

LIBERALS AND RADICALS

BY SAMUEL SPRING

"LIBERALS," the President of the bank remarked as he bestowed one of his Havanas upon me, "Liberals are merely terror-stricken Radicals. Like all Radicals, they want the whole cake or none; but knowing that they will get none, they are willing to compromise on part. Scratch a Liberal and you find a Bolshevik. Fortunately Liberals are disappearing from America like the Indians."

He smiled on me genially as he spoke. Though the outstanding Reactionary of the town, he appeared rather cheering as he sat in the modest President's room of his ostentatious bank, a tall, white-haired gentleman of seventy years' experience and astuteness. I should have answered:

"You Reactionaries are trying to murder Liberalism by calling it Anarchy. That went all right during the war; but Liberalism cannot be choked so easily."

Instead, I lit his cigar and left. I felt all too keenly that Liberalism was gently being pushed out of the world in precisely that fashion. To be a Liberal in these lurid days is to be suspected and unhappy. Everything successful is lurid; Radicals are lurid; Reactionaries are lurid; we Liberals alone seem drab. This death awaits us.

An hour later I was eating lunch with a Radical. A bald-headed, scant man of forty, he keeps his large family alive by editing a *Milkman's Monthly* and writing about the butter-fat possibilities of short-horn cows, while he dreams happily of the New State and awaits the inevitable task of seeking another job so soon as the dairymen discover that he is a "Red."

"Liberals," he said, "are merely desperate Conservatives. They rely on their magic 'Liberalism' to preserve them and their ease. Give me an honest, police-guarded capitalist. I hate hypocrites. Like the bourgeoisie, Liberals are a thing of the past; the world progresses; Tartuffe is dead!"

Is not the time ripe for someone to leave a fund for the study of the Radical mind, and, incidentally, for the preservation of dying Liberals? Is not the Liberal worth preserving, at least as an inoffensive curiosity? We are preserving buffaloes and razor-billed auks:—why not Liberals? Time was when we Liberals considered ourselves the saving remnant; boasted of our patience, our tolerance, our deep thought; felt that we alone could make progress possible. Progress? Our very ideal is out of fashion. The Conservative insists on staying just where he is. Like the carp in the mud, he says, “Here I lie possessing, happily possessing. Let me lie.” The Radical scorns progress; he demands change, abrupt, glorious, perilous change. We are caught between two armies. The Conservative adroitly turns every hand against us by calling us hard, radical names. The Radical simply sputters in rage when we appear. Could anything be of more profit than to understand the Radical Mind? In the past the Radical usually ended up in the madhouse, in jail, or in the Liberal fold, finally to reappear as a Reactionary of Reactionaries. Dare we hope that this will be true also of the future? Indeed what are the outstanding types of the Radical Mind?

I

True it is that the reaches of the world are, after all, only a small back-yard. When I came upon Ashe in the cold light of the morning, beside the gray Pacific, he was sitting on a rock watching the sea intently. I had heard a few months before that he was a war correspondent in Turkestan; before that he had been the patient organizer of several of the outstanding Radical campaigns of the decade. Organized labor at one time feared him more than it did capital. I was startled when I discovered that with him was the woman he had married a few months back; his marriage, we all felt, was his intellectual death warrant. For she was one of those Radicals who had started brilliantly; written sagely though daringly about shop and factory slavery in New York; and, as is too often the case with the woman Radical, at the point when she was on the threshold of a great work, she went wild. She became an

emotional Radical; no cause was too scatter-brained or too futile for her not to be a leader in it. And to complete her folly she married Ashe.

For by that marriage she led astray one of the finest minds and staunchest hearts of the generation. His great defect was overweening idealism. At the head of his class in the law school, envied by all who labored harder and received poorer grades, he refused to complete the course because his restless mind revolted from the two-by-four credo of the law. He entered the ministry, only to upbraid his small-souled board of trustees, composed of shop-keepers and disappointed spinsters, and to resign in contempt. Then he became a social service worker, and told his donors that they could not use him as a disguise for their greed, or exhibit him as a satisfaction to their vanity. Finally he became a Radical leader with few peers. His marriage was the last episode I had heard in his career, and his wife displayed him in every side-show of the Radical circus. He was always in revolt; always seeing the falsity and death in life; but never able to compromise ideals with realities. And now he sat quietly, almost feebly, beside the indifferent sea.

The mellow light of the California dawn suddenly made life seem blithe and serene. Only the placid sea remained stupid. It was hard to think that out of this drowsy bay, Drake had sailed, daring and damning Spaniards, tempests and the unknown. Beyond the cliff on which we stood, bounded by a white stretch of beach curving magnificently like the crescent moon, lay the very harbor where Drake had beached and scraped his water-logged *Golden Hind* before he turned her broken prow straight into the sinking sun on the high adventure of all adventures—around the world or straight out of the world!

I thought of Drake as soon as I saw Ashe; for Drake had always been his model rebel. He had even written a *Revolutionist's Life of Drake*. The reason was evident. Ashe confused rebellion with adventure. And was not Drake the greatest yet weirdest of adventurers? For he began life as a pirate, robbing silver-laden galleons on the Spanish Main, and ended life as the naval genius who broke the Armada and thus made English Conservatism eternally secure.

We talked a long time, but not about ourselves. There was a matchless tone of optimism about his remarks; not blind optimism founded on faith, but rather a peaceful surety that the world was mellowing and that life was delightful after all. His wife said not a word. I was happy to find that his Radicalism was almost gone. He had found himself at last; sure of his judgment, reliant upon his infinite experience, he felt that the short-comings of our civilization called for labor and not wild-eyed revolt.

"It's all right to change the world," he said finally, as he rose to go, "but after all it's like sailing a ship. Drake never hit the rocks—and that's a good deal. We Radicals always seem to aim for the rocks; the way to end a voyage profitably, we think, is to sink the boat. Drake's tiny ship was full of holes; she leaked and creaked and staggered as the waves struck her; but that was his adventure, to sail her patiently and keep her away from the rocks. So with this society of ours; it seems ready to quit and go to smash as it shivers on the crest of a wave; I used to pray for the power to crash it to pieces on a reef; but now I respect it. Somehow it goes; and we must spend more time sailing it instead of damning it. . . . You see, I'm still a worshipper of Drake. . . . And after all, the wisest of us may be the biggest fools. Who was it who said that the world, after all, might be a poor joke played by God on man?"

We parted gaily. The sun was shining in full, glowing splendor. The poised sea sparkled like a jewelled garden. The freshness, the cheer, the glorious color of a California morning thrilled us as only vibrant life can.

She lingered behind. I was embarrassed, for I had spoken sharply of her in the old days. The pain, the rebellion, on her small face startled me. How could she be in such unhappy, surging revolt on so glorious a morning? Heartily did I pity Ashe.

"You'll never see him again," she said simply. "Perhaps a week, a month, . . . not more than a year . . . Cancer. He knows it—and look at him! . . . Oh, the brutal, mad tyranny of it all! . . . And to think that I was ever fool enough to believe in a God, to feel that there was any force in life greater or nobler than the courage of man!"

II

"Little Napoleon," a ship-fitter's apprentice said to me truculently, "will get you government guys soon, and *get you good!*"

It was my task during the war to assist the Emergency Fleet Corporation in shaping its labor policies. It was also my duty—task for a Mohammed!—to receive complaints and keep the workers happy.

The young Radical, a ship-fitter's apprentice, who addressed me with these kindly words, had just demanded that the Government pay his railroad fare to the Great Lakes because he was an indispensable ship-fitter and would be happier there, for he was weary of the West.

"The Government ought to wake up and realize that if they keep us guys happy they'll get more ships. Little Napoleon will wake 'em up with a bang."

Always Little Napoleon! How does this Emperor of Radicals gain his power? I asked myself.

The next day the ship-yard workers, or rather part of them, struck without notice, for higher wages, in violation of their agreement to submit all labor disputes to arbitration. That same night I attended a labor rally at a great hall full of tumult, wrath and chaos. Little Napoleon, with his tumbling eloquence, was in his element. I soon learned how he held his power. To dare all and always to dare was his motto. Spoiled by high wages, believing that the golden days would never end, the younger workers were afire for radical achievement. Little Napoleon ruled them by urging them to grasp for more than they dreamed of. He phrased, in sharp, angular invective, all that they felt but dared not say. Who ever foolishly spoke of a Radical leader? They seldom lead. A Radical leader is like a cow-boy riding ahead of a mass of maddened, stampeding steers. So long as he can ride faster than they, he can lead; so soon as he hesitates, he disappears. The Conservative and Liberal labor leaders, who had nursed the Affiliated Council through bitter years of starvation, were swept aside. When the dreams of the moment passed, and the Union fell upon sad days, they would be allowed to lead again. Now they sat mute, powerless, like

Egyptian mummies. As Little Napoleon spoke I felt that I was at the high religious service of Radicalism in which he, as the priest of the temple, raucously chanted "Higher wages! Always higher wages!" while the chorus of workers stormily sang back in wrath, "Strike! Strike!! Strike!!!"

And strike they would until hunger taught them reason. For after the meeting Little Napoleon met me on the stairs. He was flushed after his constant speaking; but a touch of cunning shrewdness, despite his rampant emotionalism, still lingered about his eyes.

"Perhaps after all they will have to go back to work again," he said slyly, "but this strike will wake up them fellows in Washington. It will only be a truce. Labor will prevail. The future belongs to us!"

"The head of the Federation of Labor and your own international President," I answered, "have ordered you fellows not to strike. How can you, then? Don't you believe in organization? There may be a wrong time, even for a strike!"

"Never! What do those guys who call themselves labor leaders back East, drawing down their fat salaries from us, know about our needs? When they get at the top of an organization they become cowards. Their manners get good and their nerve gets bum. But not me! It's the strong that deserve it all; and we laborers"—his hands were soft as a woman's—"we laborers are the strong if we only knew it. Look at old Napoleon, and old Morgan. The only things they didn't grab, like the North Pole, were too far away for them to reach. Grab it all! That's me—I mean us. We've got to grab and we will! Hang reason; damn reason; just grab! Look out for us!"

Such Radicals as Little Napoleon are common enough. They always have brains of some kind. Sharp, quick to act, daring enough to clutch the stars themselves, they are a power not to be denied. But their greed betrays them utterly. They are to be feared, yet they soon destroy themselves. There are too many of them. And even the Great Napoleon could not lead his starved people through the deserts of defeat. Common sense, hidden though it may be at times, proves the Waterloo of such Radicals when hunger and disaster lend an edge! Their

ideals are as old as tumult itself. Shakespeare pictured their revolution for all time when he had the Welshman timidly say:

The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth,
And lean-faced prophets whisper fearful change,
Rich men look sad, and ruffians dance and leap,—
The one, in fear to lose what they enjoy,
The other to enjoy by rage and war.

III

H. was the valuation engineer of a State Railroad Commission. An indifferent engineer, he was nevertheless a diligent revolutionist. How often have I seen him on the witness stand testifying boldly and glaringly on behalf of the public with but one purpose, to rob the utility as far as possible. His pale face with its underbeard, his large ash-colored eyes, would flare up in passion on every occasion, like an Oriental monk about to be martyred. He lived and worked and argued emotionally. Women Radicals often reveal the same quality; well-meaning souls who seem in search for an excuse to grow impassioned, and outraged, and unhappy. They would start a revolt over the color of your hair; the revolt's the thing!

H. was a college teacher for a decade. Starvation then confronted him and his growing family. H. actually did the family washing before starting his lectures. Finally he fled into the Government reclamation service. Again starvation and ill-fortune out-stared him at every turn. He owed his position with the Railroad Commission to his willingness to do two men's work on half a man's pay. His jarring personality and narrow mind turned every hand against him. The utilities despised him for his unfairness and his impassioned Radicalism; they realized that everything with him was class conflict. His own associates hated him for his intolerance. No one would work with him. Adversity, instead of breeding fortitude, had bred bitterness.

Like all of those who are Radicals through starvation, his end was simple. The telephone company, because he was about to rob them of a couple of million a year by a neat use of the theo-

ries of depreciation, offered him a job at \$100 more a month than he was receiving. He instantly accepted. With his stomach no longer empty, he forgot Radicalism. To-day he even shows the makings of a first-rate Reactionary!

IV

The high Sierras. A donkey and two men—thus the sacred trilogy of Conservative, Liberal, and Radical. My friend M., though a tumultuous Radical, was a rare companion for a hike. At college he had aspired to be a poet, but finally compromised on art criticism. If one could not create Art, one could, at least, criticize it. To-day he is a photographer in the Zion of Mormonism, growing wealthy on the income derived from his skill in taking children's pictures in nursery style, with bits of original, apt verse at the bottom. He is as radical as ever; only now that Socialism has ceased to be accursed and startling, he has become an Anarchist, a Bolshevik. Over six feet two inches tall, stout in proportion, an awkward, blonde giant, he is nevertheless unable to carry more than forty pounds on his back, and would rather join the Conservatives than walk faster than three miles an hour. Hence his fondness for donkeys.

That memorable afternoon, just before sunset, we were toiling up a ridge, wrangling as usual. Indeed our travels could well be called "Wrangles with a Donkey." Suddenly below us appeared one of the magnificent vistas of the Sierras. The serene glory of the great wilderness, coming across our weary path so abruptly, made us forget our bickering. For miles, between forested walls, the valley stretched straight into the sinking sun and the soaring, austere Sierras. A volcano had covered one side of the valley with great boulders; masses of twisted rock appeared here and there; between the boulders stood great pines, killed and whitened by some weird blight. On the other side above the masses of colored underbrush rose lofty, serene red-woods, half green, half sere. Far away, emerging from the mists of the horizon, gleamed a faint, quicksilver stream with argent bursts of color where the water dashed against the rocks.

It was one of those rare times when the naked beauty of

Nature moves one as does the climax of a Shakespearian tragedy when a great actor stands before eternity. Being human, I am never speechless; but wrath seized me when M. began to speak.

His face was flushed, his eyes strained. He moved his hands grandiloquently, evidently under the stress of overwhelming emotion. Impassioned lover of beauty that he is, I was startled to find him breaking the spell in jarring, futile speech.

"Behold," he babbled brokenly, "behold the philosophy of Anarchy, the credo, the hymn of the Social Revolution! I worship at the shrine—"

"Anarchy and asses," I sputtered, "I see no dynamite, no sabotage, no red flags, or boiling orations—"

"Look! See the marks of the glacier down this side of the valley. Tumult, and blind, protesting force swept the mud and ugliness out of the valley, and now we have serenity and eternal beauty. What a glorious revolt; its history is written—"

"Thousands," I interrupted.

"If you pull that old saw about the changes of Nature taking thousands of years, while we Radicals want perfection over night, I'll push you and the donkey over the edge of this precipice. We don't want perfection; we simply want to sweep away ugliness, poverty, disease. Beauty must then come to fill the void. I'm sick of this rickety civilization. It has the hook-worm. This glacier swept down the country over night. Let us choke and shoot you Reactionaries and sweep away the mud over night, then—"

"Then, more mud," said I.

We were wrangling again.

Late the same day we were passing by a mountain meadow where the timid, delicate-hued mountain flowers had edged up in prodigal abundance as the snow slowly melted away. Here and there, though it was July, patches of snow and ice still remained. A great redwood had fallen along the trail, forming a matchless Juliet balcony.

Suddenly, like one of Ovid's Metamorphoses, a tawny-coated, frightened deer leaped sheer over the red-wood balcony, lighted with unbelievable grace and ease near us, and fled across our path

into the meadow. The primitive man within me spoke and I reached for my gun. M. blocked me.

"I would gladly shoot Conservatives or their Liberal step-sisters," he said savagely, "but why murder beauty, even if it is only a deer?"

Where M. is to-day, I don't know. He is one of the great types of the Radical Mind. Beauty is his religion; yet Fate denied him all creative power. Like old Kraft in Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe*, he can feel beauty supremely, but he lacks all power of expression. He is allowed to gaze into the celestial gardens, but enter he cannot. Embittered, revolting against his fate, what is more natural for him than to revolt against the world? Gray's "mute, inglorious Milton" was probably the village atheist or cynic. The surge within could not be suppressed; even futile opposition was a relief. M. reads his politics, his economics, his philosophy in terms of beauty. Ugliness is to him infinitely worse than chaos. He can revolt against society; he can form a perpetual minority; but he cannot construct. Why fear him?

So they stroll across the stage of rebellion. The man on horse-back, denied his horse, and forced to mount a soap-box instead; the starved stomach in revolt; the futile, kindly lover of beauty, ready to destroy the world because he cannot create beauty or make society beautiful; the great mind and big heart, athirst for adventure, ready to destroy all for the sake of adventure, yet taught by Life; and finally—a Liberal.

Infinite other types there are to be sure. For who can count the crows in the cornfield; or even the eagles in the heavens? Like the dark and swirling waters of the Nile, our Radicals flood the busy fields, and then when the weak begin to despair, they recede into their normal bounds leaving life much enriched and refreshed. So Liberalism is not on its last legs; rather Radicalism is. What has happened in the past will happen again in the future. At least we Liberals like to hope so, and since nothing is so comforting to those in doubt as bold prophecy, I have boldly set my prophecy down.

SAMUEL SPRING.

REPORTING PARLIAMENT AND CONGRESS

BY P. W. WILSON

ACCORDING to the wisdom of those who speak English, it is best that we should be governed by persons whom we elect to Congresses and Parliaments from constituencies where dwell the voters. There arises the question, therefore, how we are to know from day to day what our representatives are doing in our name, and in England the answer to that question was for many centuries that there was no need for us, and no right, to know anything at all. Lords and Commons were "privileged"; in neither chamber was there a press gallery; to publish a debate or any part of it was a misdemeanor; and I have in my library original reports of alleged proceedings, two hundred years ago, in which the proper names of Queen Anne's great men are printed without vowels and so disguised. The theory was that the nation put itself under a Parliamentary trusteeship, that any publicity permitted by Parliament was a favor, and that while every citizen should know the law, no citizen could claim to know how the law was made.

With the development of newspapers, such privacy was bound to be swept away. Members themselves, being human, began to publish their speeches, and men like Dr. Johnson were employed to summarize and, if need be, to improvise each day's eloquence. When the present Houses of Parliament were designed by Sir Charles Barry, provision was made in both chambers for a Press Gallery, with ample writing rooms attached, and also dining rooms, while, of course, there are now all the paraphernalia of telephones, telegraphs and tickers. Unless typewriters have been introduced since I left, three years ago, they are still taboo. After all, in adopting improvements, England must draw the line somewhere!

Still, even to-day, there is the old sense that the pressman is a