a peculiar opportunity in the Russian crisis to renew faith in

humanity so shaken by the war and its aftermath. The Russian people have shown this faith—it is for America to justify it. Already the American Friends are conducting relief work at Moscow, and through them a number of organizations (including the Jewish Joint Relief Commission) are sending funds which up to the present they have raised slowly and with difficulty. Undoubtedly the Friends will work in complete harmony with Mr. Hoover's organization as with the Soviet government: we can be sure that in practical administration they will allow nothing to stand in the way of the fullest cooperation. If it is desirable that all existing organizations for the relief of Russia be merged behind Mr. Hoover they will lead the way. But the spiritual unification of Russian relief is more important than the administrative; and that depends upon shifting the whole relation between the American and Russian peoples from politics to humanity. The All-Russian committee can cooperate to this end. It might send a delegation to the United States, headed by Maxim Gorky and including leading Russian artists and men of science. The friendship of the two peoples must once more be reaffirmed, in spite of politics. If politics continues to rule us in the face of this overwhelming human suffering we must indeed accept Rossetti's sorrowful lines on *The Refusal of Aid Between Nations*:

By this we know  
That our earth falls asunder being old.

## Japanese Reservations

THE State Department was on safe ground in predicting that Japan would accept the invitation to participate in the conference on disarmament and Pacific questions. Japan could not have refused, without falling into a position of dangerous isolation. But Japan, or rather the imperialistic group of Japanese around the foreign office, does not like the idea of a conference. It is far easier to work toward a position of advantage on the Asiatic continent through a succession of agreements with particular nations, winning recognition now from one nation, now from another, and then proceeding in further international relations on the assumption that the matter has been settled. Japan would rather leave Far Eastern questions in abeyance until our State Department assumes a more pro-Japanese complexion. But for the present the preferences of Japan do not count. The conference will be held, and she has to come in.

All that is now practicable for Japanese diplomacy is to limit the scope of the conference as