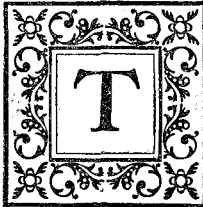


“England” and My Critics

BY THE VERY REV. W. R. INGE

Dean of St. Paul's; Author of “The Victorian Age,” “England,” etc.



THE present writer has no cause to complain of the newspaper press, which has inflicted upon him a notoriety undesired indeed, but very convenient in hard times such as these. But editors and reviewers can be exceedingly annoying. About twelve years ago some foolish young man on the staff of one of Lord Northcliffe's papers made the strange discovery that I am a pessimist, and tied a tin kettle to my tail which still seems to give peculiar satisfaction in the United States, though in England it is seldom quoted any longer except as an example of a very inappropriate nickname. When I write a book, your average reviewer skims it as rapidly as possible, and marks for quotation any sentences which seem to confirm the pre-established character of the writer which he or his sub-editor has chosen to adorn the headlines. In reviewing a book like “England,” which is intended partly to indicate rocks ahead, of which there are plenty, this method was easy. But any one who takes the trouble to read the book will get a very different impression. It was not written either to run down my own country or to irritate good Americans. “Dean predicts the ruin of England” is not a true summary of my work.

I am in fact an almost fanatical patriot, and I should not have grumbled if American critics had found fault with me, as some of them have done, only on that ground. I certainly think that England has received much less than justice from her neighbors, America included. But my object in writing was to convince my countrymen that we are likely to have a rough time in the near future, and that we must be prepared to meet it with an united front. There are certain things which in my opinion need to be said, and

which those who spread their sails to catch the popular breeze are careful not to say. There are tendencies and movements in England which may wreck us if we do not take care. So from my humble position as one of the “inferior clergy” (so the Bidding Prayer at our universities calls us, to distinguish us from the bishops) I have repeated King George V's exhortation, “Wake up, England!” *Ubi nil timetur, quod timeatur nascitur*, or, in the language of the Bible, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

No one who has lived through the Great War has any right to speak of decadence in connection with England. We had never aspired to be a military nation, when at a moment's notice an amateur wofully out of training was called upon to stand up to Jack Dempsey. The German army in the first two years of the war, when it was confident in its own invincibility, was the most tremendous fighting machine ever known. It was formidable enough even in 1918, after disillusionment had set in, but from 1914 to 1916 it was almost irresistible. And we did stand up to it, as the Germans themselves are willing to admit. A friend of mine who applied to the German War Office for leave to visit prisoners, was courteously received by a Prussian general. “You know,” he said, “we Germans are amazed at what you have made of your army. We thought it impossible.” And General von Kluck, after the war, went up to an English colonel in a Swiss hotel, and said chivalrously: “I hope, sir, you will not object to shake hands with me. I have been wishing to tell an English officer of the immense admiration which we who fought against you in 1914 felt for your old army.” I believe the impartial verdict of history will be that as fighting men there was nothing to choose between the Germans, the French, and the English, that

these three were in a different class from the other European belligerents, and that never before in history have armies passed through such a terrible and protracted ordeal. Our little Cockneys were men of poor physique, but they fought with the courage of Bantam cocks, as bravely, I believe, as the big Highlanders, Canadians, and Australians.

Well, we emerged from the four years' struggle victorious indeed, but without much left of our accumulated wealth, and with the loss of a million killed, the flower of our youth. Then, as might perhaps have been expected, alarming cracks began to show themselves in the edifice which had been so severely shaken. There is something radically unhealthy in the Labor movement in Great Britain. To put it shortly, Labor regards itself as in conscious antagonism to the rest of the community, and is determined to become parasitic on the wealth and industry of the nation. There is no other country in which the pernicious system of doles, immunities, and pensions has been carried so far. Trade disputes have changed their character. They used to be directed against the employers, and had as their object the attainment of better conditions in some particular trade. The modern strike is an act of civil war, planned long beforehand, and directed not against the employers but against the community, which is to be held up and starved out by an organized blockade. The general strike last spring was unquestionably a deep-laid revolutionary conspiracy, hatched in the midst of a nation enjoying complete democratic institutions and universal suffrage. It failed, because the nation voluntarily organized itself to maintain the public services; but the ominous fact remains that the trade-unions as a whole, though they had no grievances of their own, broke their contracts and enrolled themselves under the red flag. We are in fact in a state of chronic civil war, in which society is standing purely on the defensive against those who wish to wreck it.

It is not unpatriotic to point out that this way lies ruin, probably the overthrow of popular government in favor of some form of military dictatorship, and certainly the loss of our foreign trade, on

which millions in our island depend for their existence. There may be some nations which can afford to indulge in monkey tricks with their institutions, but England is the very last country that can play the fool in this way. Our circumstances make us very vulnerable. For us, the class war is national suicide.

I have attributed these dangerous symptoms partly to disappointment at the failure of exaggerated hopes. All through the last century England was in a privileged position. It was assumed that as a matter of course wages with us were higher, and the hours of work shorter, than on the Continent of Europe. This privileged position was in fact gained at a time when the workers had a great deal to complain of; but it continued for many years after the iniquities of the early industrial era had been redressed. We had a long start, and it took time for other nations to catch us up. But it could not last forever. At the beginning of the present century it was already plain that the ratio of wages to output must be approximately the same all over Europe, which meant that the British working man must be as efficient as the German. But the British trade-unionist has been very slow to accept these new conditions. Not only does he demand higher wages and shorter hours than his continental rival, but in many trades there is deliberate restriction of output. This custom prevails especially in those trades where there is no direct foreign competition, for instance in all branches of the building trade, and in the mines. The miners are now on strike against any increase in a very short working week; for their hours are seven hours a day, and in many parts Monday is regularly a holiday in the pits. These dangers have been pointed out by many others, and they are well known in America, where there seems to be comparatively little slack work, and nothing like so much bitterness and hostility on the part of the working men toward their employers.

The plan of the series to which my book belongs demanded that I should make some attempt to forecast the future of the British Isles as a Great Power. The expansion of Europe has been the salient feature of world-history during the last

century and a half. The White races had, in the year 1900, established a decisive supremacy all over the globe; many believed that the time was not far distant when the few remaining independent colored nations would fall under the sway of one or other of the competing White peoples of European descent. By great good fortune, aided by the sterling qualities of her people, Great Britain obtained the lion's share of these conquests. The world viewed with astonishment the spectacle of a comparatively small island whose flag waved over one-quarter of the surface of the habitable globe, and over one-quarter of its inhabitants. The question which I was obliged to ask was whether this almost miraculous state of things is likely to continue indefinitely. The fate of other empires, at one time almost as imposing as the British, had to be considered. Holland and Spain were not large enough to remain the nuclei of world-empires; and Spain is larger than the British Isles. Then it was necessary to observe that in the present century at least one non-European people—Japan—has been able to repel the aggression of a great European military Power, and has taken a place as a Power of the first class. No one now supposes that Eastern Asia will ever be a dependency of any White nation. Our anxiety is not how to subjugate the so-called Yellow races, but how to prevent them from ousting the Whites from White territory by economic competition. These facts seem to indicate that the expansion of the Whites, and not least of the Anglo-Saxons, has almost reached its term.

On the other hand, there seems at present to be no reason why the British Empire should not hold together as a loose federation, a League of Nations in being. Our race has a political genius which has been denied to the Spanish. To the political philosopher, the Constitutions of the United States and the British Empire are by far the most interesting experiments in nation-building since the Roman Empire, and the difficulties caused by the great distance of some of the Dominions grow less every year. On the whole, the tendencies which make for continued union and closer relations seem at present to be stronger than the fissiparous tendencies. It would be rash, I think, to speak with

more confidence than this. But the supremacy of the English language and institutions seems to be secure for a long time to come, in spite of the diminishing fecundity of the Anglo-Saxons both in the British Empire and in the United States. If England one day ceases to be the political centre of a World Power, it will remain, perhaps even more than it is now, the spiritual home and ancestral hearth of a large section of the human race.

I have spoken very freely in my book about our relations with the United States. There is no warmer advocate of Anglo-American friendship than I am. But there are pleasing illusions about America in my country, which I thought it necessary to dissipate, for they may lead to mistaken political action. Foreigners will never understand the English character unless they realize that though we are not at all emotional, we are the most sentimental people in Europe. The French, on the contrary, are very emotional, and inwardly as hard as nails. We are so sentimental as to be very reluctant to admit that our separation from our former colonies is final and complete. In *Whitaker's Almanack*, the leading gazetteer of Great Britain, the world is divided into three parts—the British Empire, the United States, and Foreign Countries. America is not one of the Foreign Countries. A few years ago an American gentleman wished to take a house in London. He found what he wanted, but saw a difficulty. "I see there is a clause in the lease which forbids the leaseholder to sublet to a foreigner." The house-agent smiled. "That does not apply to you, sir," he said. From the English point of view, nothing could be more natural. But if my countrymen fancy that the same feeling exists on the other side of the Atlantic, they are very much mistaken. We in England would consider war with the United States a shocking kind of civil war; I do not think that the Americans would feel anything of the kind. To us, an alliance with America would be the natural consequence of unity of origin, of language, of religion, of institutions, and of sympathies. The two nations stand together for popular government, for religious toleration, and for a conviction that international relations can be and ought to be

moralized. Many Englishmen can be heard to say, "Why should we not cut ourselves loose from entangling alliances on the Continent of Europe, and form closer ties with our natural friends and kinsfolk, the Americans?" Unfortunately, this policy, attractive as it is to us, is impossible. We could not rely on American help if a coalition in Europe were formed to destroy us. This is the fact, and we ought not to deceive ourselves.

I have been rather pleased to receive indignant letters from Americans, reproaching me for doubting the friendship and good-will of America for England. But will any well-informed American deny that these friendly voices are in a small minority? The British visitor to America usually sees only the Atlantic States, where he is made to feel very much at home. He is received with charming hospitality, and so far forgets that he is in a foreign land that he is not always sufficiently careful not to offend American susceptibilities. But if he travels further west, he finds himself, I am told, in a very different atmosphere, and is fortunate if he does not hear comments upon the "Britishers" which make his blood boil. He finds everywhere a strange isolation from European interests, tempered only by an active dislike of one European nation—his own. So at least I have been told by several travellers.

But even if this is untrue, or overstated, things happen sometimes which cannot be explained away. One such incident sank deep into the minds of Englishmen. It is recorded in the reminiscences of Ambassador Page. During the war, before America came in, our government thought it vitally important to stop the shipping of supplies for Germany from the United States. A vessel called (if I remember rightly) the *Dacia*, set out from an American port laden with contraband. The sailing of this ship was intended to be a test case. Would the British dare to stop it or not? The American Government let Sir Edward Grey know very plainly that they would regard the seizure of the *Dacia* as an unfriendly act, a phrase of sinister meaning in diplomacy. What was to be done? Were we to risk a quarrel with America, or were we to allow our blockade to be reduced to a nullity? Mr. Page

found the way out. Why, he suggested, should not the *Dacia* be seized by a French cruiser? Sir Edward Grey took the hint. The vessel was stopped, taken to a French port, and her cargo confiscated. Not a dog in Washington barked! I think it is not strange that this incident made a deep impression on the minds of English people, and gave food for very unpleasant reflections.

The causes of this ill-feeling are often discussed here. Three in particular are mentioned. First, the steady malignity of the Irish-Americans, who are not only very numerous, but are, we are told, more influential in American politics even than their numbers justify. The Irish vote, it is said, is angled for by both political parties, and any courtesy or good feeling shown to England would probably lose it. Next, the hostility of the Hearst newspapers, which are believed to have an enormous sale in the Middle West. Lastly, it is said that the school-books on which young America is educated always represent England as the villain of the piece. I am told that the newer educational books are less unfair, and it is probably a mistake to attach much importance to this cause of unfriendliness.

Some will add that the two nations do not like each other's manners. The Englishman is apt to be stiff if a stranger addresses him in a familiar tone; that is not our way. But I think we are punished for the sins of our grandparents. I should not like an American to see the cartoons in *Punch* between 1861 and 1865. In the Palmerstonian era we were certainly arrogant; I do not think we are so now. I will venture to add that the Americans would not be so ready to suspect us of airs of superiority if they were not themselves a very modest people at bottom. They do their best to hide it, but sooner or later one finds them out. I was once walking with a charming young American professor, soon, alas, to be removed by an early death. We were strolling through the street of Chipping Campden, a village of noted beauty in the Cotswold country. The vicar passed us, and said courteously: "I see you gentlemen are Americans. May I have the pleasure of showing you my church, which is one of the finest in the country?" My friend was really

troubled; he honestly thought that I should not like being mistaken for an American! A little incident like that throws a great deal of light on the mentality of the two countries. An Englishman no more wishes to change his nationality than he wishes to change his wife, and he is ready to uphold his country against all comers; but he expects a Frenchman or German or American to do the same, and likes him less if he does not.

I have never asked an intelligent American, who knows England, what he really thinks about my country. It is a question which we never ask. When things are going well, perhaps we do not care much; when they are going ill with us, as they are now, we do not want to hear our troubles discussed by a possibly unsympathetic stranger. I quoted in my book the judgments of Page and Santayana, which gave us great pleasure. These two writers saw us during the war, and their generous appreciation of the way in which we acquitted ourselves through our great ordeal was, I think, well deserved. But at present the Labor question dwarfs all others; and I must repeat my conviction that until the people of England realize that henceforth they must compete with other nations on equal terms—or even on somewhat unfavorable terms, since the load of debt is heavier with us than elsewhere—we shall not recover our prosperity, but must acquiesce in going slowly down-hill. I believe American opinion would support this view. The average output of an American workman seems to be far greater than the maximum which our trade-unions permit.

The possible exhaustion of the world's supply of food and of minerals is a very difficult question, and I believe that my anticipation of a coming failure of our coal-fields, based on the calculations of Jevons in about 1865, was partly erroneous. New coal-fields have been discovered, and improved methods of getting coal. It is possible that East Kent will before long become a productive colliery district. There is wheat in Argentina and elsewhere for at least another generation—if we can afford to pay for it. Some think that the wheat-belt in Canada might be extended further north; but

wheat-growing is a risky industry where there is a danger of summer frosts. I have heard dazzling predictions of the future wealth of Australia; but will it ever be gathered by men of our race? The provincial capitals, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, and Perth are growing rapidly; but the country parts remain undeveloped for want of labor. In New Zealand the population is better distributed.

On the whole, I stick to my prediction that except in North and South America, and to a less extent in Australasia, the era of White expansion has nearly come to an end; and this means that the position of Europe will alter relatively, though not necessarily absolutely, for the worse. The United States will be by far the richest and most powerful country in the world. This prediction should not cause any great discouragement to an Englishman, for it means the increased ascendancy of our language and institutions. Bismarck, asked what he considered the most important fact in modern history, said, "The fact that English is the language of North America." He saw that here was a fact, big with destiny, which reduced his new German Empire, built by blood and iron, to insignificance. It meant the ultimate triumph of Anglo-Saxondom.

It is irritating that one cannot defend a well-considered judgment about future history without being charged with pessimism. If my arguments are bad, let me know where the fallacies are to be found. I have never attempted to prophesy without giving my reasons. The Socialists are annoyed, as I expected them to be; but Dame Nature will not alter her laws to please the Socialists. If there ever was a fruit which was rotten before it was ripe, that fruit is Socialism. State ownership of the means of production has almost always proved wasteful and inefficient. Individual acquisitiveness is not by any means the only incentive to industry, but it is a very important incentive, and when it is withdrawn, slackness invariably appears. Equally mischievous is the system of doles, pensions, and "free" State aid, which has assumed monstrous proportions in England. Man will always become parasitic if he is given the chance.

To return to the question of Anglo-

American relations. An alliance is hardly to be thought of, since America needs no allies, and cannot commit herself to go to war in Europe. But if the League of Nations ever becomes a real arbiter in international affairs, America may exercise a decisive influence in preserving peace, which now as always is "the first of British interests." It will also tend to draw into its orbit (I do not mean by annexation) all the other English-speaking countries. Australasia, if threatened with penetration by the Asiatic races, will look for sympathy to the United States. So the world-importance of the Union will steadily grow, especially as South America, which has almost boundless possibilities, will be very much under the control of the great Republic. I see no reason why the relations of this mighty power to England and the British Empire should be anything but friendly. The notion that the American nation is only a hundred and fifty years old will be discarded, and a reasonable pride will be taken in its earlier

history, before the disruption. England will probably be the chief cultural centre of the English-speaking nations, and young men and women will increasingly come to England to finish their education, as young men from all the Mediterranean countries flocked to the university of Athens.

Let who will call this pessimism. When I look at a map of the world, and see how small a spot is the little island off the northwest coast of Europe, which itself is only a peninsula of the great Asiatic mass, and then consider in what large letters my countrymen have written their name on the earth's surface, I am much more inclined to be vainglorious than despondent. Our great daughter nation will surpass us as much as Carthage surpassed Tyre; but bigness is not everything. Attica was no bigger than a small English county; Palestine was about the size of Wales; and the England of Shakespeare might have housed all its inhabitants in half of modern London.

In Montana

BY LILLIAN T. LEONARD

A Woman Homesteader

I WALKED with quick steps up the coulee trail;
 I had to hurry lest the creeping dark
 Would catch me and my nervous hands would fail
 To find the wire gate that closed the park
 Against stray cattle. Here my cabin stood,
 In a small wilderness of quaking asp;
 Here I "homesteaded." No one thought I could
 Two years ago, but now I calmly pass
 A bristling porcupine, a rattlesnake,
 The watching eyes of some wild, hidden thing—
 A coyote sneaking near the dried-up lake,
 A row of stunted pines where finches sing,
 The mule-eared deer that often come to sup,
 And nuzzle one another at my spring,
 (Which, after cleaning, is but just a cup).
 And yet, to-night, how glad I was to bring
 My hands in contact with the wire bight
 That held my gate. I thought, "Real homesteading!"