

satire, and legendary lore is a panorama of unquestionable genius, although too intrinsically Scandinavian in its spirit to win general popularity, even with the aid of Grieg's entrancing music. Such pieces as "Love's Comedy," "The Pretenders," "The League of Youth," "Pillars of Society" have their undeniable excellences, but are not of transcendent originality or merit. Nor does "Emperor and Galilean" put all quasi-historical drama into eclipse.

Actually it was with the appearance of "A Doll's House" that the reputation of Ibsen became international. The phenomenal vogue acquired by this play was altogether disproportionate to its intrinsic literary and dramatic values. Coincident with the earlier stages of the agitation in favor of feminine emancipation, it attracted wide-spread attention by the appositeness, dexterity, and realism of its special pleading, and aspiring women everywhere gave it their enthusiastic support. It was not, in any sense, great drama, nothing in its personages, situations, or imagination rising above the level of the commonplace. But it was pregnant throughout with an appealing sex motive that everybody could understand. And in the compactness, smoothness, and interdependence of its mechanism it was a model of artistic and effective dramatic construction. And herein may be discerned the real gist and substance of the sterling benefit and instruction which Ibsen conferred upon the modern theatre, then largely filled with unmeaning trash and slipshod workmanship. He did not, as Mr. Zucker assumes, revolutionize the drama, change its traditional forms or objects, or, as a matter of fact, greatly enrich its treasury of masterpieces, but he did show how a skilful craftsman—or Master Builder—even when working with ordinary, but aptly chosen, materials, could, by steady adherence to a definite plan and purpose, and minute portrayal of diverse individual characteristics, compose an arresting and consistently effective play, without resorting to wildly ludicrous, extravagant, or irrelevant artifice.

"Ghosts," temporarily, proved almost as great a sensational success as "A Doll's House" and for similar reasons. Its appearance was contemporaneous with a marked revival of public interest in the subject of heredity and its illustration of the principle, though not new in idea or very precious as a scientific demonstration, was vivid and, on the surface, sufficiently logical, while the chief personages, of somewhat extravagant type, were depicted with realism and consistency, and the closely knit story compounded with masterful ingenuity. None of the stuff was first rate, but the expert treatment displayed all of it to the best advantage. The attacks upon the piece, provoked by its drabness and morbidity, and the queer notion that there was something immoral about it, helped to stir curiosity and create notoriety. It is by these two plays, probably, that Ibsen is most widely known, although much of his finer work is to be found in such symbolical and imaginative, but less intelligible, works as "The Wild Duck," "The Lady from the Sea," "Rosmersholm," and "The Master Builder." From the purely theatrical point of view "Hedda Gabler"—whose fantastic, highly colored, and unamiable heroine has engaged the efforts of many leading actresses—was, perhaps, one of his most successful productions. The joiner-work of it is excellent, as usual, but the minor characters have no special distinction, while the prevailing atmosphere is unexhilarating, and the study of wayward womanhood, is neither profound nor especially subtle or truthful.

The precise status of Ibsen as a poet needs no present consideration as Mr. Zucker makes no attempt to define it. As a dramatist, particularly in his earlier and more romantic moods, he is entitled, unquestionably, to a fairly prominent position among the writers for the theatre or the library. But to place him next or near to Shakespeare, or among the greatest of all time, is to betray a lamentable lack of taste and judgment. Not his was the touch of nature that makes the whole world kin, nor genius that is for all time.

### Mighty Opposites

(Continued from page 793)

have been sold at the outset to the ideals of mass production. When quantity comes in at the window, quality goes out at the door.

What is elevation of spirit in literature? Is that a question to be answered in an editorial? But Milton knew when he wrote of Fame "that the clear spirit both raise . . . to scorn delights and live laborious days. . . . But not the praise, Phoebus repli'd, . . . Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil."

## A Portrait of England

ENGLAND. By WILHELM DIBELIUS. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1930. \$5.

Reviewed by HAROLD J. LASKI

THIS remarkable book, which has been most admirably translated, is, I think, the most valuable single work published on its subject in recent times. It differs from President Lowell's well-known work, partly by reason of its width of treatment and power of incisive judgment, partly because of its effort to relate institutions to the psychological deposit of national tradition. It has not, let it be said at once, the universality which made Tocqueville's "Democracy in America" one of the seminal books of the nineteenth century. I am inclined to compare it with Bryce's "American Commonwealth," and to urge that it comes out well from a comparison which is itself a verdict of high quality. Certainly no European scholar who has written of England has ever approached the standard of this book; nor do I know of any contemporary work which, at the moment, equals it in grasp of principle or knowledge of detail. Weighing my words carefully, I suggest that it is the indispensable book on its subject at the present time.

Professor Dibelius covers a very wide area. What he has attempted is, so to say, an impressionist portrait of England. Its position as a world-power, its



A cartoon of Lloyd George reproduced from *Punch* in "Lloyd George," by Mr. Punch (Stokes). (See next page.)

national characteristics, its industries, its constitution, its churches, and its educational system,—all these are handled with knowledge and insight, and with, in general, remarkable accuracy. Sometimes one is tempted to dissent. I think, for example, that Professor Dibelius's picture of British imperialism is written more out of the books of Mr. Bernard Shaw than out of the raw material of history. I am more impressed than he is by English provincial universities. I do not think he realizes quite how deep is the modern scepticism of the English public school. He underestimates, in my judgment, the degree of reconstruction that has taken place in English political institutions since the war; and he overestimates the influence of religious institutions today in their power to shape the national life. I think, too, that what he calls the "Anglo-Saxon idea," the love of freedom, the resentment of state interference, and so on, would need rather careful annotation if it were not to emerge as more distinct and clarified than in fact it is. Granted, again, the facts, I believe that Professor Dibelius ends upon an excessively optimistic note. But these are differences of opinion in which there are arguments on either side. None of them disturbs the profound insight of the general portrait he has drawn.

What I should like here to note is certain elements in that portrait revealed to me with new precision by the power of Professor Dibelius's analysis. I do not say that they are new; I only say that they are the more freshly seen by the way in which he presents

them. The first, and the most outstanding, is the pervading and enduring power of the English aristocracy. There has not, so far as I know, been anything like this in the history of the world. It has gone in France and Germany, in Russia and Italy and the Scandinavian countries. In England it remains, a little shaken, perhaps, but still profound. The aristocracy, by its marriage with the City, its political relations, its administrative connections, shows a capacity of influence and absorption that are quite incomparable. There are still big feudal elements in English life. The problem of rural England in no small degree depends upon their recognition. A democratic franchise system still gives unique advantages to the aristocrat who enters political life. Other things being equal, he will get into the House of Commons, and thence into the Cabinet, about ten years earlier than self-made men. Contact with him will soften the edges of those who dislike aristocratic predominance and seek its destruction. Mr. MacDonald does not send ardent socialists to the House of Lords, but men rather like the occupants there of the Conservative benches. I think it was Mr. Chesterton who once said that the greatest event in the English nineteenth century was the revolution that did not happen. That was true because the governing class has always known when to compromise and coalesce. In Professor Dibelius's picture I see no element which suggests a decline of that capacity. He knows just what to improve and just what to preserve. It is still at the very heart of power.

Professor Dibelius criticizes a little severely the operation of Parliamentary government in England. He thinks it tends, in some degree, to the unreality of a sham fight and that certain classes, the underpaid curate, for example, and the small rentier, are unprotected in the conflict of parties, where a strong monarchy might safeguard their interests. On the whole, I am not impressed by his argument. As I have sought elsewhere to show, English parliamentary procedure is in drastic need of reform. But I am tempted to say, first, that the two-party system is a capital discovery in the technique of parliament, and even of representative government, and, secondly, that the interests Professor Dibelius thinks neglected under the system are just those least deserving of protection. My own doubt would be on a different aspect of his theme. Parliamentary government depends for its success upon the assumption that parties are agreed about fundamentals and differ only on points of detail. For these can be discussed and there are always ways and means of arriving at agreement by compromise. Where ultimate principle is concerned, as Ireland showed, as India may show, discussion cannot solve the problem. For discussion admits that reason must prevail, and where men argue from different premises, passion and not reason, is king. Here, as I think, is the main problem of parliamentary government in the future. I do not feel clear that it is certain to meet it successfully.

For here is a point of substance upon which Professor Dibelius does not, I think, touch adequately. You cannot make England a constitutional democracy, as was done by the Act of 1928, in politics without raising major issues of industrial government. You cannot meet those major issues, without demanding the surrender of very considerable economic power from the governing classes. They mean, as Mr. Keynes has recognized with emphasis, high taxation to distribute more equally the amenities of social life. They mean also, as education does its fell work, an increasing demand for constitutional government in industry. The effect of both these tendencies in England is, of necessity, towards a growing economic equality, and the effect of that is the disappearance of the rentier class whose outlook has been mainly shaped by contact with the aristocracy. The question I ask myself is whether the revolution in the quality of life that these things portend can be accomplished silently and in peace. I wish Professor Dibelius had dealt with this question. To answer it in the affirmative is to say that the English governing class will be the first in history peacefully to abdicate from the possession of social control. It would be exhilarating to be able to think that confidently. It would also, I suggest, be absurdly optimistic.

Two other remarks I venture to make. Professor Dibelius sees signs of new life stirring in the churches. I wish he had given us the evidence for this and sought to measure its significance. My own impression is that, whether judged by attendance at service, or candidates for the ministry, or power to



resist changes in moral outlook, the decline in ecclesiastical authority is one of the most significant things of our time in England. Its hold on the universities was never so small. With many, faith in a political creed has taken its place; thousands do voluntary work for the Labor Party which, a generation ago, they would have devoted to church or chapel. I doubt whether any religious leader today could obtain the kind of leadership that Westcott or Spurgeon or General Booth had for the last generation. There may be many signs of a vaguely religious temper; but I doubt whether the churches have any considerable part in its inspiration or control. And it is notable, too, that revivalism in England today is quite dead except as a spectacle which has to compete with the movie or the football match.

Professor Dibelius hazards the suggestion that the English universities will long remain the "pillars of aristocratic tradition." Here, I think, he exaggerates. At Oxford and London, among the undergraduates, the Labor Party is far stronger and more active than its rivals; elsewhere, invariably, it has a strong and growing life. The aristocratic "flavor" of the universities is due, I think, to three things: first, to the comparatively large sum of money a three or four years' course requires. This means that their clientèle is still mainly drawn from the upper and middle classes. Second, it is due to their form of government which, at the financial centre, is largely that of business men. This tends to a search for the "safe" professor in a way with which Americans are sufficiently acquainted, as the head of the university. Thirdly, at Oxford and Cambridge and the Scottish universities, the power of the Churches remains immense. All these characteristics will disappear as and if the Labor Party is able, first to extend the facilities for university instruction to the children of the working-classes, and, second, as Labor captures the municipalities and thus comes to have its say in the governance of local universities. The reason for the position Professor Dibelius records is simply that the control of the universities has been in the hands of vested interests. As that passes, I think wide and deep change is probable. Respectability today is much less an academic virtue than it was when I was a student at Oxford.

## Lloyd George, Democrat

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE. By J. HUGH EDWARDS. New York: J. H. Sears & Co. 1929. \$7.50.

Reviewed by J. W. T. MASON

IT is well that Mr. Edwards has written his two volumes about Lloyd George while that statesman is still in full enjoyment of his powers and still may have a great part to play in the world's future. Democracy not only in Great Britain, but everywhere, can read these volumes with profit. Lloyd George is one of the great democrats of our time. He may be, as the future will judge, the greatest. Certainly, his personality and his traits of character symbolize the democratic movement, not limited to the bounds of his own country, but having a universal application. His democracy is natural and spontaneous, having both the faults and the far greater virtues of humanity's persistent search for freedom.

When he visited America, after the war, I stood beside him in a small group aboard the cutter that brought him ashore from his trans-Atlantic liner. As we came in sight of the Statue of Liberty, I interrupted an animated conversation to point the Statue out to him. Instantly, Lloyd George's countenance, at the moment smiling and vivacious, changed. His face assumed an expression akin to veneration. He came to rigid, silent attention and in this attitude, he removed his hat and held it at the civilian salute. He said no word, uttered no apostrophe to freedom. He seemed like a soldier in the cause of liberty, paying reverence to his Goddess. He stood immovable for a moment, then bowed, ending his homage. No other European could have shown the same spirit with such obvious sincerity.

When he left New York for his return voyage, the ship news reporters, the most unromantic and most sophisticated news gatherers of the journalistic craft, visited him in his cabin and presented him with a resolution of eulogy. He is probably the only world personage to whom that tribute has been paid. Any man who can rouse New York's ship news gatherers to such a height of respect is not only a national leader; he is a true internationalist, a symbol of the universal man.

Indeed, Lloyd George is more popular in the United States, and his type of leadership is better understood here, than in his own country. His humble birth, his early struggles, and his vigorous espousal of popular causes without the background of a cultural education, combine to represent the spirit of democracy in America more than in England. The British still suspect the masses of being incompetent to provide national leaders from among their own ranks. There must be a disciplined intellectuality added, for the class feeling still prevails; and, that is one of the reasons for the decline of the Liberal party in Great Britain.

Lloyd George's character differs in this respect fundamentally from Gladstone's and Rosebery's and Asquith's, the liberal leaders who preceded him in command of the party, Campbell-Bannerman's leadership being but a compromise interlude and unimportant. Gladstone, Rosebery, and Asquith were scholars and possessed a certain intellectual aloofness. Gladstone was the last of the liberals able to popularize himself despite his scholarship. The struggle between Asquith and Lloyd George was really a conflict between liberalism curbed by intellectualistic disdain of popular methods of leadership and the newer liberalism, distrusting intellectualism as being out of touch with mass desires and ambitions.

Mr. Edwards informs us that early in Lloyd George's parliamentary career:

One who was friendly disposed towards him tendered this advice: "Get up your political philosophy. A good six months' hard grinding at Maine and Aristotle, Hobbs and Locke and Burke, would do you a world of good. You have great powers, both of thinking and of talking, but they require training and cultivation. About you there are great possibilities—possibilities that may end in much or in nothing."

That was precisely the kind of advice to be offered naturally to a British political leader a generation ago, when Oxford and Cambridge were the training grounds for those seeking public careers. But as Mr. Edwards says:

Such counsel, well meaning as it was, missed its mark. Every man is a law unto himself, and knows instinctively the bias of his destiny. The dust-covered tomes of abstruse treatises on political philosophy had obviously no attraction for the young Member.

Present events far more than the past have ever interested Lloyd George. The responsiveness of his mind to existing conditions, his sensitiveness to the realistic, and his energetic spirit of action have made him akin to the democratic mass. And, if the mass in Great Britain prefers for the time being the class leadership of Labor, represented by Ramsay MacDonald, that is because Lloyd George has never fallen into the error of believing that prosperity and high wages can result simply by legislative enactments. He represents the modern school that trusts to action and creative effort as the means of progress, which is why his democracy is so closely akin to the American idea.

During the world war, it was this characteristic of Lloyd George which carried him to the premiership and caused him, more than any other individual, to be responsible for Great Britain's success in the conflict. But it was also his passion for action, coupled with his liberalism and his frequent heedlessness, which caused him to rush Greece into her disastrous war with Turkey after the greater conflict had ended. He did not foresee that France and Italy, jealous of the prestige which would accrue to Great Britain if Greece had won, would secretly checkmate the Greeks. Mr. Edwards passes over this incident lightly; but it is symptomatic of the lack of disciplined thinking which is a part of Lloyd George's mind. He does not look far ahead. When careful foresight is essential, Lloyd George is at his worst. When instant action to meet a great crisis is needed, he is at his best. Democracy has yet to learn how to think things through; but, had democracy always stopped to think before acting, it would have lost far more than it could have gained. The balance to democracy's account favors action first; and it is his primary concern for activity that has made Lloyd George so impressive a standard bearer in the democratic advance.

His courage has the quality at times of recklessness, for he is headstrong in his constant responsiveness to whatever the present condition may be. During the Boer War, he was not content to oppose Great Britain's imperialistic struggle against the Dutch in South Africa. He sought a counter-of-

fensive against those who called him "pro-Boer" by insisting on addressing a public meeting in Birmingham, the home town of the late Joseph Chamberlain, who was regarded as the chief sponsor of the war. Mr. Edwards has described vividly the unsuccessful efforts to prevent Lloyd George reaching Birmingham, the riotous proceedings in the hall when Lloyd George faced his opponents from the platform amid cries of "traitor," and his eventual escape from mob violence. Facing his angry audience, who were bent on doing him bodily harm, Lloyd George caught sight of Union Jack flags being frantically waved at him. He pointed at them, exclaiming:

The Union Jack is the pride and property of our common country, and no man who really loves it could do anything but dissent from its being converted into Mr. Chamberlain's pocket-handkerchief.

The bitterness of the retort shows that intensity of invective which Lloyd George has used on innumerable occasions, causing stiffness of opposition where a more compromising attitude would have served him better. But, in the heat of debate, his active temperament causes him to be dominated by the will to victory at any cost, and he has a trait of the mob in himself, in this respect. It is no wonder, then, that at Birmingham, he "was on his feet for nearly an hour, but he had been able to utter only a few sentences, and these the reporters had the utmost difficulty in catching. One stone after another had come crashing through the windows, and not a few had fallen upon the platform."

The next war in which Great Britain was engaged saw Lloyd George in a different rôle, called in the supreme emergency, to lead his country to victory. Thus has the man's fate ever swung backward and forward, and still swings, as he holds today the balance of power in the House of Commons, though with but a handful of followers.

Mr. Edwards has written Lloyd George's story simply and with vivacity. It is a moving narrative, though no deeper in philosophic analysis than Lloyd George's own competence in this respect. But it relates the fundamental facts in the evolution of a commanding democrat and a great lover of liberty. Democracy can well take pride in Lloyd George and it is fitting that his career be held fresh in memory while he still lives and continues his leadership. Mr. Edwards's volume makes welcome reading for all interested in democracy's future and the kind of men democracy needs as its future spokesmen.

*THE books listed below have been read with interest by the Editors of THE SATURDAY REVIEW and have seemed to us worthy of special recommendation to our subscribers. It is our desire to bring to the attention of our readers books of real excellence, especially books by new or not widely known authors, which may not get the recognition which we believe they deserve.*

★SCHWEIK, THE GOOD SOLDIER. By JAROSLAV HASEK. Doubleday, Doran.

A tale recounting the experiences of a Czech soldier in the war which laughed thousands of the Czechs into mutiny.

★"CO." By JEAN-RICHARD BLOCH. Simon & Schuster. A novel wherein is set forth against a richly tapestried background of character and incident the perpetual and consuming struggle between man and the machine.

★"THE TESTAMENT OF BEAUTY." By ROBERT BRIDGES. Oxford University Press.

A philosophic poem by the Poet Laureate of England, noble in conception, and as plastic to a wise experimentation as though its author were in his salad days instead of eighty-six years young.

★FOR THE DEFENCE: The Life of Sir Edward Marshall Hall. Macmillan.

A biography of the most spectacular criminal lawyer of contemporary England who could have furnished forth from his experiences the stuff of a hundred detective stories.

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