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SIXPENCE

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BACK TO THEIR VOMIT

When the election came it woefully cheapened Britain. . . . Moreover, in the wider sphere of Europe the blatancies of electioneering had robbed Britain in an appreciable degree of her dignity. The national bearing, faultless in the years of trial—loyal, cool, temperate, humane amidst terrors and reverses—had experienced quite a vulgar upset.

These words are taken from the eloquent description of the 1918 election in Mr. Churchill's *Aftermath*. They need no revision as a description of the 1945 election, in which Churchill himself plays the part of Mr. Lloyd George. Of the Prime Minister in 1918 Mr. Churchill added:

He ought to have been more sure of himself at this time, and of the greatness of his work and situation. He could well have afforded, as it turned out, to speak words of sober restraint and of magnanimous calm.

Strangely enough, the evil genius who has led Mr. Churchill to cheapen himself in 1945, was also behind Mr. Lloyd George in 1918. 'An eminent contemporary observer wrote of Lord Beaverbrook:

If a newspaper proprietor, who has made his wealth by skill in manipulating men, gets personal access to such a statesman, he can surround him with a refreshing and exhilarating atmosphere of quick understanding and cynical amusement, and with the subtle flattery of the newspapers which the statesman reads. A few weeks of this process may divert to world destruction national energies which might have been used for world co-operation. . . . Because of what he (Mr. Lloyd George) then said and did children a century hence in every European country who might have lived in health will be crippled or killed by diseases . . . nations who might have been friends will hate and fear each other.

Will the same be written of Mr. Churchill a few years hence? As in 1918, 1924 and 1931, the Conservative Party avoids fighting on a programme; it diverts the public mind from the real issues of national and world reconstruction; it tries to turn the election into a plebescite behind one Great Man—who is a great man, but who would be helpless if the Tories won the election. Once again the stale dodge of a

"coupon" has been revived; Mr. Churchill is asking for support for any candidate who pledges his loyalty to the Prime Minister. Once again "National" is substituted for Conservative because Conservatism is associated with an era of poverty and unemployment ending in war. The Tory Press proposes to abolish the controls, which, as responsible leaders of every party know, are our only safeguard against mass unemployment and an orgy of inflation. Mr. Churchill lends himself to the cry that a Labour Government would establish a "Gestapo," and that the people's savings are endangered by socialism, when no one knows better than he that the surest road to a ruinous inflation would be the scramble for profits he lowers himself by advocating.

The Laski "Red Letter" is the latest and poorest scare. As Mr. Laski has at once issued a writ of libel we make no further comment. None of these stunts deserves a minute's attention from the electorate. They are chosen because of their supposed appeal to a large number of ignorant voters, who may be led by fear into voting as they did in 1918, 1924 and 1931. The harm done to this country by Lord Beaverbrook and Mr. Churchill's "Kitchen Cabinet" is already beyond computation. The constitutional position of Lord Beaverbrook is itself a matter which seems to need some clarification. Lord Baldwin, as Prime Minister, laid it down in the clearest terms that members of the Government must not be directors of business concerns while they hold Cabinet office, and this ruling has been endorsed by subsequent Prime Ministers. But the immediate concern of everyone who cares for the preservation of our democracy, and for the good name of this country, should be to prevent a small and unscrupulous clique (who do not represent, we are glad to believe, the best elements of the Conservative Party) from stampeding the electorate into giving a blank cheque to those Tory forces which Mr. Churchill has himself accused of exercising "the tyranny of a well-fed party machine."

Fortunately most of the electorate know that the real issue is: who is to control the wealth of

this country after the war; whether it is to be used for public or private benefit; whether they are to have good homes and jobs, or, once again, no decent homes and the misery of unemployment.

King Leopold's Challenge

King Leopold has issued his challenge to the Belgian people by announcing that he proposes to return and resume his constitutional powers: in plain words, he will not abdicate. He may try to form a government, which could represent only the Catholic Right. It will be heavily defeated, if ever it faces the provisional Chamber and Senate. A dissolution would in normal circumstances follow, but could an election be held on the 1937 register, from which the younger generation, the mainspring of the Resistance movement, would be excluded? It is probable, if not certain, that a substantial majority of the electorate is against the King, for by 88 votes to 3 the Liberal Council has followed the Socialists and Communists in demanding his abdication. One awkward aspect of the division of opinion is that it breaks the national unity of Belgium, since Flemings on the whole support the King, while Walloons oppose him. The Left is not making a republican stand. The grounds for its opposition to Leopold are (1) that the King's tendency is authoritarian and his entourage semi-Fascist; (2) that he acted unconstitutionally by remaining in Belgium in 1940 against his Ministers' advice; and (3) that in various ways he showed a collaborationist attitude. Certainly by using his influence to end the alliance with France and resume a status of neutrality, the King's long-term policy favoured Nazi plans, since no joint defence could be concerted with the Allies. It is unlikely that the workers will take this challenge lying down. If and when the King returns, he may be greeted by a general strike. Mr. Van Acker has warned the miners that, if they strike, the Allies might cut off food supplies. There are unpleasant rumours in Brussels that a few days ago the King's mother brought back from London

This is a brilliant anthology. The Ministry of Information and the Colonial Office might well learn from it that honest discussion provides much more stimulation and conviction than "projecting the Empire" by recounting all the good of imperialism—and there is much, and omitting all the evil—and there is plenty of that, too. The admirable writing of most of the essays helps their effectiveness, naturally. My only quarrel with them is that they tend too much to abstraction, although, of course, if you are establishing principles you must write about principles, and doctrine is needed in working out a specifically Socialist colonial policy. This emerges not from the general acceptance of the aims of political and social progress, which is now common ground in British parties, but from emphasis on certain points. Thus to all these authors what matters in the colonies is the colonial peoples. The strategic importance of colonies, their economic value to the industrial countries, the relations between the ruling nations, are held as secondary in importance, while the vested interests which exploit colonial resources are Apollony straddling right across the way. A. Creech Jones, who contributes a chapter on the welfare policy with whose inception he has had much to do, puts his finger on the spot in the introduction:

Genuine progress of the colonial peoples is achieved by policies which must include the elements of socialist economic principles.

Those principles, as Brailsford says, involve a revolution in the position of the primary producer, the peasant; otherwise, the colonial peoples, overwhelmingly country folk, will remain wretchedly poor and helpless; and also the socialisation of colonial resources such as minerals. Here is where, in conflict with the great commercial companies, Socialists "will have joined battle with the real enemy." Horrabin's geo-political cartoon, drawn with Disney verve, shows the whole force of modern transport and industrial development shifting power from the empires to the colonial peoples.

Leonard Woolf's essay on the political advance of backward peoples has the disarming lucidity of a Bach prelude, and also its inner toughness of articulation. He is, in fact, a democrat without compromise:

Freedom is an essential part of civilisation. A free man is better than a slave, and a community of free men is better than a community of slaves or subjects. This fact is not altered by the colour of men's skins, hair, or eyes. Freedom is no less desirable in Africa than it is in Britain, and the lack or destruction of it is as ugly in Kenya as it is in Berlin. Without political freedom a community of free men is impossible, and so far, in its four thousand years of history, the human race has found no road to freedom except by some form of democratic government.

It follows that the ultimate aim of our colonial government should be democratic self-government of Africa and Africans by Africans.

Of the racial inferiority which alone could invalidate this conclusion, Woolf believes there is absolutely no evidence. He demands, therefore, universal education, both elementary and advanced, local self-government in villages and tribes based on popular consent, and African membership of the central legislative and administrative councils. His urgent desire that Africans should be educated as men of the modern world makes him suspicious of anthropology applied to government, of education in the vernacular, and of indirect rule, all of which he thinks may be used to stereotype colonial peoples in provincial servitude. Commentaries on this view are supplied by Margaret Wrong's plea for education and Dr. Ward's interesting study on African languages. More cogent still is Fortes. He represents the modern anthropologists, who are entirely free from any illusions about the possibility of retaining the cultures of colonial nations intact, but who are concerned by the ruinous disintegration caused by the loss of the tribal ethics when nothing but the value of money as a means to living is offered by European rulers instead.

Equality in a state of common material poverty, dirt and danger from disease, where it goes with

equality of rights, of duties and deeply held common cultural values, is not a disorganising force in society. On the other hand, a high average standard of living and health, where it is associated with wide discrepancies of wealth, political power, and social privileges, in a society lacking vital common purposes and values, may have results only too lamentably familiar from our own history.

It behoves all Socialists to think hard how we can help the colonial peoples to travel to liberty, prosperity and scientific modernism without losing their souls, as we have so nearly lost ours, upon that road. For plain statements, especially valuable to readers for whom this may be their first introduction to the subject—and a large number of the Labour Party still think they can get off responsibility by indulging easy platitudes about the wickedness of Empire—there could not be better essays than Greenidge on land hunger, and Dr. Hinden on African poverty, both, in my opinion, models. Furnivall provides a detailed illustration with pessimistic wit. An official career passed in observation of the success of British companies and Indian rack-renters in wrecking communal land-tenure and creating wage-slavery in Burma must have been pretty embittering, but the author thinks too easily that all the motives of all people interested in colonies are self-interested. He reminds me of Effie Deans bursting out to Jeanie:

"It's whistles the fault of very good folk like you, Jeanie, that they think a' the rest of the world are as bad as the worst temptations can make them."

For all his gloom, Furnivall has more radical and, to my mind, better-conceived plans for international supervision than the anonymous author of the essay on colonies and world order. This writer wants the whole of social supervision set under the I.L.O. Certainly, the I.L.O. is the right body to plan improvement of labour conditions and to welcome the newly organised colonial trade unions. As certainly both its machinery and its delegates are unfitted for general colonial supervision, which needs a central body of colonial experts and regional representative organs.

All these essayists emphasise that the colonial peoples will in the end shape their own destiny. But as subject races, their fate is to some degree in our hands now. There is an immense popular interest in the subject, which has been growing for a generation; and the Fabian Bureau's book, which rightly aims at quickening Labour colonial policy, will serve that more generalised opinion as well.

FREDA WHITE

NEW NOVELS

Brideshead Revisited. By EVELYN WAUGH.

Chapman and Hall. 10s. 6d.

Household in Athens. By GLENWAY WESCOTT.

Hamish Hamilton. 8s. 6d.

I Will be Good. By HESTER W. CHAPMAN.

Secker and Warburg. 10s. 6d.

Serious implications have been present often enough in Mr. Evelyn Waugh's previous novels. The title of *A Handful of Dust* was significant; and certain excruciating moments in that book, as when the mother hears of her little boy's death, were threatening signs of a novelist whose powers were not easily to be ignored. Those powers find full expression in *Brideshead Revisited*, a novel flagrantly defective at times in artistic sensibility, yet deeply moving in its theme and its design. It is as well to describe Mr. Waugh's faults at once; they recur constantly, both while one is reading him and while one is remembering him. They radiate almost wholly from an overpowering snobbishness: "How beautiful they are, the lordly ones," might well stand as an epigraph to Mr. Waugh's *œuvre* so far. A burden of respect for the peerage and for Eton, which those who belong to the former, or who have been to the latter, seem able lightly to discard, weighs heavily upon him; and his satiric studies of the follies and cruelties of the posh have always been remarkable for the fact that their poshness has always seemed to the author more lovable than their silliness has seemed outrageous. It is a kind of snobbishness which

finds one outlet in a special vulgarity of its own. There are several scenes in *Brideshead Revisited* where the narrator sets his own *savoir faire* against that of the lower characters—the scene in the Parisian restaurant with the colonial go-getter Rex; for example, or the pages satirising the transatlantic liner—and emerges as no less vulgar than his victims. It is as if a man should repeatedly point out to one that his bottom waistcoat-button is undone. This vulgarity goes very deep with Mr. Waugh; and it is not surprising that in embarking on his most serious novel he should show an addiction to the purple.

The subjects of *Brideshead Revisited* are the inescapable watchfulness of God, and the contrast between the Christian (for Mr. Waugh, the Roman Catholic) sinner, and the other kind of sinner described in the cant term of our day as "pagan." Boldly, Mr. Waugh writes throughout from the point of view of the pagan, which he, a convert to Roman Catholicism, has not forgotten; even more boldly he puts some of the most devout of his Roman Catholics among his least attractive characters. The book opens with a tale of romantic friendship at Oxford in the years following the first great war. Charles Ryder, the narrator, falls in love with Lord Sebastian Flyte, the beautiful son of Lord Marchmain; Marchmain himself, once a Catholic convert, is now an apostate; Sebastian is half-pagan. The Oxford passage, comic and romantic, is the most brilliant part of the book; nothing in the later part approaches it, save the last few pages of the story proper. The farce is of a high order; the picture of the narrator's father is a masterpiece of comedy; and the seeds of the later conflict are dextrously sown.

Sebastian is tormented by his mother, whom he cannot bear to be with. The mother is a mysterious and ambiguous figure, but not dissatisfying to the reader on that account. Sebastian's father has cut himself off from her and lives in Venice with a mistress. Like Sebastian, he flees from her, and it is perhaps not an over-interpretation to see here a suggestion that she represents some of the absolute exaction, difficult to face, of the Church. Symbolic or not, she is, in the story itself, patient, wonderful, cunning and unbearable; Sebastian cannot keep Ryder to himself and away from the family; and gradually he secedes from the relationship into drunkenness and vagabondage. Ten years later, Charles again meets Sebastian's sister, Julia, unhappily married to the barbarian Rex. The family charm works again, Charles falls in love with her, and is, in a curious phrase, "made free of her narrow loins" during a gale in mid-Atlantic. For two years their love survives happily; they are both about to be divorced in order to marry each other, when Julia feels "a twitch upon the thread"; she is reminded that she is living in a state of unchanging mortal sin, and cannot escape that consciousness; in the final pages, Charles is dismissed; we have already learned that Sebastian, far away in Morocco, has also felt the twitch upon the thread. The second part of the book falls far below the first; not only because for many pages we live in the dimensions of a gaudy novelette, enlivened, if at all, by the author's testiness at other people's bad taste, but because Julia is only a theme and not a person, whereas Sebastian has been both. Julia is alive only in her final speeches; and then simply because what she says is alive.

Underneath all the disfigurements, and never for long out of sight, there is in *Brideshead Revisited* a fine and brilliant book; its plan and a good deal of its execution are masterly, and it haunts one for days after one has read it. If one is reminded of François Mauriac it is not because Mr. Waugh's book is derivative, but for two other reasons. One remembers how much M. Mauriac can take for granted in his audience: Christian or agnostic, it knows what Catholicism is about. Mr. Waugh is in the far more difficult position of writing to an audience which in general is without that knowledge; he acquits himself convincingly, even to the pagan reader. Secondly, M. Mauriac reminds one of a lack in Mr. Waugh,

for the great French novelist has sympathy with, and love for, the actual emotions of human beings. This sympathy and love are things no novelist can get along without; they are things which Mr. Waugh is still in the process of acquiring or reacquiring. A hard task; for they do not always survive religious conversion.

Household in Athens, Mr. Glenway Wescott's new book, is unusual among war-novels. Shock-tactics of technique, hysteria, over-loaded local colour, eager, unscrupulous cashing-in on the disasters of others: these are absent. It is not merely the intelligence and the watchful eye that have been engaged here. The heart is a dangerous necessity to the novelist; but it is, after all, his usual starting-point, however far away he gets from it. It is the first way of access which the author has to his characters. Mr. Wescott feels as deeply about his Greek family under the German occupation as the peace-time novelist feels about the creatures who build themselves up in his imagination and demand release. His four Greeks are thoroughly envisaged, the complexity of their plight, the slow, day-to-day horror, the mental dissolution and metamorphosis, the fantastic tricks played upon the mind by physical decay, are described with a realism of great calmness and strength. There is no local colour—a great relief. The Acropolis rises before us for a moment, but not for that purpose. There are no atrocities. It is a novel which explores its territory with great sincerity; it is a deliberately restricted territory, but there are moments when Mrs. Helianos's struggle with despair reaches out beyond the historical situation which provokes it. It is a profoundly moving book.

I Will be Good promises at first sight, and in its opening pages, to be a well-written, leisurely, escapist, comic novel; but into it one fails to escape. Nor is one meant to, though it might be possible to read the book as a romantic historical novel of immoral high-life in France in the eighteen-sixties, differing from others only by an unusual twist of fantasy. In point of fact, it has an almost Jamesian "idea" provoking it: a successful English lady novelist comes to live with a French family whom she well-meaningly, but insidiously and disastrously, persuades to behave like characters in one of her own romances. It is part of the great cleverness of the book that one is made to conjecture for oneself—and accurately, one believes—how the characters would have behaved if left to their real life. One knows, every time a wrong turning is taken,

what the right alternative would have been. Between the amusing opening chapters and the beginning of the mischief there is an hiatus where one is out of step with the author's intention; as soon as this intention is clear the book is completely entertaining.

HENRY REED

POLEMIC AGAINST PLANNING

Science and the Planned State. By JOHN R. BAKER. *Allen and Unwin. 7s. 6d.*

If I were planning science—neither Dr. Baker nor I wish for this improbable situation—one of the first tasks I should give to a "research team" would be this: What are the psychological mechanisms which cause so many people to choose some problem of the day and regard it as a Zoroastrian struggle between Light and Darkness? The fashionable type of problem for such treatment changes with the lapse of time, running round the circle of religion, sex, politics and back again. Why and how did the social and psychological frustrations of people in 17th century England lead them to become passionate partisans of some particular metaphorical statement about the admittedly inexpressible nature of Godhead, although from this distance in time one would say that their main historical task was bringing about an economic and political revolution? Will the future historian find our frenzied dualism about politics equally odd?

Perhaps not; political questions certainly appear pretty important at this juncture. Which makes any attempt to deal with them in simple black-and-white terms still more unfortunate. Dr. Baker is a bad case of Zoroastrianism. It is as though somebody, driving home some argument about planning, had caught him a sound blow on the thumb with a sledge hammer. To say that he has developed an allergy to planning, and particularly to the Soviet Union, is to use a mild metaphor. His present pamphlet is a polemic against those who think that Soviet science leads the world in achievement, and who urge that all scientists should be set rigidly to work on officially allocated tasks. It is not, of course, very easy to find anyone who supports either of these theses; but Dr. Baker is so convinced of the reality of the dangers against which he is crusading that he can spot them in the woolly ambiguities of a British Association resolution. His quotations from other scientists are selective in a way which may be somewhat deceptive to his intended audience, which apparently includes readers who do not know the meaning of the word "semen."

For instance, Bernal's views on the values and ideals of science are summarised thus: "Prof. J. D. Bernal, for instance, sneered at science outside the Soviet Union as an 'elegant pastime.' Elsewhere he writes of science (apart from its applications) as a 'game.'" Oddly enough, the only quotation from J. B. S. Haldane, the most copiously self-confessed materialist of present-day scientists, is a passage which is brought forward to qualify him for Dr. Baker's anti-materialist team.

The low level of debate at which this book is written is all the more disappointing because there is a real need, as Dr. Baker has recognised, for a study of the kind and quantity of freedom which scientists require for their work. It is true, as he says, that most recent discussions have emphasised the importance of planning and direction—which are also needed, and in my opinion, more pressingly at present. But the other side of the case also requires thinking out and stating. The only sensible object to aim at is to increase both planning and freedom at the same time. Mutual accusations of intellectual treason are not a promising line of advance towards this.

C. H. WADDINGTON

PRIVATE AMBASSADOR

A Cockney on Main Street. By HERBERT HODGE. *Michael Joseph. 10s. 6d.*

Readers of *Cab, Sir and It's Draughty in Front* will remember Mr. Hodge as a taxi-driver with an uncommon knack of presenting himself on paper. He could talk just enough about himself; he was curious about living, people, jobs, politics; a nice common-sense distinguished all that he wrote. He had, in fact, many of those plain qualities that attach sometimes to a plain name—to Johnson, Butler, Smith—and whether it was the pleasure of discovering that at last a Hodge had arisen, or an increased respect for taxi-drivers in general, I was delighted both as a reader and as a Londoner by the success of Mr. Hodge's writing. He gave some very good wireless talks before the war; and later, being unfit for military service, he took to driving a bus. *A Cockney on Main Street* describes a nine-months' interruption of bus-driving, when the author made an exacting lecture-tour of the United States and Canada. Which was the harder work, constant lecturing or bus-driving, Mr. Hodge doesn't tell us; excitement, I think, kept him going where others would have dropped. Among all our indefatigable ambassadors of

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