

through blizzards and desert, to go to jail for a cause. There is nothing here to equal the color and the tension of an East Side garment workers' strike.

But England has its uses: it provides you with a quiet place in which to sit down in peace to write about America. And it gives you a far-off place of calm from which to view America. For American life crashes rather too incessantly and demandingly upon one's consciousness; its drama sucks you into its own vortex; it is hard to remove from this strong and tumultuous life, in order to write about it.

Over there, your armies of gunmen and strikers are deployed, ready to shoot death into each other's camps. There is raw conflict in America. Over there, your artists and poets, weaned at last from the withered breasts of Europe, are beginning to express, inchoately, perhaps, but significantly, the dark and varied complexities of Amer-

ican life. The women's clubs are discussing Dos- toievsky or Hamsun, superficially, indeed, but interestedly. The American Legion riots in Kansas City; and the Holy Rollers dance and howl ecstatically in small towns of New Jersey. And a great crowd, red-mouthed and frenzied, roars thunderously when Babe Ruth hits a homer.

Out of this turmoil, what will come? Out of your whelming strengths and appalling weaknesses, what will be forged? What giant thing is struggling for form in the womb of America? Will it be a great brute tyranny of vulgarity; or will some shining glory of comradeship and power emerge to make a new morning for the world?

And it is because they sense this struggle and this imminence, and because they will that it shall come with beauty and fulfillment for us all, that a hundred men still scan eagerly the newspapers, every quiet evening, in their cells, at Leavenworth.

CHARLES ASHLEIGH.

The Plight of the English Tories

THE Morning Post said in its bitterness a long time ago that Mr. Lloyd George, having broken the Liberal party, would next break the Conservatives. From the Morning Post's standpoint, he is now in process of doing it. A neutral would more accurately say that the Conservative party is breaking itself upon his personality. The spectacle inevitably recalls another party-breaker, who split the liberals in the eighties over Ireland and the Unionists in 1904-6 over Protection—Joseph Chamberlain, who had strong points of resemblance to Mr. George, for he was a man of the people, a radical but devoid of the Liberal sense of personal and national liberty, restless, impatient, innovating, a rousing demagogue.

The hubbub has arisen out of the famous "February election" which I said in my last letter in the New Republic had been decided on before the Premier went to Cannes. The decision had in fact been taken. Mr. George disavowed all responsibility for the report when he came back from Cannes and the project was abandoned. It is a perpetual puzzle to him (how Fleet Street enjoys the little joke;) that such rumors should get into the papers. But Lord Birkenhead, who never uses a rapier if there is a bludgeon handy, has made no bones about it. He says squarely that he was in favor of having an election "in the early part of the year," that in three months' time his Tory friends will be sorry that they did not have it then, and that they could have had it in his opinion

with certainty of success. The inference is that in Lord Birkenhead's opinion there would be no such certainty now. That, at least, is sober truth. The Conservative party is in the rapids and unless it is very wary it will be split upon the rocks. We have had three by-elections lately in each of which a Conservative candidate had to meet the combined Opposition vote, which means the whole Liberal Labor poll less an unknown but certainly very small number of Liberal-Coalition voters. Result:—

CONSTITUENCY	CONSERVATIVE MAJORITY IN 1918	OPPOSITION MAJORITY TODAY
Clayton Division of Manchester	4,631	Labor 3,624
North Camberwell	1,658*	Labor 1,135
Bodmin Division of Cornwall	3,583	Ind. Liberal 3,141

This turnover of votes, which if repeated at a general election would reduce the Conservatives to a moderate group, was due to a variety of causes—accumulation of discontents against the government in office, trade depression, crushing taxation, the Geddes report (both because some of its recommendations with regard to education are resented and because the suggestion that great economies are immediately possible is accepted as proof positive of governmental sins), and the dissection in the Conservative party which is now un-

* Over Liberal and Labor combined.

concealed and takes the form of a brisk exchange of bickerings, reproaches and threats among its leading men. It provides excellent "copy" for the newspapers, admirable missiles for the party's enemies and the coldest of douches for the party itself.

The February election may have been abandoned partly because the government suddenly remembered the necessity of carrying through the Irish settlement, but in any case they could scarcely have persevered in the plan after Sir George Younger, the head of the Conservative "machine", had publicly pronounced against it. Sir George Younger represents the intransigent Tories who are weary of being dragged along a Liberal road by Mr. George. They are the genuine Right of English politics, they are sincere reactionaries and—to their credit be it said—they are tired of compromises and want the policy that matches their convictions. Sir George Younger demanded in particular that this government should undertake the reform of the House of Lords, by which he meant the abolition of the Parliament act, that is to say the restoration of the veto. Mr. George also is dissatisfied with the Parliament act, because it holds up in the Lords all really Liberal bills for two years and so undermines the Liberal government that is the author of them. He wants not more veto but less. The Die-Hard Tories want a veto that can be relied on not only to delay but actually to destroy Radical and Labor legislation.

Sir George Younger's intervention put the fat in the fire. He had really, whatever the denials, presented an ultimatum to the Premier, and at the same time to his own leaders. The word lay with Mr. Austen Chamberlain. When he spoke it was found that the principles on which the two parties were to conduct the next election had been agreed between the leaders. Or perhaps one might better say the lack of principles. There would be no "coupon" from the party leaders for Coalition candidates. There would be no joint address to the electors. So much to tickle the palate of Tories who dislike the idea of Coalition. But is independence, then, to take the place of Coalition? At this point Mr. Chamberlain really got to the heart of his subject. "For whose profit," said he to his Tory audience, "will you quarrel with our Liberal friends? In doing so you will destroy our chances in a great number of constituencies which we hold now and never should hold and never could get without their help." Therefore independence was impossible. Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Chamberlain would enter the next election with an understanding as to what they wanted and how they proposed to get it.

This, of course, meant a continuance of Coalition, slightly modified in method but in essentials unchanged. It would be based on a mutual surrender of principle, as it has always been. Mr. Chamberlain cheerfully indicated his sacrifice; he was a convinced Protectionist but to "go out" (like that great crusader, his father) with the old program of protection at this time would be "perfect madness." Mr. Lloyd George, no doubt, was to stomach the continuance of the Key Industries bill, though *his* conviction is free trade. Having made this brazen electioneering speech, Mr. Chamberlain demanded continued cooperation with those who "stand for the same great fundamental principles as we."

This was too much for Sir George Younger. All that he would assent to, he said, was "a sort of cooperation." At present there was a matrimonial alliance, and he would end it by a Bill of Divorcement. But he would not turn the Coalition "completely adrift" so long as they were willing to march with the Tories "in the policies which they considered best." Once more Sir George was issuing orders both to his own leaders and to the Premier. Lord Birkenhead looked round for his bludgeon. He said roundly that the suggestion that the Conservative party should make an independent appeal to the country was a "counsel of insanity"; they had not the slightest chance of gaining a working majority; the Manchester by-election had been lost because the Conservatives had repelled the assistance of the Coalition Liberals; the Premier would not submit indefinitely to the humiliations which rebellious Tories were inflicting on him; he himself, Lord Birkenhead, would not stand it and, besides, the cabin-boy had better let the helm alone. Fisticuffs among the leaders spell demoralization among the rank and file. The "balancing electorate," the "residuum" which used to decide the fate of elections by swaying from side to side, is now a large proportion of the whole. It will not support a party which is publicly riven by dissensions as was Mr. Balfour's in 1905 and as is Mr. Chamberlain's today. It demands, as Lord Birkenhead most truly said, "a coherent and intelligent doctrine which is expressed by men who understand their own minds." The Conservatives have neither the doctrine nor the men and they are going to the wall.

The anger of the Die-Hards is sincere and justified. They are supporting a Premier who is a Liberal. He does not say so himself, because he regards himself for the moment as above party, but he has said so plainly enough through the mouthpieces who are high up in his ministry and

share his confidence. This means that the policy of his ministry will contain just as much of the Liberal doctrine as he can persuade his Conservative colleagues to swallow—and he has persuaded them to swallow much. When the sterner Tories reflect that their party has been brought to accept the Irish settlement; that, shrinking and protesting, it will nevertheless be brought to accept a similar “surrender” in Egypt; that it has not raised a murmur over the naval disarmament imposed at Washington and the beginnings of a policy of renunciation by the restoration to China of Wei-hai-Wei; that it supports Mr. George’s progress, halting indeed but unbroken, towards the reconstitution of Russia and his readiness to negotiate, as they say, with murder and rebellion everywhere—when they ponder on this strange and abhorrent phenomenon, it is no wonder that they are appalled at their political future and demand a Conservative course for the Conservative ship.

If the Conservative revolt is pressed successfully, both the Conservative and the National-Liberal (Coalition) parties will suffer in the next election. The history of the Clayton by-election is sufficiently illuminating. There was a Conservative candidate who was independent but was prepared to support the Coalition as long as it did what he desired it should do. There was also a Labor candidate, Mr. Sutton, who had formerly sat in Parliament for this same neighborhood but is not a man of any distinction or force of character. The Free Liberals approached the Coalition Liberals in Manchester and offered to join in running a Liberal candidate “without adjectives.” Coalition Liberal headquarters in London gave no support to this idea; indeed, they emitted no opinion at all until the moment for action had passed. They simply stood aside. The Conservative organizers, for their part, did not desire, and would not accept, cooperation with the Liberals. They stood on their own feet, the bulk of the Liberal vote went to Labor, and Mr. Sutton was returned with a majority of several thousands.

If there could now be straight fighting between Conservatives and either of the two Opposition parties, the result of Clayton would be repeated in many scores of constituencies throughout the country. But such straight fights are very difficult to obtain, and wherever both a Labor man and a Free Liberal are in the field together the Conservative is likely to hold his ground. No general bargain or “pact” to abstain from competing candidatures can be made between the headquarters of the two parties. Liberal headquarters would be ready and so would be some members of the Labor headquarters staff. But these things rest with the local associations, which will not accept

dictation from headquarters, and in the constituencies may be found every degree of reasonableness and its reverse on either side. The Labor people are poor tacticians and they take a stiff uncompromising view from which their more prudent leaders have not the courage to dissuade them. To them the Liberals, all Liberals, are no better than the Tories; they are all bourgeoisie, reactionaries, “the Capitalists” and so forth. This doctrinaire and inexact division is of great assistance to the Coalition ministers, whose chief hope of success lies in creating a solid anti-Socialist block of the middle and upper working classes. It also deprives the Labor party of the middle class brains which it very badly needs even now in opposition and will need more urgently still when at last it has the responsibility of office. But at the present the most to be hoped for is that up and down the country there will be a series of common sense arrangements by which Labor and Free Liberals will get out of each other’s way. Then the causes which operated so strikingly at Bodmin, North Camberwell and Clayton will produce the like results.

Mr. Lloyd George is not too fortunate at the present moment. He is himself in sympathy with the liberal movement—a small “l”—which is moving the country. The country wants economy and peace—in Ireland, Egypt, Europe, everywhere. That is a program common to all the parties and politicians—except the Die-Hard Tories—and it is Mr. George’s. But he has not yet delivered the goods, he has committed many sins of omission and commission, he can only go on promising, and the Tory revolt conveys the impression everywhere of weakness in his conduct of affairs. It would be fatal to him if he allowed that to continue and he has now informed Mr. Chamberlain plainly that Sir George Younger must be restrained or he will cease to lead the Coalition. If he did that and the Conservatives took office, Mr. George would move back at once towards reunion with the Liberal party of which he would quickly and inevitably become the head. If the Conservative party split, then its leaders would do all they could to persuade Mr. George to join them and take the headship of a Centre party.

Just at this crisis comes the Geddes report. Mr. George invented the Geddes Committee to show that he was in earnest about economy and to put pressure on his ministers. The Committee reports that enormous reductions are already possible and Mr. George is promptly blamed for not having enforced them long ago.

Worst of all, the report has touched education in a way calculated to do the greatest electoral damage to the government. The average English elector

is not vastly concerned about the education of his children; he has never valued it except where he could see its immediate practical advantage. But the teachers, who are an important influence on public opinion, are concerned about their salaries and pensions, and the working class mothers, who now have the vote, are indignant at the proposal to turn all children under six out of the national schools. The mothers may have their doubts about education, but none about desirability of schools for children over four. The government have rejected these two recommendations firmly, but they will pay a heavy penalty for their mere publication.

How, then, should one summarize the situation? If Mr. George dissolves, the Coalition government will appeal to the country in a loose alliance. It will be the Coalition still, but weaker and apologetic, and it will pay the inevitable penalty for moral weakness. As things stand at the moment, the two governing sections are likely to come back to Parliament as groups rather than parties. It is just conceivable that they might again be able to maintain a ministry in office. That will depend partly on the Die-Hard Tory group. After the elections the indications are that the Coalition will speedily disappear altogether and that Mr. George will thereafter appeal to the country as a leader, a Liberal leader, pure and simple. In my personal belief he will in that event before long be accepted as *the* Liberal leader also. But this is prophecy and dangerous. Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Birkenhead certainly hope for a fusion and a Centre party, but I think it more likely that Mr. George has made up his mind to a definitely Liberal policy and a bid for the leadership of a united Liberal party. It would suit him vastly better if he could now, by resigning instead of dissolving, put the Tories into office and himself, in opposition, conquer the place of indisputed Liberal leader.

The Free Liberals and Labor men should return to Parliament greatly strengthened. In cooperation they might be able to form a ministry. But it is doubtful whether such a ministry would have any stability even if Labor would go into it—or dare go into it in face of its own extremists.

There is a large measure of truth in Lord Birkenhead's uncomplimentary references to the amiable weakness, in face of the extremists, of Labor leaders like Mr. Clynes and Mr. Henderson. Possibly Labor might even be so strong as to attempt the formation of a government of its own, though that is unlikely. We are seemingly on the threshold—so long foretold—of the group system, and all is uncertainty. There is a great dearth of dividing principles. Everything turns on personalities, or rather on one man's personality.

AN ENGLISH LIBERAL.

Youself and Your Critics

The First Fifty Years, by Henry Myers. The Princess Theatre, March 13, 1922.

THE question of the actor's relation to his part is still an open one. Shall he identify himself with the character, try to produce an illusion of being the very person that he represents? Or shall he only make use of himself to comment on the character, to abstract the quality that distinguishes the character, and in terms of himself give us that quality with a significant accentuation? This whole problem is happily illustrated by the work of Miss Clare Eames and Mr. Tom Powers in *The First Fifty Years*. And to this illustration the nature of Mr. Myers' play contributes no little.

The First Fifty Years is in seven scenes, seven episodes really, out of the lives of a Harlem clerk and his wife. We see them first at the homecoming after the honeymoon, very much in love and planning to be happy so long as they both shall live. There is a letter from an old suitor of Anne's in which he tells them that he will write every anniversary and will remind them to question their hearts and their love. And though there is little money Anne will do all the work for him, and will practice her music; and Martin will become the head of his firm and will go on writing his poems. The first anniversary comes, the paper wedding, which they have almost forgotten; she has become a drudge and he gets on all too slowly in his affairs; they question their hearts and almost quarrel, and end by resolving to keep their hearts open and true to each other. The Wooden Wedding comes, five years since they were married. They quarrel; he all but strikes her; finally they promise not to speak to each other again, though they must live together for fear of what people will say. Then comes a scene where Martin eats his supper; neither of them speaks; he goes out, and Anne sits at her game of solitaire and begins to sob. It is the tenth anniversary; they both have remembered, but neither has spoken. The Crystal Wedding then, fifteen years, Martin is ill, Anne cares for him, always without speaking. She is forced at last to break this silence and she tells him that as soon as he is well she is going to leave him. But his entreaties keep her; they agree to be strangers but not enemies, to make the best of things. And then the Silver Wedding, and both of them old before their time; they can talk together; they even make little presents for the occasion. Martin has got on in the world, people think the marriage a perfect one. The scene ends with their playing cards together. And then the fiftieth anniversary, the Golden Wedding. Two old people, worn out, little tilts and bickerings without much feeling one way or another. Life is neither sweet nor bitter any more. Memories; and in their absent-mindedness a passage of the old love. And in the midst of it Martin wanders back to the cards.

The First Fifty Years is pretty well worked out; in spite of the fact that it tends to be hard and abrupt in texture, in the first half especially. The whole thing is frankly an arrangement; it is episodic in nature and rightly so in structure; and the author has wisely refrained from the historical and atmospheric, which after *Milestones* and its school would have been the obvious method. The very shortness and the single-mindedness of the scenes in themselves is what does most to make the technique successful; but the play in general is deft enough, as far as it goes, and it is not without profound feeling at times. And its author evinces a real talent and insight in