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Writing on the Wall

ENGLAND'S MONEY LORDS. By Simon Haxey. New York: Harrison-Hilton Books. 1939. 263 pp., with index. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE CATLIN

THE thesis of this book is that "the Conservative Party is the political party of the very wealthy." It retains its hold by a popular vote which it well knows how to produce from the British electorate; but it uses that hold to pack the House of Commons with rich men and their kin. The titled Conservatives and their near relatives, here called "the Cousinhood," hold nearly half the Conservative seats in the House of Commons and rather less than half of the Cabinet posts. The Duke of Devonshire alone, Under-Secretary for Dominions, has six close kinsmen in the Commons. Mr. Haxey calls our attention, as to a rare bird, to Sir Walter Womersley, as "the only Tory working man in Parliament." (I seem to recall Minister of Labor, "Corporal" Ernest Brown.) Mr. Haxey's argument, however, it should be noted, is not that the rich cousins of the feudal lords are in the House because these lords are titled, but that these lords are titled because their cousins are rich. Title is now a symbol of money-power.

At the turn of the last century muckraking was a pursuit favored by Radicals in Britain, especially at the expense of the peerage. Mr. Lloyd George was Muckraker No. One. That the great family of the Duke of Northumberland were not indeed Percies but Smithsons (as the Smithsonian Institute recalls) and the dubious origin of families sprung from Charles's mistresses, bearing arms with motto *Amor*, were facts seized on with especial delight.

There is a risk of making wrong deductions by the use of this technique. Mr. Harold Macmillan, M.P., figures top on Mr. Haxey's list of the kinsmen of clan Cavendish. It so happens, however, that Mr. Macmillan, in reviewing a book of this writer's, was able to point out that he was far more optimistic about Russia and its future policy than myself. It is irrelevant that, on the subsequent record, I happened to be right. The significant thing is that Mr. Macmillan was more Russophil than a Laborite writer. This is not, of course, to say that, in these days of political theologies, the pressure to square every writing and statement with the party line is not immense.

It may also be questioned whether Mr. Haxey does not do a more important work by bringing out the significance of personal relations in their bearings on the retention of power than in his more purely economic thesis. (Incidentally, he omits analysis of the fortunes and influence of

certainly exceedingly wealthy capitalists of the extreme Left—there are such). I recall a comment of Signor Mussolini's: "The economic interpretation of history, it is not true. I was brought up as a Marxist. But let me illustrate. Signor Eden he dislikes me. And I—I dislike him. That is all there is to it. It is not the economic interpretation of history." There is no known method in political science of preventing politicians having "buddies."

With these reservations, Mr. Haxey has produced a book, not only honest and opportune, but valuable. As one surveys history one notes that, the grander the titles, not the more the wealth but the greater the inequalities of wealth. Over against the princely Radziwills, recently assassinated, stands Polish poverty. Over against the Marquesses of Londonderry, not in fact bad landlords, stand the unemployed Durham miners. It is a system that encourages diffidence, not confidence, in the common man. As a certain peer, Francis Bacon, Viscount Verulam, remarked: money, like muck, is best when spread. There is a legitimate style of snobbery of wealth as of ability, certainly not absent in Russia. There is much in a tradition of values. But the style described by Mr. Haxey—of peers equal among themselves alone and of wealth that does not know how to spend with philanthropy—is assuredly due for liquidation. It is unhealthy and near to the central sore of British lower-middle-class snobbery and cheap values. Whether it will be liquidated by some version of the American democratic route or by the Nazi-Bolshevik route (potent combination unanticipated by Mr. Haxey) we do not yet know. It is not clear that such persons as Mr. Duff Cooper (high on Mr. Haxey's list) recognize that the issue exists, from which only the most living sense of public duty and revitalization by ability can extricate this aristocracy. Nevertheless, the issue is present and the writing on the wall. Not even fascism can or will save it. That is delusion. It is the Cecils and Halifaxes, men of sincere public devotion—such as the Germans see as the source of British power in the "Gentlemantypus"—who alone can save their order by transforming it from the level of ex-robbers of monastic estates, due to be robbed by men tougher than themselves. Perhaps we should also add the most famous "cousin" of all, the Duke of Marlborough's Mr. Winston Churchill.

George Catlin is a British economist who was formerly on the faculty of Cornell University.

Cover Design

The photograph on the cover of this issue by Robert Disraeli, shows a section of Walden Pond in winter.

A distinguished teacher and writer sends us the following letter:

Gentlemen:

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Sincerely yours,

HAROLD W. THOMPSON
(Professor of English Literature
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WHITTLESEY HOUSE
McGraw-Hill Building, New York

Virginibus Puerisque

The Saturday Review's Guide to the Season's Books for Children

| Title and Author | Age and Sex | What It's About | Our Opinion |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| HOO! HOO! DE WITT! <i>Frances Dunscombe and Jean Lamont</i> (Holt: \$1.25) | 3-6 Both | A baby owl decides he will go out in the daytime and play with the woods animals. Mother owl comes to the rescue, in story that points a familiar moral. | Nicely written and illustrated |
| MIKE THE CAT <i>Creighton Peet</i> (Holt: \$1.25) | Cat lovers from 3 up | Candid camera shots of a cat that thinks perhaps it's a tiger, and pretends the house is a jungle. Beautiful pictures, with adequate text. | Charming |
| WU AND LU AND LI <i>Evelyn Young</i> (Oxford: 75 cents) | Both 6-8 | Three small Chinese children go to town to buy a toy. Charming small pictures of life in China. | Simple but pleasant |
| CATS FOR THE TOOSEYS <i>Mabel Guinnip La Rue</i> (Nelson: \$1.) | 6-8 Both | The trials of the Toosey family who suddenly acquired too many cats. Very fine pictures by Kurt Wiese. | Quite funny |
| MIKE MULLIGAN AND HIS STEAM SHOVEL <i>Virginia Lee Burton</i> (Houghton Mifflin: \$1.50) | 6-10 Boys | Mike Mulligan and his steam shovel, the faithful Mary Anne. Electric shovels and Diesel motors did Mary Anne out of a job until Mike found an unusual one. For the mechanically-minded child. | Modern and imaginative |
| THE LONELY DWARF <i>Rosemary Lamkey</i> (Holt: \$1.) | 7-10 Both | Grutchty, a lonely dwarf, and how his sad life is transformed. Grutchty cheers up. Pictures and story are by a talented fifteen-year-old who will bear watching. | Beautiful pictures |
| FARAWAY MEADOW <i>Thomas Handforth</i> (Doubleday: \$2.) | 8-15 Both | Ponies versus buffaloes in a high cool kingdom where there "lies a green meadow, smooth as a parlor rug." The heroine is a pony named Lalla who wears a blue bow in her hair. For the child that likes a fantastic form of humor. | Imaginative pictures and text |
| ST. GEORGE AND THE WITCHES <i>J. W. Dunne</i> (Holt: \$2.) | 8-15 Both | Spirited tale of how St. George, after he had slain its dragon and married the Princess, over came a plague of witches who invaded their realm. Lloyd Coe's illustrations delightful. | Outstanding |
| CHILDREN'S SCIENCE SERIES: <i>John F. Hausmann, Jr.</i> (Federal Writers' Project) (Whitman: 50¢ each) | 9-12 Both | Series includes three volumes: "The Ladder of Clouds" (meteorology); "The Book of Stones;" "Snow, Glaciers, and Icebergs." Concise, interesting, inexpensive, and attractive. | Recommended |
| LITTLE LULU AND HER PALS <i>Marge</i> (McKay: 50 cents) | Children who like comics | Cartoons about the pranks of an <i>enfant terrible</i> , little Lulu. Children tear the pages of the <i>Saturday Evening Post</i> where this series appears. Good if you don't mind putting ideas in their heads. | Funny |
| WACKY, THE SMALL BOY <i>Fred Schwed, Jr.</i> (Simon & Schuster: \$2.50) | Children and Adults | Stories about a bad little boy. Wacky is ingenious, human, and mischievous. True to life; amuses children and grown-ups. | Extremely funny |
| WINDJAMMER BOY <i>Roland Barker</i> (Winters: \$2.) | Older Boys | Around the Horn in a grain ship. The story of an exciting voyage. | Authentic sea stuff |
| DIVE BOMBER <i>Ensign Robt. A. Winston, USN.</i> (Holliday House: \$2.) | Older Boys | Exciting and informative story of the actual training and routine activities of a naval aviator. | Excellent narrative |
| WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE? <i>George H. Waltz, Jr.</i> (Holt: \$2.) | Boys 12-18 | Choosing a career. An explanation in simple terms of various careers open to boys and what each has to offer. | Well-arranged, informative |
| SARANGA THE PYGMY <i>Attilio Gatti</i> (Scribner's: \$2.) | Older Children Both | The life and hunting adventures of a jungle boy among the great and small beasts of Equatorial Africa. | Good but a trifle stodgy |
| LOST LAGOON <i>Armstrong Sperry</i> (Doubleday: \$2.) | High school boys | Rousing adventures in the South Seas, including sharks, a typhoon and a few corpses. | Blood and thunder |