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RECENT TIMES

A HISTORY OF BRITAIN AND ITS CONTINENTAL BACKGROUND
1868–1939

by

ROBERT M. RAYNER

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PREFACE

This book is a response to the call for a replanned version of *Nineteenth-Century England*, beginning the story somewhat later and bringing it down to 1939, and giving more space to the development of the social, economic and international conditions in which we find ourselves to-day. But the author found (somewhat regretfully) that widening knowledge and changes in outlook in the course of the past twenty years drove him on to produce the present book.

FOR

ROBERT, RICHARD
and MARIANA
Hoping that they and their generation
will manage things better

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I

EARLY VICTORIAN BRITAIN 1843–1854

We must first note the germination of British democracy and its earliest fruits in social reform; together with the early struggles of the working-class—hitherto scarcely articulate—to win a decent standard of living. We shall see the first breaches in 'Laissez-faire' and the birth of our present Empire Commonwealth.

THE START OF DEMOCRACY. The foundations of British Democracy had been well and truly laid. The revolution of 1688 had ensured the supremacy of Parliament, and in the next hundred years Parliament had worked out a way of exerting that supremacy through Cabinet Government, whereby ministers, picked as a team by a Prime Minister nominated by the Sovereign, can only hold office by the support of a majority in the House of Commons. But down to 1832 Parliament was dominated by the land-owning class. Two forces combined to break this oligarchy down. One was focused by the French Revolution; for its watchword 'Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood' gave a great impetus to the demand of British Whigs and Radicals for a democratic parliament. The other was the industrial revolution by which machine-production replaced handicraft; for the men who were creating the country's industrial wealth claimed a share in ruling it. The Tories held up the stream as long as they could, but at last the waters piling up against the dam swept it away. In 1830 a Whig ministry pledged to parliamentary reform gained office. Sheer weight of public feeling enabled it to force a Reform Bill through the Commons by a general election and through the Lords by the threat of creating new Whig Peers to outvote the opposition (1832).

But the Act did not go very far. It deprived very small boroughs of their members and gave these to large towns that had grown up with the industrial revolution; and it gave the vote to all householders who paid £10 or more in rent. But £10 was quite a high rent in those days, and the main effect was to

The most signal manifestation of this was the repeal of the Corn Laws. Hitherto taxation had consisted mainly of import and excise duties. During the French Wars Pitt had put on an Income Tax, but it fell almost entirely on the well-to-do, and Parliament had removed it directly the war was over. But the cost of government was always rising, and the national finances got into such a tangle that by the mid-thirties there were hundreds of import-duties regulated by scores of Acts. Most of these were unproductive, for they raised prices above what people could pay; and they choked foreign trade by hindering foreigners from sending their goods in exchange for ours. Once this had not mattered much, as the country was more or less self-sufficing; but that state of affairs was passing. Sir Robert Peel, when (having pulled the Tories together after their their defeat over Parliamentary Reform and reconstituted them as 'Conservatives') he became Prime Minister in 1841, began to set commerce free by removing duties and simplifying tariffs. He reckoned (correctly, as it turned out) that the lowering of prices would revive trade, increase spending-power, and so promote general prosperity and make the remaining taxes more productive. To give the process time to take effect he reimposed income tax (at 7d. in the £), promising to take it off again as soon as it had served its purpose.

At first he did not touch corn. Whig and Tory alike had it firmly fixed in their heads that farming was the backbone of the country; and landlords living on farm rents were still so strongly entrenched in Parliament that he hesitated to remove the duties which kept up the price of home-grown corn. But an Anti-Corn Law League was founded by Cobden and Bright to educate the public and put pressure on Parliament to cheapen the staple food of the poor. The effects of their agitation were seen in 1846, when with the potato harvest ruined by disease in Ireland and the corn harvest ruined by rain in Britain, the only way to avert famine was to let in a cheap supply of foreign corn. And the duties once removed could not be restored.[1]

[1] The Repeal split the Conservatives. Most of them, rebelling against Peel's betrayal of Protection, took as their leader Lord Derby (with the brilliant young Mr. Disraeli as his adjutant), while many of the ablest members of the Party (including the eloquent young Mr. Gladstone) stood by Peel, and eventually drifted into Liberalism.

This freeing of foreign trade was only one of the measures by which Parliament advanced the interests of business at this time. The *Limited Liability Acts* (1855 and 1862), restricting the amount a shareholder could lose in a registered company to the amount of capital he had put into it, encouraged people to invest their savings instead of hoarding them. Peel's *Bank Act* (1844) tended the same way. The Bank of England is the heart of British industry, for it acts as bank to smaller banks which give credit to enable firms to extend their operations. This Act solidified its position by regulating its issue of 'paper money' by the gold in its vaults, thus increasing public confidence.

The great railway boom of the 'thirties and 'forties was at once a cause and a consequence of industrial prosperity. The transport of goods was one of the main purposes of the railways, and the demand for rails and rolling-stock stimulated foundries, engineering works and coal-mining, especially when foreign countries began to establish railways and had to get the materials from Britain. For this country had a long start in these 'heavy' industries which require capital outlay possible only where savings are canalized by the habit of investment. Right down to the first World War a substantial part of the national income consisted of the interest (mainly in the form of commodities) from these foreign investments. British shipbuilding, too, was greatly stimulated by the adoption of steam for propulsion and of iron for hulls. By the middle of the century half the ocean-carrying of the world was done in British ships, and London was the hub of international finance—credit, insurance and stock-dealing.

And so passed the 'Hungry Forties'. For some at least of this prosperity filtered down to the working class; and, at any rate, they no longer had to keep up landlords' rents by giving a day's wages for a loaf of bread. But it was above all the heyday of the bourgeois. The new wealth poured into their pockets, most of it to be reinvested in ever-expanding enterprise. Britain became prosperous, complacent, optimistic, and proud of her parliamentary institutions as evidence of British good sense and integrity.

Self-Help for the Working Class. The age-old traditions

which had formerly held society together had been shattered by the industrial revolution, with its unrestricted competition; so the 'lower orders' had to look to their own endeavours (directed sometimes by enlightened but obscure Radicals) to win decent living conditions out of the wealth created by the new industries. By the middle of the century they were fighting their way up from privation and squalor; for British people do not make contented helots.

The only advantage which workers have over employers is numbers, and this advantage is useless unless focused by united action. But employers, realizing this, got Pitt to put through *Combination Acts* (1799–1800) which forbade workmen to agree among themselves as to what wages they would accept. For the next quarter of a century they could join trade societies only by stealth. But in the 'twenties, when humanitarian feeling was beginning to prevail, a little group of Radicals smuggled through Parliament a repeal of the Acts. Henceforth collective bargaining was permitted, provided there was no 'obstruction' or 'molestation' of strike-breakers. Trade Union law remained at this stage—a more enlightened stage, let us note, than anything abroad—for the next half-century.

Social reformers may seek their ends by direct (non-parliamentary), or by indirect (legislative) methods. Even after the Reform Act of 1832 Parliament continued to be dominated by the employing class; and the first phase of the workers' struggle naturally took the direct form. Its central figure was Robert Owen (1771–1858), who formed a 'Grand National Consolidated Trades Union' (1834), to knit all Unions into an organization able to force Capital to give way to Labour by means of a General Strike. But this was trying to make the movement run before it could walk. The whole thing collapsed, and many of the Unions were crushed out of existence by 'The Document' which employers made their workpeople sign, abjuring such organizations.

With this eclipse of Trade Unionism the workers reverted to parliamentary methods, with an attempt to remove the shortcomings of the Reform Act. Their demands, as set forth in 'The Peoples' Charter', were six in number: Manhood Suffrage—votes for all men irrespective of their station in life; Abolition of the Property Qualification which required M.P.s

to be landowners; Equal Electoral Districts, instead of some constituencies having only a few voters and others many thousands; Vote by Ballot, instead of making electors declare their votes in public, which exposed them to bribery and intimidation; Payment of Members, without which working men could not be represented in Parliament by men of their own class; and Annual Parliaments, so as to make Parliament responsive to public opinion. To us these proposals do not seem alarming; all but the last have long since been realized. But in the 'thirties and 'forties Whigs and Tories alike regarded the Reform Act as the last word in democracy. Parliament rejected the Chartists' petitions and suppressed their occasional threats of violence; and with the better times that followed the repeal of the Corn Laws the movement ebbed away.

Two forms of 'direct action' which have continued to develop right down to our own day were 'Friendly Societies' such as the Oddfellows and the Buffaloes—mutual insurance brotherhoods by which people provided for medical assistance and burial; and Co-operation, by which trade is carried on not by individuals seeking profit with prices fixed by competition, but by a society, with prices fixed by cost of production.

Britain's Second Empire. In the first half of Victoria's reign the British did not in the least feel an 'Imperial race', or wish to be one. The loss of the American colonies had been a sharp lesson. No one could have foreseen that within a hundred years another empire would have grown up, based on trusteeship for backward races *plus* 'dominion status'. This new empire was created not by governmental policy, but by the pioneering of individuals coupled with evangelical humanitarianism. A distaste for imperialism was common to both the great parties; but there was a little group of Radicals with a vision of 'Britains Overseas'. Its moving spirit was Edward Gibbon Wakefield (1796–1862), who in 1829 founded a 'Colonization Society' to encourage emigration to the open spaces of Australia and New Zealand, where emigrants could produce food and raw materials to exchange for British manufactures.

The Government poured cold water on these schemes; but when a rebellion broke out in Canada in the year of Victoria's

accession, it was a prominent member of the Colonization Society, Lord Durham, who was sent over to deal with it. His famous Report set forth the basic principles of the modern Commonwealth. He declared that the only way to avoid trouble with colonies having a considerable European population was to let them govern themselves, with ministers 'responsible' to an elected assembly of their own. The Government hesitated, but a later Governor of Canada, Lord Elgin, implemented the Report by nominating as ministers only men who had the support of the assembly; and this practice hardened, in a characteristically British way, into an inviolable constitutional custom.

But friction continued between Ontario, predominantly British, and Quebec, predominantly French, until the leading statesmen of those provinces put their heads together and devised a federal system which the Home Parliament sanctioned by the *British North America Act* (1867). New Brunswick and Nova Scotia joined the confederation almost at once, other provinces later, when the lands of the middle and far west were opened up.

The early stages of much the same process were proceeding in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

New South Wales was first used as a dumping place for persons (many of them unfortunate rather than criminals) sentenced to 'transportation'; but by the middle of the century this had ceased, a system of penal servitude being substituted. Sheep-farming had by this time become the staple occupation of New South Wales; South Australia was the outcome of one of Wakefield's schemes, and Victoria became important with the discovery of gold there in 1851. In 1852 an Act of Parliament empowered each of these colonies to frame its own constitution and regulate its own trade. But they remained independent of each other for another fifty years.

New Zealand, being geographically more compact, was unified much sooner. Its first white settlers were mostly whalers and ex-convicts; but missionaries working among the Maories (most vigorous, intelligent and adaptable of primitive races) were anxious to keep their converts from debasing contacts.

The Home Government long held aloof, but its hand was forced by Wakefield's 'New Zealand Company'. These settlers got into such conflict with the Maories over land-tenure that the Government had to intervene and annex the islands (1840), if only to protect the Maories. But it got rid of its responsibilities at the first possible moment by according to New Zealand responsible government and independence.

In South Africa the 'native problem' was complicated by the presence of another European race. Cape Colony had been bought from Holland in 1815 as a calling-place on the long voyage to India, the white inhabitants being mostly farmers of mingled Dutch and Huguenot descent, who cultivated the land with slave-labour. These 'Boers' (=farmers) were much aggrieved when slavery was abolished in British possessions (1833), and many of them set out on a 'Great Trek' northwards to find new homes. Some settled down beyond the Orange River, while others pushed on across its tributary the Vaal. But their scattered homesteads were at the mercy of the Kaffir raids, and this left Cape Colony itself exposed to attack. British policy was dominated sometimes by the rough-and-ready methods of the men on the spot, and sometimes by the philanthropic ideals of ministers and officials at home, who upheld native races 'rightly struggling to be free'. The British Government had no mind to be at the expense and trouble of protecting the Boers. In 1852 the Sand River Convention gave 'The Transvaal Republic' full power to manage its own affairs on condition that it did not allow slavery; and two years later the Bloemfontein Convention did the same for 'The Orange Free State'. And at about the same time the Home Government, having separated Natal (mainly British) from Cape Colony (mainly Dutch), authorized these provinces, too, to set up elective governments. Thus South Africa took political shape as two colonies on the coast and two republics inland, with a ring of native states beyond.

Much the same forces were at work in India, but in different circumstances and with different material. There, too, dominion had come unsought by the British Government. The break-up of the rule which Moslem Moguls had imposed on Hindu princes had left a welter of disputed sovereignties in which the

East India Company, a mere trading syndicate seeking dividends and not territory, had been obliged to take some provinces under its rule and some princes under its tutelage; and the Government had been forced, much against its will, to assume more and more responsibility for the company's administration. The impeachment of Warren Hastings (1788–95) had shown its sense of responsibility for the welfare of Indians, and it had solemnly declared that 'to pursue schemes of conquest in India would be repugnant to the wish, the honour and the policy of this nation'. But Lord Wellesley, a Governor appointed (1798–1805) by Pitt, laid it down after practical experience that India must be provided with a Pax Britannica; and the preservation of this led to further expansion until Britain had stepped into the shoes of the Mogul Empire as 'Paramount Power'.

Another momentous step came when, as a result of Macaulay's famous Minute (1835), the Government adopted the policy of educating Indians in British ideas through the English language, thus giving them a common tongue and access to 'liberal' literature. Then came Dalhousie, who as Governor-General annexed more states, and spent large sums on public works and education, and introduced railways and telegraphs.

And just before the opening of our period the Mutiny (1857) had given a shock both to Indians and to the British rulers. Thereafter the British Government, while continuing to provide peace and order, ceased to concern itself with Indian religions, ethical ideas and social customs. The old Company, having long ceased to trade, now surrendered to the Crown all that was left of its governmental powers, and faded out of existence. Its army became a branch of the forces of the Crown, its administrative machinery was taken over by an 'Indian Civil Service', and a new Secretary of State answered for British India in Parliament.

II

MID-VICTORIAN BRITAIN 1850–1868

We must now glance at Victorian ideas, especially in art, literature, science and religion; and then turn to the political events leading directly to the change of government which we have taken as the starting-point of Recent History.

VICTORIAN ART AND SCIENCE. The word 'Victorian' generally suggests ugly, utilitarian, 'philistine' houses, clothes and furniture; an age when nothing seemed to matter but material prosperity; when the nation was too satisfied with its supremacy in industrial and commercial undertakings, and the enlightenment of its political institutions, to care about beauty or spiritual values. But this is not quite just. True, British music-making consisted largely of trashy ballads and pianoforte pieces and performances of a few standard oratorios (*Elijah* coming in 1846 to share popularity with the *Messiah* of a hundred years earlier); true, too, that British architecture was chiefly remarkable for a Gothic Revival, which led to such enormities of 'restoration' that a Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments was founded to save our historic buildings from ruin. But in painting, although Constable died just before Victoria's accession, we still had in Turner a very great painter, and just after his death the Pre-Raphaelites found something to say on canvas worth saying. And in poetry, although Britain was no longer the nest of singing-birds that it had been in the first flush of the romantic age, Tennyson and Browning were considerable figures in the history of English literature. As to prose, Carlyle and Ruskin were eloquent prophets who, poles apart in most things, were at one in denouncing 'the condition of England' under the new industrialism and the ideas which it engendered, glorifying the Middle Ages and refusing to be impressed by the 'progress' of which their contemporaries boasted. But the main literary output of the age consisted in fiction, and whether or not our novelists can stand comparison with the great figures

of Russian and French literature, Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontës, Trollope, George Eliot, Disraeli, Lytton, Lever, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, were all providing entertainment, if not edification, for millions.

And this middle third of the century saw immense advances in man's knowledge of the universe and mastery over its forces; and British scientists had a distinguished part therein. Dalton's Atomic Theory, earlier in the century, gave a fresh start to Chemistry, leading in these years to fertilizers and coal-tar products. In Physics the study of Light resulted in Photography; Joule's First Law of Thermodynamics made possible modern mechanical engineering, while Kelvin's Second Law was the beginning of modern physical chemistry. Above all, Faraday's work on electro-magnetic induction prepared for the harnessing of electricity, its first product being telegraphy (1837). In medicine, again, surgery was revolutionized by antiseptics and anaesthetics.

But the greatest event in the history of ideas was the appearance in 1859 of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Twenty years earlier Sir Charles Lyell had in his *Principles of Geology* discredited the belief (till then scarcely questioned) that the earth was created by a special act about 4000 B.C. He showed that its crust had been formed by forces still at work, operating through millions of years. This provided time for the processes of evolution. Biologists had long felt that existing forms of life, both animal and vegetable, must have developed from earlier and simpler forms, but the question had always been How? Charles Darwin (1809–1882) found the key to the riddle in Malthus's *Essay on Population* (2nd ed. 1803), which set forth the theory that, as population always increases up to the limit of the food available, the majority of mankind must (unless their numbers are mercifully reduced by wars and pestilences) always be on the brink of starvation. From this Darwin deduced a perpetual struggle for existence, in which only the fittest survive to bequeath to offspring the qualities—strength, speed or cunning—which made their survival possible; and he sought, after a lifetime of patient research, to demonstrate that this process would in time produce new species. His book was greeted with a storm of anger and ridicule, for it seemed to question the veracity of the first

chapter of Genesis. But although some of his conclusions have been shaken by later criticism, the basic idea of his theory is unchallengeable. And it revolutionized men's attitude towards life and its problems. Not only had every branch of natural science to be re-studied in the light of the conception that the world around us is 'the child of the past and the parent of the future'; even the study of history took on a new meaning. And it seemed (quite unwarrantably) to confirm the current faith in the inevitability of progress in human enlightenment and well-being.

VICTORIAN RELIGION. Making money in business was not incompatible with earnest religious faith. It is doubtful if any society was ever more devout than Victorian Britain. Wesley's great mission in the previous century had not only created a new Nonconformist body, which (along with the Presbyterian, Baptist and Congregational churches, reinvigorated by it) found untilled fields in the new industrial districts of north and midlands; it also produced after his death the effect he had worked for all his life—a quickening of personal devotion in the Church of England. Among the famous exemplars of this evangelical spirit were William Wilberforce, whose life's work was crowned just before his death in 1833 with the abolition of slavery; and Lord Shaftesbury, who devoted himself to the welfare of British workers. It found scope, too, in missionary enterprise, notably through the Church Missionary Society (founded 1799) and the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (1814). It raised the tone of public and of family life, and brought faith, hope and endurance into thousands of squalid homes. But some of its by-products are not generally admired to-day. Insisting on the literal truth of the Bible, it obstructed the development of science whenever inquiry seemed to throw doubt on the accuracy of statements therein; being ultra-Protestant, it inspired a hatred of Catholicism which added to difficulties with Ireland; and it led to the 'Victorian Sabbath', and the general feeling that religion, to be sincere, must be sanctimonious and repressive.

Nevertheless, to devout evangelical churchmen the Church

was little more than an institution for the proper conduct of public worship. Since the Gospels contained all that was necessary for salvation the purpose of a priesthood was to guide and admonish rather than to act as intermediary between the individual soul and its Maker. But there were some (mostly clergymen) who believed that the function of the Church was to hand down through its sacraments the gift of the Holy Spirit left on earth by its Founder, and that priests received at ordination mystic power which made them links in a divine succession stretching back to the Apostles.

These views were set forth during the 'thirties and 'forties in a series of *Tracts for the Times* issued by a group of Oxford clergymen. The authors aroused fierce hostility in the University (much more closely connected with the Church then than today); for their views were very like those of 'Rome', and they were suspected of trying to undermine the Protestantism of the Church of England. This suspicion seemed to be confirmed when some of them were admitted to the Roman Catholic Church (of which Newman and Manning subsequently became Cardinals). But most of them, notably Edward Pusey and John Keble, remained within the Anglican fold, which was thenceforth rent with disputes between 'High' (Ritualist) and 'Low' (Evangelical) parties.

THE SECOND REFORM ACT. By the 1860's the political world was crystallizing again after the cataclysm over the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Conservatives, apart from two brief and embarrassed spells of office without a majority in the Commons, had been in the wilderness for twenty years, held together mainly by Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881). A Jewish adventurer, who had to assert himself by exotic extravagances of mien, dress and language, could hardly be received as titular head by a party of grandees. That position fell to the Earl of Derby; but it was Disraeli who led the Party in the Commons and supplied it with tactical resource and debating-power. For a time he inspired 'Young England', a little group of high-souled lordlings who talked of restoring the social system of a visionary past when the nobles of England guided and protected the humble and meek. And he wrote political novels, one of which (*Sybil*) contrasted the two nations of rich and poor into which the industrial revo-

lution had divided the people of Britain.[1] But until 1867 he sought in vain for some broad line of policy by which his Party could hoist itself back into favour with the electorate. He had led it in discarding Peel over the Corn Laws; but that issue was dead. By this time the Corn Laws were, as he himself said, not only dead but damned; the country was doing too well under Free Trade to go back on it.

And Free Trade was now personified by a man who was destined to be Disraeli's antagonist in the most tremendous and prolonged parliamentary duel since that of Pitt and Fox. William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898), son of a rich Liverpool merchant, had (what his rival notably lacked) the assured background of Eton and Christ Church. For the first decade of his public life he had been 'the rising hope of the stern unbending Tories', and for a good many years after the split over the Corn Laws it had seemed likely that he and the other 'Peelites' would rejoin the Conservative Party. But he could never forgive Disraeli's attack on his revered chief, and in 1859 he became Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Palmerston's Whig-Liberal Government. His budgets during the next six years laid down firm and lasting principles of national finance. He believed in husbanding resources, so as to leave as much money as possible to 'fructify' in the hands of the investing public; he established a strict system of auditing by which every penny of public spending needed the approval of Parliament; he concentrated direct taxation on a few articles of general consumption such as tea, sugar and beer. He disliked Income Tax because its ready expansibility was a temptation to spendthrift Governments, and he came near to abolishing it altogether.

By this time the gradual improvement in the status of the

[1] 'If there be a change', said Sybil, 'it is because in some degree the People have learnt their strength.'

'Ah, dismiss from your mind those fallacious fancies', said Egremont. 'The People are not strong; they never can be strong. Their attempts at self-vindication can only lead to their suffering and confusion . . . The new generation of the aristocracy of England are not tyrants, not oppressors, Sybil, as you persist in believing. Their intelligence, better than that, their hearts are open to the responsibilities of their position. . . . They are the natural leaders of the People, Sybil; believe me, they are the only ones.' (Disraeli, *Sybil.*)

workers was making people familiar with the idea that the franchise would sooner or later have to be extended beyond the limits set in the Act of 1832, and the Whig-Liberal Government was naturally expected to do something about it. Lord John Russell, chief author of the earlier measure, brought forward several Reform bills between 1859 and 1865, but they stood no chance in the face of veiled opposition by Palmerston. In a speech supporting one of these Bills Gladstone laid down what afterwards became a basic principle of democracy:

> 'I venture to say that every man not incapacitated by some consideration of personal unfitness . . . is normally entitled to come within the framework of the constitution.'

To-day that may seem a trite commonplace, but old-fashioned people of that generation still clung to the tradition that voting-power went with property—that ordinary folk had no political rights beyond the right to be well governed by their betters. And Palmerston ('Liberal abroad but Conservative at home') was one of them.

But in 1865 he died, the last survivor of the British Governments which had fought Napoleon. Russell, now in the House of Lords, became Prime Minister with Gladstone leading the Commons; and in 1866 they brought in a bill reducing the £10 qualification of 1832 to £7. There were a number of safeguards and restrictions which the sponsors of the bill hoped would mollify the Opposition. But the Conservatives were reinforced by a group of Liberals led by Robert Lowe, the bill was thrown out, and the Government resigned. A third Derby-Disraeli ministry took office without a majority in the House; for, of course, they could not rely on the support of the malcontent Liberals on any issue save parliamentary reform.

But 'Dizzy' now took a bold line. The working class had lately shown a new eagerness for the vote. When a Reform meeting was shut out of Hyde Park, demonstrators had torn down the railings—unwonted violence in placid, law-abiding England. In America President Lincoln had just coined his phrase about government by as well as for the people; and a new North German Confederation had adopted a constitution which (on paper) included equal, direct and secret franchise. Democracy seemed to be in the air. If its coming was inevitable,

why should not the Conservatives put through a bill of their own, and so win the gratitude (and the votes) of the working class and clear the way for social reform under a Tory democracy? His colleagues were naturally taken aback at the adoption of a policy which they had just been opposing so violently; so Disraeli contented himself with a modest bill which would have enfranchised no more than 200,000 new voters. But the Liberals, dismayed at first to find themselves robbed of their best election-cry, soon saw a way of countering his astute move. Led by Gladstone they brought forward a succession of amendments which made the bill more sweeping than their own had been. Disraeli had to accept these rather than see his Bill thrown out. The Conservative Party in the House, despite its misgivings, could not very well oppose a bill sponsored by their own Government, and the votes of the Liberals made its success certain.

In effect it gave the vote only to the more respectable artisans of the towns; but many public men were seriously alarmed. Lord Derby himself said it was 'a leap in the dark'; Carlyle called it 'shooting Niagara'; and Lord Cranborne, a leading Conservative of the younger generation, declared that for a Conservative Government to put through such a measure was 'a piece of political dishonesty unexampled in our history'.

When, a few months later, Derby retired, Disraeli reached 'the top of the greasy pole' (to use his own expression). It was a triumph over racial prejudice won by rare gifts of courage and personality; and he confirmed it by gaining the personal favour of the Queen, begging her 'to deign not to withhold from her humble servant the guidance of her wide and choice experience'. He looked forward confidently, he told his friends, to 'keeping Gladstone down for twenty years' by a sweeping success at the polls as soon as he and the Queen felt the moment for a dissolution had come. But in this he was disappointed.

JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND. The trouble—and on a long view it was the beginning of far greater trouble for Gladstone than for Disraeli—came from Ireland. But that was nothing new for British statesmen. Ireland had been a worry to them for centuries. J. S. Mill touched the root of it when he wrote:

> 'No civilized people is so far apart from England in the character of its history as Ireland, and there is none, therefore, which if it applies the maxims of government which have grown up within itself is so certain to go wrong.'

And that was just what happened. The British ruling class always assumed that what was good for England must be good for Ireland; and if the Irish did not think so regarded them as perverse and contumacious.

The Roman Empire, from which so much of European civilization is derived, never included Ireland. And when in the Middle Ages Anglo-French nobles obtained Irish fiefs they brought the feudal notion that land belongs to the King, among people imbued with the tribal notion that it belongs to the people. Hence seven centuries of friction. And that friction was redoubled when at the Reformation the ruling class (of Ireland as of Britain) became Protestant, while the aboriginal Irish remained Catholic, and England's struggle against Spain identified Catholicism with treason. Irish land was confiscated for British immigrants—a fresh cause of bitterness, especially when James I 'planted' Ulster with Presbyterian Scotsmen, who regarded 'Papists' as little better than vermin.

In the eighteenth century the British Government treated the Irish as people without natural rights. Catholics (four-fifths of the population) had no votes, and could not own land or send their children to school; while trade regulations prevented the Irish (Protestant and Catholic alike) from competing with British produce, either at home or in the colonies. Pitt tried in vain to introduce free trade between the islands—British merchants and manufacturers would not have it. So in 1800 he put through an Act of Union, by which in lieu of the Dublin Parliament (wherein only members of the Protestant 'Church of Ireland' could sit) Ireland was to be represented by one hundred members in the Parliament at Westminster. The Irish were given to understand that if they would agree to this Catholics should be made eligible for Parliament. If this promise had been kept all might have been well, but George III threatened to abdicate rather than consent to it. Thus the Irish were more than ever convinced that the 'Saxon' was treacherous and faithless. By the time Daniel O'Connell won equal political rights for Catholics (Catholic Emancipation, 1829) it was too late to appease them.

Then came the Great Divide of Irish history, the potato famine of 1845–8. During those years the population of Ireland diminished by one third, partly through starvation and its attendant diseases, partly through emigration to the United States, Canada and Australia. Even to-day Ireland has fewer inhabitants than in 1840, and there are more Irishmen abroad than at home. And wherever they went they carried hatred of England.

Out of the anguish and anger of the famine years grew a determination to 'repeal the conquest'—to expel from Ireland the foreign, heretic and landlord power to which all its ills were ascribed. No redress could be expected from laws made in a distant Parliament, administered by officials and judges of the 'middle nation'—people of British blood domiciled in Ireland. So their protests took the form of sabotage and murder; and as no jury of Irishmen would convict persons accused of these offences, the Government had to replace the law of the land by 'Coercion Acts' giving arbitrary powers to judges and magistrates. Thus began an undeclared civil war, in which the highlights were the 'Young Ireland' movement of 1848, and the 'Fenian' rebellion of 1867. The latter was organized, armed and financed by a nationalist society with headquarters in America, and called 'Fenian' after Finn McCoul, a hero of Irish legend. The Government had no difficulty in suppressing it, but it served to draw attention to Irish grievances, and to make the British people feel that something must be done about them.

Here was an opportunity for Gladstone and the Liberals. They could no longer appeal to the country for support with a programme of Parliamentary Reform, but they could promise to fulfil the general demand for measures to pacify Ireland. Gladstone addressed himself to the problem with characteristic intensity. He decided that the first step must be to end the privileged position of the Church of Ireland, to which not one Irishman in five belonged. So he brought forward in Parliament a series of Resolutions, of which the most important called for the disestablishment of the Irish State Church. Disraeli—still head of a minority Government, let us bear in mind—could not repeat his tactics over Reform by accepting these propositions piecemeal. For maintenance of the privileges of the Church of England (big sister of the Church of Ireland) had always been a

fundamental principle of Toryism. So the Government resisted the Resolutions, and when the House carried them Disraeli dissolved it. He was breezily confident that the working men whom he had just enfranchized would show their appreciation of the boon by voting Tory.

But the election gave the Liberals a majority of one hundred and twenty. The main reasons for this 'ingratitude' of the reformed constituencies were distrust of Disraeli's sincerity as a reformer, and support of Gladstone's purpose to get the Irish troubles out of the way.

Unfortunately this was not so easily accomplished. The problem of Ireland was Gladstone's main preoccupation right down to the end of his career a quarter of a century later; and it continued to harass British statesmen for another thirty years after that—until they ended their torment by the simple but drastic expedient of 'cutting the painter'.

III

THE NATION-STATES OF EUROPE 1815–1868

The French Revolution and its Napoleonic sequel spread ideas about the Rights of Man which shattered the Old Regime with its privileged castes, and gave peoples aspirations for national unity. When our period opens this spirit had just given birth to two new nation-states.

THE REACTION. The 'liberalism' of which so much was heard in nineteenth-century Europe was compounded of two elements. One was the Rights of Man: Free Speech, Equality before the Law; No Taxation without Representation; No Arbitrary Penalties; and so on. The other was Nationalism—the aspiration of people of the same race, traditions and speech to form a sovereign state with its own government. We can see what these liberals were aiming at by noting the condition of Italy and central Europe after 1815.

The inhabitants of the Italian peninsula had no 'country'—they were subjects of small states 'united only by the same geographical term'. Most of these states were ruled by foreign princes. Sicily and Naples had a Bourbon king; Piedmont and Sardinia a king of the House of Savoy; Lombardy and Venetia belonged to the Hapsburg Emperors of Austria; a wide strip across the middle formed the temporal domains of the Pope. These potentates had despotic governments conducted by officials (often corrupt) and preserved by secret police on the watch to stamp out any spark of liberal revolt.

Similar evils in a different form could be seen in the Austrian Empire. This had evolved from the 'Holy Roman' (really German) Empire which had once claimed the allegiance of all central Europe. Its Emperor was King of Hungary and King of Bohemia; as Archduke of Austria he owned Lombardy and Venetia inhabited by Italians, and as King of Hungary he owned Transylvania inhabited mainly by Rumanians; he ruled Yugoslav lands conquered in thrusting back the Ottoman

Turks; and Galicia acquired in the Partition of Poland (1772, 1793). Naturally such a state was particularly vulnerable to the spirit of revolutionary nationalism. Czechs and Magyars disliked being ruled by German Vienna, Galician Poles hoped some day to join their compatriots now under Russia and Prussia in a restoration of their national state; Venetians and Lombards longed for an Italy that would be something more than 'a geographical term'; Serbs and Slovenes looked longingly to their brothers of the Yugoslav race who, still nominally subject to the Sultan, enjoyed practical independence under their own prince at Belgrade. Thus the Austrian Empire was a worm-eaten house; if one wing of it fell it seemed that the whole ramshackle fabric might collapse.

When in 1806 the Emperor Francis decided to concentrate on being an hereditary sovereign and give up his shadowy claim to be Holy Roman Emperor, the other German states (there were scores of them, of all sizes and kinds) were left with no bond of union. So in 1815 a Confederation was set up, with Austria as permanent President of its Diet (=assembly). The King of Prussia, the next strongest state, wanted to share the chief position, but the lesser potentates, especially the Kings of Saxony, Bavaria and Hanover, were jealous of that upstart Power, whose prominence was based on an army created in the previous century by Kings Frederick William and Frederick the Great. And no real national unity among Germans was possible while their rulers were so set on maintaining their independent sovereignty, and on repressing liberal ideas.

THE LIBERAL OUTBREAK. The first attempts to burst through the crust achieved very little. In 1830 the French turned out the senior line of Bourbon kings in favour of Louis Philippe of the Orleans branch, who set up a constitutional monarchy more or less on the British model. In the same year Belgium refused to remain united to Holland under a Dutch king, and (with the support of Great Britain exercised by Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary) adopted a king of their own—Leopold of Coburg, beloved uncle of the future Queen Victoria. But a revolt in Russian Poland was a tragic failure, repressed by savage measures which drove thousands of Poles into exile.

But the great outburst came in 1848. It began in France,

where Louis Philippe was expelled and a Second Republic set up. Within the next few months there were risings all over central Europe. Metternich, the Austrian Chancellor and the very embodiment of reaction, was driven ignominiously from Vienna, and the polyglot Empire which he had held together seemed about to disintegrate: Croats, Magyars and Czechs all claimed national independence. There were similar movements in half the states of Germany. The King of Prussia was frightened into granting his people a parliamentary constitution, and a congress of representatives from all the German states met at Frankfurt to devise a federal state. Meanwhile Italian patriots were in the first stage of their Risorgimento (=resurrection). There were risings in Naples and Sicily; King Charles Albert of Sardinia, having granted his own kingdom a constitution, invaded Lombardy, which the Emperor of Austria was too distracted by home troubles to defend; and the political authority of the Pope was displaced by a Roman Republic.

But all these revolutions went awry. The French people elected as President of their new republic Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, nephew of the Emperor and heir to his traditions, who took the first opportunity to set up a 'Second Empire' (1852). This was approved by a plebiscite, and he claimed that his dictatorship was based on the people's will. The French wanted firm and orderly government and a revival of military prestige; and the new Emperor was at pains to win the support of the Catholic Church.

Reaction in Italy began when Pope Pius IX, after raising the hopes of Italian liberals by expressing sympathy with their aims, refused to go so far as to sanction an attack on Austria, the leading Catholic power of Europe. The Austrian Emperor, having regained control in Vienna, sent an army which swept Charles Albert out of Lombardy and caused him to abdicate in favour of his son Victor Emmanuel. Napoleon sent French troops to crush the Roman Republic and restore the Pope to his temporal power.

The liberals of the Austrian Empire failed because their nationalism went deeper than their liberalism. The Germans of Vienna wanted to reassert Austria's authority over Bohemia and the Italian provinces; Yugoslav Croats sent an army to help to crush the Hungarian Republic set up by Kossuth.

As to Germany, by the time the Frankfurt Parliament had agreed to invite the King of Prussia to become Emperor of Germany, the revolt in Prussia had sputtered out, and Frederick William could haughtily refuse to 'pick a crown out of the gutter'—i.e., to accept it from the hands of subjects instead of from fellow-sovereigns.

THE CRIMEAN WAR. Europe was now disturbed (not for the first time) by what historians called 'The Eastern Question'.

The Ottoman Turks had in their great days threatened to overrun the whole Danube valley. They had eventually been repulsed, but the Sultan still held a baleful supremacy over the Balkan peninsula. The Turks could conquer but could not govern, and their main interest in these domains was in taxing them. By the middle of the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire had long outgrown its political strength. It sprawled right across the Near and Middle East, still claiming the allegiance of Syria, Iraq, Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Tunis and Morocco, as well as its Balkan provinces. But it was a corrupt, neglectful and inefficient despotism, and most of these provinces had become practically independent. The Sultan's old enmity with Austria had died down. The Power most dangerous to him now was Russia—restless, ambitious, spreading across northern Asia, and looking greedily southward to the Mediterranean with the hope of one day making good an old claim to be successor to the Byzantine Empire which had been shaken to pieces when the Turks took Constantinople in 1453. Moreover the Russians, Slav by race and of the Orthodox Church by religion,[1] felt themselves the natural protectors of the Balkan peoples, who were also mainly Slav and Orthodox. Thus the Tsars had a double purpose in seeking to aggrandize themselves at the expense of the Sultan. In 1844 Nicholas I hinted to the British Foreign Office that, the Turkish Empire being 'a sick man', the Powers would do well to make arrangements in advance for his demise. He suggested that the Balkan peoples might become independent under his protection, while Britain

[1] The Orthodox Eastern Church separated from the Roman Catholic Church about A.D. 1000 over the theological question whether the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son (*Filioque*—the Roman doctrine) or from the Father only.

might take over Egypt. But Britain had long suspected Russia of designs on India, and did not want to see her power advance to the Mediterranean, where it would be a perpetual menace to her communications with Asia; so the Tsar's suggestions were coldly rejected. He was on bad terms with France, too; and the Emperor was keen to advertise his regime by reviving the glory of the French army. There is no need to trace further the disputes that led to the Crimean War. At the back of them lay the prejudices of the British people, the obstinacy of the Tsar, and the ambitions of the French Emperor.

It was a deplorable episode in our history—a war which, undertaken for no adequate reason and with no preparation, caused untold misery to the troops engaged. The siege of Sebastopol led to the battles of the Alma, Inkerman and Balaclava; but the only personal reputation won in the war was that of Florence Nightingale. By 1856 the position had become a dreary stalemate. The Tsar who had entered upon the war was now dead, and his successor Alexander II wanted to cut his losses; while Napoleon III had done enough for glory and more than enough to upset his precarious finances; and the British were sick of the tedious and squalid affair, and grew impatient when Lord Palmerston, the briskly bellicose Prime Minister, prolonged it to keep the Tsar from gaining access to the Mediterranean.

The Treaty of Paris (1856) was as futile as the conduct of the war. Britain gained less than nothing; for the terms included a revision of international law on the Right of Search, which henceforth restricted the claim of the British Navy to prevent neutral shipping from carrying 'contraband of war' to her enemies. Russia surrendered the right to 'protect' the Balkan Christians, while the Sultan undertook to give them equal rights with his Moslem subjects—a promise which he never even tried to carry out. The Tsar very reluctantly agreed that the Black Sea should be 'neutralized'—i.e., that it should not be used by warships; but he repudiated this restriction at the first opportunity. And within twenty years the Eastern Question was again disturbing the peace of Europe.

PRUSSIA VERSUS AUSTRIA. The breakdown of the Frankfurt Parliament showed that some quite different process would be

needed to unify a people so unpractised in democratic procedure as the Germans. The King of Prussia who made the 'Great Refusal' granted a simulacrum of parliamentary government to his people; but in 1857 he was succeeded by his brother William, a simple-minded soldier who believed in the divine right of kings and took the building-up of the Prussian army as his most sacred duty. As a firm-handed and resourceful minister to raise the funds to pay for it, he appointed in 1862 Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898), who became one of the makers of modern Europe.

Bismarck was by birth and outlook a typical 'Junker'—a Prussian squire. Amid all the frothy enthusiasm for 'Pan-Germanism' and constitutional government in 1848, he never wavered in narrow Prussian patriotism or in his faith in kingly power. Above all he believed in force. 'It is not by speeches and votes that the great questions of the day will be decided', he declared on a memorable occasion, 'but by blood and iron.' In his view the only power that could weld Germany together was the mailed fist of the Prussian army. Austria being the chief obstacle to Prussia's domination over the rest of Germany, a new Germanic federation must be formed with Austria outside it; and upon this design he concentrated all his prodigious energy of will and all his profound political sagacity.

As a matter of fact Austria was already in a bad way. The Emperor had just lost his best Italian province. The failure of the first stage of the Risorgimento in 1848 had shown Italian patriots that their best hope lay in extending the kingdom of Sardinia. Victor Emmanuel, already in possession of Piedmont and Sardinia, had maintained the liberal constitution granted by his father; he had an army the efficiency of which had been demonstrated on the side of the Allies in the Crimean War; and in Cavour he had one of the great European statesmen of the century. King and minister saw that to overcome Austria they must have the help of some outside Power. Napoleon, eager to revive the Bonaparte tradition of aiding Italian nationalism against Austria, filled their requirement. He won the battles of Magenta and Solferino, but then made a hasty peace which gave Victor Emmanuel Lombardy but not Venetia, while France took Savoy and Nice as payment for her services (1860). Meanwhile Garibaldi, most famous of guerrilla leaders, had

overthrown the kingdom of Naples, and had joined hands with Victor Emmanuel in the Papal Domains. But they dared not renew the attempt to drive the Pope from Rome; for Napoleon III, fearing to offend the French Catholics, left a garrison to defend the Eternal City. And so the new Kingdom of Italy had to start life with Florence, not Rome, as its capital (1860).

The loss of Lombardy was a heavy blow for Austria; but worse was to follow. In 1864 the Emperor joined the King of Prussia in an attack on Denmark which wrested from that small state the provinces of Schleswig and Holstein. But 'Prussia strikes when Prussia's hour has struck'. The robbers fell out over the booty, as Bismarck foresaw and intended. He had some difficulty in overcoming his old master's scruples about making war on his traditional suzerain, but he contrived it in time; and after a Seven Weeks' War culminating in the Battle of Sadowa (1866) Francis Joseph had to make a settlement which deprived him not only of the headship of the Germanic Federation, but even of membership of it. The kingdom of Italy took advantage of Austria's extremity to seize Venetia; but Bismarck persuaded the Prussian generals not to humiliate Austria by a triumphal entry into Vienna—he foresaw a time when he might want Austria as an ally. Prussia, strengthened by the annexation of Hanover and Mecklenberg (which, like most of the other states, had sided with Austria in the recent conflict) became the controlling power in a 'North German Confederation' with a constitution devised by Bismarck.

The Emperor Francis Joseph, overwhelmed by accumulated disasters, came to terms with his half-rebellious Hungarian subjects. Henceforward they had their own government at Budapest, and shared sovereignty with the Austrians in a Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary.

IV

THE GREAT GLADSTONE MINISTRY 1868–1874

The Franchise Act of 1867 released a spate of overdue legislation, just as that of 1832 had done. The first batch of these reforms, carried through by Gladstone and his colleagues, included a Church Act and a Land Act for Ireland, a reorganization of the Army, the establishment of national education, and improvements in administrative and judicial efficiency.

GLADSTONE'S 'UPAS TREE'. Gladstone likened the trouble in Ireland to a poisonous upas-tree whose three trunks he was determined to cut down one by one. The first was the Established Church—a survival of the bad old days when England was vainly trying to turn Irish Catholics into Episcopalian Protestants. Of course, the Penal Code had long disappeared, and private benefactors (mostly in the United States) had built Catholic churches, so that the anomaly of great empty parish churches alongside crowded little Catholic chapels was no longer so glaring. But the position of the 'English' Church remained a symbol of the hated Protestant Ascendancy, reminding the Irish people on public occasions that they were subjects of an alien Power.

Gladstone was a devout Anglican, but he realized the absurdity, the injustice and the unwisdom of the position. He brought in a bill disestablishing the 'Church of Ireland', and placing it in much the same position as a Nonconformist body in England. Its property, accumulated through centuries from benefactions and confiscations, was to be used to provide for the clergy dispossessed by the Act, and for unsectarian charities. The Government was fiercely accused of sacrilege as well as robbery, and the Queen was vexed that Gladstone should not have let sleeping dogs lie. But the Act proved a complete success. Very few clergy of the Church of Ireland ever wanted to go back to their former position; and the fear that the change would lead to the disestablishment of the Church of England proved unfounded.

The grievance removed by this Act was mainly sentimental; Gladstone next turned to one which vitally affected the lives of the people. Ireland was an agricultural country, cultivated mainly by peasants renting land from proprietors who lived for the most part in England, leaving their estates to be managed by agents. Annual tenancies were customary, and since there were practically no industries and few farmers were in a position to hire labour, the competition for holdings was so severe that impossibly high rents were promised. Thus many tenants were permanently in arrears, and at their landlord's mercy. If a peasant improved his land he was liable to have his rent raised, and if he could not pay somebody else would (or would promise to), and he and his family would be evicted to starve. Rents could only be kept down by slovenly farming to give an appearance of degraded poverty, and by terrorizing rival bidders and harsh agents. Those who defended this state of affairs (such as Palmerston, himself an absentee Irish landlord) claimed that 'a man ought to be able to do as he liked with his own'; but this hardly seems applicable to land, so necessary to life and so rigidly restricted in supply. Of course not all landlords were absentees or tyrants. It was the system that was at fault, and it was the system that Gladstone now attacked.

One of the chief hindrances to the good government of Ireland had always been the ignorance of the British ruling caste about that country. Their education had taught them more about conditions in ancient Greece and Rome than about those of modern Ireland. Gladstone now eagerly made amends, in his determination to find a solution of the land question that would accord with Irish ideas and traditions. After some months of intensive study he produced a bill which made tenants part-owners of the land they tilled, by an extension of Ulster 'tenant-right' to other parts of the country. Special tribunals were to award 'compensation for disturbance' whenever a tenant was evicted, and he was to be given an allowance for any 'unexhausted improvements' he had made during his tenancy. Unfortunately the landlords soon found loopholes in the Act. To get it through the House of Lords Gladstone had to accept an amendment by which landlord and tenant could agree not to be bound by the compensation clauses; and as there were always more people wanting land than there was land for them

to have, landlords were able to force such agreements on their tenants. Thus injustice and indignation, though checked, continued.

But the importance of this *Land Act* (1870) was that it limited the absolute power of the landlord, and recognized the principle that the ownership of land carries responsibilities on a different scale from those connected with more personal possessions.

SCHOOLING FOR ALL. In no aspect of social life was *laissez-faire* more out of date than in the matter of education. The Voluntary Societies were doing something, and 'payment by results' (that is, making Government grants depend on the number of children whom the school could cram through an oral examination) was increasing efficiency. But even in 1860 barely a third of the nation's children were getting any schooling worth the name. The prejudice against State interference with people's lives was very strong, and old-fashioned folk were still saying that education would make the 'lower orders' restless and discontented. But the new Reform Act having given the balance of electoral power to working men, it seemed common prudence to see that they could at least read and write. As Robert Lowe, now Chancellor of the Exchequer, remarked, Parliament had to educate its masters.

So one of the most urgent tasks of this Government was to create a system of elementary education. W. E. Forster, who as Vice-President of the Council was unofficial minister for education, set to work with a will. But was he to increase the subsidy paid to the Voluntary Societies, and only fill in the gaps where they failed to establish their schools; or was he to withdraw the grants and cover the country with a network of Government schools? The former policy would give mortal offence to the Dissenters (the electoral backbone of the Liberal Party); for most of the Voluntary Schools belonged to the National Society, the endowed Church of England having much more money to spend than the self-supporting Nonconformist bodies; and the Church would thus acquire increased opportunity to instil its doctrines into the nation. On the other hand, to build new schools everywhere would give even greater offence to the Church, and would be very costly to the Exchequer.

It was the last argument that weighed most with Forster. There would have been strong opposition to such lavish expenditure of public money, and he was impatient to provide some sort of schooling for the children as soon as possible. His bill was typical of British legislation in that it was patchwork on an existing foundation and not a fresh start. The Voluntary Schools were to continue, provided that they were well conducted; their teaching of secular subjects was to be directed by the Government, but they could give what religious instruction they liked. The Societies were given another year in which to build new schools; thereafter the Government would build schools wherever they were needed, and these would be managed by locally elected School Boards. By the 'Cowper-Temple Amendment' religious instruction in them was to be limited to 'undogmatic Bible lessons', given at either end of the school day, so that parents who objected could withhold their children from them.

But religious passions ran higher than to-day. Neither Churchmen nor Dissenters were satisfied with the bill, and the storms which it roused shook the Government severely. The Prime Minister took little interest in the subject, yet as Forster said, the children of England were growing up savages while their elders wrangled. He eventually got the bill through, but it was ominous for the Government that the majority included many Conservatives, while the minority consisted largely of Liberals.

A rapid growth in the State control of education followed. A new Code of Instruction had to be drawn up, plans for buildings prepared, provision made for training thousands of teachers. With all these tasks Forster grappled manfully, and on the whole successfully.

Secondary education was stimulated by an *Endowed Schools Act*. Grammar Schools had mostly been founded by private benefactors in the course of past centuries. Many of the greatest Englishmen (Shakespeare, Newton and Nelson, for instance) had been educated at them. But they had fallen behind the times, and their endowments had been diverted by dishonesty, or slackness, or changing circumstance. An Act of 1869 set up a Commission to inquire into their condition and to make changes

that would revitalise them. Henceforth they received grants on condition of submitting to inspection and control. But the rigid uniformity enforced in France and Germany has never been adopted here. Provided that schools reach a reasonable standard of efficiency they have much latitude to develop according to local needs, or the views of their governors and staffs.

The prosperity of the mid-Victorian era created a new class of well-to-do people wanting to send their sons to Public Schools, and many new ones were founded about the middle of the century.[1] In the older schools little had been taught but Latin and Greek, and outside school hours nothing was done for the boys' welfare. But the example set by Dr. Arnold, head master of Rugby from 1828 to 1842, was now having its effect in a higher moral and religious tone and a broader curriculum. And these schools, with their Spartan virtues, their training in the exercise of authority, their narrow outlook and their devotion to games, had an immense influence on the ruling class in the period we are here studying.

Finally, the Government put through a *University Tests Act* (1871) which compelled Oxford and Cambridge, hitherto practically confined to members of the Church of England, to admit Dissenters to degrees. Gladstone's churchmanship was at odds with his Liberalism over it; but when once he was convinced of its justice he drove it through despite strong opposition in the House of Lords.

CARDWELL AND THE ARMY. For half a century after Waterloo the British Army remained unreformed on the strength of having won that battle. People took little interest in it compared with the Navy, which was always the nation's pride. Long after the days of Cromwell's Major-Generals a subconscious fear lingered lest a standing army should again usurp political power, which the Navy could never do. The tradition was fostered that to be an Army officer was the occasional occupation of a gentleman rather than the profession of an expert. The men in the ranks, on the other hand, spent the whole of their active lives in the Service, and when eventually dis-

[1] e.g., Cheltenham 1841, Marlborough 1843, Rossall 1844, Radley 1847, Wellington 1853, Uppingham (practically refounded by its famous headmaster Thring) 1857, Malvern 1862, Tonbridge rebuilt 1865.

charged (without pension) they found that twenty or thirty years of barrack-room and parade-ground had unfitted them for anything else. But the Crimean War had exposed a fantastic failure to make the Army an efficient fighting-machine, the Indian Mutiny had shown that more and better troops would have to be stationed in India; and the recent Prussian victories had drawn attention to developments in training, organization and equipment.

The task of putting this right fell to Gladstone's Secretary for War, Edward Cardwell (1813–1886), a Peelite turned Liberal, like Gladstone himself. He began by strengthening governmental control. Hitherto the Militia (the only source of reserves for the Regulars) had been commanded by the Lords-Lieutenant of Counties, who were independent of the War Office; and authority over the Regular Army was divided between the Secretary of State at the War Office, who was responsible to Parliament, and a Commander-in-Chief, at the Horse Guards, who was responsible to nobody but the Sovereign. Since the death of Wellington in 1852 the post had been held by the Queen's uncle the Duke of Cambridge. Victoria clung to tradition, but after a sharp tussle Cardwell induced her to accept a compromise by which the C.-in-C. became subordinate to the Secretary of State.

His next step was the *Army Enlistment Act* (1871). 'Short Service' had been designed by Prussia after 1806 to evade Napoleon's order limiting her army to 40,000 men. Gneisenau, the War Minister, trained relays of men who returned to civil life after two years, but could be called up on the outbreak of war. It was economical, for only a portion of the army was being maintained by the State, while the rest of it was building up the national wealth by agriculture or industry. The system had to be modified to suit British conditions, such as our voluntary enlistment, and our need to keep a large proportion of the Army overseas. Soldiers were to engage for twelve years, of which six or more (according to the branch of the Service) were to be spent as reservists in civil life.

Furthermore, whereas regiments of the line had been known merely by numbers, they were now grouped in pairs to form battalions of a regiment bearing the name of a particular recruiting area. Thus the old '64th Foot' and the old '98th Foot'

became the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 'North Staffordshire Regiment'. One of each pair was to be serving abroad while the other was at the regimental depot, training recruits, sending out drafts to keep up the strength of its sister battalion, and preparing to take its own turn of foreign service.

But the most striking of Cardwell's reforms was the abolition of 'purchase'. Hitherto commissions had been regarded as personal property, and it was almost impossible for an officer to gain promotion if he could not 'buy his step'. Cardwell proposed that existing commissions should be compulsorily sold to the Government at the market price when the holders retired, and the Government would then make promotion depend on merit or seniority. Old-fashioned officers fumed that this would 'send the Service to the dogs', and the Queen sympathized with them. But when the bill was rejected by the Lords Gladstone asked her to cancel the Royal Warrant which, ever since the days of Queen Anne, was the only legal authority for the market in commissions. Victoria, flattered by this recognition of the Royal Prerogative, agreed; and the Lords saw the cheerless prospect of 'purchase' being abolished without compensation. So they gave way.

Finally, Cardwell instituted annual manœuvres. Hitherto no officer could get experience in handling any body of troops larger than a battalion. Henceforward the Reserves were to be called up once a year, when the auxiliary forces, such as the Medical and Service Corps, were to be put on a war footing for a few weeks.

One of Cardwell's chief difficulties was that he got little support from the Army itself, apart from a little knot of enlightened officers led by Sir Garnet Wolseley. But in the course of the next twenty years his reforms created a new Army in which the nation could take a pride. Service in the ranks ceased to be merely 'the last resort of the destitute' as Wellington once called it, especially after Cardwell abolished flogging; and its officers began to take a serious interest in their profession.

GOVERNMENTAL EFFICIENCY. Gladstone was always keen on keeping down the cost of government. He had already devised a system by which national expenditure is not only debated, item by item, in the Commons, but is scrutinized by an inde-

pendent 'Comptroller and Auditor-General'. Another of his abiding interests was the efficiency of the Civil Service. The work of government was, and is, carried on partly by amateurs —ministers who speak for their several departments in Parliament, and transmit to them the policy of the Cabinet; and partly by professionals who spend their whole working lives in one department, the seniors giving expert guidance to ministers, the lower grades carrying out the details of administration. How is this Civil Service to be recruited? It is obviously important to get the best men available, for the vital interests of the country depend on their ability and integrity. Yet until 1871 almost the only qualification was the favour of some influential member of the Party in power, who procured appointments for personal or political friends, often with little regard to their fitness for the posts. Gladstone had sought to end this in 1854, but the power of the old political families had been too strong for him, and he had had to be content with establishing a qualifying examination which at least kept out the half-witted. A further step followed a few years later when, on the Government of India being overhauled after the Mutiny, it was ordained that appointments to it should depend on a competitive examination, conducted on such lines that candidates who had taken good degrees at the Universities should have the best chance. As Prime Minister Gladstone was in a stronger position, but even now he had to agree to a compromise by which each minister was to decide whether his office should be recruited by competition or by patronage. Within a few years the former method was adopted by all departments save the Foreign Office. The improvement in efficiency was marked, and to-day we are justly proud of our Civil Service. No doubt the competitive system sometimes excludes good men who lack the bookish training which it favours; but it has produced better results than any other method of selection so far devised.

Another innovation was the creation of a Local Government Board. Up to now the Government had had little control over either of the Poor Law Board which supervised local Boards of Guardians under the Act of 1834 (p. 15), or the Health Boards created under the Act of 1848. The connection between sickness and poverty observed by Chadwick was now recog-

nized; the two evils were to be combated by one and the same department of State. The new Board, like the Board of Trade, consisted nominally of various members of the Privy Council, but all its functions were really exercised by its President. Fifty years later it developed into the 'Ministry of Health', but for its first decades it did little more than keep a check on the spending of public money by locally elected bodies. It got a poor start owing to the fact that Gladstone did not concern himself much with what we now call 'Social Service'; and very few people as yet assumed that the duties of Government included saving people from poverty and sickness.

An important step was taken towards democracy. Hitherto at elections each voter had had to declare openly at the polling booth which candidate he favoured. Under the *Ballot Act* (1872) he records his vote secretly, by placing a cross on a slip of paper opposite the name of his candidate. Provision is made for him to do this without being overlooked; and if he shows the marked ballot-paper to anybody it is not accepted by the returning officer. Thus the Act discouraged both intimidation and corruption, for voters cannot now be influenced by fear of offending employer or landlord, and no candidate is likely to bribe electors when he cannot be sure that he gets value for his money.

Lastly, the *Judicature Act* (1873) ended the chaotic welter of law-courts sitting in various buildings under different kinds of judges, to the bewilderment of suitors and the piling-up of costs. The Act created a single High Court of Justice consisting of three Divisions, all eventually housed in the Law Courts in the Strand (completed 1886).

'The Gentle Art of Making Enemies'. Each of these reforms gave satisfaction to some section of the nation even if it vexed others; but two of the Government's measures antagonized a great many people and pleased hardly anybody.

Hitherto the State had scarcely attempted to control the sale of alcoholic drink. Inns were licensed by local magistrates, but their hours of opening were almost unrestricted. It is significant that an Act of 1839 which closed them between midnight on

Saturdays and midday on Sundays was reported to have 'a wonderful effect on public order'. Horrible scenes of drunkenness occurred daily and nightly in every industrial district, and 80 per cent of crime was ascribed to the effects of liquor. In 1853 a 'temperance' movement to restrict and ultimately to abolish the sale of alcoholic beverages was set on foot. There was a strongly Nonconformist tone about this 'United Kingdom Alliance', and the Liberal Government tried to placate it by bringing public-houses under stricter control. The Home Secretary, H. A. Bruce, brought in a Licensing Bill which would have closed many and limited the hours of the rest. The wealthy brewing firms who owned most of them were furious at this threat to their right to run their own businesses their own way, and many other people resented the encroachment on *laissez-faire*: 'Better England free than England sober', said the Bishop of Peterborough. If the temperance agitators had countered these attacks on the bill by equally enthusiastic support it might have gone through; but they were dissatisfied because it did not provide for 'Local Option Veto', whereby a majority in any district could close all the public-houses in it. The result was that Bruce had to withdraw his bill and substitute a much milder one, which merely fixed a closing-hour of 11 p.m. Thus the Government had disappointed its Nonconformist supporters, while the brewers (and holders of brewery shares) never forgave the Liberal Party for its attack on their interests. Henceforth every public-house bar became at election-times a kind of unofficial committee-room for the Conservative candidate.

The Government also offended the Trade Unions. With the growth of prosperity in mid-century these had taken a fresh lease of life. Whole-time paid leaders like William Allen of the Engineers, Robert Applegarth of the Carpenters, and Alexander Macdonald of the Miners, gave the movement a sound, steady constitutional tone. They deprecated strikes and violence, and encouraged thrift and self-respect among their members. But the employing classes continued to be hostile, and legal decisions had undermined the position of the Unions. Merely threatening to strike had been interpreted by judges as conspiracy to injure employers; and giving a strike-breaker 'blac

looks' had been punished with imprisonment for 'intimidation'. Worst of all, when a Union prosecuted a treasurer who had decamped with its funds, the Judge declared that Trade Unions, being 'in restraint of trade'[1] were outside the protection of the law.

The Reform Act of 1867 had enfranchised the craftsmen who formed the backbone of the new type of Unions, and their votes had done much to put the Liberals in office. They naturally looked to them to do something to right their wrongs; but they were disappointed. Parliament still consisted mainly of what we have called the employing classes—landed gentry, and people with incomes from industrial shares; and this applied as much to Liberals as to Conservatives. Bruce's *Trade Unions Act* (1871) provided that the property of duly registered Unions was to be under the protection of the law, like that of any other lawful association. But this was followed by a *Criminal Law Amendment Act* which expressly prohibited threats of molestation designed to coerce either employers or employees. What this implied was quickly shown when a deputation of workers asked the Gas, Light and Coke Company for a reduction in their twelve-hour day. They were instantly dismissed; and when their comrades went on strike to get them reinstated, five of the strikers were sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for intimidating the Company by withholding their labour. So it was perhaps not wonderful that the Trade Unions determined to get rid of the Liberals at the first opportunity and see what the Conservatives would do for them.

But Gladstone's greatest cause of offence was his foreign policy; a discussion of which requires another chapter.

[1] It is a legal maxim that no contract is binding which tends to diminish commerce; but nobody had hitherto supposed that this applied to the functions of a Trade Union.

V

CRISIS IN EUROPE
1870–1875

In 1870 a few months of war on the Franco-German frontier opened a new era in European affairs. It produced a Second German Reich which was destroyed in the first World War, and a Third French Republic which was destroyed in the second World War. Britain kept out of the conflict, but an appearance of faint-heartedness towards foreign Powers hastened the fall of the Gladstone Government.

FRANCE AND GERMANY. Sadowa made a Franco-German war inevitable. For centuries France had been able to dominate Europe mainly because Germany was disunited; but now that Hohenzollern Prussia had ousted Hapsburg Austria a new potency was given to the German race. True, the south German states still held aloof, finding Prussian militarism, industrialism and Lutheranism harsh compared with their own more easy-going and gracious way of life. But Bismarck and the chiefs of the Prussian Army had hopes of soon bringing them in. All that was needed was another successful war, in which they would feel impelled to join forces with Prussia. A glorious victory over a common foe would lead to a permanent federation; and a victim was ready to hand.

Up to a point Napoleon III had fulfilled his contract. His armies had saved Turkey from Russia (with some help from Britain), and had expelled Austria from Italy (with some support from the Italians themselves); and Paris had become once more, as under Louis XIV and Napoleon I, the political hub of the world. But the creation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1859–60 had been the rather muddy high-watermark of the regime. The Emperor's later ventures, military and diplomatic, had led to ignominious failure, culminating in a disastrous attempt to foist a Hapsburg emperor on Mexico; and Frenchmen were impatient of the taxation which they involved. Furthermore, a commercial treaty with Britain (1860) by which each party lowered its duties on the other's staple products, had offended

French industrialists, who found themselves worsted in competition with British hardware and pottery. Parliamentary liberalism began to revive, and in 1869 Napoleon tried to bolster up his regime by concessions to it. An Imperial Decree set up a constitution more or less like Britain's, with a ministry responsible to an elected Chamber. But it was even more urgent that something should be done to restore French prestige abroad. The Empire could not afford to ignore the challenge implied by the rise of Prussia.

This attitude was perfectly well known to Bismarck and his colleagues, and they pressed on with preparations for the clash. The General Staff drew up detailed plans for invasion, while Bismarck took unobtrusive action to cut France off from support. To Italy he pointed out that a defeated France would have to withdraw the forces preventing Rome from becoming the capital of the kingdom (p. 39). To England he disclosed that Napoleon had planned to counter-balance Prussian aggrandisement by annexing Belgium, the independence of which was a cardinal point in British policy. Finally, he let the South German rulers know that, as an alternative to the Belgian proposition, Napoleon had suggested augmentations of French territory at their expense.

Nothing now remained but to find a *casus belli* that would make France seem the aggressor; and here again fortune favoured Bismarck. A relative of the King of Prussia was suggested as candidate for the vacant throne of Spain. Napoleon objected, and the Hohenzollern nominee, who had never really coveted that uneasy crown, promptly withdrew. This was something of a setback for Prussia, and the French could not resist emphasizing it by demanding that King William (who was at the moment taking a cure at Ems) should give a personal undertaking that the candidature should never be renewed. This was too much even for the mild old King. He refused to discuss the matter and telegraphed an account of his interview with the French ambassador to Bismarck. The latter, after making sure that the army was ready for instant action, published the King's telegram, reworded so as to make the French demand seem even more insulting than it really was. This had the effect he sought. The whole German people, south as well as north, blazed up with indignation. The King could not resist the

clamour for the army to be mobilized. The French Emperor did the same, though not without some qualms of misgiving, for he knew more than most of his bellicose advisers about the real state of his forces.

His anxiety was quickly justified, for within six weeks his Empire had ceased to exist.

ONE EMPIRE ENDS, ANOTHER BEGINS. The war was won mainly by organization. Von Moltke, Chief of Staff, and von Roon, Quartermaster-General, had arranged every detail in advance, and a fortnight after the order for mobilization every man, horse and gun was in its place on the frontier. The French army on the other hand, fell short of expectations even in numbers; and it was so unprepared for the realities of war that it was overwhelmed in defeat while thousands of soldiers were still trying to find their units; and the High Command was rotten with jealousy and intrigue.

Napoleon had hoped that southern Germany would be more or less passive, but Bismarck had played his cards so well that Bavaria and Baden responded to the call as eagerly as Prussia; and it was significant that the first defeats suffered by the French were at the hands of mainly Bavarian troops, at Weissembourg and Wörth (August 6th). Soon afterwards the main French army was split at Gravelotte; half of it was shut up in the fortress of Metz under Marshal Bazaine, and the other half was surrounded and crushed at Sedan (1st September). This was the last battle of the Empire, for Napoleon himself was with the defeated troops and surrendered to the King of Prussia. He crossed to England and died there a year or two later.

The Germans thought the war was now over, but they were wrong. The Empire had collapsed, but the French were far from accepting this as defeat for the nation. For a time it seemed as if the great days of 1792 might come again and the invaders be hurled back by a national rising, with the fiery Gambetta playing the part of Danton. A republic was proclaimed at the Hôtel de Ville and a *levée en masse* declared. The Germans invested Paris, but the seat of government was removed to Bordeaux, heroic efforts were made to raise a fresh army, and Thiers (a liberal statesman who had been Premier under

Louis Philippe) went round the capitals of Europe begging for help. But everything went wrong. In October Bazaine by a combination of treachery and imbecility surrendered Metz. And Bismarck had isolated France so completely that none of the other Powers came to her aid. The siege of Paris was pressed relentlessly, and in January the city capitulated. The lesson that union is strength had been brought home to the South German rulers, and in the great Hall of Mirrors at Versailles they formally acclaimed the King of Prussia as their overlord. The German Empire of Bismarck's dreams was founded (January 1871).

The terms accepted by France in the Treaty of Frankfurt (June 1871), though mild compared with the penalties suffered by defeated nations in our own century, seemed at the time extremely severe. The provinces Alsace and Lorraine, for centuries disputed between France and the Empire, were annexed by the new Reich, and an indemnity equivalent to £200 millions, payable in instalments over the next three years, was extorted.

Bismarck contrived a constitution for the German Empire which had the appearance of federal democracy but assured the ascendancy of the Prussian monarchy. To allay the jealousy of the other rulers the title 'German Emperor' was adopted instead of 'Emperor of Germany', and there was no Imperial crown. The Federal Council (*Bundesrath*), in which each state carried weight according to its size (Prussia had seventeen delegates, some states only one or two), was presided over by an Imperial Chancellor who was also Minister-President of Prussia, appointed at will by the King-Emperor. There was also a parliament (*Reichstag*), elected by manhood suffrage and secret ballot throughout the Reich. But this had little of the 'power of the purse' wielded by our House of Commons, for votes of credit remained in force for years, and there was nothing corresponding to our annual budget. The individual states kept their historic assemblies (*Landtage*), but these now dealt merely with 'parish pump' matters such as education and public health. For the Second Reich gave the German people far more unity than the so-called Holy Roman Empire ever achieved: a common coinage, a common post office, and above all a com-

mon army. For two centuries and more war had been 'the national industry of Prussia', and that spirit was now injected into the rest of Germany. Universal service was enforced throughout the Empire; and although Saxony and Bavaria were allowed to keep their own uniforms and military traditions in peace-time, training and equipment were the same throughout the Empire, and all German soldiers had to take an overriding oath of fealty to the Emperor.

Alsace-Lorraine proved indigestible booty. The conquerors hoped that the superiority of German to French culture would be as obvious to the inhabitants as to themselves; but the suppression of the French language failed to have the desired effect, as did the drafting of young men as conscripts to Prussian regiments. When in 1874 the provinces were allowed to send members to the Reichstag, their fifteen representatives protested their French nationality and walked out; and although their successors took their seats they continued their opposition in various forms and various degrees of intensity, right down to 1914.

THE BIRTH OF THE THIRD REPUBLIC. The French people, having swept away the Empire in the rage of defeat, had to find some other form of government. With the consent of the Germans, who wanted a stable government with which to make terms, a National Assembly met at Bordeaux in February 1871. Thiers was elected 'Chief of the Executive', but the forms of settled government were as yet lacking—it was not at all certain that the majority of Frenchmen wanted a republic. But Thiers's first task was to wring the best terms obtainable from Bismarck, with the result embodied in the Treaty of Frankfurt.

The Assembly then moved to Versailles, whence it conducted a savage struggle with the 'Commune' of Paris. The siege had cut off the capital from the rest of France for months, and the cleavage had gone deep. The Assembly, representing all France, was largely monarchist, whereas Paris was fiercely republican; and whereas Paris had wanted to continue the war, the Assembly had sacrificed two provinces rather than do so. Demoralized by six months of fighting and famine Paris felt betrayed. The National Guards elected a central committee to

organize resistance to the Assembly, and there began a second siege of Paris, to the contemptuous amusement of the German army of occupation still encamped in the suburbs. After a month the Assembly's troops broke in, and there followed *semaine sanglante*, when blood-lust ran riot and the Seine ran between walls of flame. Street by street the Communards were driven back until at the end of May they made their last stand in the cemetery of Père la Chaise. Even now the ferocity of the Provisional Government did not abate. Thousands of the defeated Parisians were shot, thousands more sentenced to imprisonment or transportation. Thiers was determined to make an end, once for all, of 'the red fool fury of the Seine'.

His next care was to pay off the indemnity and so rid France of the hated German army. He floated loans which were taken up with such avidity that the whole amount was raised a year ahead of schedule. Europe was impressed, and Germany chagrined, by this evidence of the nation's vitality.

France had now to settle her future government. In the Assembly the largest group consisted of Orleanists, partisans of the constitutional monarchy which had ruled from 1830 to 1848. There was a right wing of Legitimists who adhered to the senior branch of the Bourbons; and the rest were republicans of various shades. The combined monarchists outnumbered the combined republicans; so the childless elderly Comte de Chambord (grandson of Charles X) took as his heir the young Comte de Paris (grandson of Louise Philippe). But just when all seemed set for a restoration Chambord insisted on the re-adoption of the Bourbons' white flag in place of the revolutionary tricolour associated with Valmy and Fleurus, with Austerlitz and Jena, with Magenta and Solferino. So the legitimist restoration hung fire.

But the country could not postpone indefinitely the setting up of a permanent constitution, especially as Bismarck, feeling that he had let France off too lightly, seemed to be planning another war. So the Orleanists supported the Republicans over a number of resolutions which in the course of the next few years collectively shaped the Third Republic. The first decreed that 'The Government consists of two Chambers and a President'; and an amendment to it declared that the President should be

elected by a joint session of the two Chambers. It was later decreed that senators (one for each *département*) should be elected (for eight years) by local government bodies; while deputies were to be chosen (for four years) by constituencies based on population. And when in 1879 the anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille (14th July) was adopted as the national fête-day, and the *Marseillaise* as the national anthem, it was generally felt that the Third Republic was established.[1] And as a matter of fact it lasted longer than any other of the round dozen of constitutions which France has adopted since 1789.

GLADSTONE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. Gladstone and his Government lost a good deal of public favour over their relation to European affairs. There was a general feeling that the Union Jack did not flaunt so proudly as in 'Pam's' time, and that high ideals of Christian forbearance were out of place when they had the effect of lowering British prestige in the eyes of foreigners.

This was first felt at the outbreak of the Franco-German War. It took the Foreign Office so completely by surprise that there was no time to make any serious attempt at mediation. All that could be done was to carry on the traditional policy of safeguarding the Low Countries. In 1839 the chief Powers, including France and Prussia, had guaranteed to defend the recently created kingdom of Belgium from attack. Britain now induced each of the belligerents to promise to keep out of it, threatening to go to its defence if either of them violated its frontiers. British sympathies were at first with Germany, owing to distrust of Napoleon III; but there was a revulsion of feeling in favour of the struggling Republic. Of course, nobody could seriously suggest that we should intervene in a contest with which we had not the remotest concern, especially at a time when our army—negligible in size compared with the masses of men engaged—was in the midst of the Cardwell reconstruction. And yet there was an uneasy feeling that to remain a passive

[1] One result of this fixed life for the Assembly has been a constant change of Ministry. Our own House of Commons is chary of throwing out a Government, for this usually leads to a dissolution and a General Election; but in France the Chamber lives out its full life, and the only result of defeating a Ministry is the formation of a new coalition after wire-pulling and bargaining among the leaders of the numerous groups.

spectator while the future of Europe was being shaped just across the Channel was somewhat humiliating.

That feeling was intensified when the Tsar took advantage of the war to repudiate his promise in the Treaty of Paris to keep no warships on the Black Sea (p. 37). Palmerston had prolonged the Crimean War for half a year to extort this concession, and it was humiliating to have to admit that this sacrifice of men and money had been fruitless. Yet what could Britain do about it? Our former ally was in no condition to give any support. Were we to fight Russia single-handed in order to uphold the last remnants of a treaty after most of its other main provisions had already faded away?[1] All that the Government could do was to point out that one party to a treaty cannot abrogate it without the consent of the others, and to induce the Tsar to recognize this principle by agreeing to a conference in London which solemnly accorded him permission to do what he could not, in any case, be prevented from doing.

The Gladstone Government's next stroke in foreign relations registered an even more important point at an even greater cost to its prestige. From 1861 to 1865 the American Civil War had been fought, fundamentally to decide whether the slave-owning, cotton-growing southern States should secede from the Union and set up a Confederacy of their own. The sympathies of the British ruling class had been almost entirely with the South. But the North had won; and the American Government called Britain to account for allowing 'rebel' commerce-raiders to be built in British shipyards. They claimed that under international law this country was financially liable for all the damage done to Federal shipping by the *Alabama* and her sister ships. The dispute became heated, and there were moments when it seemed likely to lead to an open breach.

Gladstone determined to put the matter to arbitration. He had much trouble to win the consent of the American Government, and much opposition from his own colleagues; but in 1871–2 an international court—the first of its kind in history—

[1] e.g., the Danubian Provinces, restored to Turkey by the Treaty, had become the Principality of Rumania; and the Sultan had not even attempted to fulfil his treaty-obligations towards his Balkan subjects.

met at Geneva. It consisted of one representative each from the United States, Great Britain, Brazil, Italy and Switzerland. America, at first, claimed the whole cost of the last two years of the war, on the grounds that the South would have given in earlier but for British encouragement. These 'Indirect Claims' would have made a settlement almost impossible; but fortunately Charles Francis Adams, the American member of the Court (who had been ambassador in London during the war, when both nations owed much to his good sense and good feeling), did not pursue them. Ultimately the Court called on Britain to pay about 3½ millions sterling This seemed a large sum, and after all the claims of American citizens had been met a substantial surplus remained. But it was a bagatelle compared to the cost of a war, even in material wealth; and the experiment set a precious example to later generations.

And yet—once more there was a feeling that it was inglorious to talk and pay instead of fighting things out in the good old-fashioned way.

DECLINE AND FALL. Thus the strength of the Liberal Government which had entered upon its programme of reforms with such zeal and energy in 1868 crumbled away until by 1873 it was tottering. The disaffection in the country spread to the Government's ranks in the House; and when the Prime Minister brought in a bill for providing Ireland with a Catholic university (the third trunk of the 'upas-tree') it was defeated by a majority which included many Liberals. He forthwith resigned. But Disraeli was too wily to take office until the Liberal rot had gone far enough to ensure a really substantial Conservative victory at the polls. So Gladstone had to resume the harassing task of keeping together a half-hearted following.

This did not last long, however. The Postmaster-General had procured money to pay for the new telegraph system without provision for it being made in the Appropriation Bill. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Robert Lowe, was involved in the 'scandal' and had to be removed to another office. Out of this unpromising situation Gladstone tried to wring an advantage which would rehabilitate his Government. He himself took over the office in which he had won such triumphs in the past, and set about fulfilling a pledge which he had made

twenty years earlier, but which had been suspended by the Crimean War and the Mutiny: to abolish Income Tax. But nothing could avert the Government's doom. To reduce expenditure Gladstone had to ask the spending departments, particularly the War Office and the Admiralty, to cut down their estimates. The ministers said they would not feel justified in doing this until a General Election had given the nation a chance to express its views. Gladstone suddenly decided to take them at their word, and dissolved Parliament in the midst of the Christmas vacation.

All the pent-up animosities which had been aroused by recent legislation now found vent. The electorate was not to be bribed even by the abolition of Income Tax; and the result of the election was a Conservative majority which surprised Dizzy himself. Nor was this the end of the Liberals' woes. Gladstone, aggrieved at the dissensions in the Party, retired from the leadership. He was now sixty-five years old, and he intended, he said, to spend the scanty remainder of his days in quiet preparation for his latter end. When we consider how great a place he filled in the next twenty years of public life we cannot forbear a smile at this premature abdication. But at the moment the spirits of the Liberal Party, with only the somnolent Lord Hartington to lead them, were very low indeed.

VI

DISRAELI'S ZENITH
1874–1880

Six years of Gladstone were followed by six years of Disraeli. It was the climax of a remarkable career. Member of a despised race, he had become head of the Party which included most of the aristocracy. His sagacity in political manœuvre and brilliance in debate had rebuilt the Conservative Party after its split over the Corn Laws; and now, after thirty years of almost continuous opposition, he was Prime Minister with a substantial majority, a capable Cabinet, and a Sovereign who bestowed on him her highest personal favour.

THE NEW CONSERVATISM. Disraeli's roseate dream of an aristocratic 'Young England' had not lasted long, but its democratic Conservatism lived on in his mind. There were three main planks in its platform: the Constitution, British prestige abroad, and social reform. Gladstonian Liberalism was not directly opposed to these lines of policy; the distinction between the Parties lay in interpretation, and the proportion of governmental attention and parliamentary time given to them.

It is sometimes said that Gladstone excelled in home affairs, Disraeli in foreign policy, but this is over-simplification. In at least one aspect of European affairs we shall find Gladstone's ideas sounder than Disraeli's; and on the other hand although the town-planning and sanitary measures of 1874–9 were not on so large a scale as the Irish, Army and Education Acts, they dealt with evils which had retarded the development of civilized life, and they exemplified an interest in the welfare of the populace in which Gladstone was deficient.

As a matter of fact this programme of social reform fell short of Disraeli's earlier hopes; but he was now under several handicaps. Firstly, his health was breaking up. Secondly he had recently lost his devoted wife. Thirdly, having just attacked the Liberals for 'menacing every institution and every interest' he could not well embark on a programme of far-reaching legislation.

Still, some valuable reforms were put through. The Prime

Minister did not exert himself greatly over them, lacking Gladstone's exuberant zest for such work; but his keen political vision and sure guidance in counsel gave never-failing inspiration to the ministers concerned.

RICHARD CROSS AT THE HOME OFFICE. Most of the work in social reform naturally fell to the Home Secretary. In appointing Richard Cross (1823–1914)—a Lancashire business man with little or no political experience—to this office, the Prime Minister showed a shrewd judgment of character and ability—another trait in which he excelled Gladstone. For Cross turned out to be the success of the ministerial team. He certainly knocked more nails into the coffin of *laissez-faire* than any other legislator of the age.

His *Artizans' Dwelling Act* (1875) was the first serious attempt to abolish slums. Every Town Council was henceforth required to appoint a Medical Officer of Health, and empowered to buy up insanitary house-property and replace it with healthy dwellings to be let to working people at reasonable rents. By modern standards it was not a 'strong' measure; for it did not *compel* local authorities to deal with their slums—it merely allowed them to. The necessary public spirit was of slow growth; but a conspicuous example had been set at Birmingham. There Joseph Chamberlain, a prosperous screw manufacturer but a strong Radical, was mayor from 1873 to 1876, and could boast that in those four years he had made Birmingham a model municipality. In particular, forty acres of human rookery were swept away to make Corporation Street. Disraeli's main contribution to this reform was his famous quip, 'Sanitas, sanitas, omnia sanitas'; but as he himself said, it is by words (and phrases) that men are governed.

Another safeguard for health and happiness was the *Enclosure of Commons Act* (1875), which made it almost impossible henceforth for private persons to absorb public land into their estates. Among the first areas which the Act preserved for the use of the people was Epping Forest.

The law as to Trade Unions was amended by the *Employers and Workmen Act* of the same fruitful year. Gladstone's Act (p. 50) had left restrictions which Trade Unions felt to be unjust. It was now definitely laid down that a Union could not be prosecuted

for any action which would not be illegal if done by an individual, and that workmen could induce others to join in a strike by any methods short of actual threats or violence. This remained the basis of British Trade Union law for a quarter of a century, and it gave Unions a better position than they enjoyed in any other country for forty or fifty years to come.

Lastly, there was the *Factory and Workshop Act* of 1878. This was what is called a 'consolidating' statute. Since the first great Factory Act of 1833 supplementary legislation had safeguarded many different classes of workers and different aspects of their welfare. Cross now brought the regulations into a consistent scheme. Among other provisions it laid down that children under ten could not be employed at all, up to fourteen they could be employed for only half the working day, and women not for more than fifty-six hours a week. Lord Shaftesbury, now nearing the end of a long life given to this cause, declared that 'millions would bless the day that Mr. Cross became Secretary of State for the Home Department'.

Besides these four reforms sponsored by the Government a fifth was forced on them by a private member. Samuel Plimsoll, Member for Derby, had taken up the cause of the men of the Merchant Navy, who often had to risk their lives in overloaded and unseaworthy ships, sent to sea by owners who stood to gain by over-insurance. When the Government could not find time in the crowded session of 1875 to deal with the evil, Plimsoll lost his temper. He so far forgot Standing Orders as to stand in the middle of the floor apostrophizing Members as 'murderers in league with ship-owners'. A week later he returned and apologized, but found that his unparliamentary behaviour had aroused the interest and sympathy of the House. A temporary measure was rushed through, and in the following session a *Merchant Shipping Act* empowered the Board of Trade to prevent 'coffin-ships' from putting to sea. And to this day the lines painted on all British ships showing how deeply they may be laden are called the 'Plimsoll Marks'.

'BRITAIN IS AN ASIATIC POWER'. The glamour of the Orient, especially of India, had always excited Disraeli's imagination,

and most of his personal contributions to the policy of his Government were connected directly or indirectly with what he called 'the brightest jewel in Britain's crown'.

In the winter of 1873–4 the Prince of Wales was sent there on a State progress. It was the first time that any Royal Personage had visited any part of the Empire, and the tour served its purpose of calling forth demonstrations of loyalty.

Then in 1875 the Government bought the shares in the Suez Canal Company that had formerly belonged to the Khedive of Egypt. When the Canal was begun in 1863 Palmerston had refused to support the project, feeling that it would do British interests more harm than good; but now that it was cut (by a French engineer with mainly French capital), and now that the rapid supersession of sail by steam was changing the conditions of ocean transport, those interests clearly demanded control over what had become a ganglion of the routes to Asia and Australasia. At the moment when Disraeli learned that the shares were on the market Parliament was not sitting, but he raised the money on his own responsibility from his friends the Rothschilds. His action was acclaimed as a master-stroke by all but a few disgruntled members of the Opposition such as Gladstone and it proved a very profitable investment; though subsequent events did something to justify Palmerston's reluctance to see those regions become a vital 'interest' for this country.

In the following year Disraeli induced Parliament to pass a *Royal Titles Act*, making the Queen 'Empress of India'. He had the imagination to feel what a difference it would make to Indians to have as sovereign, not the parliamentary monarch of an alien island, but an Emperor—a king of kings. Victoria was highly gratified; but the proposal came in for a good deal of criticism. The title had been tarnished by the career of Napoleon III, and some people said it was 'un-English'. To this Disraeli replied that it was not for use in England but in India; and had not Edmund Spenser used it in dedicating *The Faerie Queene* to Queen Elizabeth? Opposition died down, and the change had the effect its author anticipated.

A fourth example of Disraeli's preoccupation was his appointment of Lord Lytton (son of the novelist) as Viceroy, with the express task of strengthening the defences of the north-west

frontier against a possible attack from Russia. Lytton put pressure on the Amir of Afghanistan, through whose land an invading army would have to pass, to receive an envoy at the court of Kabul, where he would be able to keep a check on Russian intrigues.

In August 1876 the Prime Minister transferred himself to the House of Lords as Earl of Beaconsfield. Latterly a martyr to gout, he found the long hours and constant hurly-burly of the Commons too much for his ebbing strength. His mordant and jaunty leadership of that House was replaced by that of the worthy but drab Sir Stafford Northcote.

THE EASTERN QUESTION AGAIN. As Benjamin Disraeli the Prime Minister had been merely a consummate parliamentarian with a special interest in India; as Earl of Beaconsfield he became a leading figure in the affairs of Europe. For his concern for British interests in India now led him to intervene in a Russo-Turkish quarrel about the Balkan peninsula.

The Eastern Question was becoming more complicated every year. The tide of nationalism, main cause of disturbance in Europe ever since 1815, was now seeping into Balkan backwaters. The unification of Italy made the Southern Slavs—some of whom (e.g. the Serbs) had their own prince under Turkish suzerainty, while others (e.g., the Bosnians) were under the Sultan's direct rule, and yet others (e.g. the Croats) were Austrian subjects—feel that they, too, ought to be united in an independent nation-state. And this feeling was stimulated by an influential party in Russia. There the nationalist spirit led to 'Pan-Slavism'—a fervent belief that it was the mission of the Orthodox Church 'to purge the West from the putrefaction of industrialism, socialism and atheism' under the leadership of Holy Russia. This impulse had latterly been focused on encouraging the lesser Slav-Orthodox peoples of the Balkans to throw off the yoke of the Sultan. Tsar Alexander hoped thus to further the traditional aims of Russia—an outlet to the Mediterranean—by winning Constantinople and the Straits.

And Austria eagerly took up the challenge; for having just lost her leadership in Germany and her provinces in Italy she was equally intent on strengthening her Balkan interests—perhaps extending them to the Mediterranean at Salonica.

Furthermore the Sultan's government seemed liable to fall into deliquescence at any moment and Beaconsfield was not the man to let their future fate be settled without the participation of Great Britain, whose interests would be vitally affected if any other Power gained control of the eastern Mediterranean.

Thus the stage was set for another act in the long drawn-out drama.

It opened in 1875 with a revolt in Bosnia provoked by Turkish officials trying to extort fresh taxes after a bad harvest. The rebels were supported by volunteers from Serbia, and the Pan-Slav organization in Moscow urged the Tsar to intervene on their behalf. The foreign ministers of the three Emperors met at Vienna to discuss the situation. Austria, already in possession of Croatia and Dalmatia, had hopes of getting hold of Bosnia, which lay between those provinces; and these hopes would be frustrated if it were absorbed by a Greater Serbia under the protection of Russia. But Alexander II, though not impervious to Pan-Slav sentiment, was reluctant to be drawn into war, and Bismarck summed up the Prussian attitude by his remark that the whole peninsula was not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier. So the ministers agreed to shelve the problem by 'The Vienna Note' (October 1875), calling on the Sultan to make certain reforms under international supervision. When this was sent for approval to the other Powers, France and Italy agreed to it without demur, but Britain declined. Disraeli called it 'a piece of imbecility' thus to trench on the sovereign power of the Sultan. And he sent the Mediterranean fleet to Besika Bay, just outside the Straits—ostensibly to protect British lives and property at Constantinople should the Note cause trouble there, actually as a reminder of Britain's irresistible naval power.

'THE BULGARIAN HORRORS'. At this point (July 1876) there began to appear in the newspapers of western Europe blood-curdling accounts of atrocities in Bulgaria. The Bulgars, excited by the Bosnian revolt, had broken into rebellion. Sultan Abdul Hamid had suppressed this without difficulty, and his Bashi-Bazouks (semi-savage irregular cavalry) had wiped out whole

villages. Children had been dragged behind galloping horsemen, women horribly mutilated, congregations burned in churches. Disraeli, on the strength of mistaken reports from the ambassador at Constantinople, sneered at what he called 'coffee-house babble'; but the public conscience of Europe was stirred—in Britain by the voice of Gladstone. A couple of years of theological and Homeric studies had restored all his old zest for public life, and he now came charging back into the fray in response to the call of the oppressed nationalities of Europe. Tens of thousands of copies were sold of his pamphlet on *The Bulgarian Horrors*, in which he demanded that the Turks should 'clear bag and baggage from the provinces they have desolated and profaned'. And at Blackheath, in the first of a series of flaming orations all over the country, he lamented that 'the Government responsible for these atrocities turns for sympathy and support, not to any of the historical homes of oppression, but alas! to free, Christian, humane England!'

To Beaconsfield this seemed obnoxious humbug. The Tsar, he argued—potentially the most dangerous enemy of our Empire—was trying to aggrandize himself at the expense of our old ally the Turk. By showing him a firm and united front we could restrain him without actually going to war; but Gladstone, with his hypocritical cant, was breaking up that front with rhetoric which seemed to justify Russian intervention in the Balkans.

The political rivalry of these two men intensified into a personal vendetta. Each felt that the other was demoralizing the nation. In this conflict the Queen was an impassioned Disraelian. She felt that as Prime Minister Gladstone had upset Army and Church, had kowtowed to Russia and America, had inflicted on her long-winded disquisitions, and had pestered her to come out of the seclusion into which she had retired on the death of her beloved Albert; and now in opposition he was obstructing the anti-Russian policy of the kindest and most understanding of Ministers, who wrote her bright despatches and paid her charming compliments.[1]

The Tsar twice tried to get the other Powers to join him in intervening, but the Sultan, encouraged by the attitude of

[1] Disraeli avowed that in dealing with royalty he found it best to 'lay on flattery with a trowel'.

Britain, refused to brook interference with his right to do what he liked to his own subjects. At last Alexander was swept by the Pan-Slav current at his court into sending an army to invade Turkish dominions across the Danube. After a check at the mountain fortress of Plevna (September-November 1877), where the Turks under Osman Pasha held out for some months, the Russians carried all before them and came within striking distance of Constantinople.

This caused a revulsion in Britain. The old hatred of Russia as a barbaric ogre-Power surged up again, crowding the Bulgarian horrors out of the public mind; and sympathies veered back to 'our old comrades-in-arms' so gallantly facing the monster. Queen Victoria became almost frantic with rage. 'If England is to kiss Russia's feet', she wrote to Beaconsfield, 'the Queen will not be a party to it, but will lay down her crown. . . . Oh, if the Queen were a man, she would like to go and give those Russians such a beating!' But the Prime Minister had no real intention of going to war, while Derby,[1] his Foreign Minister, was for peace at almost any price, and Salisbury,[2] his Secretary for India, held views not very different from Gladstone's—apart from patrician disdain for Radical ranting. So Beaconsfield had to appease the Queen and the Russophobe public by a show of firmness without actually doing anything to make war inevitable.

Meanwhile the Balkan peoples took advantage of the Sultan's defeat: the Serbs took Nish, the Greeks conquered Thessaly, the Montenegrins reached the Adriatic. So the Sultan had to accept the Russian terms embodified in the Treaty of San Stephano (March 1878). This recognized the full independence of Serbia and Montenegro, and created a principality of Bulgaria stretching from the Danube to the sea, to be under Russian tutelage for the first five years.

'PEACE WITH HONOUR'. These terms aroused indignation in Vienna and London. Andrassy, the Austrian Chancellor, complained that Russia's influence in the peninsula would be augmented, and Austria's security endangered, by the creation of an enlarged and sovereign Serbia next door to her Croat and

[1] Son of Disraeli's former chief.
[2] The former Lord Cranborne.

Slovene subjects. Beaconsfield declared that this big Bulgaria would be a standing threat to the Sultan, and would bring Russian influence to the Aegean, on the flank of Britain's main

route to India. He called up the Army reserve and brought Indian troops to Malta. Derby thought these moves needlessly provocative, and resigned; but Salisbury, who succeeded him at the Foreign Office, sent out a circular letter which brought

Germany, France and Austria to agree with Britain that the Balkan settlement made after the Crimean War could only be revised by common consent. Russia, impressed by Britain's vigorous measures, reluctantly agreed to a Congress at Berlin, where Bismarck would preside[1] and act as 'honest broker' (to use his own expression) in bringing about a settlement.

Before it met Salisbury came to secret understandings with each of the chief disputants. With Andrassy he agreed that it would be a good plan for Austria to 'occupy and administer' Bosnia and Herzegovina, while leaving them under the overlordship of the Sultan. With Gortshakoff he agreed that Bulgaria should not extend beyond the Balkan mountains. And Turkey agreed that if Russia acquired any territory south of the Caucasus Britain should have Cyprus as a base from which to protect the Sultan from any renewed aggression.

The Congress of Berlin (June 1878) was the first meeting of 'The Concert of Europe' since the Treaty of Paris. (The fact that in 1856 it had met in Paris under Napoleon III and now in 1878 it met in Berlin under Bismarck was significant.) The British delegates were Beaconsfield and Salisbury. Although the main issues had been settled in advance there were acrimonious disputes about the frontiers of Bulgaria, and Britain had to buy off French objections to her acquisition of Cyprus by promising to be equally compliant if France later took Tunis. When the Turks protested that they were quite able to manage Bosnia without Austria's aid, Bismarck roughly reminded them that they owed much to the Congress and must accept its decisions as a whole. The Treaty trisected the big Bulgaria of San Stephano. The most northerly strip was to be a Principality, tributary to the Sultan but under the guidance of the Tsar; the middle strip, 'Eastern Rumelia', was to have a Christian Governor under the Sultan; and Macedonia, bordering the Aegean, was to remain under direct Turkish rule.

When the British delegates came home they were greeted with acclamations which showed how relieved the nation was to be rid of the spectre of war, and the Prime Minister assured the cheering multitude outside Charing Cross station that he

[1] It is a diplomatic custom that the minister of the Power which acts as host to an international congress shall preside over it.

was bringing them 'Peace with Honour'. He and his colleague received the Garter, the highest honour in the Queen's gift.

Later events and cooler reflections somewhat modified these raptures. Peace had never been in danger except from Britain's insistence on a splitting of Bulgaria which was undone a few years later without ill effects to anybody. And Russian influence there was very short-lived: the Bulgars proved extremely jealous of it. Gladstone had been right in prophesying that the spirit of nationality would offer to Russian encroachments 'the stoutest of barriers—the breasts of freemen'. The continuance of Turkish rule in Macedonia meant further decades of misgovernment there. And the Austrian occupation of Bosnia was a slow fuse which led to the explosion of the first World War. Cyprus was of little use to Britain, and it is interesting to speculate on what would have been the effect if Beaconsfield had adopted Bismarck's suggestion and taken Egypt instead.[1]

Still, when all is said, this Treaty of Berlin gave Europe peace for thirty-six years—a period nearly as long as that after the settlement of 1814, and a great deal longer than was secured by that of 1919.

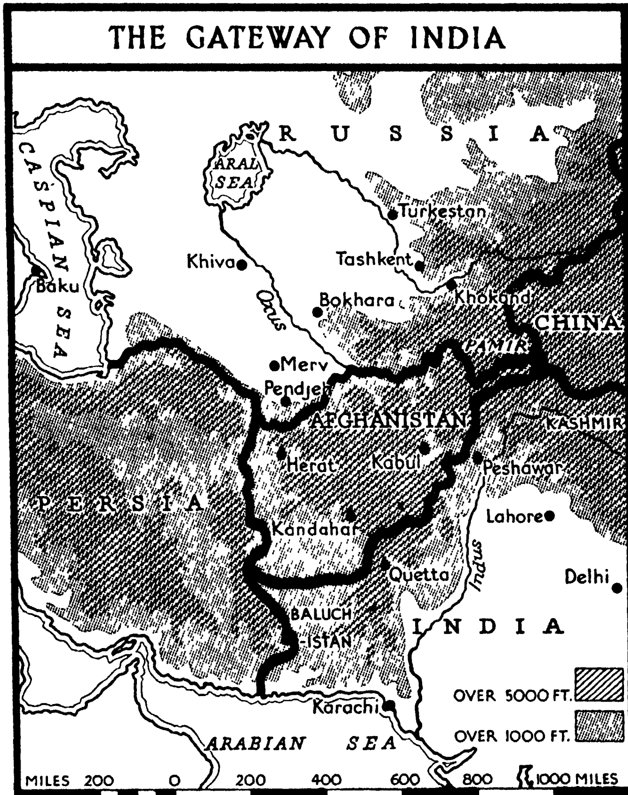
THE 'FORWARD POLICY' GOES ADRIFT. Some people expected Beaconsfield to use his Berlin popularity to renew his lease of power by an immediate election. But it would have been sharp practice for a Prime Minister to dissolve prematurely a House which was steadily supporting him, to snatch a party advantage. Nor was it at all certain that the cheers of the London mob represented the feelings of the nation as a whole, especially in the industrial North and Midlands, where Gladstone held such sway.

All the same, 'Peace with Honour' was the zenith of the Government's fortunes. From then on one after another of its lines of policy came to a bad end, and within two years it had gone down to defeat.

The first blow fell in Afghanistan. The envoy sent under Lord Lytton to control the Amir's foreign relations was murdered with all his staff within a few weeks of his arrival. A punitive

[1] His refusal was due mainly to anxiety not to impair the Sultan's prestige.

expedition had to be sent under General Sir Frederick Roberts, who in the course of his campaign made a famous march through a roadless mountain wilderness from Kabul to Kanda-



har. But Britain did not want, and could not maintain, Afghanistan as a permanent possession; and the net result of the 'Forward Policy' there was a costly expedition and a troublesome problem.

It made an equally unpropitious start in South Africa. The two Dutch colonies had gained independence by the Conventions of 1852 and 1854 (p. 21), Cape Colony had become self-

governing in 1853; and although Natal remained a Crown Colony it had been left to shift for itself. But as time went on it began to look as if this 'letting well alone' would end in the extinction of both the white races. The Boer Republics were so sparsely populated and so loosely organized that they could not beat off attacks by warlike African races from the north. The Zulus were now preparing a large-scale invasion under their king Cetewayo. If they overran the Transvaal, would they not go on to destroy Natal, and then with the impetus of success sweep right down through Cape Colony?

This was the situation when Disraeli became Prime Minister. He saw that the interests of the four provinces were intertwined, and his Colonial Secretary, Lord Carnarvon, sent out Sir Bartle Frere to contrive some sort of federalization. Frere found that the Boers had provoked the Zulus by unsuccessful attacks, and were now dreading retaliation. Some of them, at any rate, asked for British protection even at the price of their independence. Acting on this information, the British Government annexed the Transvaal, promising it colonial self-government within a federated South Africa under the Union Jack. Thus the policy of non-intervention was once more reversed.

In 1879 the expected Zulu attack came. As usual the British forces on the spot were quite insufficient for their task, and they were wiped out at Isandlhwana. Natal would have been overrun but for the defence of Rorke's Drift by a heroic handful. In the end the Zulus were decisively defeated at Ulundi and Cetewayo was captured; but the prestige of the British Army was damaged by the difficulty it had found in dealing with these primitive warriors. And the moment the Zulu menace was removed the Boers began to chafe at the loss of their independence.

Here was plenty of fuel for the fires of Gladstone's wrath against 'Beaconsfieldism'. Support of the unspeakable Turk, wanton aggression in Afghanistan, the guileful acquisition of the Transvaal: these were topics well suited to his rhetoric; and equally so was the rise in national expenditure which they involved. To him the errors of Lord Beaconsfield were not mere matters of opinion, but crimes against God and man which it was the urgent duty of a Christian to combat with all his might.

As an opportunity for an active onslaught on the Government he became parliamentary candidate for Midlothian, which had long been a safe Tory seat. There, towards the end of 1879, he addressed a series of great public meetings. In those days leading statesmen seldom made speeches outside Parliament save in their own constituencies at election-times. Certainly nothing like this sustained campaign had ever been attempted. 'He bore his hearers through long chains of strenuous periods, calling up by the marvellous transformations of mien a succession of images—as if he were now a keen hunter, now some eager bird of prey, now a charioteer of fiery steeds kept well in hand; and now and again we seemed to hear the pity or dark wrath of a prophet, with the mighty rushing wind and the fire running along the ground.'[1]

This 'drenching rhetoric', as Beaconsfield called it, had a decisive effect on the public mind; and the election of 1880 resulted in the return of 347 Liberals, 140 Conservatives, and 65 Irish Nationalists. This result was as surprising as it was painful to Beaconsfield and his adoring sovereign. To the Queen it seemed that the country had gone mad. Her only consolation was that as Gladstone was no longer the titular leader of the Liberal Party she would not have to suffer him as Prime Minister. But Lord Hartington, when she sent for him, pointed out that a Liberal Cabinet without Gladstone was as inconceivable as one in which he would play a subordinate part He declined even to attempt the task of forming one. So Victoria was compelled to send once more for the old statesman whom she could never bring herself to like or to trust.

[1] Morley, *Life of Gladstone*.

VII

THE MINISTRY OF ALL THE TROUBLES 1880–1885

Gladstone's second Government seemed born to trouble. It was faced with a number of difficult problems, and despite high capacity and excellent intentions it mishandled them all. Apart from the County Franchise it achieved little legislation, and on the other hand it came to grief in South Africa, in Egypt and the Sudan, and above all in Ireland.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION. The Second Gladstone Government contained some very able men, and was supported by a bigger majority than any since the great Reform Act; but it was really a coalition. It consisted for the most part of aristocratic Whigs such as Earl Granville and the Marquis of Hartington (1833–1908). But Gladstone found himself obliged to admit a new element in the person of Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914) and Sir Charles Dilke—progressive and aggressive Radicals, inclined even to republicanism. Never before had a man of Chamberlain's 'self-made' and Nonconformist antecedents been a member of a British Cabinet. But the Liberal victory had been largely due to his initiative in organizing the voting-power of the Party by a Liberal Federation (commonly called 'the Caucus') which provided constituencies with funds, candidates, speakers and 'literature'. In the circumstances Gladstone had to admit him, as President of the Board of Trade, while his friend Dilke became Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

The Cabinet was a difficult team to drive, and its charioteer was getting too old to hold it together. The 'Grand Old Man' (as his fervent admirers were now beginning to call him) was apt to be absorbed in the one matter which engaged his attention at the moment; and his immense prestige and almost terrible loftiness of character made him remote from his colleagues. Indeed, 'colleagues' is hardly the word for them. Whereas members of the late Cabinet called their chief 'Dizzy' (at any rate behind his back), Gladstone's subordinates scarcely spoke or even thought of him as anything but 'Mr. G'.

While the Cabinet contained these elements of weakness, the Opposition contained unsuspected elements of strength. Besides the regular Conservatives led by Northcote there was now a compact Irish Nationalist Party. An unforeseen effect of the Ballot Act was to enable Irish peasants to elect Members of their own race and outlook instead of having to vote for men of the landlord class who belonged to one of the great English Parties. And the new group was now demanding a revival of the Dublin Parliament extinguished by the Act of Union (p. 30). In the late Parliament they had been led by Isaac Butt, an amiable ex-Liberal who brought in annually a motion in favour of Home Rule, but accepted its defeat without demur. But he was now superseded by a man of very different mettle. Charles Stewart Parnell (1846–91) was of Anglo-Saxon descent, educated at English schools and Cambridge University, and an Anglo-Irish landlord. But he was disgusted at the effects of English rule in Ireland, and under his stern command the Nationalists devised methods for impeding all other parliamentary business until their demands were met.

There was also a little group of Conservatives who came to be known as 'The Fourth Party'. The official leaders of their Party were too negative and forbearing for them, and they set themselves to hinder, thwart and wreck the work of the Government in every possible way. The most conspicuous of them were A. J. Balfour (1848–1930), the elegant and cultured nephew of Lord Salisbury, and Lord Randolph Churchill (1849–95), younger brother of the Duke of Marlborough. The public was very amused at the way the latter David of debate slung his sharp stones of sarcasm against the Liberal Goliath. And he found the old man fatally ready to be drawn into wordy explanations and angry arguments which wasted precious parliamentary time—exactly what the Fourth Party wanted.

THE BRADLAUGH EPISODE. The first chance came with the very swearing-in of the new Parliament. Charles Bradlaugh (1833–91), elected for Northampton, asked to be allowed to make a solemn affirmation instead of taking the usual oath. By vocation he was a lecturer and writer in support of atheism. Of humble origin, he had made his way, in the face of unpopular views, by his own force of character and integrity. Many men in public

life conformed outwardly to religious observances which were little more than empty forms to them, but Bradlaugh was too honest to take that easy course. Moreover, he wanted to bring to an issue the question whether affirmation could be substituted for the oath in Parliament as it could in the Law Courts. The Speaker left it to the House, which would probably have let sleeping dogs lie but for the Fourth Party, who seized eagerly on a chance to worry the Government. Gladstone was in a painful position. Christianity was the chief thing in life to him, but he felt bound to uphold the Liberal principles of toleration, which laid him open to the charge of 'supporting atheism and blasphemy'. Many Liberals, fearing that imputation, voted with the Conservatives in deciding that all Members must swear. Bradlaugh now proposed to take this course, but the House by a majority of three refused to let him do so, and declared his seat vacant. Northampton re-elected him, and there arose a dispute which reminds us of Wilkes and the Middlesex Election in the time of George III: Can the Commons reject a duly-elected Member? Four times in the next four years the House refused to accept his election, and each time he was triumphantly returned by his faithful constituents, who felt that he represented the freedom of thought and speech which is a British birthright. He repeatedly demanded to be allowed either to affirm or to swear; he was forcibly ejected; he was imprisoned in the Clock Tower; he was prosecuted in the Law Courts; still he fought on with unquenchable spirit. At last he was victorious, for when he came up to take oath at the opening of the next Parliament (1886) the new Speaker would not let his right be questioned. A Conservative Ministry was now in power, and Bradlaugh-baiting had lost its charm when no longer associated with Gladstone-baiting. He afterwards became a useful and popular Member; and in 1888 a *Government Oaths Act* conceded the right to affirm instead of taking the oath.

THE FRUITS OF THE FORWARD POLICY. In March 1881 Lord Beaconsfield died, his last months somewhat shadowed by the frustration of his policy in Afghanistan and South Africa.

It had become clear that nothing short of a large permanent British garrison would compel the Amir to submit to the control of his foreign relations; and it was equally clear that the British

taxpayer would not, and the Indian taxpayer could not, pay the cost. Roberts's expedition having restored British prestige, a return was made to the earlier policy of letting Afghanistan be an independent but friendly buffer-state between Russian ambitions and British India.

In South Africa the situation was more complicated. The annexation of the Transvaal had been bitterly attacked by Gladstone in his Midlothian campaign, but he hesitated to undo the accomplished fact; and the Boers, disappointed that the change of Government in Britain had not restored their independence, rose in rebellion and invaded Natal. The tiny force at the disposal of Sir George Colley, Governor of that colony, was quite insufficient to repel them. He made an armistice, and sent to the Boer Government the offer of a full discussion of their claims requiring a reply within forty-eight hours. Without waiting for this he took the offensive, marching up Majuba Hill, which commanded a Boer outpost at Laing's Nek. The little force was driven back, leaving Colley and ninety of his men dead on the hillside, while a reply was on its way from President Kruger accepting his proposal for a conference (February 1881).

What was the British Government to do now? The Radical element wanted to continue the withdrawal as if nothing had happened, the high Whigs were for maintaining the annexation at all costs, and an intermediate group suggested defeating the Boers before restoring their independence. But Britain could not well annex a province against the almost unanimous wish of its inhabitants, especially as the Cape Dutch were threatening to rise in support of the Boers. Nor did it seem worthy of the British Empire to feel obliged to prove its ability to conquer a few hundred farmers. At any rate Gladstone's ideals of Christian statecraft left him no option. The Boers were granted complete autonomy, except that they admitted British suzerainty, promised to admit all white settlers to equal civil rights, and agreed to have no relations with foreign Powers.

There matters rested—for the time. Once again, it is not easy to see what else Gladstone could have done; but it was unfortunate that so early in the life of the Government he should have had to take a line which seemed to confirm his opponents'

(and the Queen's) doubts of his firmness in dealing with foreign and imperial affairs.

MORE TROUBLE IN IRELAND. Meanwhile the Irish Nationalists were deliberately making nuisances of themselves. Parnell had no literary airs and graces, but he knew what he wanted and let nothing stand in the way of an icy determination to get it. He gained such an ascendancy over his Party as few parliamentary leaders have ever held. His frigid, haughtily aloof leadership welded them into solid phalanx which made up for its small numbers by its discipline.

And another new force was coming into being over in Ireland. Michael Davitt had as a lad worked in a Lancashire cotton mill (where he lost an arm in the machinery), and had ther become familiar with militant Trade Unionism. While serving a sentence of fifteen years' penal servitude as a Fenian he founded the Land League, a sort of peasants' trade union. Th members undertook not to outbid each other in offering rents; any who did so were treated as 'blacklegs', often with a charge of buckshot. If a landlord made himself objectionable—by evictions, for instance—his tenants were to go on strike by refusing to pay rent, and the League was to support them.

Parnell—himself an Irish landlord—disliked the scheme, but he saw that it would greatly strengthen his parliamentary campaign, and he became President of the League. It was he who suggested its most powerful weapon. Anybody, whether landlord or tenant, who offended it was to be sent to Coventry: no one was to have any dealings with him. This was really a substitute for the physical violence which Parnell always deprecated. The first to suffer under it was a landlord's agent named Boycott, and a new word was thus added to the English language.

The situation was aggravated by another potato famine in 1878–80. Failure of the crop made the peasant unable to pay his rent, and this meant eviction, and the workhouse or death from starvation and exposure. The yearly total of evictions rose from about five hundred in 1878 to over two thousand in 1880. As a matter of fact it paid landlords to pull down the peasants' hovels and turn estates over to pasture. When General Gordon visited Ireland in 1880, he described the condition of the peasantry as 'worse than that of any other people in the world, let

alone Europe'. Despair led to arson, cattle-maiming and murder; and there was a soldier or a policeman for every thirty inhabitants, vainly trying to keep order.

This was the situation when Gladstone took office in 1880. His Chief Secretary for Ireland, W. E. Forster (the hero of the Education Act) was an advanced democrat, but a firm believer in law and order. He took the view that the disturbances were caused by 'village ruffians' who cunningly kept out of the trouble they stirred up. So he brought in a drastic Coercion Bill empowering magistrates to lock people up without trial. Not unnaturally the Nationalist Party opposed it tooth and nail. They carried speech-making to such lengths that a twenty-hour sitting was required for the second reading; and capped this by prolonging the debate on the third reading from 4 o'clock on a Monday afternoon till 9 o'clock on Wednesday morning. This led to a new Standing Order giving the Speaker power to apply the 'Closure' to debates which are obviously being prolonged for the purpose of obstruction. Thus the Parnellites had destroyed for ever the freedom of debate on which the House had always prided itself.

Gladstone regretted Forster's repressive measures, but during 1880 he had been too absorbed in reversing 'Beaconsfieldism' to make the second attack on the problem of Irish land-tenure which was the only alternative. When he produced this new Land Bill in 1881 it proved to be the longest and most complicated measure ever brought before Parliament. It embodied what became known as 'The Three F's': Fair rents, to be fixed by a tribunal of judges; Fixity of tenure, so that a tenant could not be turned out so long as he paid his rent; and Free sale, which entitled him to sell his interest in his holding. Broadly speaking, it divided the rights of ownership between landlord and tenant. The Conservatives were very hostile because it interfered with landlords; the Nationalists were offended because they had not been consulted; even among Liberals few understood it. To Gladstone therefore fell the whole burden of explaining it and defending it, for the whole four months that it was before the House.

Parnell could not accept it because the Irish-American Clan-na-Gael opposed any measure that might make the Irish peasant content under the British flag. He himself did not feel

like that, but he dared not offend the organization which provided his Party with most of its funds. So he resisted the working of the Act, urging tenants not to use the new Land Courts. This was too much for the patience even of Gladstone; and as outrages continued unabated he felt that he must demonstrate that (in his own words) the resources of civilization were not exhausted. In November 1881 Parnell and several of his chief supporters were arrested under Forster's Coercion Act and lodged in Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin. This move was very popular in England (it was one of the few actions of the Government which the Queen heartily endorsed); but it did not lead to any improvement in Ireland—quite the reverse. Towns as well as rural districts were infested with murder gangs; jurymen who condemned gunmen were shot in the street. Parnell was also dissatisfied, feeling that he was losing his grip on the situation. So, in April 1882, Gladstone authorized Chamberlain to enter into secret discussions with a representative of Parnell, a Captain O'Shea. The result was the 'Kilmainham Treaty' by which Parnell was to be released and, in return, was to use his best endeavours to restore order. Forster, indignant at the reversal of his policy, resigned, and Gladstone replaced him as Chief Secretary by Lord Frederick Cavendish, a young man whom everybody respected and admired. It was hoped that a 'New Departure' would give a fresh start to Anglo-Irish relations. But it was not to be. Within a few days of his arrival in Dublin Cavendish was stabbed to death while crossing Phoenix Park in broad daylight (May 1882). The murderers, members of a gang called 'The Invincibles', considered themselves super-patriots, but their deed was one of the most disastrous even in the disastrous history of Ireland.[1] The 'New Departure' broke down. Another Coercion Act was rushed through Parliament, and the old story of suspicion, repression and violence began again.

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to the Government was the course of events in the Middle East.

Khedive Ismail, who ruled Egypt (nominally as a satrap of the Sultan of Turkey) from 1863 to 1879, was fascinated by the wonders of European civilization. With money borrowed chiefly from British and French financiers he promoted railways, telegraphs, harbours and irrigation works, besides squandering vast sums on wanton luxury.[1] The interest on the loans became an impossible burden on his corrupt and leaky exchequer, despite crushing taxes extorted from the luckless *fellaheen* by flogging. For a time he staved off disaster by selling his Suez Canal shares to Britain, but the relief was only temporary. The holders of Egyptian bonds, fearing that he would become bankrupt, put pressure on their respective governments to intervene. The result was an Anglo-French *Caisse de la Dette* at Cairo, into which all revenue was to be paid so that the interest due to European creditors could be the first charge on it; and the Khedive had to act on the advice of British and French administrators. When Ismail tried to throw off these restrictions the two Powers got the Sultan to dethrone him in favour of his son Tewfik, and the 'Dual Control' was made firmer than ever.

But now came a new complication. An officer of the Egyptian Army named Arabi Pasha raised a mutiny against the system by which high rank was reserved for the ruling caste. The frightened young Khedive submitted; but the movement developed of its own impetus into a demand for the expulsion of foreigners. When fifty Europeans were massacred at Alexandria an Anglo-French squadron was sent to protect the survivors and to prevent the rebels from fortifying the city. The pacific Gladstone Government would scarcely have taken this step but for the initiative of the ebullient French Premier Gambetta; but when the rebels defied the allies and it became necessary to bombard their forts, the British ships were left to act alone. There had been a change of government in France, and Gambetta's successor reversed his policy—albeit with assurances that, although France withdrew from Egyptian affairs she would not object to the British Government taking any steps it chose. This

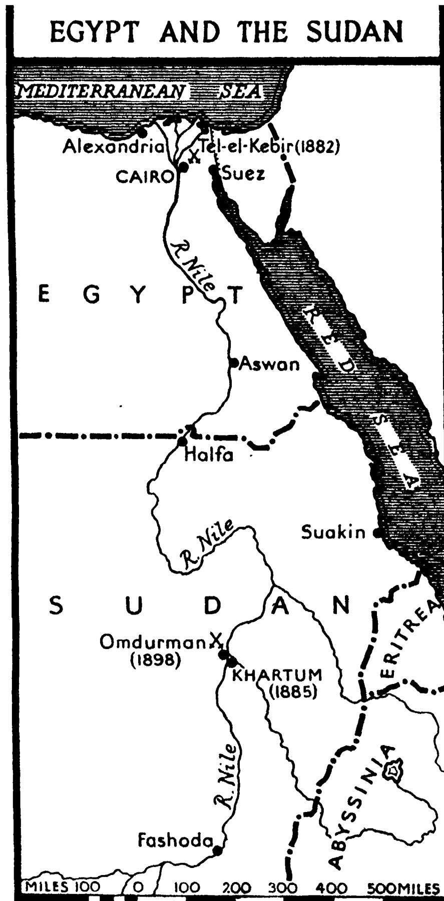
[1] One fortunate form of this extravagance was the commissioning of a spectacular grand opera from Verdi for the celebrations at the opening of the Canal. The result was *Aïda*.

was an unexpected and unwelcome situation for the Gladstone Government, but they could not withdraw at this stage, leaving Egypt under a military adventurer whose regime would inevitably become bankrupt and fall under the domination of some other Power (Russia?) which would thus get control of the Canal. So a small but efficient army was sent out under Sir Garnet Wolseley, and Arabi's forces were obliterated at Tel-el-Kebir (September 1882). Even now it was evident that if the Khedive were left to his own resources he would again succumb to financial disaster and military disaffection. So Britain agreed to support him with troops and officials until his authority should be firm enough and his ministers efficient enough to enable him to hold his own.

GORDON AND KHARTUM. So far the Government had handled the Egyptian situation with a firmness which rather disconcerted its critics; but there was more trouble brewing away to the south. The Sudan had been conquered by an earlier Khedive, and was garrisoned by Egyptian troops mostly commanded by retired British officers in the Khedive's service. His authority was now manifested there by little more than spasmodic efforts to collect taxes and to check Arab slave-trading. On an island in the upper Nile there lived during the 'seventies a sort of Moslem saint named Mohammed Ahmed, who prophesied, worked miracles, and attracted disciples from all the country round. In 1880 he announced that he was the Mahdi, the last of the twelve successors of the Prophet, come on earth to drive out the Egyptian oppressors and the white officials who ground down the faithful with taxes and corrupted their souls with the abominations of the West. Whole tribes joined him, and he began to organize a formidable military state. Soon all the Sudan was under his sway. The outposts held by Egyptian detachments were in imminent danger, and it seemed that even Khartum, the capital, with its 50,000 inhabitants, might be captured.

What was the British Government to do about it? Events had placed upon them an unwanted responsibility for Egypt; were they to pour out British blood and money to reconquer the Sudan for their new clients? After some hesitation they decided to induce the Khedive to abandon the province until he could

recover it for himself, and meanwhile to send an officer to extricate the Anglo-Egyptian soldiers and civilians. It was not easy to find one with the necessary qualifications—courage, initiative,



organizing power, and an intimate knowledge of the country In an unlucky moment for all concerned they decided to send General Charles Gordon (1833–85).

Gordon was a former officer of the Royal Engineers who had.

found employment in many parts of the world—notably in China, where he had put down a rebellion against the Emperor, and more recently in the Sudan, where he had been Governor-General under the Khedive. A man of dauntless spirit, sustained by fervent evangelical piety, he was the personification of the Christian warrior, and as such caught the imagination of the British public. The Government was warned by its Consul-General at Cairo, Sir Evelyn Baring (who had known Gordon during his service in the Sudan) that he would be reluctant to abandon his old Sudanese friends to the Mahdi, and that his self-willed temperament would make him unreliable in carrying out a policy of which he did not approve. But journalists who knew nothing of these circumstances started a newspaper campaign in favour of 'Gordon for the Sudan!' Gladstone, his mind at the moment absorbed in a County Franchise Bill, gave way before the tide of public feeling. This surrender to popular clamour and the imperialist Whigs in the Cabinet turned out to be a disastrous error of judgment.

For Gordon acted just as Baring anticipated. His instructions were to go to Khartum and report on the best method of evacuation, as a preliminary to carrying the operation out; but when he got there it seemed unthinkable that the place and people should be abandoned to 'a lot of stinking dervishes'. Instead of acting on his orders he poured out a stream of telegrams to his official chief at Cairo. Baring adhered frigidly to his instructions. Gordon, becoming exasperated, determined not to be the tool of a 'dastardly' policy. He felt sure that if he held on long enough an expedition would have to be sent to relieve him, and that with a couple of thousand good troops there was nothing he could not achieve.

But he came up against a nature as obstinate as his own. Gladstone felt that an attempt was being made to force his hand —indeed, Gordon admitted as much in an indiscreet communication to the Press. He was determined not to give way this time to the newspapers now demanding the immediate despatch of a relieving force. Sometimes even his colleagues in the Cabinet ventured upon timid suggestions of this kind, but they were too much in awe of him to protest vigorously against his inaction. And all the time the Mahdists were gradually hemming Gordon in at Khartum. He could easily have escaped down the Nile,

but it never occurred to him to give way, or to leave his black friends in the lurch.

When, in the autumn (1884), Hartington put his slow but heavy foot down, threatening to resign if an expedition were not sent, Gladstone gave way. Even now there would have been time to save Gordon but for a perverse series of misfortunes. By the time Wolseley had got boats ready the waters of the Nile were too low to float them over the cataracts. This meant a dash across the desert on camels—and camels could not be procured for several weeks and then had to be trained. When at last the expedition came within reach of Khartum it was two days too late. The Mahdi had stormed the place and Gordon was dead (January 1885).

Britain was overwhelmed with grief and anger. The general feeling was that the Prime Minister was no better than a murderer, and the Queen stopped little short of calling him one in an open telegram. Gladstone bowed before the storm. He might have pointed out that Gordon had never been asked to stay at Khartum more than a few weeks; but no taunts or vituperation ever moved the old statesman to throw blame on a soldier who had sacrificed his life for an idea. And he was equally firm on another point: he would not be driven by demands for vengeance on the Mahdi to undertake the reconquest of the Sudan for the Khedive. Not until Baring and Kitchener had created modern Egypt in the course of the next twelve years was that task undertaken.

THE COUNTY FRANCHISE. The legislative work on which Gladstone's mind had been concentrated during the Gordon crisis was a bill giving the vote to dwellers in rural areas on practically the same terms as town-dwellers had enjoyed since 1867. That this was an act of simple justice could not be disputed. The Conservatives, whose main strength lay in county constituencies, dared not oppose it except in matters of detail, and its third reading was passed without a division. The House of Lords, however, having no constituents to fear, rejected it because it was not accompanied by a rearrangement of electoral districts to make these fit the changes in the electorate. The Prime Minister promised a Redistribution Bill in the autumn, but the large Conservative majority in the Lords would not buy a pig

in a poke by widening the franchise before knowing the actual terms of the other bill. The question of the County Franchise became merged in a struggle between the Houses—the opening of a feud between the House of Peers and the Liberal Party which culminated in the Parliament Act of 1911. Chamberlain was spoiling for a fight with the Lords—'they toil not, neither do they spin', was one of his pungent phrases; John Morley prophesied that the constitutional position of the Upper Chamber would have to be 'mended or ended'; and Gladstone pointed out that in the half-century since the Great Reform Act only two out of thirteen Parliaments had contained a Conservative majority; how then, he asked, could it be claimed that the Lords represented 'the real and solid convictions of the people'?

But the innate constitutionalism of Gladstone's outlook, intensified by advancing years, made him unwilling to press the struggle to an issue, and the anxious efforts of the Queen to bring the antagonists to terms were at last successful. Lord Salisbury (now leader of the Conservative Party) and Sir Stafford Northcote took tea with the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing Street, and there was a pregnant hour of conversation. The visitors went away satisfied as to the Redistribution Bill, the opposition in the Lords was withdrawn, and all ended happily (November 1884).

The first Reform Act had doubled the electorate; the second doubled it again; this third one doubled it yet again. Britain's strides towards universal suffrage were lengthening. The fourth, biggest of all, did not come until another generation had passed away.

VIII

HOME RULE
1885–1886

The second Gladstone Government, put into office so triumphantly to wipe away 'Beaconsfieldism', had fallen on evil days. Apart from its misfortunes in Africa, Ireland had become a welter of anarchy and crime, and Gladstone's effort to find a permanent cure for the troubles there led to the disruption of the Liberal Party.

THE IRISH PROBLEM. By 1884 the elements of which the Government was composed seemed to be falling apart. The meteoric rise of Chamberlain to the front rank in the course of these four years was very distasteful to the patrician Whigs, especially to their outstanding personality, Lord Hartington. Cut off from the people by rank and wealth, Hartington belonged to a class which Chamberlain assailed with bitter scorn—the class 'whose fortunes have grown by levying an increased toll on all that labour has done to add to the general wealth and prosperity of the country'. He was no debater even in the Cabinet; his mind worked slowly, and his somnolence was the subject of jocose anecdotes. But he embodied the straightforward common sense on which John Bull prides himself. To him and his like the true course for Liberalism was to let well alone as long as possible, occasionally putting through carefully limited reforms in time to prevent dangerous agitation; and they hated to see this 'Brummagem Radical' stumping the country stirring up demands for revolutionary ideas like Manhood Suffrage and Payment of Members; and his 'Caucus' threatened to bring politics down from mannerly discussion among gentlemen to the mass production of voting-power swayed by mob-oratory.

And the cleavage between the two men—becoming more important every day in view of the fact that Gladstone was now approaching his eightieth year and the succession to the Liberal leadership must soon be settled—was very marked over the most vital question of the day: the future of Ireland. Hartington, who like most Englishmen was disgusted at Irish atrocities

at home and obstruction in Parliament, would be certain to obstruct any further attempt to placate the Nationalists; whereas Chamberlain, shocked to see England acting in Ireland as an alien master-race, had a scheme by which all distinctively Irish affairs—Education, Police and Transport—would be managed by elected County Boards with a Central Board elected by them. And he was the very man to carry such a scheme through, with his fertile resource and irresistible driving-power.

Of course, nothing could be done for Ireland without the approval of Parnell, and Parnell was a mystery-man. He was bent on wringing Home Rule from Parliament, but nobody knew what degree of Home Rule would satisfy him. He held scornfully aloof from the rank and file of his Party; yet his grip on them was such that they acted and spoke and voted at his word of command; and he enjoyed the potent support of the Catholic clergy, despite the fact that he was a Protestant in theory and a freethinker in practice. And his electoral prospects had been greatly improved by the recent Franchise Act, which trebled the voting-power of the Irish peasantry, thereby threatening what was left of the older parties in Ireland with total extinction (apart from the north-east corner). With the prospect of a solid block of eighty parliamentary seats at the next election Parnell felt that he would be able to extort Home Rule from whichever of the British Parties was in office; but meanwhile he had to keep his own extremists in hand by violently anti-British speeches, which made it more difficult than ever for the Party leaders to come to terms with him. And when Chamberlain got the shifty O'Shea to lay the County Board scheme before him, there was a misunderstanding. Parnell gave it qualified approval as a stepping-stone towards Home Rule, but O'Shea led Chamberlain to think he would accept it as a final measure of Irish self-government. Chamberlain was disappointed when the Whigs in the Cabinet refused to adopt it and decided for a renewal of the Coercion Act, but he refused to be discouraged. A General Election would soon be due, and he had high hopes of sweeping the country with his plan for getting Irish troubles out of Parliament's way for good and all.

But mines were being laid which were to blow his plans sky-high. Lord Carnarvon (a former Conservative Colonial Secre-

tary) had half persuaded Lord Salisbury that, since some form of Home Rule was inevitable, they might as well buy Parnell's support by adopting it. Parnell, when sounded on the subject, was delighted. The Conservatives, with their predominance in the House of Lords, would be in a much better position to put Home Rule through than the Liberals. The idea was eagerly taken up by Lord Randolph Churchill, who was in some ways a Conservative counterpart of Chamberlain. Keenly interested in social reform, and contemptuous of the 'Old Gang' of his Party, he was bent on making Toryism popular, and organized a National Union of Conservative Associations on the lines of the Liberal 'Caucus'. Like Chamberlain, he was a ready and biting debater, with inexhaustible pertinacity, and with prospects of succeeding the leadership of his Party. He now set about turning out to the Liberals with the help of the Parnellites.

The opportunity came over the Budget of 1885, which involved a rise of Income Tax to eightpence and an extra five shillings a gallon on spirits. The Irish were always sensitive to the interests of distillers, who subscribed handsomely to their funds; they joined wholeheartedly with the Conservatives in throwing out the Budget, and the Government, glad to end their accumulated difficulties and discredits, resigned with alacrity (June 1885).

There could be no General Election until the registers of voters under the County Franchise Act were ready; so the Conservatives took office under Salisbury as 'Caretaker Government', to wind up the session and dissolve Parliament in the autumn.

THE CRISIS. Salisbury took over the Foreign Office, the only department that really interested him. An aristocratic Tory of the old school, he was completely isolated from the lives and interests of common people. To him the home policy of Conservatism was limited to preserving the Constitution, especially the privileges of the National Church. For the sake of the Church he was ready to go to almost any lengths to turn out the Liberals. Of course Gladstone was a staunch churchman, and so were the Whigs, but it was obvious that not they but Chamberlain and Dilke would be the master minds of the next Liberal Government; and these Radicals had made Disestablish-

ment of the Church of England part of their gospel. To win the Irish vote from Liberalism became a matter of paramount importance. With this in mind he sent Lord Carnarvon to Dublin as Lord-Lieutenant. In Ireland this was regarded as a tacit promise of Home Rule. Carnarvon, returning to London with the acclamations of the Dublin crowds ringing in his ears, had a secret interview with Parnell in an empty house. Exactly what passed is not known to this day, but it is certain that Salisbury authorized the interview and approved Carnarvon's report on it, and that Parnell left it believing that the Conservative Party was pledged to Home Rule.

Chamberlain, still under the impression that Parnell was satisfied with his Councils scheme, was convinced that the country would endorse not only this scheme for Ireland, but a sweeping 'Unauthorized Programme' of Radical reforms. In September he set out on a great oratorical tour, stirring vast crowds to enthusiasm for Free Schools, Disestablishment, Small Holdings, Manhood Suffrage, Payment of Members. In a great winding-up address at the 'Old Vic' he announced that if the Liberal Party did not adopt the Programme he would not accept a place in the next Government. This amounted to an ultimatum, for he now eclipsed Gladstone himself in popularity Nothing seemed more certain than that he would soon be the first Radical Prime Minister, with the prospect of ascendancy for twenty years.

As for Gladstone, he still hoped to retire at the end of the year, if only he could feel that the Irish problem was solved. Further reflection had convinced him that Pitt had done wrong in forcing through the Act of Union, and that it was unworthy of England to rule Ireland as the Turks ruled Macedonia. He felt himself too old to undertake the task of liberation, and therefore welcomed signs that Parnell had come to terms with Conservatism. The best plan would be for the Tories to put through this reform with Liberal support, as they had emancipated Catholics in 1828, repealed the Corn Laws in 1846 and enfranchised the working man in 1867. But to bring this to pass he had to keep his conversion to Home Rule a deep secret, for the Conservatives would never take up any cause that he had adopted as part of the Liberal programme. And when Mrs. O'Shea, who was known to be in Parnell's confidence, wrote

asking him if he had anything to offer the Irish Party, he declined to make a counter-bid for their support.

So when, the registers having been completed, Salisbury dissolved (November 1885), Parnell called on the Irish voters in Great Britain to vote Conservative. This cost the Liberals a good many seats, and memories of Majuba and Khartum cost them others. These losses were counterbalanced by rural voters returning thanks for their enfranchisement and approving of the Unauthorized Programme, and in Great Britain the Liberals had a majority over the Conservatives of eighty-five. But, as anticipated, the Parnellite Nationalists swept the whole of Ireland save the north-east corner, and raised their numbers from thirty-five to (ominous coincidence) exactly eighty-five.

Then, with the situation so delicately balanced, a tragic mishap once more blasted any hope of peace and happiness for Ireland. The G.O.M.'s son Herbert half accidentally disclosed to pressmen his father's conversion to Home Rule. That upset the apple-cart. The Conservative Cabinet had not accepted Carnarvon's Home Rule plan, and now that Gladstone had adopted it, Salisbury publicly repudiated it. Furthermore, many leading Liberals felt that Gladstone had not treated them fairly in keeping them in the dark about his conversion. Perhaps if he had called them together and explained why he had been so secretive they might have been somewhat mollified; but he was never adept in dealing with men. And the irony of the situation was that the reticence which had cost him the confidence of his Party had been in vain—the Tories had rejected Home Rule after all.

So Ireland's only hope lay with Gladstone and the Liberals. They had been grievously weakened by Parnell's manifesto—those thirty or forty seats would make all the difference on a division. Parnell had always said that his responsibility was only to Ireland—he did not care a rap what Englishmen thought of him; but this was overlooking the fact that English votes would be needed to pass Home Rule. And he had made a particularly bitter enemy of Chamberlain—the most dangerous of political antagonists.

Worse still, it was soon evident that Gladstone would not be able to count on the support of all Liberals. Several ex-Ministers declared at once that they would not be members of a

Government engaged in passing Home Rule; and these included not only high Whigs like Hartington, but John Bright the Radical spokesman of the 'Nonconformist Conscience' whose oratory had done so much to repeal the Corn Laws, to make Britain ashamed of the Crimean War and to enfranchise the working man. To fill the gaps Gladstone had nobody of standing except Lord Rosebery (1847–1929), a brilliant young Scottish peer who took the Foreign Office, and John Morley (1838–1923) a Radical 'intellectual' who became Chief Secretary for Ireland. As to Chamberlain, he was somewhat ruffled by the old leader's refusal to make him Colonial Secretary, and more so by his obvious intention to ignore the Unauthorized Programme and concentrate on Home Rule; but, hesitating to cut himself off from the Party which he hoped soon to lead, he decided to stay on and see what Gladstone's proposals really amounted to.

THE LIBERAL SPLIT. Could a way be found for Ireland to have a form of government that would be acceptable to the 80 per cent of its population represented by the Nationalist Party, without breaking the political connection between the two islands? The Opposition said No: a Parliament at Dublin would be a breach in the fabric of the Empire that would lead to its collapse. And mingled with this apprehension was a profound distrust and dislike of Parnell and his followers, who had never shown any deep abhorrence of the crimes committed by their partizans; who, moreover, had never disguised their contempt for British institutions. Were such people fit to undertake the responsibilities of self-government? Then again, there was a strong prejudice against the Catholic clergy, who with their firm grasp on Irish politics would presumably dominate a Dublin parliament. Irish Catholicism had always been of the ultramontane type which regarded Protestantism not merely as a heresy but as a sin. Was the Protestant minority—perhaps a fifth of the population—to be handed over to its mercies? Bright declared that Home Rule meant Rome Rule, and Churchill roused the Orange Lodges[1] of the north-east with his watchword 'Ulster

[1] The Protestantism of North-Eastern Ireland is always associated with William of Orange, who restored the Protestant ascendancy by his defeat of James II at the Battle of the Boyne (1st July 1690).

will fight and Ulster will be right!' These varied fears and hatreds accumulated into a formidable mass of opposition;[1] and it was significant that whereas Catholic Emancipation, Free Trade and Household Suffrage had been supported by the *intelligentsia* of art, science and philosophy, Home Rule was opposed by Huxley and Tyndall, Lecky and Froude, Tennyson and Browning, Millais and Leighton, Spencer and Jowett.

But Gladstone was not to be daunted. Much as he regretted the secession of Hartington and the Whig grandees, he was confident that the solid Nationalist vote would suffice to put Home Rule through, and that the masses in England, Scotland and Wales were as determined as himself to do justice to Ireland. But he had not got far in preparing the bill when he had another loss, and a vital one. Chamberlain approved of Home Rule provided that Ireland continued to have representatives at Westminster. An Irish Central Council at Dublin, subordinate to an Imperial Parliament at Westminster, would be a good thing—he would like to see similar assemblies for Scotland and Wales. But if Irish members no longer sat at Westminster the Dublin parliament would be not subordinate but parallel. That would imply separation, and Chamberlain, already an ardent Imperialist, would not be a party to it. Parnell, on the other hand, insisted on Ireland being excluded from Westminster, and his support was essential to the passing of the Bill. So Gladstone had to let Chamberlain go. Always a bad judge of men, he seems hardly to have realized what he was losing. Already the weighty phalanx of the Grand Whiggery personified by Hartington had left him, and Liberalism, for good; already a large section of Nonconformity, personified by his lifelong friend and supporter Bright, had left him, too. But the defection of the Radical demagogue, whose Unauthorized Programme had made him spokesman of the industrial North and Midlands, was the most shattering blow of all.

Gladstone brought in his bill on 8th April with three and a half hours of eloquent advocacy. He argued that, the Conservatives themselves having abandoned coercion, the only alternative was the self-government demanded by the great majority of the Irish people. He therefore proposed to set up an

[1] Not only in Ireland, but in England, where attempts had been made to blow up the Houses of Parliament and the Tower of London.

Irish legislature of two chambers, with its own ministers, judges and police, but with no control over foreign affairs or armed forces or foreign trade. It was to contribute one-twelfth of the revenue of the United Kingdom.

The debate was conducted on a high level. For the most part the Conservatives left the attack to the dissentient Liberals. But outside Parliament Lord Salisbury made a speech which the Irish remembered against him all the rest of his life.

> 'All races are not capable of self-government as the English race is. There are the Hottentots, for instance, and the Indians. The alternative is to enable the Government of England to govern Ireland. Apply that recipe honestly and resolutely for twenty years, and Ireland will be found fit to accept any gifts in the way of local government that it may be desired to give her. What she needs is government which does not flinch or vary.'

Chamberlain deplored this threat of arbitrary rule 'couched in language that Cicero might have used about Gauls or Germans', but he was tremendously active in organizing the 'Liberal Unionists' (it was Lord Randolph who coined that name for them). It seemed impossible for him to make common cause with the Whigs. Up to the last moment he hoped that the Prime Minister would give way over the representation at Westminster, and so enable him and his friends to support the Bill. But Parnell held Gladstone in a vice. A meeting of the Liberal dissentients in Chamberlain's house on the eve of the division on the second reading discussed whether merely to abstain or to vote against it. A letter from John Bright made most of those present decide on the latter course.

Gladstone closed the debate with a moving appeal.

> 'Ireland stands at your bar expectant, hopeful, almost suppliant. You have been asked to-night to abide by the traditions of which you are the heirs. What traditions? Our Irish traditions? No; they are a sad exception to the glory of our country. What we should do is to stand by the traditions of which we are the heirs in all matters except our relations with Ireland. She asks also a boon for the future. Think, I beseech you, think well, think wisely, think not for the moment but for the years to come, before you reject this Bill.'

But the issue had been settled outside the House. The second

reading was rejected by 343 votes to 313, the majority including 93 Liberals.

Gladstone obtained the Queen's reluctant consent to an immediate dissolution. Though he had the upper classes against him (Liberalism was henceforth very rare among people of high society) he was confident that he still had the masses at his back. But as the campaign developed he realized for the first time how formidable were the forces arrayed against his cause. His own personal magnetism was as potent as ever; wherever he spoke he held great audiences spellbound. But this was counteracted by the tumultuous enthusiasm aroused by Chamberlain's call to the nation to preserve the unity that is strength. The fires of religious passion were assiduously stoked up by Churchill and Bright; and the rural voters who had saved Liberalism at the last election had then voted mainly for the Unauthorized Programme with its promise of allotments ('Three acres and a Cow'), which Gladstone showed no sign of implementing.

Thus, when the last returns were in, Parnell led back his 86 stalwarts, but of Gladstonian Liberals there were only 191, while the Conservatives numbered 315 and the Liberal Unionists 78—a majority against Home Rule of 117.

IX

SOCIALISM
1880–1895

During the 1880's a new gospel began to be preached in Britain as a remedy for the social and economic ills of the poorer classes. The influence of Socialism spread until in our own time many of its principles are accepted by millions of people who do not consider themselves Socialists. In this chapter we shall see how it began.

KARL MARX AND HIS BOOK. Modern Socialism began with the publication of *Das Kapital* in 1867. Its author, Karl Marx (1818–83), was one of the creative thinkers who have changed men's outlook on life. Before him Socialism had been based on the imaginings of philanthropists; he based it on an interpretation of history. A German Jew who had fallen foul of the authorities owing to a *Communist Manifesto* published at the time of the revolutionary movements of 1848–9, he spent the rest of his life in London, bringing up a large family in squalid penury, quarrelling with fellow-exiles, and producing a *magnum opus* from material amassed in the Reading-Room of the British Museum. Even after twenty years of toil only a third of it had been completed by 1867; the rest was published after his death by his friend Friedrich Engels.

It developed two main themes: that all social and political developments depend on economic conditions, and that under modern capitalism the 'surplus value' given to raw material by labour is appropriated, apart from a subsistence-wage, by the capitalist. Every age, he maintains, has its appropriate economic system—capitalism, for instance, would be incompatible with feudalism. The essence of capitalism is monopoly of the means of production—land, machines, buildings and raw material. The industrial revolution has given those who have acquired this monopoly such power that they control the political structure of the State, and use that control to bolster up their rights and privileges. Marx gives a long account, supported by copious citations from historical authorities and the

Reports of British Royal Commissions on Factories and Mines, of the evils of industrialism. But he declares that it bears the seeds of its own decay and death. As technical processes improve, production exceeds demand, especially as workers' consumption is cut to a minimum so as to enable employers to compete not only with each other but with competitors in foreign countries. Over-stocked markets lead to stagnation and unemployment. Such crises will grow ever severer, more widespread and more frequent, until the whole world is staggering 'under an Atlantean weight of ill-distributed goods'. Production tends to be concentrated in larger and larger aggregations, the proletariat becoming a helpless, hopeless army of wage-slaves. But the bow will be bent too far. The search for markets and materials to keep the vast structure going will lead to destructive wars, and in the resultant chaos the proletariat will be driven by its sufferings to revolt. Nothing short of revolution—and well-directed revolution—will loosen the grip of the bourgeoisie on the political and economic life of the country; and such a movement can only be carried through successfully if the working-class, or at any rate its leading spirits, have been adequately prepared by instruction and forethought. This 'dictatorship of the proletariat' will be but a passing phase, however. It will be followed by a classless society in which sufficient income will be distributed among the population to cover the purchase of the whole produce of industry and agriculture.

We have now had another century of experience of capitalism, and have seen Marx's programme carried into effect in Soviet Russia. It is easy to find flaws in his argument. Capitalism has not become more concentrated; on the contrary, it is spread more widely through multitudes of small shareholders. It has not led to increasing misery of the working classes; on the contrary, they are now much better off. And many points he did not make clear—e.g., whether capitalism is going to die of its own inherent rottenness, or will have to be overthrown by a militant proletariat. But many of his prophecies have been signally justified, especially that of gigantic economic wars.

FOUNDATIONS OF BRITISH SOCIALISM. *Das Kapital* was a very long and difficult book, and no English translation of it appeared

for many years. British Socialism was in the main a reaction to a trade depression in 1878–9 with its sequel a few years later.

The causes of the periodical rise and fall of industrial activity are highly disputable. All that concerns us here is to note that the waves became steeper as industrialism developed; for the small-scale producer's miscalculations affect few but himself. The effects of a modern slump spread over wider circles because over-production leads to unemployment, and the unemployed lack purchasing-power. Moreover, trade-depressions hurt workers more than employers; for an employer can in good times accumulate a 'hump' on which he can draw in bad times, whereas labour's share in a boom gives the individual little more than a spell of continuous employment at a living wage. And down to our own times unemployment meant destitution.

The slumps of 1878–1880 and 1882–84 left a permanent mark on the social and intellectual life of the country. The demoralizing poverty which they entailed stirred the consciences of the well-to-do. Arnold Toynbee carried Oxford culture into Whitechapel, convinced that the needs of the poor could only be understood by people living and working among them; and after his early death in 1883 his work was carried on by University Settlements. General Booth (1829–1912) founded the Salvation Army in 1878 to save men's souls, but soon realized that an indispensable preliminary was the saving of their bodies through 'rescue work'. The Government set up Commissions on the Housing of the Poor, on Unemployment, on Sweated Labour; and an anonymous philanthropist defrayed the cost of a Conference on Industrial Remuneration, in which men of such varied views as Dilke, Morley, Balfour and Bernard Shaw took part.

But by far the most important of these reactions was the rise of British Socialism. Henry George, an American, had set the ball rolling with his book *Progress and Poverty* (1880). He was no Socialist, but his proposal of a Single Tax on land-values would, in practice, have led to a Socialist State, and his catch-phrase 'the unearned increment'[1] had much more influence on the arguments of early British Socialists than Marx's 'surplus value'. George wanted taxation on land (which, he argued, was as much the common property of the human race as the sea or the

[1] The phrase refers to increases in rental values due to the growth of towns.

air) to be increased until it eliminated the need for all other imposts, leaving landowners just enough to induce them to go on organizing its exploitation.

But the real founder of British Socialism was H. M. Hyndman, a well-to-do man of the world, who had been to Cambridge and had played cricket for Sussex. ('The Socialist in a top hat' some of his humbler converts called him.) About 1880 he read *Das Kapital* (in a French translation), and mastered some, at least, of its arguments. He opened a campaign which lasted all the rest of a long life with a booklet called *England For All*, in the course of which he drew attention to the startling fact that of the £1300 millions worth of goods produced annually in this country, more than £1000 millions was absorbed by rent and profits. In 1884 he founded the 'Social Democratic Federation' to advocate 'The Socialization of the means of Production and Distribution in the interests of the entire community'. By way of 'palliatives for immediate adoption' it suggested such bagatelles as the Nationalization of the Land, the Disestablishment of the Church, Free Education up to the age of sixteen, and repudiation of the National Debt.

Many able men joined the Federation. The most notable of all, perhaps, was William Morris (1834–96), already famous as poet, designer and craftsman, who looked to a social revolution to revive happy medieval times when workmen could take pride in the work of their hands instead of minding machines in factories. But Hyndman was always the leader. He laboured with abounding energy and optimism, assured that the revolution was at hand, and quite clear that when the great day came it was he who would take control of the proceedings. Many of the members found his dictatorial assumptions rather galling, and the S.D.F. was somewhat of a caravanserai, people passing through it to other forms of Socialist endeavour.

Alongside it, and started at about the same time, was the 'Fabian Society', named after the Roman general who won a campaign by avoiding direct conflict. Bernard Shaw (as yet unconnected with the drama) was its leading light, and Sidney Webb (a clerk in the Colonial Office) its master-mind. It sent out well-informed lecturers and published tracts culminating

in the *Fabian Essays* (1889), which carried Socialist ideas into tens of thousands of minds. But it looked for no millennium to be created by a sudden overturn of society. It looked to changes brought about by what Webb jestingly called 'the inevitability of gradualness'—the permeation of people's minds and habits by the practice of collectivism in the form of Factory Acts, Adulteration Acts and Land Acts, and in municipal enterprises such as tramways, gas-works and wash-houses.

One other feature of this early phase of British Socialism should be noticed. Foreign Socialists were mostly freethinkers, and there was everywhere a deep cleavage between them and the Christian Church. That such was not the case here was largely due to the influence of the Reverend Stewart Headlam, who founded the Guild of St. Matthew (1884) to maintain that the Church ought to help on 'the change by which the production of material wealth is to be taken out of the hands which now monopolize it'.

TRADE UNIONISM ADOLESCENT. The members of these Socialist organizations were mostly people of the professional classes living in or near London. Their discussions were far above the heads of the masses; few even among the leaders of working-class opinion were interested in economic theories. In 1868 some of the strongest Trade Unions had formed a Congress of delegates from all over the country to meet in a different town each year to discuss policy for organized Labour. In 1871 it set up a Parliamentary Committee to keep the interests and needs of the working-class before the attention of M.P.s, but there was, as yet, no thought of a separate 'Labour Party'. Now and then Union officials got elected to Parliament—Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt (both miners) did so at the election of 1874; but they were always humble members of the Liberal Party. They had no proposals for an upheaval of society, and no doctrine that even promised a short way out of 'Darkest England' for the poor. And in any case the Unions were practically limited to skilled craftsmen. Unskilled labour—quite three-fourths of the population—was outside Trade Unionism altogether.

The first attempt to organize it on a large scale was made by

Joseph Arch, a Warwickshire farm-worker who, in 1872, formed an Agricultural Labourers' Union. It was a tremendous task, to inspire to a common purpose simple folk, as yet mostly illiterate, and engaged in heavy toil through all their waking hours, often in remote districts. But he succeeded, and his movement spread across the Midlands to East Anglia. When the labourers of Norfolk and Suffolk made a united demand for a wage of fifteen shillings for a sixty-hour week the farmers were as astounded as Balaam was at hearing a protest from his ass. Unfortunately for the Union the importation of corn from overseas was now beginning; a decline in employment on British farms was inevitable. The farmers 'locked out' members of the Union; after some months of struggle its funds were exhausted and it broke up. But hundreds of workers (and these mostly the fittest in mind and body) emigrated rather than remain in the squalor of English rural life, and thousands more sought employment in the towns. The depopulation of the countryside, so bitterly lamented in later decades, had set in.

But Arch's Union did not advocate Socialism. What interested the average working-man, whether urban or rural, was not theories about surplus value and economic rent, but a life worth living. The only way to interest him in Socialism would be to show that it could do something practical towards this end. And an opportunity for this was now at hand.

The Great Dock Strike. Conditions of employment at the London Docks were appalling. When a ship came in, the Dock Company gave a contract for the unloading and loading to a middleman who engaged 'hands' for the job at the rate of fourpence an hour. The work needed no special training, and the competition for employment was almost unlimited. Moreover it was casual: after a few hours' work a man might have to wait about at street-corners outside the dock-gates for another chance to earn a shilling or two. The arrival of a ship was often followed by scenes of bestial ferocity, hundreds of famished men fighting to get from a clerk protected by an iron grid the tickets that entitled them to a modicum of work and wages. The system was demoralizing and degrading to all concerned.

A young man named Benjamin Tillett (1860–1943), working in a tea warehouse near London Bridge, set himself to bring the

dockers the means of self-help through a Tea Coopers' and General Labourers' Union which he founded in 1887. To organize such chaotic material was a difficult undertaking, but Tillett carried it through; and in August 1889 he called his dockers out on strike, demanding sixpence an hour and a regular roster for employment in spells of not less than four hours. The struggle that ensued drew the attention of the whole civilized world. Tillett was joined by John Burns (1858-1943) and Tom Mann (1856-1941). They threw themselves into the fray with tremendous energy, and soon the strike spread along the whole range of docks from London Bridge to Tilbury. The leaders checked all tendency to violence, but they contrived to picket the whole ten miles, and effectually prevented the use of 'blackleg' labour. This orderliness and efficiency made a good impression on the public and brought much practical support. The Lord Mayor, the Bishop of London and (most active of all) Cardinal Manning, intervened to try to bring about a settlement. The Dean of St. Paul's opened a relief fund to feed the wives and children. Contributions to the war-chest flowed in from Trades Unions all over the world. Australia alone cabled £4,000—a very large sum in those days. The City became restive at the increasing dislocation of business and blamed the Dock Companies; and the great shipping firms began to talk of taking the lading of their ships into their own hands. It was generally felt that the men's demands were reasonable and that common humanity demanded their acceptance. Even on the music-hall stage allusion to 'The Dockers' Tanner' were sure to bring down the house. After six weeks the Companies, finding themselves unable to resist the accumulating pressure of public feeling, agreed to Tillett's demands.

The incident was significant for several reasons. It showed that even unskilled and casual workers could make a firm stand under the right type of leader. It proved that a strike could be carried to success with self-restraint and decorum; something like £50,000 was distributed in strike pay by an almost spontaneous organization (for few of the dockers belonged to the Tea Coopers' or any other Union) with practically no leakage. It showed that when public opinion is on labour's side even powerful vested interests cannot hold out against it. It brought out the fact that the inability of the Dock Companies to pay

decent wages was, by their own admission, largely due to stupid rivalry among them, for which a cure was ultimately found in creating the Port of London Authority. Finally, the fact that Mann and Burns were both members of the S.D.F. gave Socialism a new prestige in the eyes of the working class.

BIRTH OF THE I.L.P. Above all the Dockers' victory opened a new chapter in the development of British Trade Unionism. Unskilled labour now began to organize. Tillett's little Tea Coopers' Union was turned into a Dockers' and Wharf Labourers' Union, 40,000 strong. The hitherto struggling Seamen's and Firemen's Union enrolled 50,000 men under Havelock Wilson before the end of the year. The expansion was equally marked in the oligarchic old craft Unions: the Miners' Federation grew from 30,000 to 150,000 in the course of 1890; the Boot and Shoe Operatives trebled their numbers in two years. Much of this expansion was due to a new sense of industrial solidarity, which led to the admission of lower grades to Unions which had hitherto jealously excluded them. And the new Unions of unskilled or semi-skilled labour were mostly Socialist from the start. They had no connection with the great political Parties, nor were they 'glorified goose and coffin clubs' like the craft Unions. Their subscriptions had to be limited to a few pence a week, and their purpose was to fight Capital for the rewards of production. And the men who now came flocking into the older Unions brought the same spirit. At the Trades Union Congress of 1890 a large proportion of the delegates were avowed Socialists and most of the resolutions passed were collectivist in character, calling for State and Municipal interference for the public good.

Another symptom of this new vigour was a revival of political ambitions. The Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. had attempted little more than to act as a leaven in the Liberal Party, but the new element aimed at setting up a Socialist system of government. The idea of an Independent Labour Party was first conceived by H. H. Champion, an ex-officer of the Royal Artillery. Growing impatient with the S.D.F. (which he, Mann and Burns had now left) he wanted to get something done without waiting for Hyndman to sound his last trump. If

Trade Unions and Socialist Societies could focus their efforts in a new Party which would hold a balance of power in the House as the Irish had in 1886, they might force through an Eight Hours' Act as a foundation for a brave new world. The crusted old Union officials still kept aloof from Socialism, but their influence was nullified by delegates from the newer Unions and by the personality of James Keir Hardie (1856–1915). Born in Glasgow, an errand-boy at eight years old, a rivetter at ten and a coal-getter at sixteen, he became Secretary of the Ayrshire Miners' Association at twenty-one. He began his public life as a Radical, but when the Liberal Party ran a candidate against him at a by-election he became a champion of direct representation for the working-class. He never troubled much about Marxist doctrine—his Socialism did not go beyond a feeling for co-operation and the brotherhood of man, and a conviction that the best way of promoting these ideals was for the workers to have a Party of their own in Parliament. In 1892 he was elected for West Ham, the first independent representative of Labour; for the other fourteen working-class candidates elected that year (including Burns, Arch and Havelock Wilson) were all more or less in alliance with Liberalism.

The Trades Union advocates of an independent parliamentary Party now determined to hold a special conference. This met at Bradford in January 1893. The Liberal-Labour M.P.s were not there, but the delegates included Ben Tillett (now an alderman of the London County Council), Tom Mann, Robert Blatchford (editor of *The Clarion*, the most widely read Socialist journal), Robert Smillie of the Scottish Miners, and Bernard Shaw of the Fabian Society. Keir Hardie was chairman. Some of the delegates wanted to keep Socialism in the background, but this was defeated, and the object of the new Party was declared to be 'to secure the collective ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange'. Immediate efforts were to be made for a legal eight hours day, free education up to the University, provision for the sick and aged, the abolition of war and the nationalization of the railways. Funds were to be raised by a levy on affiliated Unions and Societies in proportion to their membership. The Party held further conferences, but did not find the walls of Jericho ready to fall. Its candidates at by-elections were invariably at

the bottom of the poll, and at the General Election of 1895 all its twenty-eight candidates were defeated, while several Trade Unionists who stood as Liberals were returned.

Nevertheless, the founding of the I.L.P. was an outstanding event: a Socialist organization had been based on the natural organs of working-class politics. Henceforward practical Socialism was a subject of general interest and of frequent discussion in Trades Councils,[1] Working-men's Clubs and Mechanics' Institutes.

SOCIALISM IN THE DOMINIONS. To see the first experiments in applying collectivist principles to the practical problems of government we have to look to the other side of the globe.

When in the 'fifties New Zealand became practically independent it consisted of half a dozen scattered settlements, each having its own little elected assembly, with a rather shadowy federal Government at Auckland. But in the next twenty years the population increased fivefold, and this subdivision of a country little larger than Great Britain became a hindrance to economic development. So in 1876 the provincial assemblies were abolished, and New Zealand became a unitary state with its seat of government at Wellington. Steam-ships and refrigeration, making possible the export of mutton and dairy produce as well as wool, brought rapid expansion—too rapid, as it turned out, for over-development led to bad times.

Then in 1893 the premiership of Richard Seddon (1845–1906), commonly called 'King Dick', marked a fresh era in the history not only of New Zealand but of the arts of government. He was a hearty, rugged pioneer, with no Socialist theories; but he carried out collectivist innovations which would have been impossible in an older country with deeply rooted traditions. He put on a progressive land tax which broke up great uncultivated estates; he prevented strikes by Conciliation Boards and a National Arbitration Court whose awards had the whole weight of the State behind them; he instituted an Income Tax and Death Duties so steeply graduated that wealthy people paid 7s. 6d. in the £ at a time when the largest incomes in Britain paid only 10d.; and he established Old Age Pensions, Compul-

[1] A Trades Council consists of representatives of the chief local unions and branches of unions in a town or district.

sory State Insurance, and Votes for Women, long before the Mother Country had thought of such things. And he fostered national spirit by Acts restricting immigration and by tariff walls as high as Canada's.

Australia, like New Zealand, consisted of isolated settlements, but its area is so much greater that the impulse to unity was not strongly felt until much later. Federation was not even suggested until 1890, and the idea required another ten years of incubation before the Commonwealth came into existence. The great obstacle was that whereas the other colonies had adopted Protection, New South Wales clung to the Free Trade upon which the prosperity of Sydney was based. The great stimulus to union, on the other hand, was the need for collective action against the immigration of Asiatics, to which was added later the fear of aggression by Japan and Germany in the Pacific. The form of constitution finally adopted by the constituent committee in 1900 has been described as 'all sail and no ballast'. It is more democratic even than that of the United States, for the Senate has no executive functions and no veto.

But the most interesting feature of Australian politics is that it was the first country in which Labour gained control of the government. This is especially noteworthy because the Labour Party and the Labour Ministry are themselves controlled by a body outside Parliament, the highly organized 'Caucus', representing the Trade Unions, which selects candidates, collects funds, directs policy, and instructs Members how to vote. The development of the Party is a significant phenomenon. A series of disastrous strikes in the late 1880's, culminating in something like a universal stoppage in 1890, seemed to be destroying the very roots of prosperity by frightening away capital. The Trade Unions resolved to turn to politics as an alternative to their 'direct' methods which had brought the country so low: they would get control of the State themselves. Thus the very origin and purpose of the Labour Party was to manipulate the Government for the benefit of the working class; and it is therefore not surprising that Australia pushed State control over wages and conditions of labour further than any other country had so far done. It started Wages Boards and Courts of Industrial Appeal, both in the separate States and under the Com-

monwealth Government; everything has been done to enhance the power and prestige of the Trade Unions, and to give them almost despotic control over employer and employee. Land laws have broken up many great sheep-runs and made Australia one of the great granaries of the world. And the drastic curb on immigration, to further the aim of a 'White Australia', was part of the same purpose—to make the country a good place for the average man, by limiting the supply of labour and keeping up the standard of living. Another interesting experiment was 'The New Protection' by which manufacturers are protected only if they pass on some of the benefit by paying good wages and keeping prices reasonably low for the consumer.

X

IMPERIALISM
1872–1890

The opening of our period coincided with the awakening of national pride in 'Britains Beyond the Seas'; the desire to extend our colonial possessions was augmented by seeing other Powers similarly engaged, and led to the creation of a Third British Empire.

A NEW SPIRIT. The Second British Empire which came into existence in the eighty years following the loss of the First in 1783, had grown up almost of itself, through natural causes. So far as it was the result of conscious effort, the effort was confined to a few missionaries and 'cranks'. Moreover, the ruling class had hitherto been concerned with domestic problems and (less intensely) with the 'liberal experiment' in Europe, and had been convinced that the less the Government interfered with the natural course of events the better; while the mass of the nation, having little part in political life, had been immersed in the struggle to live. But now there was a transformation. The country was prosperous, the working class had been enfranchised, *laissez faire* was fading away; and the nation was roused to a realization of the value of overseas possessions by the novel spectacle of other Powers trying to get some for themselves. Their rivalries and internal discords having settled into some sort of equilibrium, they were now becoming industrialized, and were striving to make up the long start which Britain had gained on them in this process. And when they began to scramble for colonies to exploit, Great Britain could not hold aloof. To have done so would have meant slow starvation to a population grown great on industries dependent on imported material and exported manufactures. Thus British Governments, at first reluctantly and intermittently, began to feel that one of their functions was to develop and strengthen the Empire.

The first prominent statesman to take this line was Disraeli. His actual achievements in carrying it out did not amount to very much, but his ringing phrases aroused a new sense of

responsibility and opportunity, at a time when it had long been an accepted view that colonies were more trouble than they were worth. His imagination was kindled by the conception of world-wide possessions in close political and spiritual touch with the Mother Country; and with his unerring political prescience he saw what a fine rallying-cry it would be for the Conservative Party, against the purely domestic interests of Liberalism. A speech that he made at the Crystal Palace in 1872 has been called the starting-point of British Imperialism. He accused the Gladstone Government of disintegrating the Empire, and asserted that no minister would be doing his duty if he neglected any opportunity of responding to 'those distant sympathies which might become the source of incalculable strength and happiness to this land'. He went on to declare that the self-government which Liberals had been so ready to grant to the colonies (p. 20–1) 'ought to have been conceded as part of a great plan for consolidation', by an imperial tariff, by a code of defence, and by the institution of a representative council in the metropolis.

> 'The issue is not a mean one. It is whether you will be content to be a comfortable England, modelled upon Continental principles and meeting in due course an inevitable fate, or whether you will be a great country, an Imperial country, a country where your sons, when they rise, rise to paramount positions, and not merely obtain the esteem of their countrymen, but command the respect of the world.'

This was not perhaps the wisest of utterances. It has proved impossible to forge defensive, fiscal and political unity in the Empire; and the national assertiveness which the speech evoked proved one of the less pleasing attributes of British Imperialism. But his words were in many ways prophetic.

A notable symptom of the new spirit was the Imperial Federation League (1884), having W. E. Forster as President, and among its foundation-members Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Rosebery. The leaders of commerce and industry discovered that 'Trade follows the Flag'; and the general public began to take a pride in 'The Empire on Which the Sun Never Sets', and in world-maps with British possessions coloured red. The literary side of the movement began with Dilke's *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-speaking Countries*. Ruskin, in the

course of lectures as Professor of Art at Oxford, found opportunities for imperialist grandiloquence:

> 'England must found colonies as fast as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men; seizing every piece of fruitful land that she can set her foot on, and there teaching these, her colonists, that their chief virtue is to be fidelity to their country, and their first aim to advance the power of England by land and sea. . . .'

His words had a profound effect on a generation of undergraduates which included Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Milner. At the sister University Seeley's lectures on *The Expansion of England*, afterwards published and widely read, roused a new interest in the history and significance of imperial development.

'CIVILIZATION' ON THE CONGO. Stanley's famous greeting, 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume,' uttered in October 1871, drew the world's attention to Unknown Africa. Until recently the interior of the continent had been secluded by pestilential coastal districts. Almost the only parts known to Europeans had been Egypt and the Sudan, the strip between the Atlas Range and the Mediterranean, and the area between the Cape the and Limpopo. The Nile had been navigated as far as Khartum, and Mungo Park had gone half-way up the Niger; but until the third quarter of the century the Congo and the Zambesi were known only at their mouths. That was, indeed, the heroic age of African exploration. Between 1850 and 1875 Nachtigall crossed the Sahara, Schweinfurth explored the upper Nile, Baker and Speke reached the Great Lakes, and Livingstone followed the Zambesi from end to end. When the devoted missionary disappeared for some years Stanley's search for him aroused great public interest. Livingstone refused to be 'rescued' and died a few years later amid his faithful converts; but Stanley (a Welsh-American journalist) was financed by the *Daily Telegraph* and the *New York Herald* on an expedition to probe some of the mysteries of Central African geography. From Zanzibar he marched to Lake Tanganyika, and thence to the upper Congo. That river there flows northward, and Livingstone had supposed it to be a tributary of the Nile. Stanley effectively disposed of that notion by following it right down to the Atlan-

tic—a journey which killed most of his companions and turned his own hair white.

His book, *Through Darkest Africa*, sold in tens of thousands; but only one of its readers realized the opportunities which it disclosed. That was Leopold II of the Belgians. Before succeeding his father in 1865 he had travelled in Asia and Africa, and was impressed by the importance of tropical possessions to a highly industrialized little country like Belgium. He now invited the Governments of Europe to join in seeing what could be done to exploit the Congo basin; but this proposal was not taken up. In the course of the next ten years he set up trading-stations along the river as far as the Stanley Falls. The rubber, palm-oil and ivory that were forthcoming opened the eyes of Europe. Portugal claimed the whole river-basin on the strength of Vasco da Gama having landed at the mouth four centuries before; and a French enterprise was sent to the north bank, where its leader, Count de Brazza, got at loggerheads with Stanley. To prevent these disputes leading to war, Bismarck organized a Conference at Berlin (1884), to discuss the whole question of claims in Africa. The Conference recognized the 'Congo Free State', comprising almost the whole of the million square miles drained by the river and its confluents. Furthermore each Power was allotted a particular 'sphere of interest' in the rest of Africa, and was to notify the others when it assumed a protectorate within that area.

These regulations stopped the Powers from flying at each other's throats in the 'scramble for Africa' which ensued, but the Congo Free State soon fell on evil times. King Leopold assumed despotic rights in it; and although his régime brought to it some of the externals of civilization—railways, telegraphs and steam-boats—it soon became a terrible instrument of oppression. It monopolized all the chief crops, and took over all 'vacant lands', disregarding the need of primitive peoples for wide hunting-grounds. Labour was obtained for the plantations by buying 'apprentices' from chiefs, and taxes were extorted by flogging and mutilation. Belgian officials, paid by results, hastened to feather their own nests before the climate killed them. In ten years the population decreased by two-thirds. Probably the King knew little of what was going on, but he did not put himself out to inquire. When the horrors were exposed by Roger

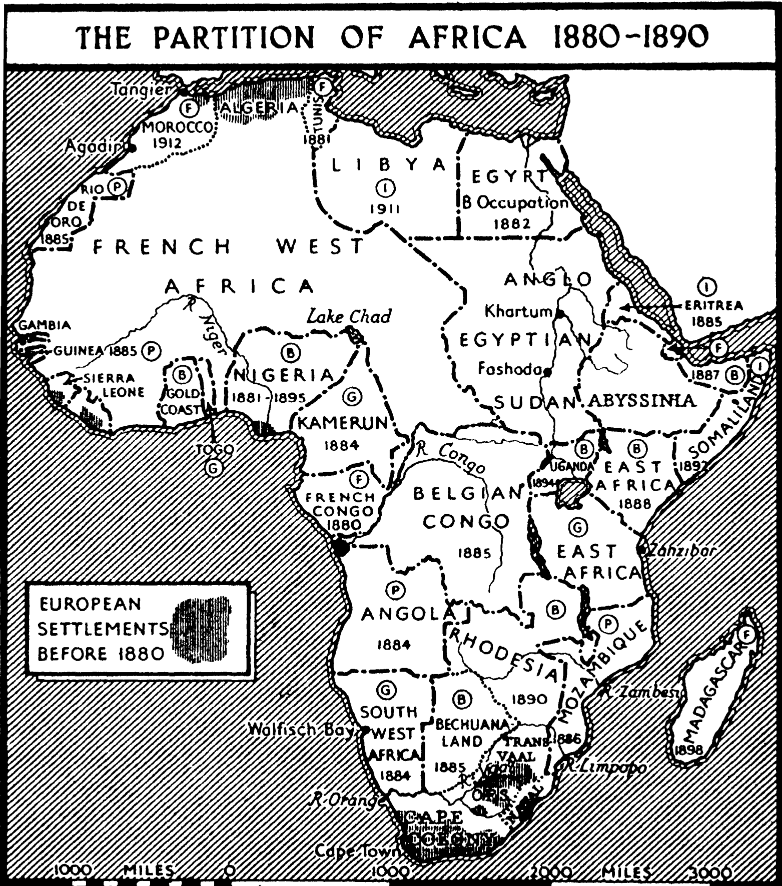
Casement, British consul at Lagos, Leopold had to authorize an international inquiry which substantiated most of the charges. Improvement followed and when, just before his death in 1909, he made over his rights to Belgium, the Free State became a normal 'colonial possession'.

THE SCRIMMAGE. The jostling for 'places in the sun' went on in other parts of Africa besides the Congo basin. Italy, discontented that the formation of her kingdom had left to Austria large areas inhabited by Italians, sought compensation in colonial expansion. Just across the Sicilian channel lay Tunis, the earliest overseas conquest of ancient Rome. It was now ruled by a Moorish Bey, under nominal suzerainty of the Sultan, but would make a good start for a new Italian Empire. But much preparation was needed, for the monarchy was impoverished by the cost of becoming a Great Power, and before it could act a French expedition sailed for Tunisia. This was alleged to be sent merely to chastise rebellious tribes on the borders of Algeria (conquered by France 1830–47). But, as might have been expected, the French force, having established itself in Tunisia, stayed there.

Italy sought a substitute in Eritrea and Somaliland; Portugal agreed to content herself (after claiming a thousand-mile-wide strip right across the continent) with Angola on one coast and Mozambique on the other. France, taking old possessions in Senegal as a base, brought under control the whole Sahara as far as Lake Chad, and a great (as yet undefined) part of Nigeria. Most of this was 'somewhat light soil', as Lord Salisbury ironically observed, but it was a vast area. And the French, with their disregard of 'colour', have been very successful in dealing with backward peoples.

Even Bismarck was dragged into the mêlée. He kept out of it as long as possible, fearing that colonial ambitions would distract Germany from the supremacy in Europe which was the end of his policy. In any case, she could not afford such ambitions. 'For us', he once remarked, 'colonies would be like the fur coats worn by Polish nobles who have not a shirt to their backs.' The cost of developing them would drain off the resources he needed for the Army, the solid basis of Germany's greatness. But the spirit of the age became too strong for him.

The new industrial Germany was like the parvenu millionaire who must have a steam yacht and a castle in the Highlands as signs of wealth and importance. The sun never set on the Union



THE PARTITION OF AFRICA 1880-1890

Jack, thousands of square miles outside Europe were under the *tricolore* of the despised French Republic; little Holland dominated the East Indies; but the Imperial flag of Germany was scarcely to be seen outside her European frontiers. Moreover, exclusive markets and sources of raw material seemed a neces-

sary adjunct to the protective duties with which he was now nursing German industries. And why should German emigrants have to go to the United States or Canada, where they were lost to the Fatherland as cannon-fodder?

The great apostle of this gospel was Karl Peters, who after a lecture-tour by Stanley in Germany founded a German Colonial Union. The first practical step was taken by an adventurous Bremen merchant named Luderitz who set up trading-stations between Walfisch Bay and the Orange River, and asked for Government protection. A little later Nachtigall made agreements with native chiefs along the Ivory Coast; and Peters himself landed on the mainland behind Zanzibar and cajoled a number of chiefs into granting Germany what amounted to sovereignty. In 1884 Bismarck had to placate the 'colony-men' in the Reichstag by taking these ventures under official protection. The Luderitz concession became 'German South-West Africa'; Nachtigall's developed into 'Togoland' and 'Kamerun'; that of Peters became 'German East Africa'.

The Governments of Gladstone and Salisbury did not much like to see these developments, but their hands were tied by the position in Egypt. France, vexed at having broken up the Dual Control, was doing all she could to thwart Britain at the *Caisse de la Dette*, and German support on it was necessary if our position in Egypt was not to be made absolutely impossible.

THE LION'S SHARE. The British lion entered late into the scrimmage for Africa, but when it was over he was found to have acquired most of the more eligible portions of the carcase.

Along the West Coast a number of moribund trading-stations started into fresh life. In 1865 a Parliamentary Commission had reported that all further activity there would be inexpedient. But when the drowsy old trading companies woke up to the fact that foreign competitors were now in the field, they took active steps to stop the rot; and their pressure, in the imperialist atmosphere of the 'eighties, impelled the Government to declare Protectorates over Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast. And at the Berlin Conference Britain gained (in return for a surrender of all claims in the Congo Basin) rights in Nigeria which would safeguard the areas behind these coastal possessions.

Equally important were gains on the eastern side of the continent. Bismarck's heart was never in colonial enterprise, and he readily exchanged Zanzibar, which he did not want, for the little British island of Heligoland which commanded the entrance to the Kiel Canal, now under construction. When, a decade later, Germany became a great naval Power, Heligoland was the keystone of her coastal defences; but at the time it seemed that Lord Salisbury had made a good bargain. Moreover the exchange was part of a general settlement which left Britain in possession of what is now Kenya Colony and the Uganda Protectorate.

But by far the most important of these African acquisitions was Rhodesia, the last large empty area of the globe suitable for permanent settlement by white people.

Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902), son of a Hertfordshire parson, had between school and college been sent to South Africa for his health. As a young man he became imbued with a sort of religion compounded of the ideas of Ruskin quoted earlier in this chapter, the Theory of Evolution (then still an exciting novelty) and his own experiences in South Africa. To bring as much as possible of the world under the sway of the highest type that Evolution had produced, namely the Anglo-Saxon race, seemed to him to be acting as the instrument of a beneficent Providence. His own personal aim was to create a United States of South Africa under the Union Jack, protected by the Royal Navy, but free from the meddling and muddling of Whitehall which had been so disastrous in the past, and peopled by Britons and Dutchmen united in a great South African nation.

Inspired by these dreams he returned in 1878 to the diamond fields at Kimberley, found the road to wealth, and became a member of the Cape Parliament. But soon a crisis arose which threatened all his plans. The only route to the north lay through Bechuanaland, between the Transvaal Republic and the Kalahari Desert. Germany now proclaimed a protectorate over Namaqualand, the eastward limits of which were undefined; if they were held to include Bechuanaland all access to the interior would be cut off. The Cape Government refused to do anything about it. Eventually the Imperial Government declared a protectorate over Bechuanaland. The immediate danger was aver-

ted, but not by the means which Rhodes favoured. He saw that to attain his ultimate objects he must wield the power that only great wealth can give. Up to now his income was a mere £50,000 a year—enough to keep the wolf from the door, but only a trifle compared with what his schemes required. For the next three years he was absorbed in putting money in his purse. He got the whole of the Kimberley diamond-fields under his control, cut costs and regulated supply. By 1890 his personal income was about a million sterling a year.

He had been anxious to keep open what he called the 'Suez Canal' through Bechuanaland, because it led to a magnificent stretch of country between the Limpopo and the Zambesi, which he saw was capable of great development. He now set about taking possession of this country by means of semi-private enterprise on the lines of the old East India Company. He bargained with Lo Bengula, the Matabele chieftain who ruled the best part of it, for a concession to work its minerals; and spent great sums in buying out rival concessionaires. He then came to England to get the necessary sanction from the Government. Here he met with a good deal of opposition, for Bradlaugh and the Aborigines' Protection Society objected to natives coming under the control of greedy speculators, while Chamberlain and the Imperialists distrusted a man who, in the Cape Parliament, proclaimed his hostility to the Colonial Office. He made friends with the Irish Party however, for Home Rule fitted in with his conception of a federal Empire; and he subscribed £10,000 to their funds on condition that the next Home Rule Bill should provide for Ireland to be represented in the Imperial Parliament. Eventually he obtained a charter which authorized his company to extend the railway and telegraph to the Zambesi (one of his visions was an 'all-red railway' from the Cape to Cairo), to encourage trade and colonization, and to develop the mineral resources of the country. In 1890 he sent up a band of pioneers, Dutch and British, to take possession.

In 1893 a war with the Matabele broke out. The unfortunate Lo Bengula found that an ell had been taken where he had given an inch. He had had no intention of giving up his authority over his subjects the Mashonas, among whom the newcomers had settled; but when he exercised it the colonists intervened. Moreover the pioneers became dissatisfied with the

comparatively poor lands assigned to them, and cast envious eyes on the splendid uplands where the Matabele kept the finest herds of cattle in Africa. In these circumstances war was inevitable, and equally inevitable the defeat and death of Lo Bengula, and the lapse of all his territory into the possession of the Chartered Company. Finally, in 1895, the whole country between the Limpopo and the Great Lakes received by Royal Proclamation the name 'Rhodesia'.

XI

THE TRIUMPH OF UNIONISM
1886—1895

The defeat of the Liberals in 1886 gave the Conservatives a chance to apply Salisbury's prescription of 'resolute government' to Ireland. It caused a certain reaction in favour of Nationalist claims; but misfortune continued to beset Anglo-Irish relations, and Gladstone's second attempt at Home Rule completed the shipwreck of Victorian Liberalism.

'Resolute Government.' When Gladstone resigned in 1886 Lord Salisbury (who though he enjoyed dealing with foreign affairs had little appetite for politics in general) offered to stand aside in favour of Lord Hartington. But the time had not yet come for the Liberal Unionists to sink their identity in Conservatism, or even to form a coalition with it—after all it was only a couple of years since Tory leaders had been likening Chamberlain to Jack Cade. So for the duration of this Parliament the Unionists sat as a group on the Opposition benches.

Salisbury in making up his second Ministry had to find a place for Lord Randolph Churchill, who had done so much to overthrow the Liberals. But it was a bold step to make him Chancellor of the Exchequer, for he had never been credited with any taste for finance. Still, as soon as he had been instructed by the Treasury officials in the significance of decimal points he soon grasped the essentials of budget making, and the post seemed to make him heir-apparent to the leadership. But his success was cut short by a political error of judgment. He was as ardent about social reform as his friend Chamberlain, and in a speech at Dartford in October (1886) he set forth plans as alarming to the old-fashioned Tory as 'The Unauthorized Programme' has been to the Whigs. To procure the money for these reforms without increasing taxation he proposed to reduce the Estimates of the War Office and Admiralty. When W. H. Smith, the War Minister, objected, Churchill impetuously resigned, confident that the Prime Minister would have to back

him up for lack of anyone to take his place. But to his chagrin his resignation was quietly accepted. Salisbury had realized that he was going to be an uncomfortable colleague, and offered the post to Goschen, a former Liberal minister who had parted from Gladstone over the County Franchise. He proved a capable and businesslike Chancellor. Churchill, who had 'forgotten Goschen', died a few years later while still a comparatively young man, without being in office again.

Another bold appointment of Salisbury's was that of his nephew Arthur Balfour, as Chief Secretary for Ireland, to carry out the 'resolute government' which he had declared to be the right alternative to Home Rule. People who knew Balfour as the cultured but lackadaisical member of the 'Fourth Party' were amazed; but appearances were deceptive, and the Irish Members who at first ridiculed him as a 'tiger-lily' and 'the darling of perfumed drawing-rooms' were soon vituperating him as 'Bloody Balfour'.

He had to face a new phase of Irish agitation. In the autumn of 1886 Parnell's principal lieutenants, Healy, Dillon, and O'Brien (he himself being laid aside by illness) adopted 'The Plan of Campaign' for fighting landlords with their own rents. The tenants on an estate met and agreed among themselves as to what was a fair rent for each holding; and if the landlord would not accept it they put the rent they had offered him into a fund to resist evictions in the law-courts. To counter this illegal scheme Balfour brought in the most drastic Coercion Bill ever conceived. Since Irish juries would not convict people of offences against the Land Laws he put such charges under the jurisdiction of Resident Magistrates who were responsible to the British Government. And no time limit was assigned to this reign of Arbitrary Law.

There was a great outcry from Nationalists and Liberals, and many Conservatives were taken aback. General Sir Redvers Buller, whom the Government had sent to restore order in S.W. Ireland, came to the conclusion that the peasantry there could not possibly pay their rents. 'You have here a very ignorant poor people,' he reported; 'the Government ought to do something for them, instead of looking after the rich.' Other employment was quickly found for this bluff plain-speaking soldier.

To help the Government get the Coercion Bill passed *The Times* printed a series of articles entitled 'Parnellism and Crime', suggesting that the Nationalist Party had been instigating the bloodshed and violence in Ireland. On the very day that the decisive vote was to be taken in the House there appeared what purported to be the facsimile of a letter written by Parnell just after the Phoenix Park murders, apologizing to a supporter because public decency compelled him to disown them. Parnell denied all knowledge of the letter, but it was generally felt that *The Times* would not have printed it without certain proof of its authenticity, and Salisbury rebuked Gladstone for having dealings with such a miscreant.

The Government got its bill through, partly owing to the feeling aroused by these articles, and partly by a new and more drastic method of beating down parliamentary obstruction. By the 'Guillotine' any clauses of a bill that have not been dealt with by a time table fixed in advance can (if the Speaker approves) be put to the vote without further discussion. Only a few years earlier Conservatives had been horrified and Liberals dismayed by Gladstone's introduction of the Closure, which merely enabled the Speaker to end the debate on a particular clause.

Meanwhile Balfour went on his way unperturbed by abuse. He let it be known that he would support any magistrate or constable who erred by excess of zeal in dealing with crimes of violence. Irish Members were sent to prison as common criminals for speaking in favour of the Plan of Campaign. (Ireland was the only country in the civilized world where political prisoners were forced to wear prison dress and have their hair cropped.) To Balfour Irish Nationalism was mere sentimental nonsense. He refused to recognize it as a genuine political cause, or to distinguish between various categories of law-breakers. By the end of 1887 six Irish M.P.s were undergoing hard labour at the same time.

PIGGOTT AND PARNELL. Parnell asked the Government to appoint a Select Committee to inquire into the charges in *The Times*. This was refused, but after some delay Salisbury offered instead a Judicial Committee of three High Court judges. The judges selected were all strong Conservatives; the Attorney-

General (the Government's chief law officer) acted as leading counsel for *The Times*; and at the last moment the scope of the inquiry was widened to include charges made outside its columns against 'other persons' as well as Parnell. The Commission thus became a sort of trial of the Irish nation, with the British Government acting both as judge and prosecutor. But Parnell had to accept it or let his case go by default.

The Commission sat for more than a year off and on, and heard hundreds of witnesses examined and cross-examined. When at last it came to what really interested the public, *The Times* letters, an amazing story came out. It appeared that *The Times* had spent tens of thousands sterling in the search for evidence against Parnell, and had bought these letters at a very high price from a stranger who had obtained them from an out-of-work journalist of doubtful reputation named Piggott. A merciless cross-examination by Sir Charles Russell, Parnell's counsel, extorted from Piggott what amounted to an admission that he had forged them. That night the wretched culprit fled to Spain, where he committed suicide to avoid arrest.

After these events the Commission's Report could not go against Parnell, but it upheld charges against some of his leading supporters. *The Times* had to pay £200,000 to defray the costs of the inquiry, but made no adequate apology for the wrong it had done to Parnell. As for Lord Salisbury, he passed the incident off as merely 'evidence that one Nationalist could forge another Nationalist's signature'. But British love of fair play hastened a reversal of feeling towards Parnell and (illogically, perhaps) his cause. People began to rally round Gladstone now that it appeared that the only alternative to Home Rule was perpetual coercion, with prison suits and plank beds for critics of the Government. To placate this feeling Balfour put through a *Land Purchase Act* (1891) by which the Government undertook to lend tenants money up to a total of £20,000,000 to buy their farms from landlords willing to sell. The Act also set up 'Congested District Boards' which did something to improve methods of agriculture and revive cottage industries.

Nevertheless, by-elections continued to go against the Government, until its majority shrank to seventy. A 'Union of Hearts' between Liberals and Nationalists culminated in a visit

of Parnell to Hawarden (Gladstone's home in North Wales), followed by a speech at Liverpool in which he spoke of Gladstone as 'Our grand old Leader'. It looked as if the next General Election would give Gladstone a majority that would enable him to accomplish the purpose which kept him, as he said, 'chained to the oar'.

Then came a bolt from the blue. Parnell was cited as co-respondent in a divorce suit brought by Captain O'Shea. He made no defence, and the suit was allowed. The effect was disastrous both for the Nationalists and for their Liberal allies. The 'Nonconformist Conscience', still the pith and marrow of Liberalism, revolted against co-operation with a man who had been found out in transgression of the moral code. Strong pressure was put upon Gladstone to throw over Home Rule altogether unless the Irish Party would dismiss its leader. Parnell, with his haughty contempt for English politicians, spurned the idea of resigning to please them. The great majority of his Party begged him to retire, if only for a time, but he indignantly refused. Thereupon the dissentients broke away, and the Party split into Parnellites and anti-Parnellites. Soon personal animosities embittered the controversy beyond hope of reconciliation. Parnell made desperate efforts to rally the Irish nation to himself, but the Catholic Church now threw him over, and the opposition of the clergy proved decisive. Within a year he had worn and worried himself to death (September 1891), leaving in ruins the edifice which he had built with such sagacity and determination.

Local Government. Meanwhile the Government pursued the even tenor of its way. Salisbury was immersed in foreign affairs, which he often conducted at Hatfield House without troubling to come up to London—it was said that he did not know some of his colleagues even by sight. Balfour kept Ireland quiescent (outwardly at any rate) by his combination of Coercion and Land Purchase. Chamberlain, as leader of a group whose support was increasingly valuable to the Government, made his Radical influence felt in several directions—the Colonial Conference at the time of the Queen's Jubilee (1887) and in the completion of Free Education (1891); above all in the Local Government Act (1888), by far the most important

piece of legislation which this Government carried through.

Since 1832 spasmodic twinges of social conscience had made Parliament set up a number of local bodies—Health Boards, Boards of Guardians, Burial Boards, School Boards, District Sanitary Boards—with overlapping areas, varied electoral systems and conflicting powers. By 1880 a householder might have to pay a dozen different rates. And while most of the older cities had elective councils under the *Municipal Councils Act* of 1835, administration in rural districts was still in the hands of J.P.s nominated by Lords-Lieutenant of the Counties. Now that the social services were being extended some more comprehensive and democratic system of applying them was needed. Whitehall was too remote to adapt regulations to local circumstances; but these one-job Boards had the opposite fault: they were too subject to local influences and prejudices. The area which offered the happy medium was the County. And it had tradition behind it. Indeed, it was an older governmental unit than the country itself—there were ealdormen of Kent and Gloucester long before there were kings of England.

So in 1888 a *Local Government Act* set up County Councils elected by ratepayers, to meet at least four times a year in the county town. Each was to have its own paid officials, and was to divide itself into committees to control roads, public health, and (in conjunction with the magistrates) the police. Later on education and the relief of the poor were added to its responsibilities, as we shall see in due course. The larger towns, already self-governing under ancient charters or the Act of 1835, resented the proposed loss of their autonomy, so the biggest of them were made 'County Boroughs', outside the authority of the County Councils.

One notable outcome of the Act was the formation of a County of London with a Council of its own. Hitherto the Mother of Cities had been mismanaged by a chaotic welter of 'vestries' or parish meetings, which nominated unpaid officials who often shirked their undesired duties; while certain common interests were controlled by a 'Metropolitan Board of Works' elected by the vestries, and only very distantly responsible to the ratepayers.

The new L.C.C. was a great success. Its first chairman was Lord Rosebery, and among its original members were men who

had gained distinction in many walks of life. Ten years later the old vestries were finally abolished, and Greater London was divided into twenty-eight boroughs, each with its own mayor and council bearing much the same relations to the L.C.C. that other boroughs bear to the County Councils. But the City maintained its independence, with its own historic Lord Mayor and Common Council, and even its own police.

In 1894 the reorganization of local government thus begun was completed by a *District and Parish Councils Act.* (A Liberal Government was now in office, but this was never treated as a Party issue.) The counties were now divided into Urban and Rural Districts, each with an elected Council employing paid officials. These District Councils were entrusted by the County Councils with such duties as require an intimate acquaintance with each locality. There are some functions, such as the control of the police and the provision of mental hospitals, which can only be carried out effectively on a fairly large scale; others, such as checking insanitary 'nuisances' and providing allotments, are better done for each neighbourhood by people on the spot. Urban Districts, being more populous, were to be given wider powers than Rural Districts. And finally areas under R.D.C.s were to be subdivided into Civil Parishes (not always identical with Ecclesiastical Parishes) to take charge of parish property, keep up village greens and parish halls, remove petty nuisances, and bring the needs of the parish to the notice of the Rural and County Councils.

'AN OLD MAN IN A HURRY.' When in 1892 the Parliament of 1886 was drawing to the end of its life, the country, as we have seen, was equally dissatisfied with 'resolute government' and with the prospect of Home Rule. The very completeness with which the Catholic Church had obliterated Parnell's influence seemed to enforce the argument that Home Rule would put Irish Protestants, especially the Presbyterians of Ulster, at the mercy of an intolerant hierarchy controlled from Rome. Nevertheless Gladstone, who so dwarfed his colleagues that he could scarcely recognize any distinction among them, was still obsessed by the hope of bringing peace to Ireland by a measure of autonomy. Certainly a few other items were added to the Liberal programme at a Party meeting at Newcastle in 1891

but these were not likely to arouse enthusiasm in the country. Proposals to disestablish the Welsh (Anglican) and the Scottish (Presbyterian) Churches alienated both Churchmen and Dissenters; while the adoption of Local Veto united several classes of the community in a determination to keep out a party which threatened 'to rob the poor man of his beer'.

Thus the election of 1892 gave the Conservatives and Unionists a majority of forty over the Liberals; but the eighty Irish members—divided among themselves as they still were even now after Parnell's death—once again held the balance between the Parties. With their support the Liberals turned the Conservatives out; and Gladstone formed his fourth Government, with Rosebery at the Foreign Office, Morley as Chief Secretary for Ireland, and Harcourt as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Prime Minister set to work at once on another Home Rule Bill, and introduced it in February 1893. Randolph Churchill had taunted him with being 'an old man in a hurry', and the phrase had more truth than kindness. That seemingly inexhaustible elasticity of body and spirit was at last wearing out. As he himself said, 'The gates of the senses were closing'. His opponents were young and could play for time; but for him it was now or never. During the following fifteen months he gave an amazing display of mental energy and resource for a man of eighty-four, but it was obviously his last effort.

This bill provided for Irish Members to sit at Westminster as well as Dublin; otherwise Ireland would be paying a share of Imperial taxation with no voice in the spending of the money. The debate was long and acrimonious; on one occasion it degenerated into something like a free fight. And all the time an air of futility hung over the House, for everyone knew that whatever happened to the bill in the Commons it was certain to be killed in the Lords. In the end it passed the Commons by forty-one votes, but was thrown out in the Lords by a majority of ten to one.

That was the end of Home Rule for a generation. Gladstone retired soon afterwards, and the House in which he had sat since the days of the first Reform Act knew him no more. When in 1898 he died, Balfour called him 'the greatest member of the greatest deliberative assembly the world has ever known'.

THE ROSEBERY MINISTRY. The Queen did not consult Gladstone about his successor (nor did she thank him for his fifty years of service); she forthwith sent for Lord Rosebery. Sir William Harcourt (1827–1904) was bitterly disappointed. He had been a minister when Rosebery was still at Eton, and he was an experienced member of the House of Commons, where Rosebery had never sat. Rosebery was, indeed, a spoiled darling of politics, as successful on the turf as in politics[1] (an unusual qualification for leadership of Liberalism). What hurt Harcourt most was that his colleagues acquiesced without question in his rival's advancement; but in truth their approval was negative—it was not due to wanting Rosebery as their chief, but to a dread of having Harcourt, who was touchy and overbearing.

Thus the revised Ministry was divided against itself. A Prime Minister in the Lords was very dependent on his Leader of the Commons; but Harcourt (who accepted the latter position and struggled manfully to hold together a majority that sometimes sank to ten or a dozen) rarely communicated with his chief otherwise than by acid notes. And Rosebery made an unfortunate start by a speech in which he seemed to throw Home Rule overboard. 'Before it could be conceded', he said, 'England as predominant partner will have to be convinced of its justice.' It was true enough that the Act of Union could not rightfully be rescinded by unilateral action, but if the Liberals dropped Home Rule they would lose the Irish vote, without which they would instantly be thrown out of office.

The one solid achievement of the Rosebery Government was Harcourt's 1894 budget. Increased naval expenditure called for a new source of revenue, and the Chancellor found it by an extension of the Succession Duties. These had been widened by Gladstone in 1853 to include Real as well as Personal Estate. Harcourt now made them payable on the estate as a whole and not on separate legacies; and as the percentage increased on a sliding scale this made a big difference. Unlike indirect taxes, which increase the price of goods and fall on all consumers, 'Death Duties' are paid only by the well-to-do. And they can

[1] He is said to have announced while still at Oxford three ambitions: to marry an heiress, to become Prime Minister, and to win the Derby. He married a Rothschild in 1878, became Prime Minister in 1894 and won the Derby twice—in 1894 with Ladas and in 1895 with Sir Visto.

be increased at any time by a mere turn of the screw, for whereas a rise in an indirect tax may reduce consumption, nobody can avoid dying, sooner or later. That was why Gladstone disliked them—he feared that they would encourage extravagant public expenditure.[1] But no subsequent Chancellor of the Exchequer has been able to discard them, and they have become one of the main pillars of revenue.

The House of Lords rejected practically all the Government's bills, or so mutilated them that they had to be withdrawn. Thus it was reduced to 'ploughing the sands', to use the expression coined by H. H. Asquith, the young lawyer who was making a name for good sense and political acumen as Home Secretary. Cabinet meetings became painful owing to personal feuds. Then in March 1895 came a blessed relief. The Opposition moved to censure the Government for an alleged shortage of cordite (a new smokeless explosive); there chanced to be more Conservatives than Liberals present in a thin House, and the motion was carried. There was no constitutional reason for Ministers to take this 'snap vote' seriously, but they were glad of an excuse to bring the wretched life of the Government to an end. And the ensuing election showed that the country was as tired of the Liberals as they were of themselves.

[1] His fear was justified. Harcourt's highest rate, payable on estates over £1,000,000, was 8 per cent. The amount payable on such an estate in 1948 was 40 per cent.

XII

EUROPE TAKES THE WRONG TURNING 1875–1893

In the twenty years following the Franco-German War the Powers fell into two hostile and suspicious groups, which eventually clashed in the first World War. This polarization was due largely to the policy of Bismarck, the dominant figure of the epoch.

BISMARCK'S GERMANY. In the new German Empire the Reichstag could not dismiss the Chancellor, but it could hamper him by refusing credits and rejecting Bills, and Bismarck took care to keep a friendly majority in it. The Conservative Junkers—the class which provided Prussian officers and officials—were staunch supporters of the authoritarian monarchy, but they had only about fifty members in an assembly of four hundred. For some years he also managed to keep in with the strongest Party, the National Liberals, who represented the upper middle class. These two groups, corresponding roughly to English Tories and Whigs, were deeply rooted in German history; but two others grew up from new circumstances.

There was a tradition of hostility between the Prussian State and the Catholic Church, which fostered Polish nationalism and sided with Catholic Austria. The quarrel now came to a head over the recent promulgation of Papal Infallibility.[1] Professors of theology at Catholic Universities in Germany were dismissed by the Vatican for rejecting the doctrine, and Bismarck took their part. At the very first meeting of the Reichstag the Catholic members formed a 'Centre Party' to protect the interests of the Church. Bismarck would not let his authority be challenged by a non-German potentate, and there began a *Kulturkampf*—a struggle between Catholic and Protestant types of civilization. Bismarck issued anti-clerical decrees, forbidding

[1] The doctrine of Papal Infallibility had been discussed for centuries, but it was only in 1870 that the Vatican decided to adopt it. It claims Divine inspiration for the Pope's pronouncements upon Faith and Morals. It has never actually been exercised.

the clergy to interfere in politics and compelling them to graduate at German Universities, and enforced them by wholesale ejections. By 1877 half the Catholic bishoprics were vacant and a thousand parishes lacked priests. But it was a hollow victory. The old King-Emperor hated religious persecution; the Junkers disliked being on bad terms with their peasantry (Polish Prussia was the stronghold of Junkerdom); and the Centre Party seemed to thrive on it. Bismarck had declared that come what might he 'would never go to Canossa',[1] but by 1878 he needed the support of the Centre for another line of policy which he deemed more urgent. He unobtrusively withdrew the oppressive decrees, one by one; but by this time the Centre had made for itself a permanent position in German politics.

What impelled the Chancellor to make his peace with it was the appearance of a Social Democratic Party. When in 1848 Marx and Engels issued their 'Communist Manifesto', mass production had hardly begun in Germany; but within the next quarter of a century it was raising there the same problems that had long afflicted Britain, and (to a lesser degree) France. In 1861 Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel formed a Social Democratic Workers' Party, which in 1875 was put on a sound footing, with capable officials, a substantial income and a daily newspaper, *Vorwärts*. At the next election it polled half a million votes and sent nine members to the Reichstag. Bismarck was startled. This seemed a far greater danger to his Reich than Catholicism—especially now that the Pope had condemned Socialism as un-Christian. With the aid of the Centre Party he put through a special law which suppressed Trade Unions, forbade public meetings, and gave the Government power to suspend journals, to put districts under martial law, and to banish people without trial.

But the banned Party seemed, like the Centre, to thrive on persecution. It continued its local organizations in various disguises, as choral unions and gymnastic clubs; it held its congresses and printed its propaganda abroad. So Bismarck

[1] The reference was to the famous occasion in 1077 when the Emperor Henry IV, after his 'Investiture Conflict' with the Pope, came to Canossa to beg for reconciliation and absolution, and was kept waiting barefoot in the snow before being admitted to the castle.

coupled with persecution an attempt to kill it by kindness. A Workmen's Compensation Act was passed in 1881, Compulsory Health Insurance in 1884, Old Age Pensions in 1888—social services which were the first of their kind in the history of the world. The funds were provided one-third by the worker and two-thirds by the employer; the State's contribution being limited to administration. At one time Bismarck went so far as to discuss abolishing Sunday labour and reducing the working day to twelve or even eleven hours; but he decided that to do this without reducing wages would cripple foreign trade by raising the cost of production, while to reduce wages would bring the worker, with his ten shillings or twelve shillings a week, below starvation level, especially now that he had to subscribe to schemes of insurance. But blandishments were no more effective than severities. The Social Democrats looked on the reforms as a trick to head them off from demanding an all-round advance in the standard of living, and at the election of 1890 they polled one and a half million votes.

The year 1878 was a pivotal one for Bismarck. It saw not only the opening of his campaign against the Socialists and the close of that against the Catholics, but a revolution in fiscal policy. All Europe was turning to the national self-sufficiency preached by Friedrich List.[1] France, Russia, Italy and Belgium had already begun to protect their markets from foreign competition by high import duties. German industries, still in tender infancy, needed careful nursing, especially while recovering from the inflation caused by the French war indemnity; and German agriculture was now beginning to feel the competition of Russian and Hungarian cornfields. Moreover, revenue from indirect taxes were by the Constitution independent of the Reichstag, and could therefore be used to meet the growing cost of the Army without the Government having to pay court to plebeian parliamentarians. Bismarck began in 1878 with a small corn duty. (A large one, such as the Junkers demanded, would have raised the price of bread and therewith the costs of industrial

[1] Friedrich List's *National System of Political Economy* (1841), stressing the case for national self-sufficiency by means of Protection, was one of the most influential books of the century. Its doctrines led to the first Great War.

labour.) Protection for heavy industry followed in the next few years.

THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE. But Bismarck's main interest was in foreign affairs. He had no further ambitions: Germany was, as he said 'a sated Power'. But he wanted security from retaliation by the Powers at whose expense he had built up the Empire, and the illimitable strength of Russia was a perpetual menace. So he offered a military alliance to Austria.

He was now rewarded for his foresight in curbing the Prussian generals from inflicting unnecessary wounds on Austrian pride after Sadowa. His greatest difficulty was with the soldierly straightforwardness of his own master. The old King-Emperor would not sanction machinations against his cousin the Tsar, who had so obligingly held back Austria during the Franco-German War. But in time Bismarck wore down his scruples: the Tsar was not to be shown the Treaty which mentioned Russia as the potential enemy, but a memorandum for it, which did not. Stripped of diplomatic jargon, the parties agreed that if Russia attacked either the other would go to the victim's aid; if any other Power (i.e. France) attacked either—the other would observe benevolent neutrality (1879).

And before long Bismarck contrived to draw over to his side another possible ally of France. Italy's history after 1870 was an anti-climax, as the glowing colours of the Risorgimento faded in the common light of a drab constitutional monarchy. Victor Emmanuel and Pio Nono, the last survivors of the heroic age, both died in 1878, but the quarrel between Church and State continued to distract the nation. The House of Savoy could not keep the national spirit alight—the first kings of Italy could not even speak Italian. There was hostility between north and south; there were clogging traditions of governmental sloth and corruption; the people were unfit for parliamentary government—in the former Papal States only 5 per cent of them could read and write. And there was vexation because Italy was not complete: Trieste and Istria, included in Napoleon's 'Kingdom of Italy', and Dalmatia, once part of the Venetian Empire, were still under Austria. And when in 1880 the embarrassed Government thought of compensation overseas, a French ex-

pedition had anticipated it by seizing Tunis thereby putting Italy's coasts at the mercy of the second strongest sea-power in Europe, with bases at Toulon, in Corsica, and now at Bizerta. So in 1880 King Umberto made secret inquiries at Berlin to see if Germany would buttress Italy against France.

As a matter of fact Bismarck had at the Berlin Congress secretly suggested to France the seizure of Tunis, hoping that this would drive Italy into his arms. The upshot was Italy's secret admission to the Austro-German Alliance. The three Powers guaranteed each other's territories in Europe; but Austria and Germany promised no support for possible Italian adventures in Africa, and Italy excused herself from any conflict with Great Britain—partly from sentiment for the country which had done so much for Italian nationhood, and partly from a wholesome respect for the British Navy. Italy thus bought security at the price of her 'unredeemed lands', and Bismarck's statecraft had struck another shrewd blow at France. She would never be able to undertake a war of revenge against Germany without Italy's acquiescence, and she was henceforth obliged to keep two army corps guarding her Italian frontier.

RUSSO-GERMAN HOSTILITY. The formation of the Triple Alliance, even though its mention of Russia was kept a close secret, was a great shock to Tsar Alexander II. He began at once (as Bismarck intended) to try to restore good relations with Germany; but he had hardly begun when he was assassinated. In Russia nineteenth-century liberalism came into conflict with social conditions dating from the Dark Ages. Despotism to be successful needs to be efficient, and Tsardom was not. The masses were too down-trodden to have the spirit to revolt, but there was an active-minded minority of educated people whose discontents, lacking a parliamentary outlet, took extravagant forms, culminating in a violent and remorseless resistance to authority for which Turgeniev invented the term 'Nihilist'.

It is an old saying the tyranny is most in danger when it tries to reform. The Nihilist terror broke out under the most humane of Tsars. Alexander II tried hard to bring enlightenment and prosperity to his people. He set up village councils (zemstvos); he instituted public law courts with trained judges; above all, he abolished serfdom. But the immediate effects were dis-

appointing. Nobles resented the loss of their human property; ex-serfs complained that they had not enough land to live on; improvements in education created throngs of discontented unemployables. Disaffection had to be checked by secret police, whose methods drove resistance into secret societies pledged to terrorize the ruling class into granting freedom of speech and a national parliament. While the 'Tsar Liberator' was considering concessions on these lines the Nihilists acted: he was killed by a bomb in the streets of St. Petersburg (1881). His successor, Alexander III, was a stolid unimaginative young man, who took as chief adviser his old tutor Pobyedonosteff, a fanatical upholder of the traditional autocracy. Iron-handed repression became the order of the day, combined with a revival of Pan-Russian ambitions in the Balkans.

These were bound to antagonize Germany and Austria; and the renewed rivalry at once became manifest over the Principality of Bulgaria. Even at the Berlin Congress scarcely anybody but Lord Beaconsfield had thought that the trisection of Bulgaria would be permanent, and in 1883 two of the parts joined under a Prince Alexander of Battenberg. He had been nominated Prince of Bulgaria by Tsar Alexander II in 1879, but was soon hand in glove with Stambuloff, the leader of resistance to Russian influence. In 1886 some Russian officers broke into his palace at Sofia and made him abdicate; but the Tsar gained little by this, as Stambuloff procured the election of another German prince in his place. How this embittered Russo-German relations still further we shall shortly see.

'Boulangisme' and 'Reinsurance'. In 1887 France and Germany seemed once more about to fly at each other's throats. The Republic was always in financial difficulties, due partly to colonial enterprises in North Africa and Cochin China, partly to the growing cost of army and navy, and partly to vote-seeking programmes of public works. In 1886 a timid Premier played for popularity by appointing as War Minister a dashing Radical soldier, General Boulanger. The Radicals (among them Georges Clemenceau) were above all the party of 'revenge', and Boulanger personified it. Young, handsome and debonair, he was a striking contrast to the dull, grey-whiskered politicians, and he made the Army once more the centre of France's pride

and hope. The Government went for months in dread lest the spirit thus roused should drag the country into a war for which it was as yet unprepared. A determined attempt was made to 'build him up' for the Presidency. When President Grévy had to resign owing to an unsavoury scandal about the sale of honours, the hour seemed at hand for 'Général Revanche' to set up some kind of military monarchy. But beneath his braggadocio Boulanger knew himself incapable of leading France to victory, and the nearer he came to being put to the test the more his spirit quailed. When the Government plucked up courage to prosecute him for plotting the overthrow of the Republic he fled to Brussels, where a little later he committed suicide.

But 'Boulangisme' had made Bismarck anxious to strengthen his Triple Alliance. Austria and Italy were both making difficulties about renewing it, and to overcome their timidity he tried to bring Britain into it. 'If England holds aloof Germany will have no further reason to withhold approval of French designs in Egypt or those of Russia in the Near East, however far they go'—that was his line of argument to Lord Salisbury. Eventually he procured an exchange of Notes by which Britain and Italy promised to support each other in the Mediterranean; and when the Triple Alliance was renewed in 1887 Britain became a sleeping partner with very limited liability.

Bismarck then renewed his efforts to neutralize the hostility of Russia. A furious anti-German campaign was raging in the Pan-Slav Press, and it seemed that the Tsar might be stampeded into an alliance with France. As a matter of fact, Alexander III felt disgust and disdain for the Republic, and the Boulanger episode intensified this antipathy; but Bismarck determined to tie his hands by a pact. The Tsar suspected that the Triple Alliance was expressly directed against him; and instead of denying this, Bismarck confirmed it. He disclosed to him the secret clause of the treaty, trusting that alarm at his isolation would outweigh his anger at the duplicity. The ruse succeeded. A secret Russo-German treaty was signed (June 1887) by which if either party were attacked the other was to remain neutral.

But this 'Reinsurance Treaty', as Bismarck called it, was no union of hearts; and soon a severe strain was put upon it. Prince

Ferdinand of Coburg, a very astute and ambitious young man, put himself forward for the vacant throne of Bulgaria. The Pan-Slavists raged, and the Tsar wanted no more German princelings at Sofia. Nevertheless Ferdinand managed to get himself chosen by the Sobranje, the Bulgarian Parliament. It was a great diplomatic victory for Bismarck, thus to have substituted German for Russian influence in Russia's client-state; and the Tsar began seriously to consider if he had not better swallow his monarchist pride and come to an understanding with France.

Still, the Reinsurance Treaty was a clever piece of work. It implied a diversion of Russia's interests from the Balkans, where they clashed with Austria's, to Asia, where they clashed with Britain's; and it enabled Bismarck to keep France isolated by playing Russia and Austria off against each other.

A New Regime in Germany. In the autumn of 1887 Bismarck could review his handiwork and find it very good. The Empire which he had created and made the hub of European affairs filled foreign observers with admiration and respect. Its disciplined regimentation of commerce, science, technology and scholarship made Germans seem a nation of experts among happy-go-lucky amateurs. The contrast was specially notable in the military sphere. The German Army was directed by some of the nation's ablest men, to whom soldiering was a life's vocation, under a Government which regarded war as its chief instrument of policy; at a time when the British armed forces had not even the rudiments of a General Staff or of an Intelligence Service.

But there was a cloud in Bismarck's sky. The King-Emperor was a very old man (he had been at the Battle of Waterloo); and the Crown Prince, though a good soldier, was inclined to liberalism, being much under the influence of his high-spirited wife, the eldest daughter of Queen Victoria. Though three of her grandparents were Germans she became in Germany an upholder of all things British—especially in constitutional matters, such as responsible government and personal liberty. Naturally *die Engländerin* was much disliked by patriotic Germans, especially by the Iron Chancellor, to whom democracy was only less detestable than petticoat government.

For thirty years Frederick and Victoria made plans, nursing

hopes deferred that made the heart sick; and latterly their heart-sickness had been embittered by the character of their eldest son William. Born in 1859, he inherited his mother's restless energy; but an accident at birth checked the development of his left arm, and this deformity, so galling for one destined to the limelight, gave him what would nowadays be called an inferiority complex—an impulse to show people, including himself, that he was as virile as anybody else. The only environment in which he felt happy was the Army, where he was surrounded by glitter and adulation. And as soon as he was old enough to realize the ill-feeling between his parents and Bismarck, he instinctively sided with the latter, who took every opportunity of pushing him forward at their expense.

Until lately the Crown Prince and Princess had consoled themselves with the thought that when their time came they would be able to put Bismarck aside and establish their liberal regime so firmly that when Prince William came to the throne he would not be able to upset it. But in the spring of 1887 Frederick became very hoarse. Experts recommended the removal of a malignant growth which would leave him voiceless. This would be a grave embarrassment for a soldier-Emperor, and when an English throat specialist, Sir Morell Mackenzie, gave hopes of a cure without surgery, this alternative was gladly accepted. But the disease was not checked, and by the time Mackenzie admitted that his diagnosis must have been mistaken it was too late for the operation. Thus when in March 1888 the death of old William I brought the Prince and Princess to their promised land, it was agonizingly evident that their tenure would be but momentary. The doomed Emperor Frederick did not dismiss Bismarck, knowing that the change would be reversed within a few weeks. Death came after a reign of ninety-eight days.

William II's first proclamation was to his Army ('I swear to remember . . . that I shall one day have to give account to my ancestors for its honour and glory'); his second was to his rudimentary Navy. Only some days later did he condescend to address his civilian subjects. Never throughout his reign did he appear in public out of uniform. There was every sign that Bismarck would remain in office indefinitely.

But circumstances had changed. In 1871 the Emperor had been a veteran of seventy-four while the Chancellor was in the prime of life; but now it was the Chancellor who was seventy-four while the Emperor was a young man of twenty-eight, bursting with lust for domination. Had Germany been a democracy, William would have had to adapt himself to a minister who had such a hold on the nation's confidence; but Bismarck had made the sovereign supreme in the State, and his success in this was now his own undoing.

It was not long before he began to feel the difference in his position. Nobody could exercise so much power so ruthlessly for so long without making enemies; and many Germans felt that the Reich having made good its supremacy in Europe, the time had come to make it a World Power—a task for which Bismarck was not fitted. The crisis came when the young Kaiser took a line of his own in social policy. When a series of strikes, accompanied by violence against 'blacklegs', interrupted production in the Ruhr, Bismarck decided on strong measures against the Social Democratic Party. But the Emperor made his own inquiries, found that German working-men had to bring up families on wages of threepence or fourpence an hour, and determined that they should learn to look to him for protection instead of to Socialist leaders. Encouraged by sycophants who urged that Frederick II would never have become 'The Great' if he had been under the thumb of an all-powerful minister, he nerved himself for a bold stroke. Without waiting for the Chancellor's counter-signature he issued two Imperial Rescripts, one on social insurace and the other calling for an international conference on labour problems. After that the end was in sight for Bismarck. He resigned in March 1890: the young captain had 'dropped the pilot'.

The new regime had at once to make a momentous decision. The Reinsurance Treaty would expire in June; was it to be renewed? The Kaiser had been shocked to learn of it on his accession: the promise of neutrality in an Austro-Russian conflict seemed contrary to the first axiom of German policy—the preservation of Austro-Hungary as a first-class Power. Moreover this two-faced game of Bismarck's involved intricacies which he alone could manipulate. Caprivi, the new Chancellor, and

weapons it was to France that she naturally turned. The Government of the Republic smoothed out all difficulties; the aim of all patriotic Frenchmen was to drag France out of the diplomatic isolation to which she had been relegated by the other Powers when she became a republic. And now the Kaiser had blundered into making her 'alliance-worthy' (*bündnisfähig*), to use Bismarck's expression.

During 1890–1 Franco-Russian relations grew ever more cordial. The Republic obligingly arrested Nihilist refugees. Staff officers exchanged visits. The French fleet visited Kronstadt; and when Alexander III stood bare-headed while the band of his flagship played the *Marseillaise*, the battle-hymn of the Revolution, the alliance was as good as made. A year later it was signed, with clauses stating the number of troops which each party would put into the field within a specified period after a declaration of war, an undertaking that neither of them would make a separate peace, and a promise of strict secrecy. Within a few years 500,000,000 francs of French money had been spent in giving vitality to Greater Russia by a railway from Petersburg to Vladivostock, and in rearming the Russian forces.

The actual terms might be kept dark, but it was impossible to hide the existence of the treaty. And when soon after the death of Alexander III, in 1894, his son Nicholas II visited Paris, the French nation gave him a delirious reception. One famous journal went so far as to say that the French army's message to its honoured guest was *Quand vous voudrez!*

This rapture was somewhat exaggerated. Though the Dual Alliance undoubtedly strengthened the diplomatic position of both parties, it had a bad side. For it prevented Russia from feeling the urgency of a drastic overhaul of her military and governmental systems, and without that overhaul her strength was far less than either Power supposed. And liberal-minded men everywhere regretted that France, the home of Liberty and Equality, should buttress with loans the rotten façade of Tsarist autocracy. But French politicians stopped their ears and shut their eyes to anything that might weaken the new-found 'security' of the Republic.

And a terrible cataclysm began to darken the horizon.

XIII

IMPERIALISM INFLATED
1895–1899

The Liberal Unionists now became such an important leaven in the Conservative Party that their leader became the dominant personality in Salisbury's third Government. These years of Chamberlain's ascendancy marked the high tide of flag-waving Imperialism, with its main focus in South Africa.

UNIONISM IN THE SADDLE. The electoral tide which in the summer of 1895 washed Liberalism out of office for a decade (p. 128) consisted of no more than a quarter of a million votes in a total of 6¼ million; but it is surprising what a turnover of 5 per cent of the electorate will do. On this occasion it converted a Liberal-Nationalist majority of forty-one into a Conservative-Unionist majority of one hundred and fifty-two.

In the third Salisbury Government the leading Liberal Unionists took office, and for the next quarter of a century Conservatives were generally known as 'Unionists', as if to proclaim that implacable opposition to Home Rule was the main plank in their platform. But for the present it was a coalition, not a fusion; the ex-Liberals remained a separate group. The most notable appointment was that of Chamberlain to the Colonial Office. It was anomalous that he, by far the most prominent member of the Government, should have to forgo the leadership of the Commons in favour of Balfour. But by following his convictions over Home Rule he had forfeited the prospect of becoming Liberal leader without gaining a corresponding position with the Conservatives.

But the Government's chief source of strength was the demoralization of its opponents. With the Home Rule flag at half-mast the Liberals could no longer count on the support of the Irish. And they were practically leaderless. Rosebery, too fastidious for the political rough-and-tumble, scorned the motley and dispirited remnants of Liberalism, while Nonconformists were shocked at the idea of a leader who won horse races.

He soon resigned the position, and after several experiments it fell in 1898 to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, a wealthy Scottish baronet, shrewd and staunch, but lacking in distinction, and generally regarded as a mere stop-gap. The newly-formed I.L.P. failed to get a footing—even its pioneer Keir Hardie lost his seat. For the next five years Socialism was kept alive by the spade-work of individual devotees, up and down the country.

THE RAID. The new Government had hardly picked up the reins of office when it had to deal with an embarrassing crisis in South Africa.

The great obstacle to Rhodes's scheme for a South African Union was the existence of the two Boer Republics. When he tried to get them to federate with Cape Colony and Natal for such purposes as customs, railway organization and postal business, the Orange Free State was favourable, but not so the Transvaal, where grim old President Kruger (a survivor of the Great Trek) detested the English and all their ways, and was extremely suspicious of Rhodes and his designs.

The situation was complicated by the fact that a rich gold reef had recently been found in the south-western corner of the Republic. People were gathering there from all quarters of the globe; and, unlike the pioneers who made the gold-rushes to California (1849) and Australia (1851), these were mainly city-bred adventurers who imported machinery for extracting the gold by the cyanide process, the manual labour being done by blacks. Within a few years Johannesburg had grown from a tiny farm-hamlet to a modern city, and the revenue of the Republic had increased from £250,000 to £3,000,000. The type of civilization represented by the immigrants disgusted the puritanical Boers; and their numbers grew so fast that to prevent their swamping the Government and upsetting the established order Kruger put through his Volksraad a law making it almost impossible for a foreigner to become a citizen of the Republic.

Thus the position of the 'Uitlanders' (=foreigners) violated the democratic principle of No Taxation without Representation: they paid nineteen-twentieths of the taxes with no voice in the spending of the money. High rates were levied in Johannesburg without the payers getting any value for their money—

not a drain, not a street lamp, not a school. They were ruthlessly fleeced by special imposts and by monopolies granted by Kruger to European Dutchmen whom he imported to carry on the administration. Railway-rates were raised to prohibitive heights, and when the Uitlanders tried to bring in their supplies by road, the President closed the 'drifts', or fords, across the Vaal. Even the Cape Dutch fell foul of the Boer Government over these vexatious restrictions, which hampered the trade of the whole of South Africa.

The Uitlanders, lacking the means of constitutional redress, began to plot the overthrow of the Boer Government. Rhodes (now Prime Minister of Cape Colony) was in close touch with their leaders, hoping that their discontent might be the means of clearing the way for his great design. He undertook to smuggle arms to them at his own expense, and to support their rising with 1500 armed men in the service of the Chartered Company. These very irregular troops were quietly mobilized at Pitsani, in the Bechuanaland 'corridor' under his trusted lieutenant, Dr. Jameson, administrator of Rhodesia. Rhodes was drawn into this hare-brained plot partly by fear lest the rising should take some form incompatible with his own plans, partly by impatience to realize those plans before he died (for doctors had warned him that he had not long to live), and partly because he had been spoiled by success and was surrounded by flatterers. But as the time for the coup drew near he realized the difficulties involved. The Uitlanders were far from agreement among themselves; many (especially the Germans and Americans) wanted to seize the Government, but to keep it as independent of the Cape as ever. Rhodes sent a message postponing the raid, but Jameson was impatient of delay, confident of success, and anxious lest the plot should leak out. On the night of 30th December 1895 he 'rode in' with about a quarter of the numbers agreed upon as necessary. The Uitlanders had made no preparations to support him, and his party was surrounded and disarmed by Boer militia with ludicrous ease.

It was a shattering blow to all that Rhodes held most dear. Many of the Boers and most of the Cape Dutch had been opposed to Kruger's cantankerousness, but these moderates were now silenced. The British had put themselves in the wrong in the eyes of the world, and the German Emperor sent Kruger

a telegram congratulating the Republic 'on having succeeded *without appealing to friendly Powers* in maintaining the independence of the Government'. Rhodes could no longer rely on the political support of the Afrikander Bond (the Cape Dutch party), and the racial cleavage which he had hoped to close became wider than ever. The dignity and authority of the Cape Government were dragged in the mire by the conduct of its Premier, and the prestige of the Empire itself was severely damaged, not only by the hatching of the plot, but by its ignominious failure.

Perhaps the unkindest cut of all was that the Boer Government was enabled to be contemptuously magnanimous. It released the rank-and-file raiders and turned over the four chief officers to the British authorities. After a trial at the Old Bailey they were sentenced to terms of imprisonment up to eighteen months. A Committee of Inquiry censured Rhodes, but no criminal charge was ever brought against him. And he and 'Dr. Jim' were the heroes of the hour with the general public, in whose eyes 'Imperialism' justified even a treacherous attack on a neighbouring state. No doubt this attitude was largely a reaction to the Kaiser's arrogant telegram. It found fitting expression in verses by Alfred Austin, Tennyson's successor as Poet Laureate:

> '*We were wrong but we're only half sorry,*
> *And as one of the baffled band*
> *I would rather have had that foray*
> *Than the crushings of all the Rand!*'

Some people thought that Chamberlain had had advance knowledge of the raid, and when in the House he paid a glowing tribute to Rhodes ('apart from one gigantic blunder'), the Opposition Press hinted that this was blackmail extorted by Rhodes as the price of keeping back certain incriminating documents. But a parliamentary Committee, which included some of Chamberlain's bitterest opponents, such as Harcourt and Campbell-Bannerman, unanimously exonerated him. He probably had some suspicion as to what the Uitlanders had in mind; but for a Minister of the Crown to sanction the raid even tacitly, would have been madness, and Chamberlain was certainly not mad.

Rhodes returned to the Cape to pick up the broken threads of

his schemes as best he could, but he had to resign both his Premiership and the Chairmanship of the Chartered Company. And it was never glad confident morning with him again. Having forfeited the goodwill of the Cape Dutch he had to turn for support to the aggressively British party and expose himself to the charge of associating with self-seeking stock-jobbers. The breach between the two races grew ever wider, especially as the Boers, deceived by the ease with which they had crushed the filibusters and by the sympathy expressed by France, Germany and Russia, began undisguisedly to prepare for war with Britain. They imported arms and ammunition of the latest pattern (paid for out of taxes wrung from the luckless Uitlanders), and engaged instructors from the French and German armies to train their forces.

'SPLENDID ISOLATION'. Lord Salisbury, immured in foreign affairs, was loftily aloof from the aggressive 'patriotism' of the common herd. His general line of policy he once called 'splendid isolation', and his imperturbable prudence steered the country round some dangerous corners.

Britain's tenuous link with the Triple Alliance (p. 135) did not really commit her to anything, and the Kaiser's telegram was paradoxical evidence that he was conscious of this and wanted to tighten the bond. All through his reign we see working in him a subconscious desire to make Britain feel that he could be a formidable enemy whom she would do well to court. And he was constantly being led into vagaries by his impulsive, restless vanity. For instance, he used the influence he had gained over the young Tsar Nicholas to induce Russia to take a strong line against Japan, so as to weaken the value of the Russian alliance to France, while at the same time he exasperated Russia by patronizing Turkey. This patronage was first manifested when, in 1894, the Sultan Abdul Hamid began massacring his Armenian subjects. In that age, more fortunate than ours, the wiping out of villages by fire and slaughter was 'a horror unthinkable', and Gladstone came ramping out of retirement to take up the cause of the victims of 'Abdul the Damned'. Salisbury was not to be prodded into more than verbal protests. He admitted that at the Congress of Berlin Beaconsfield and he had 'put Britain's money on the wrong horse' in backing Tur-

key, but as he pointed out, the Fleet could not cross the Taurus Mountains. And the effect of his protests was the loss of the last remains of British influence at Constantinople without the smallest benefit to the Armenians, 60,000 of whom were slain in the course of 1895. To that influence the Kaiser determined to succeed; for he saw in the decrepit Ottoman Empire infinite possibilities of exploitation by Germany as a set-off to Britain's advance in Africa and Russia's in Asia. He went on a spectacular tour through the Arab provinces, and at Damascus made a flamboyant declaration that the 300 million Moslems throughout the world could always look to him for support and protection. And, going on to Constantinople, he reaped his reward in a concession to extend a German-owned railway through Asia Minor to Bagdad. This was an unspoken threat to the security of India, but our Foreign Office, still dependent on German goodwill in Egypt, dared not protest.

Relations with the United States were for a time precarious in the extreme. The frontier between British Guiana and the Republic of Venezuela had never been clearly drawn, and in 1895 the Venezuelans arrested two British police officers for trespassing on their territory. The officers were subsequently released, but President Cleveland of the United States intervened, announcing that he was about to appoint a tribunal to fix the boundary. When Salisbury mildly demurred to this forced arbitration, Cleveland delivered a Message of Congress, adducing the 'Monroe Doctrine',[1] and implying that he would treat any attempt by Britain to impose her claims on Venezuela as a *casus belli*. The British Government and people were amazed, but the explanation of his ferocity was quite simple: a Presidential election would soon be due, and nothing would win more votes for his Party than twisting the tail of the British Lion. The Venezuelan frontier mattered as little to Britain as it did to the United States, and Salisbury agreed to the arbitration rather than embitter relations any further. By the time

[1] In 1823 President Monroe warned Spain not to try to reconquer her former colonies in South America, declaring that his Government would regard it as an 'unfriendly act' for an outside Power to interfere with any State on the American continent. This has ever since been taken as an axiom of United States policy.

the court reached a decision (in Britain's favour) the election was over, and the tension relaxed. And a couple of years later Anglo-American relations took a permanent turn for the better when a British admiral prevented all chance of German intervention in the Spanish-American War[1] by putting his ship between the German and American warships in Manila Bay, with the remark that blood was thicker than water.

In a quarrel with France over the Sudan Salisbury took a firmer line.

The work of Baring (afterwards Lord Cromer) in Egypt was often hampered by the precarious balance of power on the Caisse, but his reconstructive work will always be an example of what can be achieved by patience, organizing capacity and tact. Revenue was increased while taxation was lowered, barbarous methods of government were abolished, trade was doubled, money was raised for vast schemes of irrigation, the administration of justice was made cheaper and more efficient —all with a minimum of interference with Egyptian officials. Simultaneously the army was reorganized under British officers, the most famous of whom was Sir Herbert Kitchener (1850–1916), for many years Sirdar (Commander-in-Chief). By 1896 the country's resources made possible a start in winning the Sudan back from the dervishes who had overrun it in 1882–3 (p. 86). The Sirdar made the most methodical preparations, leaving nothing to chance, and pitting all the resources of civilization against the semi-savage enemy. The chief difficulty of desert warfare, transport, he overcame by building a railway, which would be of permanent value. This limited the pace of his advance, but after a three years' campaign he brought to bay the forces of the Khalifa, successor to the Mahdi, at Omdurman, near Khartum, and wiped them out of existence (September 1898).

But almost at the moment of success disconcerting news came from the south. The French colonial party, always hoping to recover a measure of control in Egypt, had some years before planned to extend the sphere of French influence from bases on

[1] In 1898 Spain's misgovernment of her last remaining overseas possessions led to a war with the United States which resulted in her losing Cuba and the Philippines.

the Niger and the Congo to the Nile, where they would control the waters on which Egypt depends for existence. In 1895 Sir Edward Grey, at that time Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, had warned France that Britain would oppose such a move. But France refused to be warned off; after all, the Sudan belonged not to Britain but to the Sultan and his vassal the Khedive, and had for years been in the hands of their enemies. The clash was precipitated by events in Abyssinia. Italy's quest for territory on the Red Sea (p. 113) had led to a dispute with King Menelek of Abyssinia which culminated in an annihilating defeat for an Italian army at Adowa (March 1896). This impelled the British (who did not want to see Menelek in control of the Blue Nile) to push on with the reconquest of the Sudan; and it impelled the French to send thither an expedition from Nigeria, under a Captain Marchand. After a journey which was one of the most remarkable achievements of the kind in history, Marchand reached the Nile at Fashoda in July 1898, with three white officers and one hundred and twenty Senegalese soldiers.

Kitchener had not intended to go any farther than Khartum, but as soon as he heard of Marchand's arrival he set off with five gunboats and 240 men, and in three days came in sight of the *tricolore* flying over Marchand's mud-built fortress. Neither of the commanders would withdraw, but neither wanted to strike the first blow; and the two forces remained face to face while their Governments threshed matters out. Salisbury claimed that the whole Sudan was an Anglo-Egyptian possession by conquest, and Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, found that the British nation was solidly behind him. Even the Liberals were up in arms: Opposition leaders declared that no Government which gave way on this issue would last a week; and *Punch* depicted France as an impudent little organ-grinder asking, 'What will you give me to go away?' to which an irate and muscular John Bull replies, 'I'll give you something if you don't!' The French Press and public were equally warlike, and for a month the issue of peace and war seemed to tremble. But Delcassé had the sense to see that, whatever the rights and wrongs of the matter, a war with Britain would end France's hopes of recovering Alsace for a generation, and that the British Navy could not only prevent an attack on England, but

capture the French colonies *seriatim*. Withdrawal was a bitter pill, but he and the French nation had the courage to swallow it. He declared that Marchand was merely 'an emissary of civilization', concerned, like Kitchener, in reclaiming the Sudan from barbarism. His mission accomplished he would now withdraw.

The whole area drained by the Upper Nile and its confluents now became a Condominium, 'The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan,' under a British Commissioner (Sir F. R. Wingate), who effected as remarkable a regeneration there as Lord Cromer had achieved in Egypt. The slave trade was abolished, education established, agriculture developed; and the Sudan became, comparatively speaking, a land flowing with milk and honey.

CHAMBERLAIN AT THE COLONIAL OFFICE. Chamberlain soon made his presence felt as Colonial Secretary. His aggressive vigour would have brought any department into the public eye, and he had chosen this one because he saw in it scope for imperialist activities which accorded with his own strong convictions and the prevailing spirit of the age. He was idolized by millions as the personification of national self-confidence; and though old-fashioned Liberals detested him for his apostasy over Home Rule, this was but a further tribute to the dynamic force of his personality. He never formally renounced the Radicalism of earlier days; but new interests, and association with Tories, pushed social reform into the background of his mind. True, the first effective *Workmen's Compensation Act* (1897) owed much to him, but we hear little more of his projects for Old Age Pensions and National Insurance.

His first few years of office were taken up mainly with the development of the tropical colonies—more nails in the coffin of *laissez faire*. He treated the colonies from the point of view of a business man—as properties to be developed by careful planning and judicious expenditure for the benefit of landlord and tenant alike. Nigeria was opened up by railways; Schools of Tropical Medicine were set up in London and Liverpool for research and the training of specialist medical officers. A regular shipping service developed the export of fruit from the West Indies; methods of sugar-production were modernized; scientific agriculture was encouraged by an Institute for Botanical

Research at Kew. Lastly, an end was made to boundary disputes with France which had hindered the prosperity of West Africa. French colonial expansion was not left, like Britain's, to the enterprise of private trading companies; it was directed and encouraged by the Government. Native regiments with French officers had been sent to take possession of up-country districts, leaving Britain's coastal settlements rootless. But Chamberlain checked the process. He organized a West African Frontier Force under Colonel Lugard to challenge the French at their own game. As on the Nile, the officers on both sides managed to avoid a 'shooting war', and after a long conference in Paris a Convention (June 1898) fixed boundaries which have remained substantially unchanged to this day.

In 1897 Queen Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubilee. This was more of a military pageant than that of 1887 had been. Fighting men from all the corners of the Empire camped in Hyde Park and marched through the streets of London. It was the apotheosis of red-on-the-map Imperialism. But Kipling, its uncrowned laureate, who had called on Britons to take up the White Man's Burden of ruling black men, sounded a warning note in a 'Recessional' which appeared in *The Times* on the morning of the royal thanksgiving at St. Paul's:

'The tumult and the shouting dies,
The captains and the kings depart;
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.

Chamberlain took advantage of the gathering to hold a second Colonial Conference. He hoped that the cheering crowds and the general expression of devotion to the Monarchy would make the colonial Premiers (there were twelve of them, for Australia and South Africa were as yet unfederated) amenable to his idea of a closer union, political, military and economic. But he was disappointed. These self-governing colonies prized their independence above all things. They would not even agree to regular consultations upon foreign policy, lest this should reduce their freedom to go their own way; and they passed a resolution that 'the present relations between the United Kingdom and the self-governing colonies are generally satisfactory'.

Nor would they listen to suggestions of a Customs Union by which they would lower their import duties on each other's goods.

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION. In 1899 representatives of the Powers met at The Hague to confer on disarmament and the safeguarding of peace. Such ideas have since become familiar, but they were then startlingly novel. It was the Tsar who made the arrangements and sent out the invitations. (There were rumours that he had been converted to pacificism by reading Tolstoi, but some people unkindly suggested that Russia could not afford the standard of armaments now being set by Germany and Austria.)

The proposal was received with expressions of admiration which covered bewilderment and distrust. Holstein expressed the general feeling in a confidential memorandum to the Kaiser:

> 'For the State there is no higher object than the guarding of its own interests. In the case of the Great Powers these are not identical with the maintenance of peace, but rather with the subjugation of enemies and rivals.'

William II praised his 'dear Nicky's' lofty motives, but asked:

> 'Could we figure to ourselves a monarch disbanding his regiments with a hundred years of history, relegating their glorious colours to museums, and handing over his towns to anarchists and "democracy"?'

But all wished to throw on others the blame for the breakdown which all were determined to ensure. Bülow, the German Chancellor, wrote to his ambassador in London:

> 'It would be an advantage to Germany if this Conference were wrecked on England's objections, without our having to appear in the foreground. I venture with the utmost confidence to rely on Your Excellency's well-tried dexterity to bring this about.'

The English ministers did not evade the trap. Salisbury declared that no Power would submit questions of honour and vital interest to the decisions of a third party, and mentioned Egypt as a case in point.

When the Conference met (May 1899) the naval delegates—especially Captain Mahan for America and Sir John Fisher for Britain—displayed sailorly frankness about their detestation of limits to the number and size of warships. Britain flatly refused to restrict her right of blockade by excluding private property from seizure as 'contraband of war'. As for land forces, it proved impossible to equate different types of troops and systems of training. The sole results of the Conference were (a) the creation of a Court of International Arbitration to be housed in a Palace of Peace at The Hague, recourse to which was to be optional; and (b) some attempt to humanize the conduct of war by forbidding the use of explosive bullets and poison gases.

In the following year the Powers did manage to co-operate over one matter, but it cannot be said that the incident reflected much credit on them.

The younger generation of Chinese felt deeply a crushing defeat by Japan (p. 191), and were anxious about the future of their country; but the Dowager Empress, who had seized power in 1898, adroitly turned their wrath from the Manchu dynasty to the foreigners who were said to be eating up the country. 'China for the Chinese' became the watchword of a nationalist organization known as 'The Boxers'. Violent demonstrations against Europeans in the seaports became so threatening that an international force was organized to restore order. To the German contingent drawn up at Bremerhaven for embarkation the Kaiser made a speech which confirmed the growing suspicion that he was not quite sane:

> 'You must know, my men, that you are about to meet a crafty, well-armed foe. Give no quarter! Take no prisoners! Even as a thousand years ago the Huns under their King Attila made a name that still inspires terror, so may the name of German sound through Chinese history a thousand years from now.'

The ministers present tried to prevent this passage being reported, but it leaked out, spread all over the world, and was thrown against the Kaiser and his soldiers in the Great War. In the event the marines he was addressing took no prisoners because the Boxer rising had been quelled long before they

reached China. So they had to content themselves with competing against the Russians in looting the priceless art treasures of the Summer Palace at Pekin. The only contingents to behave creditably were Asiatics—the Japanese, and the Indians who represented Great Britain.

XIV

IMPERIALISM DEFLATED
1899–1902

The South African War taught Britain three sharp but salutary lessons: that her army was out of date, that she was hated by other nations, and that there was a seamy side to her Imperialism.

STEPS TO WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA. The dispute with the Boer Republics about the rights of the Uitlanders developed into a struggle for supremacy between two peoples who, having much racial stock in common, had grown widely different in outlook. Chamberlain at the Colonial Office was like most Englishmen of his day in assuming that his countrymen must be supreme in South Africa. But he saw no reason why this should not come peacefully. In 1897 he sent out as High Commissioner Sir Alfred Milner, who after a brilliant career at Oxford, had done fine work in Egypt under Cromer. But in some ways the choice was unfortunate: brilliant intellect is apt to lose patience with bucolic obstinacy, and patience was the quality most needed.

Much of the argument turned on Britain's right to demand electoral fair play for the Uitlanders. This led to the question of 'suzerainty' claimed for Britain in the Convention which defined the position of the Republics after Majuba but omitted from its revision in 1884. Did not the omission imply a surrender of the claim to sovereignty over them? And was it reasonable to expect the Boers, by giving the Uitlanders the vote, to put their government into the hands of people of alien outlook who had no abiding interest in the welfare of the Republics? On the other hand, the sense of grievance was no longer confined to the mine-owners and their hangers-on. In March 1899 people of all classes, to the number of 20,000, begged the Queen to intervene on their behalf; and Milner backed their petition with a strongly worded despatch:

> 'The spectacle of thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of helots, calling vainly to Her Majesty's

Government for redress, is undermining the influence of Great Britain and respect for the British Government within the Queen's dominions.'

There were repeated conferences, in which a prominent part was taken by J. C. Smuts, State Attorney at the Cape, then aged twenty-nine. But there is reason to believe that Kruger and his circle had already made up their minds for war, to be started as soon as the autumn rains brought up grazing for horses 'on commando'. And there is equally good reason to think that Milner, though he had come out with the intention of bringing about a peaceful settlement, had by this time decided that war was the only way. Chamberlain's hopes survived up to the last moment. But the Boers could put 50,000 armed men into the field at a moment's notice, whereas the British forces in South Africa were only 15,000, so it was but common prudence to send out reinforcements, and meanwhile to cover the frontier with such troops as were available. This the Boers treated as a *casus belli*—their peremptory demand that the movement of troops should cease being disregarded, they declared war (October 1899). The Orange Free State, though it had taken no part in the quarrel, threw in its lot with its sister Republic under an alliance signed a short time before.

Was the war inevitable? Kruger was an old man; within a few years the Republic would have fallen into other, more amenable hands; and whatever the disabilities suffered by the Uitlanders, it was scarcely worth a costly and bloody war to right them. But on the other hand for the Government to have stood aside and let its case go by default might have shaken the Empire to pieces. And more discreditable motives were at work. Chamberlain was essentially a man of peace, but there was a noisily aggressive spirit of 'jingoism' abroad in Britain. Kitchener had just taken vengeance on the Mahdi, and there was a general feeling that the welfare of South Africa could never be secure until the Boers had been taught a lesson—until, in fact, we had 'avenged Majuba'. And High Finance, on which all modern Governments depend, was determined to get the Rand goldfields freed from the control of reactionary and ignorant Boer patriarchs.

'THE GREAT BOER WAR': STAGE I. It seemed a desperate step for these tiny republics with a total population of 180,000 to defy the British Empire, and in Britain it was generally expected that the war would be over by Christmas. But the Boers were confident of success, and not without some justification. They knew nothing of close-order drill, they had no uniforms, their equipment was limited to a rifle, a bandolier and a haversack. But they had all been able to ride and shoot from childhood; and their sturdy little horses, accustomed to getting a living on the veldt, doubled their value in a theatre of war which consisted of wide areas with few centres of population, such as had defeated the British in the War of Independence and Napoleon in Russia. Moreover they were on the spot, and would be fighting in a friendly and familiar country; whereas Britain had to send her army with its cumbrous equipment 6000 miles by sea and the another 1000 miles by land—most of the last part through hostile country where every yard of road and railway had to be guarded. It was a problem with which no other army in history had ever been faced. Again, the Boers had recently learned the latest developments in warfare from their European instructors, and were armed with up-to-date weapons from Krupp's and Creusot's; while the British Army was choked with pipeclay and routine, having long rusted in inaction, apart from demoralizingly easy victories over savages. It had no General Staff, it scoffed at 'Intelligence'; it rejected offers of irregular forces from the colonies with scarcely-veiled contempt.

Britain was sending out a field force of 50,000 men as soon as it could be got ready. (The Government did not authorize it until the end of September—proof, if proof were needed, that it had not intended to go to war.) Hostilities began with an attempt by the Boers to exploit their advantage in numbers while it lasted. There is no knowing what might have happened if, leaving enough forces to occupy the British on the frontier, they had swept down through undefended Cape Colony to Capetown. Britain's task would then have been so difficult that she might well have been ready to talk of compromise. But they dallied by setting siege to Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking, the headquarters of the three little British forces, and made their main effort towards Durban, the nearest seaport.

'THE GREAT BOER WAR'

When the new British Army landed at Capetown in November (1899), its commander, Sir Redvers Buller, divided it into three columns. One, the weakest, under Gatacre, was to hold down northern Cape Colony; the second under Lord Methuen, was to relieve Kimberley; while the main force, under Buller himself, was to check the Boer thrust into Natal. By the middle of December all three had come to grief. On the 10th Gatacre, about to make a surprise attack by night, was himself surprised with annihilating losses at Stormberg. On the 11th Methuen's men made their first acquaintance with an enemy in concealed trenches, and were shot to pieces at Magersfontein. And on the 15th Buller (who had left his staff behind at Capetown and had no recent maps) failed in an over-confident attempt to cross the Tugela River at Colenso in the face of an enemy strongly positioned on the opposite bank. A 'Black Week' indeed!

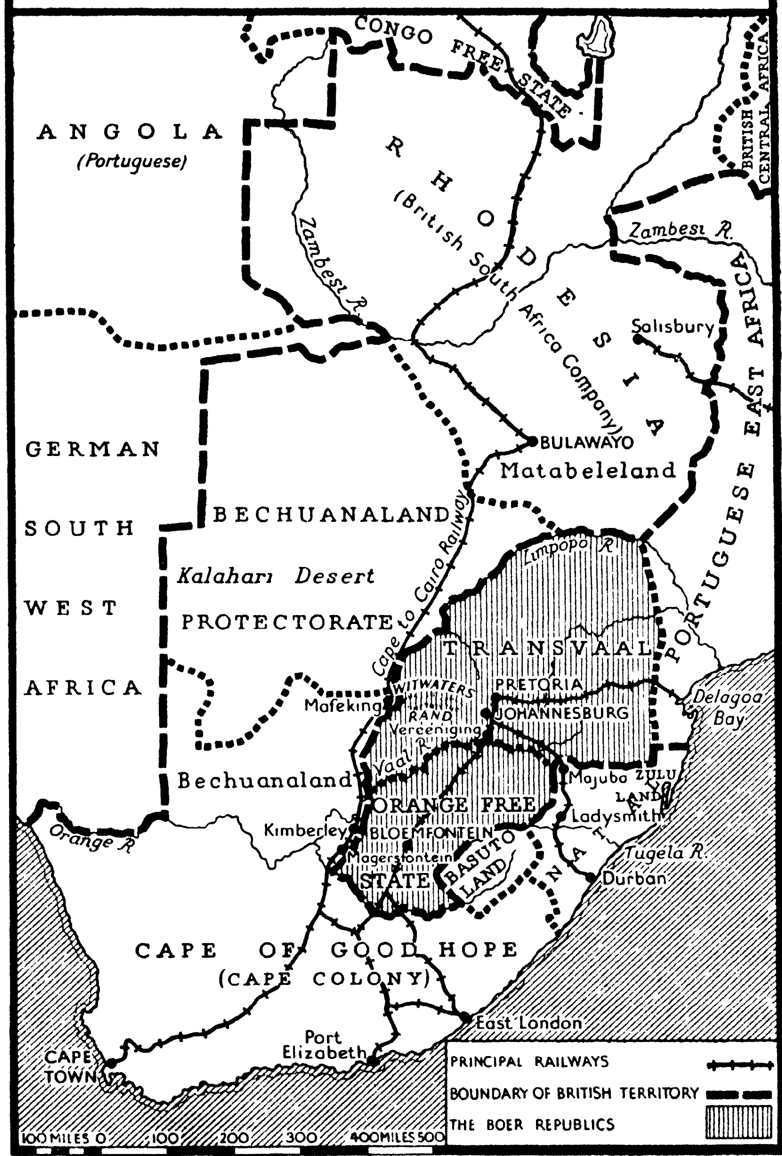
As usual, the British people showed up well in disaster. The old Queen spoke for them when she replied to a minister who pulled a long face about the news, 'Please understand there is no one depressed in *this* house. We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat: they do not exist!' Buller, who after Colenso had authorized General White in Ladysmith to surrender, was superseded by Lord Roberts of Kandahar (now a veteran of sixty-eight, whose only son had just gained a posthumous V.C. trying to save the guns at Colenso), with Kitchener, fresh from his success in the Sudan, as his Chief-of-Staff. New forces were recruited, including the City Imperial Volunteers, raised and equipped by London. Renewed offers from the colonies were now accepted. It was already evident that mounted men able to look after themselves and their horses, and imbued with the initiative bred by life in the 'wide open spaces' of the Empire, were going to be badly needed.

'The Great Boer War': Stage II. Roberts had three advantages over his predecessor. Firstly, the reinforcements he brought out, together with the bodies of Irregular Horse already being raised in South Africa from 'rough-riders' flocking in from all parts of the Empire, enabled him to outflank his enemy instead of having to rely on the frontal attacks which had proved so costly. Secondly, he could profit by the tactical experience so dearly gained. Thirdly, he had a touch of genius.

His general plan was to draw off the Boer forces from Cape Colony and Natal by a counter-attack against their own capitals, Bloemfontein and Pretoria. After a feint in the direction of Kimberley he turned eastward towards Bloemfontein, leaving the relief of the diamond-town to General French and a cavalry division. At a critical moment 200 men under Christian de Wet captured the whole of the ox-waggon transport which Roberts had gathered with immense difficulty; but the stout-hearted veteran was not to be deflected from his course: he put his force on half-rations and pressed on. French got into Kimberley (February 15); Cronje, the Boer commander, finding himself between French and Roberts, tried to make for home, but was cornered by Kitchener and surrendered with 4000 men at Paardeburg (February 29). Robert's strategy was now taking effect. The day before Paardeburg Buller, at the fifth attempt, relieved Ladysmith and began to clear up Natal; while Roberts himself pushed on to Bloemfontein, reaching it in the middle of March. He was now astride a railway again, but it was only a single line of narrow gauge, constantly exposed to Boer raids. Progress was delayed for some weeks by the need for building up a secure supply-base, by an outbreak of enteric fever, and by an Afrikander rising in Cape Colony. But by the beginning of May all was ready for a fresh start. Detaching a flying column to relieve Mafeking (to the frenzied delight of the London mob, whose roystering jubilations added the verb 'to maffick' to our language) he proclaimed the annexation of the Free State as he crossed its frontier into the Transvaal. A week later he was in Pretoria, President Kruger having taken train a few days earlier towards the coast, with the archives and the treasury.

There was another pause while Roberts reorganized forces and brought up supplies. In August a British advance down the railway towards Lourenço Marques compelled Kruger to embark there on a Dutch warship which brought him to Europe, where he tried to induce some European Power to intervene. Before the month was out the Boers' last coherent army, under Louis Botha, was defeated and dispersed, and on 25th October (1900) the Transvaal was ceremonially annexed by the British Crown.

It was now generally assumed that the war was practically


SOUTH AFRICA: circa 1900
CONGO FREE STATE
ANGOLA
(Portuguese)
RHODESIA
(British South Africa Company)
Zambesi R.
BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA
Salisbury
PORTUGUESE EAST AFRICA
BULAWAYO
Matabeleland
GERMAN
SOUTH
WEST
AFRICA
BECHUANALAND
Kalahari Desert
PROTECTORATE
Cape to Cairo Railway
Limpopo R.
TRANSVAAL
PRETORIA
WITWATERSRAND
JOHANNESBURG
Mafeking
Vereeniging
Vaal R.
Delagoa Bay
Bechuanaland
Majuba
ZULULAND
ORANGE FREE STATE
Ladysmith
Kimberley
BLOEMFONTEIN
Magersfontein
BASUTOLAND
NATAL
Tugela R.
Durban
Orange R.
CAPE OF GOOD HOPE
(CAPE COLONY)
East London
Port Elizabeth
CAPE TOWN
PRINCIPAL RAILWAYS
BOUNDARY OF BRITISH TERRITORY
THE BOER REPUBLICS
100 MILES 0 100 200 300 400 MILES 500

over. Roberts and Buller came home, leaving Kitchener to 'clear up'. Nobody supposed that more than half the duration of the war and more than half its cost (in money though not in lives) was yet to come.

THE REALITIES OF ISOLATION. The war made the drawbacks of isolation painfully apparent. Britain had prided herself on being outside the rivalries which divided Europe; but dislike of her was now a subject on which the nations were in full accord. Exultation over 'Black Week' was universal. Britain was everywhere regarded as a great Power trying to bully a little people out of its homeland—and failing; with unflattering reminders of Naboth's Vineyard and David's discomfiture of Goliath.

Of course we expected that sort of thing from Russia, whom we had fought in the Crimea and thwarted at the Berlin Congress, and whom we suspected of sinister designs on India. With France, too, we had long-standing quarrels. Those about West Africa had now been patched up but the situation in Egypt still rankled; and at the time of the Fashoda crisis people had said that, a Franco-British war being inevitable, the sooner we got it over the better. And when France was torn over the re-trial of Dreyfus, an unpopular Jewish officer who had been condemned to life imprisonment on the pestilential 'Devil's Island' on a false charge of selling military secrets to Germany, British public opinion had been so hostile to the French Army that the French were naturally delighted at our humiliation in South Africa. But many people in this country clung to hopes of good relations with the Germans, and these hopes received a severe blow when the German Press broke into exultation as rancorous as the French.[1]

As a matter of fact another cause of Anglo-German ill-will had been arising even before the Boer War. The Kaiser had been much impressed by Captain Mahan's book *The Influence of Sea-Power on History*; and he realized that British naval supremacy would have to be broken down before he could win the World

[1] Conan Doyle in his *History of the Great Boer War* expresses the general dismay that 'fellow Teutons who had been so deeply indebted to us for assistance in throwing off the French yoke' (which seems going back rather far) should turn against us. 'Never again under any pretext will British soldiers or sailors shed blood for such allies.'

Power he coveted. He had taken the first step when in 1898 his energetic Navy Minister, Captain Tirpitz, had put through the Reichstag a Bill doubling the size of the fleet. Certainly that fleet had much leeway to make up before it could seriously challenge the Royal Navy, but the Emperor's rhetorical phrases in public speeches about Germany holding the trident, and her future being on the water, were already causing some misgiving in this country.

Nevertheless, when in the autumn of 1899 the Kaiser paid a visit to his grandmother—the first since his Kruger telegram—Chamberlain took the opportunity to try to improve relations. He and von Bülow (who had accompanied his master to Windsor) agreed—or Chamberlain thought they did—to give public expression at the first opportunity to this mutual desire for a good understanding. Accordingly in a speech at Leicester a few weeks later Chamberlain declared that Britain could no longer remain isolated, and that her natural ally was Germany. If the United States would join them there would be a triple alliance which would keep the peace of the world. As for the French, they would do well to mend their manners. But his invitation met with a chilling response. America at once repudiated the idea of an entangling alliance with any Old World Power; and in Germany there was furious indignation at the suggestion of a compact with 'the bloodhound of the Transvaal'. So Bülow and his master went on the opposite tack—they used this indignation to get through a new Navy Bill for another doubling of tonnage; and when the Chancellor announced it he brusquely rejected Chamberlain's suggestion:

> 'To protect her trade and colonies Germany must have a battle-fleet so strong that even *the adversary possessed of the greatest sea-power* will attack it only at great risk . . . and that even emerging victorious he would no longer be able to secure his own position in the world.'

That was plain speaking indeed. Chamberlain was bitterly chagrined, and so far as he was concerned the idea of an Anglo-German alliance was at an end.

THE KHAKI ELECTION. The war seemed likely to complete the disintegration of the Liberal Party. Campbell-Bannerman was generally liked, but he stood for old-fashioned liberalism

of the 'Manchester School', which held that he governed best who governed least, and wanted the nation's savings left to 'fructify' (as Gladstone put it) in industrial and commercial enterprise rather than extorted by taxation to pay for armaments and adventures in foreign and colonial affairs. It seemed questionable if he would long be able to hold even nominal allegiance from the 'Liberal Imperialist' group—H. H. Asquith, R. B. Haldane and Sir Edward Grey—who felt that these ideas were out of date, that the Party must, in the words of Asquith,

> 'appeal to sober-minded and level-headed men in all strata of humanity, and must convince the nation that it is a Party which can safely be entrusted with the fortunes of the Empire'.

Naturally, the war brought these differences to a head. The attitude of "C.B." was a nice equipoise: the Government had been wrong to try to extend the Empire by pressure on the Boers, but it was Kruger's ultimatum that had made the war inevitable; the ministers had blundered into war without adequate preparation, but the only thing for the country to do now was to win it; the annexation of the Republics was the only possible outcome, but the Government ought to be ready for negotiations with future fellow-subjects rather than harry them into unconditional surrender. But he had great difficulty in restraining the disruptive tendencies of the 'Lib. Imps.' who held that Britain had been right all through, and the Pro-Boers who were equally sure that she had been wrong.

In the autumn of 1900 the Government decided on a General Election to seek approval for the policy which had led to the war, and authority to continue it to a triumphant end. The Liberals complained that the Unionists were acting unfairly in rushing this election and then arguing that it would be fatal to 'swap horses crossing a stream'; and some old-fashioned Tories were disposed to agree with them. But Chamberlain's popularity meant everything to the Government, and as he insisted on an election he had to have his way. He directed the campaign with ruthless vigour. No distinction was made between 'Lib. Imps' and 'Pro-Boers'; constituencies were plastered with posters declaring that a vote for a Liberal was a vote for Kruger, and depicting prominent members of the Opposition helping the enemy to shoot down British 'Tommies'. The

result confirmed the Unionists in office by a majority almost equal to that of 1895; but if their watchword was justified nearly half the electors voted for Kruger—roughly 2·1 millions as against 2·4 millions. Thus the nation seemed far from enthusiastic about the war. Even among Unionists there was a good deal of misgiving about the influence of Chamberlain on their historic Party. A famous cartoon by F. C. Gould in *The Westminister Gazette* depicted Salisbury and Balfour looking disdainfully at 'Joe', an unkempt gun-dog, laying the 'Khaki' majority at their aristocratic feet.

'THE GREAT BOER WAR': STAGE III. When Lord Roberts came home at the end of 1900 arrangements were begun for a solemn thanksgiving for victory at St. Paul's; but this was fortunately cancelled in time to save the country from further ridicule. For it quickly became clear that the war was not by any means over. Kitchener was soon calling for another 50,000 men, and complaining that the reinforcements coming out were too raw to be of any use. And the Boers did not seem to know when they were beaten—a quality which, however much we lauded it in ourselves, we found exasperating in our opponents. Their racial temperament, their knowledge of the terrain, their arms, equipment and training, were all well adapted for small-scale war; and for the next eighteen months they led the British forces a most unpleasant dance. Botha, de Wet and de la Rey led commandos which swooped down out of the blue to overrun outposts, cut railways and capture convoys. Time and again each of them seemed to be rounded up, only to carry out some daring exploit a hundred miles from where he was supposed to be. The British public characteristically enjoyed the joke against its own side—de Wet in particular became quite a popular hero through his audacious elusiveness. Kitchener's great difficulty in dealing with them was that they got supplies and information from the scattered farmhouses, and he was driven to laying waste broad belts of the countryside, burning the crops and farms and driving off the cattle, and providing for the non-combatants thus rendered homeless in 'concentration camps'. This led to much unpleasantness. The British authorities did their best, but could not prevent epidemics breaking out, or induce Boer women to take hygienic precautions; and in some

camps the death-rate rose to three hundred per thousand. Tempers became embittered, and each side accused the other of foul play.

The exacerbation spread to home politics. A Radical 'Conciliation Committee' argued that having annexed the Republics we should now offer acceptable terms; but most Liberals and all Unionists declared that if we stopped short of unconditional surrender the Boers would think us as weak-minded as after Majuba. David Lloyd George, a young Welsh M.P., founded a great reputation for courage by spirited attacks on 'Chamberlainism'; but when he ventured to speak at a 'Conciliation Meeting' in Birmingham Town Hall his life was in such danger that he had to be smuggled out at the back disguised as a policeman (December 1901). And C.B.'s reference to farm burning and concentration camps as 'methods of barbarism' led to something like a revolt in the ragged ranks of Liberalism: the Lib. Imps. formed a 'Liberal League' with Rosebery as president. But Rosebery's talk of 'a clean slate' (i.e. dropping Home Rule) was too negative to inspire enthusiasm, and C.B.'s staunchness in debate, amid the gibes of foes and the sneers of friends, kept for him the loyalty of the bulk of the Party.

A parley at Middelburg in the spring of 1901 broke down over the question of an amnesty for rebels—the Dutchmen of the Cape and Natal who, being nominally British subjects, had taken arms for their kinsmen the Boers. So the dreary struggle recommenced. In the summer of that year de Wet and Smuts led a wide sweep through Cape Colony, where more than half the population was in sympathy with their cause; and early in 1902 de Wet captured Methuen and 2,000 men at Tweebosch.

But the end was now in sight. The Royal Navy cut the Boers off from all hope of foreign intervention. The Kaiser, despite his people's zeal for the Boers, would not even receive Kruger, being dependent on British coaling stations to keep in touch with his interests in the Far East; and Russia and France were equally impotent. Kitchener's ever-stretching lines of barbed wire fortified by blockhouses were checking the Boers' movements, and every loss they suffered was irreparable. There was a division of opinion on both sides. Botha was for getting the

best terms available, while de Wet was for independence or death; Kitchener was for granting an amnesty, while Milner was opposed to it. When at last the parties came together at Vereeniging in May (1902) there was a compromise on this point: Britain gave an undertaking not to go to extremes in dealing with the rebels. The final contest was over the war-debts of the Republics: Milner did not see why we should pay for a war fought against us; but here again Kitchener was for generosity, and his spirit prevailed. The Boers laid down their arms and acknowledged themselves British subjects; military government was to be followed as quickly as possible by civil government, and ultimately by self-government; Britain was to make a grant of £3 millions to hasten resettlement on the farms.

From first to last Britain had put 450,000 troops into the field; £250 millions had been added to the National Debt. The British losses were 5,700 killed, 16,000 died of wounds or disease; 23,000 wounded.[1] It had proved about ten times as big a job as we had bargained for; but at the end of it British South Africa extended continuously from Capetown to the Zambesi.

Cecil Rhodes did not live to see this realization of one of his dreams: he had died some months before at the age of forty-nine. After his death his vast wealth was used for the same purpose as in his lifetime, for by his will he founded a number of scholarships to bring young men from all the English-speaking peoples into contact and comradeship at his old University.

[1] A comparison of these figures with, say, the 60,000 casualties suffered by the British on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, will preserve us from exaggerating the scale of the struggle. But the losses seemed appalling at the time.

XV

LATER VICTORIAN BRITAIN
1868—1901

The death of Queen Victoria in January 1901 ended an epoch, and we shall do well to take stock of the outstanding economic and social changes which had come over the country in the past thirty years.

STILL THE WORLD'S WORKSHOP. When our 'Recent Times' began the national income was still advancing (to use Gladstone's phrase) by leaps and bounds. But over-confidence led to over-investment and in 1878 slump followed boom as the night the day. And though there was some recovery after the mid-'eighties our industrialism never quite regained the carefree optimism of the middle decades of the century. For foreign countries which had once been their best customers were now putting up tariff-barriers behind which to develop their own industries. Moreover some important markets had become 'saturated'—e.g. the demand for rails and rolling-stock to set railway systems going. And the transport thus developed was now being used to establish heavy industries, notably in Pennsylvania, the Ruhr, and north-eastern France, which further reduced the demand for British goods.

Still, these effects were not immediately apparent, being for a time disguised by expansion in other directions. The demand for our coal, for instance, became greater than ever. Some of our competitors were beginning to develop their own coalfields, and their greater readiness to adopt scientific and economical methods eventually gave them advantages. But this took time, and for another decade or two Britain continued to exploit the superior quality of her coal and its nearness to seaports. The 12 million tons exported in 1870 grew to 20 millions ten years later and in 1900 to 30 millions; and returning colliers brought foodstuffs and the raw materials which fed our factories.

And there was a great boom in shipbuilding. The substitution of iron for wood revived the demand for British iron just when

the world was getting stocked up with railway materials; and then when other countries began to make some headway with building iron ships iron was superseded by steel, which prolonged Britain's advantage still further. For Bessemer, whose methods halved the cost of production and doubled the useful qualities of the product, required non-phosphoric ores which other countries lacked. Germany eventually got a supply from Sweden, and America developed the Siemens method of expelling the phosphorus; but Britain had a useful start. And when about 1870 steam propulsion began to replace masts-and-yards—the process hastened by compound engines which greatly economized fuel, and a little later by triple expansion, which greatly increased speeds—Scottish engineers developed a genius for the design and construction of marine-engines which, coupled with the proximity of steel and coal, made the world almost dependent for its shipping, for the time being, on British shipyards. But the country which built these ships sailed most of them herself. Right up to the end of the century half the world's ocean-carrying was done under 'the old red duster'.

The Limited Liability Acts were now creating a new type of 'capitalist'. The constant growth of industrial undertakings was eliminating the man who managed his business himself, and substituting the distant shareholder who knew and cared nothing about the policy and conduct of the business so long as its dividends enabled him (or her) to live in comfort. Control was coming to be invested in Boards of Directors, meeting once or twice a year; and day-to-day management was falling into the hands of salaried 'executives'. Accountancy became a special profession; the Institute of Chartered Accountants was founded in 1880.

A similar process was at work in Banking. The multitudinous local banks which had financed the early stages of the industrial revolution were now agglomerating into vast impersonal concerns with branches whose managers lacked the personal initiative of the old-style banker. But the magnitude of the unit spread risks, diminished the liability to panic, and stabilized financial policy under guidance of the Bank of England.

But British farming, once the backbone of the national economy, fell into a state of prostration. The repeal of the corn duties was now taking effect by delayed action. It was only

when trans-continental railways opened up the prairie lands of North America that overseas competition knocked the bottom out of the world-price of corn. When American railroad corporations, to encourage settlement along their routes, carried crops below cost; and American farmers, with no cheap labour available, took to the combine harvester—then Europe, with its tired soil and hand labour, could not compete. Other countries took refuge in protective duties, but Britain clung to Free Trade as the palladium of her prosperity. Powerful financial and shipping interests, and exporters of coal and steel and textiles and machinery, would have vetoed any reversion—especially as cheap bread meant cheap labour. Except for a little coterie of 'Fair Trade' faddists such an idea was scarcely mooted. Thus the price of a quarter of corn, standing in 1870 at 56s., fell by the mid-'eighties to 31s., and in the 'nineties to the neighbourhood of 20s. By the end of the century the acreage of land under corn was only half what it had been at the beginning. And to complete the farmer's woes, prices for livestock were shattered by refrigeration. In 1878 the first cargo of chilled Argentine beef arrived—beginning the end, as yet twenty years distant, of the horrible ocean-transport of live cattle. And a few years later frozen mutton began to make New Zealand prosperous.

The depopulation of the countryside was accelerated. The balance tilted about 1880, and by 1900 three-fourths of the nation were townsfolk. But not all the migrants became unskilled labourers in our industrial towns; many—and the most energetic and enterprising of them—emigrated.

ELECTRICITY. The last half of Victoria's reign produced applications of electricity even more momentous than those of steam had been during the first half. The properties of the new force had been investigated in the 'thirties and 'forties by Faraday, Clerk Maxwell and Thomson (later Lord Kelvin), but it could scarcely have been turned to account without the development, just before our period opened, of generation by dynamo and transmission by cable.

It had already been applied to telegraphy. At first the wires were carried only along the new railway lines, and by private enterprise. But competition was out of place in a service which depends for success on universality and uniformity; and the

first Gladstone Government bought out, at the price of twenty years' profits, the scores of private companies which had sprung up. The whole business was now handed over to the General Post Office, which in the course of six years of tremendous activity spread its wires, no longer confined to railway routes, all over the country. Attempts to lay a submarine cable to America, begun in 1865, were finally successful ten years later.

The telephone ran a similar course. The London Edison Company was formed in 1879, but was hampered by a legal decision that telephony, being a kind of telegraphy, came under the control of the Postmaster-General. The Government granted licences to local companies, but by 1885 there were only 10,000 subscribers in the British Isles as compared with 170,000 in the United States. The companies amalgamated in 1889; but the telephone habit did not really take hold of the nation until after 1905, when Parliament (by an Act not fully operative until 1911) took over the National Company's assets and placed the service under the Postmaster-General.

As an illuminant electricity dates from about 1880. In that year arc-lamps were installed in the G.P.O. and in Liverpool Street station; and in 1881 London and Liverpool began to adopt them for street lighting. The invention of the vacuum bulb, by Edison in America and by Swan over here, made electric lighting available in smaller quantities. It was installed in the new Savoy Theatre, and gradually came into use in private houses. But development was slow until in the course of the 'nineties power-stations were built in large centres of population —in some places by private enterprise, in others by municipalities.

The 'eighties also saw electric power applied to locomotion. Blackpool adopted the underground conduit system for its tramways in 1884; the first town to experiment with the overhead trolley system was Leeds. In 1900 came a further departure: an underground electric railway—at first with a fixed fare of twopence and known as 'The Twopenny Tube'—between the City and Shepherd's Bush.

A use of electricity even more significant for the future of mankind was to explode a mixture of petrol vapour and air within a cylinder. The first internal-combustion 'motor-car' was built (in France, by Daimler) in 1888. By the middle

'nineties the invention had made enough progress in this country for a 'Marathon Race' from London to Brighton.[1] And it made possible a totally new medium of transport: the air. For no other means of generating power combined it with lightness to anything like the same degree. But these further developments took place beyond the time-limit of this chapter.

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS. The line between Disraeli's 'Two Nations' was becoming blurred by the growing middle class. One symptom of this was the spread of organized games. In the good old days 'sport' meant, in the main, the slaying of bird, beast or fish by people of leisure; but the word now included games that could be enjoyed, actively or passively, by the million. Lawn tennis, for instance, could be played in suburban gardens. Originally a proprietary invention, under the name 'Sphairistike', its rules were drawn up in 1877 by the same body that regulated the well-established game of croquet. Golf spread south from Scotland, slowly during the 'seventies, faster during the 'eighties. It required plenty of space, but was inexpensive compared with grouse-shooting or fox-hunting.

But the most striking feature of the age in this regard was the development of football and cricket as entertainment, played before crowds in built-up areas. Our period coincides with the beginning of the County Cricket Championship, with the visits of teams from Australia (the first 'test match' was played in 1882), and with the career of W. G. Grace (1848-1916), the personality who made the game a topic of general interest and discussion. The rules of football were more or less local and chaotic until the 'sixties. The Football Association drew up rules in 1864. At first the game was played almost entirely by amateurs; for years the winners of its cup were such teams as the Royal Engineers and the Old Etonians. But the increase of spectators brought professionalism, which was recognized by the Association and organized by the Football League in the middle 'eighties. The rugby game, originally played at the school of that name and made famous by *Tom Brown's Schooldays*

[1] This was made possible by the removal by an Act of 1896 of a regulation that mechanically-propelled vehicles had to be preceded by a man on foot with a red flag. To the delight of the crowd nearly half the cars failed to start, and very few reached the finish.

(1857), developed at about the same time. The Blackheath Club was founded in 1860, and the first England *v.* Scotland international was played in 1871; but being less entertaining as a spectacle, rugby remained largely an amateur game. Working-class players, needing compensation for wages lost while playing it, formed in 1893 a 'Northern Union' of their own, practically confined to the industrial districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Costume was tending to become simpler. Men still wore frock coats and silk hats on all formal occasions—at church or in Parliament; but as the period wore on were oftener seen in lounge jackets and 'bowlers'. As to women, the crinoline went out about 1870, the bustle some ten or fifteen years later. To be sure, corsets of steel and whalebone still constricted their vital organs, and skirts and petticoats continued to be far more voluminous than women of to-day would find tolerable. But cycling helped to lighten the burden among the younger generation, after the invention of the 'safety' in 1885 made this form of exercise possible for women. Incidentally, cycling was another solvent of social distinctions, for it enabled people who who could not afford carriages to visit friends and places till then out of their reach.

Women's right to a part in public affairs began to be recognized when in 1868 they gained the vote in elections to Local Authorities, and still further when a couple of years later the Education Act allowed them to become members of School Boards. Another milestone was the *Married Women's Property Act* of 1882, which ended the husband's right to treat his wife's possessions as his own. But what did more than anything else to emancipate women was the diminution in the size of families. Hitherto six or eight children had been quite usual; family life had been enormously important and was regarded as the special sphere of womenfolk. But now that people were restricting the size of their families, middle-class women were beginning to seek other outlets for their energies. Two famous headmistresses during these decades were adapting public-school ideals to the needs of girls: Frances Mary Buss at the North London Collegiate School, and Dorothea Beale at Cheltenham Ladies' College. But they were handicapped by the lack of qualified

teachers until the products of women's colleges at Cambridge (Newnham and Girton), and Oxford (Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville)—all founded during the 'seventies—became available. But women were still barred from most other professions. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first woman doctor, had to force through her admission as a qualified physician in the face of every kind of obstruction and insult.

Nevertheless, there was a gradual loosening of the bonds of convention; we see it in the gradual decay of religious observance. At the start of our period it was quite usual for guests in a country house-party to assemble after breakfast for prayers; at the end of it this would have been very unusual indeed. But Sabbatarianism lingered: London continued to be a dead city on Sundays, even in the 'nineties, though the Prince of Wales opened a breach in the citadel with his Sunday evening dinner parties at Marlborough House. And whereas in 1870 quite half the ablest young men at the Universities entered Holy Orders (still necessary for College Fellowships and most Public School Headmasterships), by 1900 very few of them did so. The most favoured career by this time, significantly enough, was the Civil Service—the higher bureaucracy.

The ban on divorce continued, however. The political careers of Dilke and Parnell ended abruptly when they were cited as co-respondents; and Queen Victoria would not receive at Court even the injured party to a divorce suit.

PAINTING AND MUSIC. These decades saw a gradual awakening of the public to the idea of beauty, and a growing demand for it, that would have seemed 'soft' and almost sinful to the grim and earnest Early Victorians. We see this in public buildings, especially the revival of French Renaissance style exemplified by New Scotland Yard and the Imperial Institute. The Roman Catholic cathedral of Westminster evaded competition with the Abbey by a boldly Byzantine design and the use of red brick. As to dwellings, the demand for cheapness still fought against beauty of design. The harsh combination of red brick and blue-grey slate was carried to all parts by the cheapening of railway transport. But the new houses were at any rate more

sanitary than the old. Main drainage became universal in towns, and houses of quite moderate size had baths installed.

An 'aesthetic' revolt against philistine ugliness was begun by William Morris with his revival of medieval arts and crafts and his designs for wallpaper, textiles and printing type. 'Have nothing in your house but what you know to be useful and believe to be beautiful'—that was a daring gospel in an age of heavy plush curtains, walls covered with framed photographs and 'Japanese' fans and gilt mirrors, overmantels and what-nots crowded with quaint knick-knacks, ornamental flowerpots in the windows and painted drainpipes in the corners. It began a process of clearing the air which has gone on down to our own day of elegant barrenness.

But the main stream of aestheticism was in painting, embodied in the formula 'Art for Art's sake'. The first to preach and practise it were Whistler (an American by parentage, but a product of the art schools of Paris), and the New English Art Club, founded in 1886 to propagate the ideas and methods of the French Impressionists—Monet, Renoir, Degas, and Manet—who painted pictures which excite or delight the spectator as a whole, and not as the sum of meticulously painted parts, and which emphasize decorative beauty rather than story-telling. A young Irish *littérateur* named Oscar Wilde made himself (to the annoyance of practising artists like Whistler) the apologist of the cult of beauty, exemplifying it, as far as in him lay, in unconventional dress and artistic interior decoration, and making it the subject of essays and lectures adorned by glittering paradox. He and his kind were satirized in the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta *Patience* (1881); and the aesthetic movement was further advertised by a famous lawsuit which ended with Ruskin—the former champion of the unconventional Turner having now set up as the guardian of orthodoxy—having to pay a farthing damages for libelling Whistler by saying that in his *Battersea Bridge* he had impudently flung 'a pot of paint in the public's face'.

In the 'nineties the movement fell on evil days. It labelled itself 'decadent', and as exemplified by Wilde's epigrams (his highest praise for a book was to call it 'poisonous') and by the brilliant but morbid pen-and-ink drawings of Aubrey Beardsley, the epithet seemed appropriate. When in 1896 Wilde was sent

to prison for criminal vice there was a general reaction against 'beauty for beauty's sake'. The most revered figure in the world of art at the turn of the century was G. F. Watts, a gifted portrait painter who had latterly turned to making symbolical pictures designed to elevate the moral tone of the beholder.

Evidence of an increased interest in painting was to be seen in the new public galleries opened—the National Portrait Gallery in 1896, the National Gallery of British Art ('the Tate') in 1897, and the Wallace Collection in 1900.

When our period opened Britain was still 'the land without music'; and for the next twenty years its most memorable musical production was Savoy operetta: (*H.M.S. Pinafore*, 1878; *The Mikado*, 1885; *The Gondoliers*, 1889)—very delightful, but scarcely Art with a capital A. Then at the beginning of the 'nineties came the first streaks of dawn. Sir Hubert Parry and Sir Charles Stanford, heads of the Royal Academy and Royal College of Music respectively, were men of social standing as well as musicians, and their educational work made people realize that music might be an interest and even an avocation of self-respecting persons, instead of being associated with long-haired virtuosi from abroad. But London still had no permanent orchestra in the Continental sense, for the Royal Philharmonic Society merely gave half a dozen ill-rehearsed concerts a year, though the Hallé maintained an anxious and overworked existence in the North. A new orchestra was formed when the Queen's Hall was opened in 1893, but its early seasons of Promenade Concerts under young Mr. Henry Wood consisted mainly of music associated with seaside bandstands. Opera, apart from one or two struggling touring companies, was limited to a short but expensive season of foreign works performed by foreign singers as a function of fashionable society. Little or no chamber music was to be heard in London, save some so-called 'Popular Concerts' at the St. James's Hall (where the Piccadilly Hotel now stands), with a limited repertoire of 'classical' chamber-music. The provinces never heard music on the grand scale except a biennial or triennial charity festival, with a scratch orchestra of London players but with local choirs, (choral singing being a spontaneous British musical activity, like brass bands) performing standard oratorios and symphonic

works, with occasional 'first performances' of still-born compositions, mostly by academic musicians.

But in the very last years of the century a wonderful thing happened. In 1899 Elgar's *Enigma Variations* were performed in London, and a year later *The Dream of Gerontius* was heard at the Birmingham Festival. It was the beginning of an English musical renaissance, after a dark age lasting since the death of Henry Purcell in 1695.

LITERATURE—AND JOURNALISM. English poetry had fallen by the way. Browning lived till 1889 and Tennyson till 1892, but their productive vigour had ebbed long before they died. Swinburne (1837-1909) was still prolific with entrancing sound, if only great poetry needed nothing besides. The only live verse of the last decade came from Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), whose lyrics, like those of Robert Burns a century before, expressed the spirit of an age to ears not usually attuned to poetry. His short stories also belonged to the era, dealing as they did with soldiers and officials at the outposts of Empire, and bodying forth the ideas of a people who felt themselves a chosen race, called to bear the burden of ruling lesser breeds without the law.

The novel took a fresh turn. The massive three-volume productions which (at 31s. 6d.) depended on circulating libraries, gave place to single volumes which ordinary people could afford to buy. There was a growing public for novels which treated serious subjects seriously. The oustanding figures were George Meredith (1828-1909) and Thomas Hardy (1840-1928). Meredith spoke for and to the upper middle class (*Vittoria* glorified the Risorgimento and *Diana of the Crossways* was a sacred book to devotees of Women's Rights); whereas Hardy's best books dealt with rural life in Wessex, and were more universal in theme. But they were both gifted poets who wrote novels for a living; and both took an ironic view of life—albeit Meredith's irony was comic and Hardy's tragic.

In the last decade there began a revival of the drama as an institution for intelligent people. The British theatre had long produced little besides conventional melodrama or frivolous farce, mostly either adapted from the French or knocked up to display the talents of particular actors. The first shock was ad-

ministered by the English production of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in 1889, and a second, much ruder one, by that of his *Ghosts*, two years later. The British public resented the mental disturbance caused by seeing life's problems presented on the stage, and the first requirement of the New Drama was propaganda. This was supplied by George Bernard Shaw, whose exposition of Ibsenism was supplemented by offensive and defensive sword-play as a dramatic critic, and by dramas of his own which made ideas palatable by wit and humour. Some of his characteristic work—the *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* and *Plays for Puritans* had appeared before the end of the century.

The philosophy of the age was expounded by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and T. H. Green (1836-82). Spencer set himself early in life the immense task of applying the principles of Evolution to the whole field of human knowledge and thought. The notion underlying the *Synthetic Philosophy* (of which he issued a prospectus in 1860, published bit by bit, and only completed in 1896), is the Victorian belief in Progress as a supreme law of the Universe. His works had a great vogue in their day, more in America even than in Britain; but nowadays nobody regards them as of permanent value. Green, on the other hand, was little known outside academic circles in his lifetime, but is still looked on as one of the great creative thinkers of his age. He became Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford in 1878, and the lectures delivered in the four years that were left to him of life were published after his death as *Prolegomena to Ethics*, and *The Principles of Political Obligation*. The first opposed the hard-and-fast interpretation of science which considered the universe, including Man, as 'a fortuitous concourse of atoms' acted on by blind forces. It postulated Man as a person having power to will his betterment and to reach out for it. In political thought Green supplied a reasoned basis for the general trend towards collectivism, arguing that, as the individual depends on the community for most of what makes his life worth living, it must be the function of the community to provide him with conditions for his full development.

The last years of the century produced a revolution in the production of newspapers. The Education Act had by this time resulted in a vast increase in the reading public, which meant a

greatly widened field for the spread of very simple ideas. The older periodicals and newspapers had been designed for select readers with time to digest them; but there were now millions of persons who could read easy prose but lacked leisure and mental background. George Newnes made a fortune with *Tit-Bits* (founded 1881), which catered for a public only capable of absorbing knowledge in scraps; and he had countless imitators. In 1896 this idea was adapted to the daily newspaper by Alfred Harmsworth (afterwards Lord Northcliffe) with his *Daily Mail.* Hitherto British newspapers had prided themselves on traditions of sober and weighty responsibility; but the *Daily Mail* cast off these shackles, in conscious imitation of the American 'yellow press'. Its price was a mere halfpenny, and it was designed for hasty perusal, often in crowded suburban trains, with short words, short sentences, short paragraphs, and headlines which enabled the 'reader' to feel, without the need for concentration of thought or judgment, that he was in touch with what was going on in the world. Within a few years the circulation of the *Mail* was double that of any other newspaper in the country. And with the growth of circulation came a growth in the value of advertisement space, until the revenue from this source greatly exceeded that from the purchase price.

The effects of this development (which early in the next century was taken up by other newspapers) were both good and bad. Keen competition plus ample revenue led to widely extended news services; but on the other hand editors and proprietors were often guided in selecting and presenting news by anxiety to give the public what it wanted—a principle (or lack of it) which shocked newspaper-men of the old school. Harmsworth himself once said that there was 'nothing the public liked so much as a good hate'—especially against foreigners; and hate breeds war.

XVI

THE BALFOUR GOVERNMENT

1902—1905

The death of Victoria coincided with the retirement of Salisbury. Under his nephew Unionist power was prolonged for another three years, during which important reforms were instituted in Education and the Navy, a challenge was thrown down to Free Trade, and there was a revolution in foreign policy.

THE OPENING OF AN ERA. The death of the old Queen in January 1901 put on the throne a sovereign of very different calibre. Victoria had become a legendary figure in her seclusion. The monarchy had latterly recovered the prestige it had lost in earlier decades; for one result of imperialism had been an attachment to the sovereign as a living symbol of the race, and 'The Widow at Windsor' had appealed to her people's imagination. But it was significant that her successor, despite her known wish that he should be 'King Albert' in memory of her adored husband, chose to be proclaimed by his second name Edward. He meant to break with the Victorian Age. Unlike his mother, he delighted in pageantry and pleasure, and displayed the external graces of kingship—he could look dignified in ceremonial, he could be affable in social intercourse, and was an effective leader of 'Society'; and though he never read books or newspapers (or even state-papers if he could help it), he was quick to pick up ideas from better-informed persons. He was so much more in the public eye than the old Queen had been that people thought he was exerting more influence on the Government; but as a matter of fact he exerted less, having less industry and capacity. And his mother, disgusted at his lack of moral ballast, had never given him any practice in the duties of a constitutional King—he had not been allowed to see even Prime Ministers' daily reports of Cabinet meetings until 1891, when he was fifty years of age. But at his coronation (which was postponed for three months, to the dismay of the thousands of visitors from all corners of the earth, owing to a sudden illness calling for a major surgical operation) he showed appreciation

of the spirit of the age by being proclaimed King 'of the British Dominions Beyond the Seas' as well as of the United Kingdom.

Lord Salisbury now retired from public life. He had been Prime Minister longer than any of his predecessors since the first Reform Act, but he had never been a familiar figure; for —an aristocrat of the old school—he kept himself to himself, and he never felt that good government implied constant legislation.

He was succeeded by his nephew A. J. Balfour. This was another setback for Chamberlain, who would have been more than human if, still full of exuberant energy, he had not become restless at seeing his hopes of the Premiership slipping away. As to the other members of the Cabinet, Lord Lansdowne had already taken over the Foreign Office, and the almost unknown C. T. Ritchie became Chancellor of the Exchequer in place of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who as one of the Tory Old Guard had retired with Salisbury.

Balfour's air of languid culture concealed first-class political acumen; and the courage and determination which he had shown in applying 'resolute government' to Ireland he now showed as Prime Minister in the face of growing difficulties. For there was an inevitable decline in the Government's prestige, after a war which had revealed a deplorable lack of efficiency and foresight. Commissions of Inquiry found that it had sent out millions of useless cartridges, soft bayonets, and untrained horses which contractors had bought for £10 and sold to the War Office for £40 apiece. But it was a wholesome trait in the British character that these ugly facts should have been sought out and made public instead of being hushed up.

THE BALFOUR EDUCATION ACT. Just before the war there had been complaints about the lack of facilities for secondary and higher education. The much-admired efficiency of Germany in war, science, industry and commerce, was ascribed to an educational system designed to fit every citizen for his place in the national machine. Britain was falling further and further behind not only Germany but France and America, and it was argued that this was becoming a serious handicap in industrial competition. A child's chance of any education beyond the elementary stage depended on his parents' means or the existence in

his neighbourhood of an endowed school. As for technical training, it was undeveloped and spasmodic.

The Salisbury Government had taken a preliminary step towards a unified system by setting up a Board of Education (1899). Responsibility for grant-aided schools, hitherto left to the Lord President of the Council, was now to be in the hands of the President of this (fictitious) Board; and there was to be a register of teachers, elementary and secondary.

Further action was precipitated in 1900 by the 'Cockerton Judgment', when the Law Courts upheld an auditor of the Local Government Board who pronounced that the London School Board had no right under Forster's Act to spend any part of its grant in providing evening classes. These 'Science and Art Classes' were the only means of continued education for millions of young people, not only in London but in other large towns, and something had to be done without delay. In 1901 there appeared a 'Fabiän Tract' on the subject, written by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. This advocated the substitution for School Boards of a complete educational system under the control of Education Committees of County Councils. It was a typical piece of Fabianism—a practical scheme for providing a national minimum of schooling, equal for all, under the direction of Local Authorities; and it was widely discussed.

Balfour was greatly taken by the proposals, especially as they would remove a grievance against the School Boards long felt by the High Church element in his Party.[1] The Anglican clergy had always disliked the 'undenominational' religion taught in Board Schools. Since 1870 the growth of towns was making them gain on the Church Schools, and the clergy saw with apprehension the approach of a time when the majority of British children would grow up ignorant of the Church Catechism and the Apostles' Creed. They would be delighted to see School Boards abolished and a fresh start made.

So in March 1902 Balfour brought in a bill which carried the Fabian plan into effect. It put the Elementary Schools under Committees of County and County Borough Councils; while non-County Boroughs with more than 10,000 inhabitants and Urbän Councils with more than 20,000 *could* have such Committees.

[1] e.g., his own cousins, Lord Cranborne, and Lords Robert and Hugh Cecil.

The County and County Borough Committees were also to see that secondary education was brought within reach of all children able to profit by it; and endowed schools were to be supported from the rates and taxes, provided they gave free places to a certain proportion of children from Elementary Schools, and were efficiently run. The Act further abolished the distinction between schools maintained wholly out of public funds and the 'Voluntary' schools maintained partly by Church or Chapel: all alike were to be under the Education Committees, though Voluntary Schools were to have managers of whom two-thirds could be nominated by the religious organization which supported them.

Balfour admitted that one object of the Act was to put Church Schools on a permanent basis, and it roused Nonconformists to anger. When, in the teeth of bitter opposition, it was forced through, some Local Authorities (especially in Wales, under the spell of David Lloyd George) refused to put it into operation; and for some years individual zealots became martyrs to the cause by going to prison as 'passive resisters' rather than pay an Education Rate to be spent on bringing children up as Churchmen.

The opposition was the more damaging to the Government in that it was shared by many Unionists. Chamberlain and his supporters from the industrial midlands were Nonconformists almost to a man; and they regarded the Act as a concession to the 'Hotel Cecil' with whom they had never been on good terms. 'Our best friends are leaving us by scores of thousands,' he wrote to the Duke of Devonshire; and he gave scarcely disguised support to the resistance.

Nevertheless the Act was one of the most important pieces of legislation passed of the twentieth century.

THE BALFOUR LICENSING ACT. Another cause of offence to most dissenters, and to many Churchmen too, was the Licensing Act (1902). It is difficult for us to-day to realize what passion was in those days put into the gospel of 'Temperance'. But there was good reason for it. There were fewer amusements then to keep people out of public houses—no cinemas, no wireless; beer was fourpence a quart and whisky 3s. 6d. a bottle. Magistrates' courts were as much occupied with cases of 'drunk and dis-

orderly' as they are now with motoring and cycling offences. Religious bodies kept up a crusade against 'the Trade,' and there was a 'Blue Ribbon Army' of those who had 'taken the pledge' never to touch strong drink.

The most effective way for Parliament to check the evil was by limiting the number of licences granted by magistrates at their annual 'Brewster Sessions'; but any suggestion of the sort aroused fierce resentment not only from publicans and their customers but from the great brewing firms that owned most of the public-houses, the tens of thousands of people engaged in the industry, and the hundreds of thousands of brewery shareholders. The Liberals had found this to their cost in 1871 (p. 49).

But there was a considerable section of the Unionist Party, too, who wanted facilities for drinking reduced; and in 1901 the question was brought up by a decision in the Law Courts. Had a publican a right to have his licence renewed annually, provided that his house was properly conducted; or could it be withheld merely on the grounds that there were too many public-houses in the district? (At Farnham, for instance, there was one for every 120 inhabitants, men, women and children.) In other words, was a licence a species of property, like a piece of land?

The situation had to be cleared up, and in 1904 the Government brought in a bill which required each licensing area to raise a fund by an annual levy on licensees from which compensation could be paid whenever renewal was refused on grounds other than misconduct. Magistrates, it was felt, would be able to cancel licences more freely if this would not rob brewers of their property. The Temperance party objected that this expressly recognized a vested right, and they fought the measure tooth and nail. The Government forced it through; but there was continued indignation in Temperance circles, including many clergymen who had hitherto been staunch Unionists.

THE BIRTH OF THE LABOUR PARTY. And there was trouble brewing for the Government from another quarter.

The Independent Labour Party soon found that there was no hope of forming an effective working-class parliamentary party without the solid financial and moral support of the Trades Union Congress. Hitherto the older Unions had not

committed themselves to Socialism. Not until the Plymouth Congress of 1899 did they authorize their Parliamentary Committee, by a small majority, to hold a conference with the Socialist societies to consider how direct representation in Parliament might be increased. This conference, meeting 120 strong in London in February 1900, elected a Labour Representation Committee, consisting of seven delegates from the T.U.C., two from the I.L.P., two from the S.D.F., and one Fabian. It chose as secretary Ramsay MacDonald, who worked with unsparing energy to build up a Party that would be a potent factor in the political life of the country. At first it had a desperate struggle for existence. The S.D.F. seceded almost at once because it was not definitely Socialist; the Fabians treated it with rather disdainful patronage; some of the older Unions, including the all-important Miners, preferred to maintain their traditional alliance with Liberalism; and it made itself unpopular by taking a 'Pro-Boer' line over the South African War. It was, therefore, not surprising that at the 'Khaki Election' only two of its fourteen candidates were successful, and one of these, John Burns, was about to leave it because it was too 'class-conscious'. Eight Miners' officials were elected, but sat as Liberals.

Thus the enterprise hung fire, and it might have faded out altogether but for an event which threatened the Unions themselves with extinction.

In 1900 there was an unofficial strike on the Taff Vale Railway in South Wales. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants had nothing to do with the dispute; but when the company brought in strike-breakers from outside, it sent down its General Secretary, who in order to prevent disturbances issued strike-pay and persuaded the 'blacklegs' to go back home. The strike was soon settled; but railway companies had always bitterly opposed Trade Unionism among their employees, and the manager of the Taff Vale Co. thought of a new weapon against it. He sued the A.S.R.S. for all the losses suffered by the Company through the stoppage. It had always been assumed that Disraeli's *Employers and Workmen* Act assured the right to strike; but to the general amazement the judge declared that this interpretation of the Act was misconceived, and that the Union was therefore liable. This decision was reversed in the Court of Appeal, but upheld by the House

of Lords. The total cost to the A.S.R.S. was about £50,000.

Great was the jubilation among employers, profound the dismay of organized labour. The judgment threatened the end of militant Trade Unionism. The only remedy would be a new Act of Parliament expressly freeing the Unions from such financial responsibility. But the Government Party being almost entirely of the employing class, there was no likelihood that it would pass a law to facilitate strikes! So the Trade Unions girded up their loins for a great effort to turn it out at the next election, and there was greatly increased support among them for the struggling little Labour Party.

THE UNIONIST DECLINE. An untoward fate seemed to lie in wait for the Government's most promising and well-meant enterprises.

For instance, George Wyndham, one of the ablest of the younger Unionists—'the courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword'—had been made Chief Secretary for Ireland. Balfour when he had held that post had set going a scheme by which the Government lent Irish tenant-farmers the money to buy their farms. This it was hoped would appease the land-hunger which had always been the underlying cause of Irish unrest, and would ultimately 'kill Home Rule by kindness'. Wyndham now aimed at rounding off the plan by a new Land Purchase Act, coupled with a scheme of 'devolution' which would give Ireland a considerable degree of financial, if not legislative independence. Exactly what was intended never became clear, for the mere idea roused such an outcry from Irish Unionists that the Government hastily dropped the proposals, and Wyndham resigned. Thus the net result was that the Government, instead of winning the hearts of the Irish Party, threw them back into the arms of the Liberals and revived the demand for Home Rule. As for Wyndham, he was never heard of again—another victim of the blighting contact with the Irish problem.

Then there was trouble in India between the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Curzon was a first-class specimen of the aristocratic vice-consul—lofty of demeanour, but high-minded, purposeful, and a prodigy of industry. Lord Kitchener, who had been sent after his triumphs in Africa to re-

organize the Indian Army, personified the most admired qualities of military imperialism. But the two were incompatible spirits. Part of Kitchener's plan was for the C.-in-C. to be a member of the Viceroy's Council, but Curzon felt that this would be unduly to exalt his authority. After unseemly recrimination the question was referred to the Government, which felt that, damaging as the resignation of Curzon would be, that of Kitchener would be worse. So Curzon came home nursing a bitter grievance.

CHAMBERLAIN MAKES A PLUNGE. But the heaviest blow suffered by the Government, at once disintegrating its own ranks and unifying its opponents', was over fiscal policy.

In the autumn of 1902 Chamberlain went to South Africa to see for himself how best the effects of the war might be cleared up, and to get away for a spell from the depressing atmosphere in Whitehall. And there were several things he wanted to think out. His schemes for social reform had been overlaid by his imperialism—and even this had not been as successful as he had hoped. He had put through some useful changes in tropical Africa and in the West Indies; but the problem of drawing the Empire together, on which he had been intent ever since he joined the Imperial Federation League twenty years before, seemed as far from solution as ever. He had presided over two Colonial Conferences, when the Premiers were gathered in London for the Diamond Jubilee of 1897 and for the Coronation in 1902; but these had shown that the self-governing colonies were too jealous of their independence and too conscious of their separate interests to be willing to enter any kind of political federation. They were better disposed towards a customs union; but the difficulty about this was that, while they had all adopted tariffs to protect their rising industries from foreign (and British) competition, Britain still clung to Free Trade. That meant that she had nothing to offer them in return for a lowering of import duties on her goods—her markets were wide open to all.

If only the nation would consent to a tariff just high enough to enable concessions to be made! Such a policy had been advocated by a few bold spirits in the 1880's—'Fair Trade', they called it, to make it sound as much like Free Trade as possible;

but it had died away. The nation held by the fiscal policy which had brought it prosperity in the middle of the century, and would not accept Protection in any shape or form. But the country was now faced with ever fiercer competition, even in its basic industries—coal, iron and textiles. Foreign countries were closing their markets to our products, and the only way to force those markets open was to be able to threaten retaliation. Further than that Chamberlain did not (as yet) think of going. He knew how deep-seated was the feeling against 'food-taxes', and he knew that the 'City'—that conglomeration of Banking, Credit, Shipping and Insurance—would be dead against any curb on the freedom of commerce which made London the central emporium of world-trade. For Britain's 'invisible imports', consisting mainly of charges for freight and insurance, came to her mostly in the form of food and raw materials. But he was not without hope; a promising start had just been made with a 'registration-duty' of one shilling a quarter on wheat which Sir Michael Hicks-Beach had imposed in the 1902 budget.

Six months later he returned from South Africa in a somewhat disgruntled mood. He had made some strong speeches calling for unity under the British flag; but the noisy acclamations of the ex-Uitlanders hardly compensated for the sulky silence of the ex-Boers. And the mine-owners of the Rand had failed to respond to his appeal for contributions towards the cost of the war which, as he pointed out, had been fought mainly in their interests. They said they could not be expected to meet extra taxation until the mines were in full production again, and this was at present impossible owing to the shortage of labour. What disquieted him even more was that they were talking of importing indentured coolies from China; for this would be very unpopular at home, where people would ask if this costly and troublesome war had resulted in nothing better than 'Chinese Slavery'. Some big issue must be laid before the country, to turn its mind from the sordid aftermath of the war.

And on landing he learned that, Hicks-Beach having been replaced by Ritchie, the 1903 budget was to include the cancellation of the shilling Registration Duty. The thin edge of the wedge had been withdrawn! We should not, after all, be able to offer Canada even the smallest return for the specially favourable terms she had just offered to British manufacturers.

'The Height of this Great Argument'. Chamberlain was not the man to be put off his stroke by such a mishap. On the contrary, it impelled him to open defiance of the Free Trade flag which the Cabinet seemed to have nailed to its mast. On May 15th, in a speech at Birmingham, he called for 'preference' for colonial produce, and 'retaliation' against countries which barred British goods; pointing out that Germany had just put punitive duties on Canadian goods for giving us a preference, and we were unable to make any counter-stroke. It so happened that on the same day Balfour told a protectionist deputation that the Registration Duty had been a mere war-tax; to make it permanent would be an attack on Free Trade for which the Government had no warrant. The contradiction caused much questioning in the country, in Parliament and even in the Cabinet. What *was* the Government's fiscal policy?

That question long remained without forthright answer. Obviously Chamberlain could not continue in the same Cabinet with a doctrinaire Free Trader like Ritchie; which would Balfour discard? In the event they both resigned, and the Duke of Devonshire, another staunch Free Trader, as well. Balfour was determined to avoid such a breach in his Party as Gladstone had torn in Liberalism by not giving himself time to convert his followers to Home Rule (p. 92). Chamberlain was now free to devote himself to propaganda, while Balfour held the Government together by benevolent neutrality and a pledge not to introduce Protection until the issue had been placed before the electorate. That need not be for several years: it was for Chamberlain to make the best use of his time.

Such was the sway of his personality that the majority of the Party and practically all the Unionist Press were converted to 'Tariff Reform' right away; but the 'Unionist Free Fooders' were a compact group in the House, and their defection would bring the Government down with a crash. The Prime Minister set himself to prevent the issue being brought prematurely before Parliament. When pressed by opponents he admitted that he had not yet made up his mind—the matter needed calm and judicious investigation.

And now Chamberlain, despite his sixty-seven years, ranged

the country in a raging, tearing campaign of oratory. With the fight for imperial unity and for national prosperity was now conjoined a fight for his own prestige. A Tariff Reform League was started, modelled on the historic Anti-Corn Law League, supported by subscriptions from industrialists who hoped to recoup themselves from higher prices and better trade. But the threat to Free Trade—the Ark of the Covenant to all true Liberals—galvanized the Opposition into a unity, self-confidence and energy which it had not known for twenty years. A Free Trade Union flooded the country with leaflets and pamphlets; speeches from all sections of the Party—Campbell-Bannerman, Morley, Asquith, Lloyd George, and even the aloof Rosebery—countered Chamberlain's arguments and contradicted his statistics. Thus aroused, his combative instincts made him push his proposals further than he had originally intended. He began by calling merely for duties of two shillings a quarter on corn, 5 per cent on meat and dairy produce, and 10 per cent on manufactures; and as a set-off to the new food duties he proposed to halve those on tea, cocoa and sugar. But soon he went on to demand protection on a scale which would arm the country for a tariff war *à outrance* against its rivals; and as arguments for this fiscal revolution he produced figures which drew a tragic picture of British industries fading away one after another. When people reminded him that he had been one of the most destructive critics of 'Fair Trade', he replied that the rise of German industry had changed the whole position since 1880.

The Tariff Reformers' general line of argument was that a small duty on foodstuffs would not raise the cost of living; and that even if it did the nation ought to bear a slight burden for the sake of Imperial unity especially as the tariff would revive our dying industries and provide regular work and higher wages for all. Furthermore, the revenue from it would pay for Old Age Pensions and other social amenities without increased taxation. In any case, it was really the foreign exporter who paid the duties, by accepting reduced profits.

To all this the Free Traders replied in effect: If your proposals will not raise prices, how will they benefit British producers? And if your duties keep out foreign goods they will produce no revenue unless the foreigner pays the tax—but if he does so,

why the call for patriotic sacrifice? Moreover, many industries had everything to lose and nothing to gain by the proposals. A reduction in imports would make it very difficult for the foreigner to find means of payment for our goods, or for the 'invisible exports' of interest on freightage and investments. And what would happen to the people employed in transport —dockers, warehousemen and seamen? Moreover, was it certain that the Colonies would be ready to make worth-while bargains with us? Canada was already 'dumping' iron and steel here. And it must not be overlooked that the product of one industry is the raw material of others. It is true that whereas in 1880 Britain produced a third of the world's steel she now produced only a seventh, but the actual amount had increased fourfold; and why should the industries dependent on steel (especially shipbuilding and engineering) have the cost of their main structural material raised against them for the benefit of foundries which did not employ a quarter as many men?

So the argument raged on all through 1904 and 1905. Balfour maintained a precarious balance on the fence. He was determined that at all costs the life of the Government should be prolonged until the completion of a revolution in foreign policy which was vital for the country's security. Discussion of that revolution must be deferred to another chapter.

XVII

THE END OF ISOLATION
1899–1904

The passing of Victoria and Salisbury cleared the way for a new departure in foreign policy. Recent events had shown that isolation was no longer safe. Balfour, as Prime Minister, and Lansdowne, as Foreign Secretary, recognized this; Chamberlain had already shown that he did, too; and Edward VII was certainly no devotee of Victorian traditions.

THE RISING SUN. William II had a vision of Germany as a World Power, and the one country which already had possessions in every continent was his mother's native land. His envy of it had become an obsession, and the upper classes in Germany disdained the British as an effete and bloated nation which was acting as a dog-in-the-manger over colonies. But the Royal Navy gave the British an exasperatingly smug sense of security. If only he could make them see that they could not in future ignore his military might! He had tried to make Britain feel her isolation over the Armenian massacres and a year or two later he had seized an opportunity to make himself felt in the Far East.

The Manchu Empire of China was visibly crumbling. Here was another 'Sick Man' whose decadence put the Powers of Europe on the watch to stake out claims, at any rate for trading-rights. But they had to reckon with another Power—a new one, right on the spot, with even stronger and more immediate interests involved.

Japan, having suddenly emerged from her feudal age in the 1860's, had in thirty years become a modern state, complete with railways, universities, a parliament, an army and navy, above all an industrial system, all assiduously copied from European models. Japanese industries needed, like those of European countries, overseas markets and sources of raw material. On the mainland opposite were vast opportunities—empty lands and latent mineral wealth to the north, and teeming populations to the south—waiting to be exploited. The

Japanese already had a footing in Korea, which they had forced open to their commerce. But the opening of the Trans-Siberian Railway was bringing a new competitor into the field. Russia already had a secret agreement with Korea and was angling at Pekin for the right to run the railway through Manchuria to Port Arthur as well as to her own Pacific port of Vladivostock. In 1894 this situation led to a Sino-Japanese war. A Japanese army landed in Korea and drove out the Chinese troops who upheld the suzerainty of their Emperor over its king, while the new Japanese warships destroyed the wooden junks of the Chinese Navy at the mouth of Yalu River. In November another Japanese army crossed into Manchuria and occupied Port Arthur; but when in March 1895 they began a further advance, Russia, France and Britain intervened. Germany gave the Chinese Government private warning that if these Powers sent armies there they were likely to want something for themselves. So Li Hung Chang, the veteran Chinese statesman, hastened to agree to the Japanese demands, which included extensive trading and political rights in China. The British Government wanted to avert the overthrow of the Manchu Empire and the ruin of the very profitable Anglo-Chinese trade; but the Rosebery Cabinet, now tottering to its fall, could not ignore the sympathy felt in this country for 'the gallant little Japs'; and people argued that it would be foolish to check them for the benefit of our old enemy the Muscovite. So Britain held aloof from the joint action undertaken by the other Powers.

For the Kaiser had been struck by a new idea. Here was his chance to renew Russo-German ties and at the same time draw Russia's attention away from Europe. 'My root idea', he explained to the Emperor of Austria, 'is that if we can keep Russia tied down in Eastern Asia Germany will not have to fear an attack by France, nor Austria a revolt in the Balkans'. He therefore depicted to the Tsar (always much under his influence) the terror which would fall on Europe if the 'Yellow Peril'—Mongol hordes directed by Japanese intelligence—fell upon it from the East. It was 'Nicky's' proud duty to be the Paladin of the White Races, while his faithful 'Willy' covered his rear.

The Tsar was duly impressed ('Good: it has worked!'

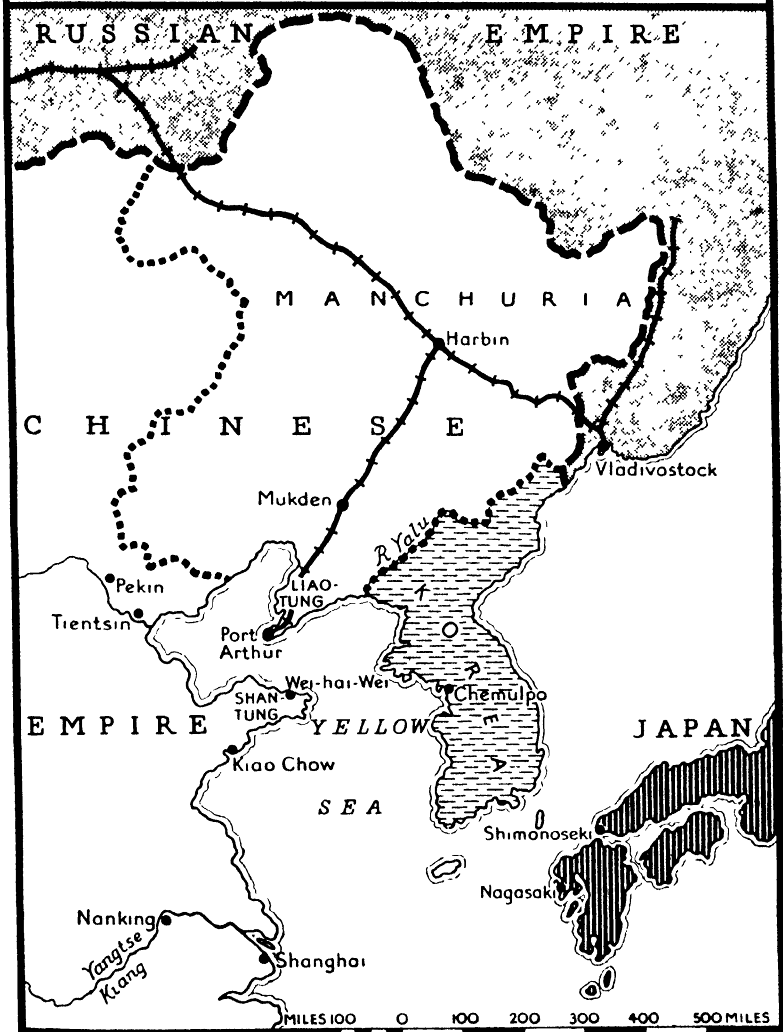
William wrote across his reply), and agreed to co-operate in putting pressure on Japan. The Japanese Government was taken aback to find Germany, whom they had regarded as their friend, joining Russia and France in demanding a revision of their recent treaty with China; and they withdrew all claims on the mainland in return for an indemnity.

In 1898 the murder of two German missionaries in China gave the Kaiser an excuse to demand the cession of Kiao Chow, and Russian warships forced a renewal of the lease of Port Arthur. So the British Government, feeling that it must keep an eye on these developments, and maintain the 'Open Door' for the trade of all nations in that region, obtained the use of Wei-hai-wei as a naval base.

THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE. Japan was also preparing to take a hand in the game—by reorganizing her army and building a new battle fleet. It was a matter of economic life and death for her to keep the Chinese trade from which Russia was bent on supplanting her. Inquiries and calculations convinced Japanese statesmen that in the last extremity they could fight Russia—provided that Russia's ally France did not join in. So they had to seek a European ally to cancel France out; and they naturally thought of Britain, who had not joined in coercing them, and was already on bad terms with both Russia and France. And the British Government was almost equally anxious for a partner able to uphold British interests in eastern Asia.

So when the Tsar, egged on by courtiers who hoped to feather their nests in the Far East, and by his German cousin, brusquely announced that Korea must no longer be under Japanese control, the Marquis Ito hastened to London; and the upshot was a treaty signed 30th January 1902. It recorded the desire of both parties to prolong the existing regime in China and Korea; each undertook to safeguard the other's interests in that region, to remain neutral if the other went to war in defence of those interests, to come to its aid if a third party entered the conflict, and to make no agreements with other Powers to the partner's detriment.

The treaty was mildly popular in Britain; in Japan it was acclaimed with delight as marking admission to the circle of civilized Powers. Russia wanted Germany to join in a counter-


THE COCKPIT OF THE FAR EAST
[Railways as in 1904–5]
RUSSIAN EMPIRE
MANCHURIA
Harbin
CHINESE
Vladivostock
Mukden
R. Yalu
Pekin
LIAO-TUNG
Tientsin
Port Arthur
KOREA
Wei-hai-Wei
SHAN-TUNG
Chemulpo
EMPIRE
YELLOW
JAPAN
Kiao Chow
SEA
Shimonoseki
Nagasaki
Nanking
Yangtse Kiang
Shanghai
MILES 100 0 100 200 300 400 500 MILES

demonstration of some kind; but Chancellor Bülow declared that it was a not undeserved punishment for Russian passivity during the South African War.[1] But the general feeling in Europe was mystification. What was the purpose of the alliance? Surely Japan could not be thinking of war with Russia! Why, the Boers had had far better prospects, for Britain had no army worth mentioning, whereas Russia had the biggest in the world.

What followed amazed everybody except the Japanese themselves—and perhaps even them. They repeatedly told Russia that they did not care about Manchuria so long as they were left alone in Korea, but the blunderers at St. Petersburg would not listen. Then, in February 1904, Japan suddenly attacked, just when the thaw made landing possible in northern Korea. That landing, coupled with the command of the surrounding seas through the destruction of an anchored Russian squadron before its commander knew the war had begun, gave Japan bases from which to master Manchuria. After some delay owing to rascality in shipyards, the Russian Baltic Fleet set out to raise the siege of Port Arthur. While passing through the North Sea it mistook the Lowestoft herring-fleet for Japanese destroyers and opened fire, killing several fishermen and sinking some of their drifters. The incident was closed with apologies and compensation, but it threw British sympathies more than ever to the side of Japan. Long before the Russian fleet reached the China seas land battles had decided the issue. General Nogi took Port Arthur (January 1905), and the main Russian Army was defeated in the fourteen-day battle of Mukden (February 1905), after a winter campaign in which trench-warfare was developed. And when at last the fleet arrived it was sent to the bottom by Admiral Togo off Tsushima in the course of half an hour.

Russia's resources were as yet scarcely tapped if she had had the moral energy to bring them into play; but the Government was in dread of revolution. And as the Japanese were at the end of their economic tether both sides were ready to listen to President Theodore Roosevelt's offer of mediation. By the Treaty of Portsmouth (Maine), Korea was to be a Japanese 'sphere of influence', and Russia was to evacuate southern

[1] This seems oddly discrepant with the Kaiser's later claim that he had refused to be drawn by the Tsar into a pro-Boer coalition.

Manchuria and to cede the southern half of Sakhalin (September 1905).

This war was one of the most important events of modern times. Japan won because the whole nation was behind the Government, whereas 'Russia' was, politically, merely a caste which excluded not only the labouring masses but the intellectual *élite*. And the Japanese victory was a message of hope to the peoples of Asia, telling them that the white man's overlordship was drawing to an end. Furthermore, it abruptly ended Russia's Far Eastern adventure, and turned her attention back to Europe, where her renewed clash with Austria led straight on to the Great War. Lastly, the exposure of the rottenness of Tsardom precipitated the first phase of the Bolshevik revolution.

A CORDIAL UNDERSTANDING. The Kaiser must sometimes have wondered if he had not gone a little too far in rebuffing Chamberlain's attempt to bring Britain and Germany together. And the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War was undeniably a set-back for his super-subtle policy towards Russia. He had pushed the Tsar on to a catastrophe which started a train of events leading to a situation that he had always dreaded.

France had from the first been averse to the Tsar entangling himself in the Far East. If the venture succeeded Russia would become absorbed in developing Manchuria and would drop the European interests which were vital to France; and if it failed she would have used up all her resources, leaving the Dual Alliance an empty shell. Thus from the time when the Tsar took up his Asiatic project French statesmen began to feel that they must provide against France having to fight Germany with a hostile Britain on her flank.

But the outlook for a Franco-British *rapprochement* was not at all promising. The Fashoda crisis was still fresh in memory; and patriotic Frenchmen could not forget how the British public had accused French army chiefs of forging evidence against Dreyfus. Quarrels about the hinterland of Nigeria had been suspended, but had left sore feelings on both sides. So had the growth of French influence in Indo-China. Disputes over fishing-rights off Newfoundland had gone on bickering for two centuries. Above all there was Egypt. France, perpetually

vexed that she had abdicated from her share in its development, kept asking British Governments when they were going to fulfil their promise, given to the Khedive in 1883, to clear out as soon as the Egyptian Government could stand alone; and the British continued to tell the French with varying degrees of asperity to mind their own business. And latterly there had been friction about Morocco. France had long been intent on building up an empire in north-west Africa; and Bismarck had encouraged this to keep her mind off Alsace-Lorraine. But Morocco still maintained a precarious independence under a 'Sultan' whose authority was insufficient to keep the suburbs of his capital free from brigands. And its geographical situation, opposite Gibraltar, gave it great importance for the control of the Mediterranean. In 1901 a Moroccan mission was received in state by Edward VII; and it is pretty certain that if Anglo-German relations had not gone awry, Britain would have joined Germany in thwarting French influence there.

Once more Chamberlain was the dynamo which set the Government in motion. Having decided that isolation must end, he had no sooner given up hopes of Germany than he turned to France. In January 1902 Count Metternich, the German ambassador, told his Government that he had secret information of conversations between Chamberlain and Cambon, the French ambassador, aiming at an all-round settlement of colonial questions. Later he added that further talks had touched on Morocco and Egypt—areas outside the concern of a Colonial Secretary. All through the rest of that year there was a general thawing of relations between the French and British peoples; both parliaments discussed an arbitration treaty; and the French Press toned down its attacks on British 'atrocities' in South Africa.

In the spring of 1903 the King made an important contribution to the process. Up to now he had, so far as he held any decided views, accepted the official leaning towards Germany; but there had never been any love lost between him and his bumptious nephew, and he had, like most *bons viveurs*, pleasant memories of Paris. It seemed that if anyone could dispel the suspicion and bitterness engendered by recent wrangling, it would be this genial man of the world—so unlike the long-faced, sanctimonious Englishmen regarded as typical by conti-

nental caricaturists. So in March 1903 Lord Lansdowne informed the French Government that it would give the King great pleasure to visit the President in Paris on his way back from his spring cruise in the Mediterranean. President Loubet and his Foreign Minister Delcassé were delighted; such condescension had never before been shown by a British monarch to the French Republic. Old rancours lingered and there were fears that the King might have an unpleasant reception, but he scoffed at them—and made them groundless by his own personality. When he arrived his carriage passed amid stony silence, apart from occasional cries of *Vivent les Boers!* But he took no notice; his affable bearing and tactful speeches warmed all hearts; and as he drove back to the Gare du Nord three days later he was rapturously cheered. When in July Loubet returned the call—the first official visit of a French President to London—the British people made evident their pleasure at the new departure in our foreign relations.

Loubet brought Delcassé with him, and discussions now got into top gear. There was some hard bargaining—in particular a French demand for a definite time-limit to the British occupation of Egypt, which Lansdowne would not and could not concede. But at last the following general formula was agreed on, and signed in April 1904:

> 'His Majesty's Government having recognized the task incumbent on France in Morocco, for which full liberty of action is left to her, the Government of the Republic declares itself disposed not to hinder the action of England in Egypt, and not to press for a term to the British occupation.'

THE 'ENTENTE' CONFIRMED. The agreement was well received in both countries. It did not commit either party to anything definite; in particular it did not commit Britain to fight against Germany. But the removal of old grievances was the first stage towards closer co-operation.

This was realized in Germany and Russia, too. William II and Bülow professed indifference, but were inwardly perturbed. Their Machiavellian policy had thrown France into Britain's arms—just what old Bismarck had so carefully avoided. They had assumed that the two were incompatible, and that they had only to bide their time to have Britain cringing for German

patronage; but now it seemed that they had missed their market. So they decided to break down the *Entente*, subjecting it to a severe strain before it had time to harden by challenging French aims in Morocco. Britain had agreed not to oppose those aims, but would certainly decline to risk being drawn into a war for them. France, thus deserted, would have to submit; Anglo-French relations would be poisoned for another generation; Germany would get some pickings for herself from a grateful Sultan—say commercial privileges and a coaling station on the Atlantic; and all the world would see that no important decision could be made in Europe without the approval of Germany.

Delcassé played into the German hand by forcing concessions from the Sultan; and in March 1905 the Kaiser paid a spectacular visit to Tangier in his yacht. He made a flamboyant speech hailing the Sultan as a fellow-sovereign under whom commerce of all nations must have free and equal rights, and demanded a conference of all the interested Powers on the subject. Delcassé tried to put a bold face on the situation and refused to submit France's rights to a conference; but his Premier, Rouvier, would not risk a war for hypothetical trading-rights in Morocco, with Russia out of action and no prospect of support from Britain. Bülow followed up his advantage by a curt message declining to have 'any further dealings with Monsieur Delcassé'; and Delcassé, the author of the Entente, had to resign. The Kaiser exulted at a public dinner: 'So hurrah for dry powder and well-sharpened sword!' and Bülow was made a Prince.

The excited Kaiser tried to follow up this triumph by a treaty of mutual assistance with Russia, negotiated at a personal meeting with the Tsar while on a yachting cruise in the Baltic. But Bülow saw fatal drawbacks in the terms, and so did Lamsdorff, the Russian Foreign Minister, and this Treaty of Bjørkø was stillborn.

Yet in the Moroccan Conference at Algeciras (1906) the Germans once more showed that they did not know when to stop. There had just been a change of Government in Britain, but this did not involve a change in foreign policy—we have a strong tradition that foreign relations must not be the sport of Party politics. When Cambon, anxious over the defeat of the

Government which had made the Entente, timidly asked Sir Edward Grey, the new Foreign Minister, how far France could rely on British support if war came over Morocco, Grey replied: 'If France were attacked by Germany in consequence of the agreement our predecessors made with the French Government, public opinion would be strongly moved in favour of France.' It was not a very glowing formula, but it justified an extension of 'conversations' already begun between high officers of the two armies and navies; and it enabled France to go to Algeciras with just that extra fillip of confidence that made all the difference. It was Germany that found herself unsupported there; for Italy had always stipulated that she was not to be drawn into antagonism with Britain (p. 133); while Austria was very conscious of having no interests at stake in Morocco; and Spain was flattered by the offer of a share, along with France, in the control of the Moroccan police. In the end France obtained almost all the privileges she coveted; the Kaiser could scarcely disguise that this amounted to a public rebuff for him; and the *Entente* had been strengthened by a successful partnership.

XVIII

THE CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN GOVERNMENT 1905–1908

The Liberals, returned to power in overwhelming strength, found more of their reforms vetoed by the Lords. But the main achievements of these years were the admission of the Boers to citizenship of the Empire, an 'Entente' with Russia, and a drastic overhaul of Army and Navy.

THE LANDSLIDE. For two years Balfour contrived to keep Tariff Reform from cleaving the Unionist Party; but by the autumn of 1905 Chamberlain was publicly demanding that it should accept his gospel as part of its policy. To prevent the disruption that this would entail Balfour had to act quickly. On 6th December (1905) he resigned, instead of dissolving Parliament. He hoped thus to avoid having to fight the election on Tariff Reform, and to compel the Liberals to announce their Cabinet and come before the electors asking for support for what everyone assumed would be a woebegone, half-hearted piece of patchwork. It was doubtful if they would support Campbell-Bannerman, their official leader, as Prime Minister. Only a year or two before some of them had been calling him 'The Incubus', and hinting that such a simple-minded, slow-witted old fellow could not possibly preside over a Cabinet which would include some first-class brains. And dissensions had lately arisen over Home Rule: C.B. had declared that Liberalism still stood by it, while a few days later Rosebery had announced that he for one 'would never fight under that banner'.

But Unionist hopes were disappointed. All Liberals realized that C.B. would attract more loyalty than any other possible leader; and King Edward, who had always liked his plain, genial common sense, sent for him without hesitation. In the critical process of Cabinet-making there was a slight hitch when Asquith, Haldane and Grey said they would not take office unless C.B. became a peer, leaving the leadership of the Commons to Asquith. There was something to be said for the suggestion, for C.B. was an elderly man with a failing heart,

and it was likely that grappling day after day with such formidable debaters as Balfour and Chamberlain would be too much for him. But behind it lay an obvious design to push him into obscurity, leaving the direction of policy to the 'Lib. Imp.' triumvirs. Their absence from the new Government would have greatly weakened it, but C.B. grasped the nettle firmly and declined their proposal. Thereupon they gave way, feeling that it would be wrong to hinder a Liberal victory and jeopardize Free Trade over a personal issue.

When the names of the new Government were announced it was generally felt to be, man for man, a good dealstronger than the old. Asquith was to be Chancellor of the Exchequer; Grey (who had been Parliamentary Secretary to the Foreign Office under Rosebery) was Foreign Minister; Haldane took charge of the War Office. These three Imperialists were balanced by three Gladstonians; Herbert Gladstone at the Home Office, John Morley at the India Office, and Lord Loreburn on the Woolsack. The Board of Trade fell to Lloyd George, the fiery Welsh Radical, who had greatly enhanced his reputation by his defence of Free Trade and defiance of the Education Act. And two other appointments had special interest: John Burns, ex-workman and ex-Socialist, became President of the Local Government Board, and young Winston Churchill, son of Lord Randolph, crossed the floor of the House over Free Trade, and, having already made some mark as soldier and war-correspondent in India, the Sudan and South Africa, now had his first taste of office as Parliamentary Secretary for the Colonies.

As soon as Campbell-Bannerman had got his team together he dissolved Parliament, and a general election was held in January 1906. It was generally expected that Liberals would get a majority; but as the results came in (they were spread over a fortnight in those days) surprise grew to bewilderment. Nobody had realized how great was the cumulative effect of the late Government's misfortunes and mistakes. The Liberals made much play with denunciations of 'Chinese Slavery';[1]

[1] Liberal posters depicted chain-gangs of villainous-looking Chinese coolies; but when in office they found themselves obliged to let the 'slaves' work out their indentures. The last of them were not shipped home for nearly two years.

and they collected thousands of votes in constituencies where there was no Labour candidate by promising legislation to reverse the Taff Vale decision. But their greatest asset was the dread of Protection. Free Trade had grown into the nation's system, and Chamberlain's vehement electioneering had left no doubt that he would regard even the smallest Unionist majority as a verdict in favour of tariffs. Liberal posters contrasting the Big Loaf vouchsafed by Free Trade with the Little Loaf that would follow Protection had tremendous effect on the public imagination.

The combined effect was the greatest electoral turnover in history. Practically all the late ministers were turned out, including Balfour at N.W. Manchester (though a safe seat was soon found for him in the City of London). Scores of Liberals who had put up as 'forlorn hopes' in strongly Unionist constituencies were astonished to find themselves Members of Parliament. Birmingham stood firm—7 of its 9 seats were held by Chamberlainites; but Wales returned not a single Unionist, and Scotland only 4. In the end the number of Liberals was 377. The new Labour Party won 29 seats, apart from the 24 working-class members (mostly from mining constituencies) who sat as Liberals. The Irish had their usual 83 Members. And against all these the Unionists could muster only 157. Thus even in the unlikely case of the lesser groups all voting against the Government, it would still have a majority of 80.

The result broke Chamberlain's heart. A few months later he was struck down by paralysis, and though he lingered until 1914 he took no further part in public life.

THE LORDS' VETO. However, the Unionists consoled themselves with Balfour's reminder that 'whether in power or in opposition the Unionist Party would still control the destinies of the country'. For it took two Houses to make an Act of Parliament, and in the Lords there was a permanent Unionist majority larger than that which the Liberals now had in the Commons. Gladstone had long ago foreshadowed that something would have to be done about this (p. 87). Unionists maintained that the Upper House merely vetoed ill-considered measures which did not really represent the will of the nation; but it was noticeable that when a Unionist Government was in office its

measures went through the Lords almost without question. Still, the new Government did not suppose they would so flout the principles of democracy as to throw out bills passed by immense majorities in a House of Commons fresh from a general election. They might do so later on, when the Government's popularity had begun to wane, but not for the first year or two. So they pressed on with some of the reforms which they had been elected to pass.

They began in April with an Education bill designed to remove the features of the Balfour Act which gave such offence to Dissenters. The Lords passed amendments to it which nullified its effect. The Government refused even to discuss in the Commons amendments obviously intended to wreck the bill, and sent it back to the Lords in its original form. When the Lords reinserted their amendments the Government dropped the bill altogether. To call on the nation to decide between the Houses by another general election would at this stage have been madness. And later in this session the Lords went on exultantly to wreck an *Agricultural Holdings* bill, and rejected out of hand a Plural Voting bill which would have deprived people with property in different constituencies from voting in more than one of them.

There were anxious speculations as to the fate of the *Trade Disputes* bill to undo the Taff Vale decision. As a matter of fact, this was a measure which the Lords might have been justified in sending back for further consideration; for it was so sweeping as to alarm many of the Government's own supporters, a large proportion of whom saw matters from the employers' point of view. The Government had proposed merely to safeguard Trade Unions from penalties for acts committed without their authority; but this half-heartedness angered the Labour group and Radicals generally, and the Labour Party brought in a bill of their own, making Unions immune from any losses suffered by employers during a strike. Quite half the Ministers—in particular those who were lawyers—objected to thus placing the Unions in a privileged position. But at a critical moment in the debate the Prime Minister supported the Labour Party's bill, and the lawyers were placated by an amendment which made it apply to employers as well as work-people. Some who voted for the measure against their judgment counted on the

Lords throwing it out. But they were deceived. The Unionist Peers did not want the working-class vote thrown against their Party in the next election as decisively as it had been in the last; they reflected that the old Act which the Taff Vale decision upset had been a Tory measure, and they let the bill pass.

BIRTH OF A DOMINION. But the Government's most notable achievement during its first year, and C.B.'s main claim to statesmanship, was the granting of responsible government to the Boer ex-Republics, as promised in the Treaty of Vereeniging. Lord Milner, who had been made Governor of them, had put them on the road to recovery and prosperity, but he was an out-and-out Imperialist who believed in authoritarian rule and plenty of it, and his regime aroused fierce resentment among these new subjects of the Crown. So in 1905 the Balfour Government had drawn up a constitution to be put into force the following year, which made most of the Ministers in the two States responsible to an elected assembly. This went much further than Milner liked, and he resigned. But the Boers, under the leadership of General Botha, demanded full responsible government, and Campbell-Bannerman showed his faith in Liberal principles by a bill granting it, confident that this act of good-will would wipe away the bitterness of old quarrels. Some of his colleagues demurred, pointing out that as the majority of the population were Boers the proposal meant handing over control to people who had just been in arms against us. Surely, they argued, it would be safer to wait for ten or twenty years until they had absorbed British ideas. But C.B. overbore the doubters and sent out a commission which persuaded the Boers to join in framing a constitution that would satisfy them. To circumvent the House of Lords the Government proceeded by Royal Letters Patent instead of by statute.

The Opposition raged at thus 'throwing away all that had been won by such sacrifices in the recent war'; Balfour called it 'a dangerous, audacious and reckless experiment'. But the Government swept aside all obstruction, the Patent was issued in December (1906) and came into force six months later. The results amply justified it. Louis Botha, who up to 1902 had led the Boers in opposing British arms, represented them in 1908 at an Imperial Conference. Foreigners who during the late war

had vituperated the British as greedy bullies were sorely puzzled, and could only shrug their shoulders at our insular oddity.

The settlement of the former Republics made possible the Union of South Africa. The Dutch welcomed the idea—perhaps with an eye on the fact that their numerical superiority in three of the four colonies would give them predominance in the Union. A constituent assembly at Durban in 1908 decided upon a strongly centralized State, with all real power in the hands of the Union Government. An Act of the Home Parliament in the following year gave it full sovereignty, the only limitation being that Acts affecting the treatment of the natives or the equality of the English and Afrikaans languages in the public services require two-thirds majorities in both Houses of the Legislature. Parliament meets at Capetown; the seat of the Government is Pretoria. The Act came into force on 31st May 1910, the eighth anniversary of the Treaty of Vereeniging.

Thus the dream of Cecil Rhodes, the typical Imperialist, came true under conditions created by Campbell-Bannerman, the typical 'Little Englander'. But neither of them lived to see it.

THE 'ENTENTE' BECOMES TRIPLE. Algeciras had shown France and Britain the value of their *Entente*; but diplomatic partnership could not long be effective without military co-operation to back it up; and Germany had sinister plans afoot.

Von Schlieffen, successor to von Moltke as Chief of the German General Staff, had worked out a bold strategic plan for the next war. France had fortified her short eastern frontier facing Germany, but not the longer north-eastern frontier facing Belgium. So he proposed that the main strength of the German Army should sweep through Belgium, while an attenuated left wing held the Rhine. To be sure, this meant violating Belgian neutrality which Germany, like France and Britain, had undertaken to uphold by the Treaty of 1839 (p. 57); but a trifle like that could not be allowed to hinder a German victory. Of course, the plan was kept a close secret, but—equally of course—the French Intelligence Department ferreted it out; and the long platforms constructed at obscure country railway stations on Germany's Belgian frontier offered a broad hint of what was in the wind. Soon after the Entente was made the French General

Staff asked that in the event of war a British force should be sent to strengthen their left wing. And now Campbell-Bannerman, the most anti-militarist of Prime Ministers, authorized 'conversations' between French and British officers to discuss how this could best be done; and what is more, he did not tell the Cabinet about them. For the British public would have been outraged at a Liberal Government making detailed preparations for war; and Germany might have been driven to precipitate the conflict. Only the Foreign Secretary and the War Minister knew what was going on.

But Franco-British co-operation would be very difficult if Britain remained on bad terms with France's ally; and Russia was hated by Liberals and Unionists alike—by Unionists especially as an aggressive Power threatening India, and by Liberals especially as a savage despotism, under which intelligent people were banished to Siberia for reading John Stuart Mill, and the word 'student' was almost synonymous with 'revolutionary'. All this had recently been brought home to people's minds by the savage repression of a revolutionary movement which was the outcome of the distress resulting from the Japanese War. It culminated in 'Red Sunday' (22nd January 1905), when scores of unarmed petitioners were shot down outside the palace at St. Petersburg. The horror evinced all over the world had led the Tsar to summon a kind of Parliament; but this 'Duma' was only advisory; when it tried to interfere with government it was summarily dismissed. And the Russians certainly had no reason to love Britain, whose support had enabled the Japanese to defeat them in the Far East.

But there were strong motives for an understanding. The more truculent Germany became the more important it was for Britain to find friends on the Continent. And now that Russia had been checked in Asia she naturally reverted to Pan-Slavism and leadership in the Balkans. That policy, personified by Isvolsky the Foreign Minister, required the opening of the Turkish Straits to Russian warships, for which the friendly support of Great Britain would be invaluable, if not essential.

King Edward hinted to Tsar Nicholas (Queen Alexandra's nephew) that a revival of the Duma would make a favourable impression here. This achieved, discussions were opened

between the Foreign Offices to clear up a number of disputes about 'undue influence' in countries bordering on India. The British side of the negotiations was conducted by Sir Arthur Nicolson, ambassador at St. Petersburg, with exceptional tact and patience. After fifteen months he got the results embodied in three pacts, concerning Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet respectively. Persia was divided (with expressions of profound respect for the sovereignty of the Shah) into three zones: that nearest India to be under British influence, and that nearest Turkestan under Russian, with the middle strip a diplomatic No-man's-land. As to Afghanistan, Russia agreed to conduct relations with the Amir through the Government of British India. The difficulties about Tibet were eased by both parties agreeing to leave it alone.

The Kaiser, while pretending not to mind, was more than ever convinced that his Uncle Edward was trying to encircle Germany with a ring of hostile States; but the agreements merely removed reasons for Russia acting with Germany against Britain; they offered no reasons for her to act with Britain against Germany.

REVOLUTION IN THE ARMY. Of course military 'conversations' presupposed forces suitable to the tasks discussed; but the British Army was as yet quite unfit to take part in a continental war. Its organization had been inadequate even for the South African War, and a much more severe test was now to be apprehended. The Balfour Government had made attempts at reform, but neither of the Ministers successively concerned (Brodrick and Arnold-Forster) had achieved anything of importance except the abolition of the position of Commander-in-Chief in favour of an Army Council on the model of the Board of Admiralty.

Thus when the Liberals came in the War Office was a critical post, and Haldane accepted it as an opportunity for a big and important task. His career had never suggested any special interest in soldiering—he was a Scottish Chancery barrister with a bent for metaphysics acquired at the University of Göttingen. But what was needed was good sense applied by a vigorous mind, and in these he was not lacking.

In adapting the Army for a European war the first step was

to create a General Staff to plan operations. The second was to group it into an expeditionary force that could be transported ready to fight at short notice. This was to consist of six Infantry divisions and one Cavalry division, each fully provided with ancillary troops required for a campaign—Artillery, Supply, Medical and Sanitary services. These divisions were to be trained together on army manœuvres under conditions as much like real war as possible. The third part of the scheme was to turn the old Volunteers and Yeomanry into a 'Territorial Force' of fourteen divisions and fourteen mounted brigades, designed in the first instance for home defence when the regulars should have gone abroad. School and University Cadet Corps became Officers' Training Corps to provide for the expansion of the forces in time of war.

Thus Britain acquired for the first time an Army co-ordinactd in a rational system. Lord Roberts conducted a campaign for compulsory service; but the country prided itself on its traditional freedom from the 'blood-tax', and Haldane's military advisers objected that the tremendous reorganization involved would put the Army out of action for a decade.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the reforms was that they increased efficiency with a reduction in cost—a most important point when the Radical wing of the Government's supporters were ever on the watch to condemn 'bloated armaments'. And the fact that the reforms had in view participation in a great European war was also kept out of sight. There is no record of anyone raising the question in Parliament.

Revolution in the Navy. Even more sweeping were the changes in the Navy. Sir John Fisher (1841-1920), who became First Sea Lord towards the end of 1904, was, though verging on the elderly, a man of ruthless force, and a resolute facer of facts, with a caustic tongue and a total disregard of men and ideas that stood in the way of his creating a fleet of irresistible power. His reforms were not all his own invention—a beginning had been made with some of them a few years before; but it was his tremendous energy that carried them through.

The foremost of the new facts to which he addressed his policy was that the potential enemy was now Germany. Britain had long aimed at maintaining a navy superior to those of

France and Russia combined; but the Entente had removed danger from the one, and the ships of the other were now at the bottom of the China Sea. It was with Germany and her brand-new Navy that the British fleet would have to deal. This re-orientation had been begun by starting to construct naval bases at Rosyth and Cromarty, on the North Sea.

And the second plain fact to which Fisher adapted the Navy was that the application of mechanical power, steam and electric, had changed the qualities required of ships and their crews. Hitherto engineer-officers had been of inferior status to the executive officers who sailed and fought the ships; but now all were to undergo the same training for six or seven years, first at Osborne, then at Dartmouth; and all were taught the elements of physics, mechanics and engineering. Parallel changes were made in the training of the lower deck: the brawny A.B. hauling on halyards was replaced by the engine-room artificer and the mechanic tending a hydraulic ammunition-hoist. And the need for swift expansion in war-time was met by a system akin to the Army's Short Service, seven years in training and afloat being followed by five years in the Royal Fleet Reserve (not to be confounded with the R.N.R., which gave naval training to officers and men of the Merchant Marine).

Economy was served by sending out-of-date ships, wasteful in peace and death-traps in war, to the knacker's yard by the dozen. This deprived the Admiralty of vessels which had been useful for 'showing the flag' in distant waters, but Fisher cared for nothing but efficiency in war. He called home the China Squadron, no longer needed in view of the Japanese alliance; he reduced the Mediterranean Fleet, since our prospective enemy could not challenge us in those waters, and substituted an Atlantic Fleet based on Gibraltar. All the rest of the Navy was concentrated in home waters, with a reserve fleet maintained by nucleus crews of skilled ratings, to be filled out with Fleet Reservists at the outbreak of war.

And the first results of Fisher's aim to give capital ships greater hitting power were the battleship *Dreadnought* and her battle-cruiser counterpart *Invincible*. *Dreadnought* was the biggest, fastest, hardest-punching warship ever seen. She displaced 18,000 tons instead of the 16,000 tons of the *Lord Nelsons*

(hitherto the biggest); turbine engines, just invented, enabled her to steam at twenty-one knots instead of eighteen; she had ten twelve-inch guns in place of the four mounted in the *Lord Nelsons*. Her armament plus her speed would enable her to blow all existing ships out of water at her leisure. Fisher's driving-power was displayed in the speed with which she was completed: her keel-plates were laid down in October 1905, she was launched the following February, and was ready for service in November 1906. And this revolution in organization and increase in fighting-strength had been achieved with reduced Estimates, owing to the smaller number of ships in commission.

Of course, there was a debit side to the *Dreadnought*. Britain had almost ostentatiously taken up Germany's challenge: war had, in a way, been already joined. And when Germany began to build similar ships, making all older vessels little better than scrap-iron (and she had one on the stocks before *Dreadnought* put to sea) she started level with the only type of battleship that henceforth would really matter. To be sure, the German *Dreadnoughts* would at the outset have to be divided between North Sea and Baltic, since the Kiel Canal could not float ships of such beam; but the Germans at once set about widening it.

One other point must be noticed. The French in concentrating their main naval strength in the Mediterranean had tacitly left the protection of their other coasts to the British. Some years later Grey made it clear to Cambon, their ambassador, that 'the disposition of the French and British fleets does not imply any engagements to co-operate in war'. But facts were facts. Nobody could suppose that Britain, when it came to the point, would leave the coasts of France unprotected when her main fleet was relieving the British elsewhere. Tirpitz and his Kaiser plumed themselves on having driven the British out of the Mediterranean; but in so doing they had made it practically certain that they would have Britain against them in the next war.

XIX

THE LIBERALS AND THE LORDS
1908—1910

The first three years of Asquith's Premiership were marked by a further stride towards European war; and by social reforms which precipitated the Liberals' long-anticipated contest with the House of Lords.

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE ASQUITH GOVERNMENT. In the spring of 1908 Campbell-Bannerman's health broke down; he retired and soon afterwards died. The succession of H. H. Asquith was a victory for the Imperialist wing of the Government, but his two years of loyal support to C.B. won him the confidence of the whole Party. And he had many of the qualities needed for a Prime Minister. Of Yorkshire bourgeois origin, he had been one of the ablest products of Balliol scholarship in the great days of Jowett, and had made a mark at the Bar. He was no inspiring leader of crusades. As chairman of the Cabinet he smoothed over differences of opinion and clashes of temperament with judicious tact, and in debate his measured oratory appealed to good sense and good feeling. And though he lacked vision he carried on the King's Government with integrity, and his colleagues knew they could depend on him in difficulties.

But he might not have kept the support of the Radical wing if he had not appointed Lloyd George to succeed him at the Exchequer. Lloyd George was everything that Asquith was not. Born in a humble Welsh cottage, he had no pretension to culture. But he was full of infectious enthusiasm for social reform, he exerted tremendous energy in administration and initiative in planning, and his eloquence had spell-binding power. He was to Asquith what a revivalist preacher is to an archbishop.

The Presidency of the Board of Trade, vacated by Lloyd George, fell to Winston Churchill, who thus gained Cabinet rank at the age of thirty-four.

Asquith had prepared the budget for 1908, so he introduced

it himself. His two previous budgets had preserved the Gladstonian tradition of 'retrenchment,' and he now had a surplus of £6 millions, which he spent in financing a scheme of Old Age Pensions. The idea had been started by Bismarck in the 1880's (p. 131), and New Zealand had proved its value in dispelling the fear of a pauper old age. The British plan, unlike its German prototype, was non-contributory; but it imposed a 'means test'; old folk were to draw 5s. a week if their income from other sources did not exceed £26 a year. It was not munificent, but it recognized the debt of the community to those who built up its wealth by lives of underpaid toil. And it was not wholly a debit to the Treasury, for it encouraged people to give aged parents a home instead of letting them go to the workhouse.

This was the first of three notable reforms passed in this session. The second was an Eight Hours' Day for miners. Miners had a hard life, but so had other workers. What enabled them to focus public attention on their grievances was the concentration of electoral power in certain districts, which sent to Parliament a solid phalanx of 'Miners' Members'. Herbert Gladstone as Home Secretary piloted the bill through the House. The coal-owning interests managed to whittle it away by getting the time spent between surface and coal-face (often an hour or more a day) outside the statutory eight hours; but the House of Lords, true to its general line of conciliation towards organized labour, gave the bill a fairly easy passage.

The third reform was the *Trade Boards Act* (1909). Some industries, carried on by humble employers with a handful of workers in squalid workshops or attics, or at starvation piecework rates in workers' homes, were outside the protection of any Trade Union. For certain of these the Government now set up 'Trade Boards' consisting of representatives of employers and employed, with a paid chairman and secretary appointed by the Board of Trade, to fix wages. At first the only occupations affected were the making of garments, cardboard boxes and chains; but others were added later.

THE BOSNIAN CRISIS. The year 1908 saw Europe move another stage towards Armageddon.

The fact that the people of the southern provinces of Austro-Hungary cherished secret ambitions to join with Serbia led

to hatred and suspicion between the Dual Empire and that small kingdom. And when in 1905 Isvolsky became Foreign Minister at Moscow expressly to restore Russian influence in the Balkans, while Count Aehrenthal became Foreign Minister at Vienna to advance Austrian interests there, it seemed that trouble was brewing.

However, the two Ministers struck a bargain. Aehrenthal's immediate aim was the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, placed by the Treaty of Berlin under the 'protection' of Austria while still nominally subject to the Sultan. This would, of course, give great offence to Russia, which posed as 'big brother' to the Balkan peoples. But Russia also wanted a concession—the right to use the Turkish Straits for her warships, forbidden by the Treaty of Paris. In July 1908 a revolution carried through by a 'Young Turk' Party forced that disgusting old tyrant Abdul Hamid to grant constitutional government to his dominions. But for Bosnia to send representatives to the new Parliament would strengthen its ties with Constantinople. So Aehrenthal arranged a meeting with Isvolsky at which they secretly agreed that Russia would make no trouble about the annexation of Bosnia if Austria would make no trouble about the opening of the Straits. To gain the consent of the other parties to the two Treaties Isvolsky undertook a tour to Rome, Paris, London and Berlin. But he had got no farther than Paris when Austria announced the annexation without waiting for the result of his journey, and without making any provision for Russia's *quid pro quo*! His mission collapsed. France would do nothing about the Straits until she had sounded Britain, and Britain would not weaken the new 'Liberal' regime in Turkey by forcibly opening its great waterway to Russian warships. And he and the Tsar now had to grapple with a very difficult situation. The Serbs, blazing with fury at Austria's seizure of yet another province of the Greater Serbia of their dreams, called on their Russian patron to do something about it. The Tsar had to pacify them by assurances that he would never, never acquiesce in the crime. But everything really depended on the attitude of Germany.

The Kaiser was at first extremely annoyed with his ally for taking such a step without consulting him; especially as it was an affront to Turkey, whose consent he wanted for an extension

of the Berlin-Baghdad railway. At first he talked of breaking up the Triple Alliance altogether, but Bülow pointed out that this would leave Germany isolated. So he rushed to the other extreme, backed up Austria tooth and nail, and posed as knight-errant standing by his comrade 'in shining armour'. Russia, not yet recovered from defeat and revolution, was in no position to fight the Triple Alliance single-handed, and it was certain that neither France nor Britain would go to war about Bosnia. So Nicholas had to break his pledge to the Serbs and recognize the annexation.

The results of the episode were disastrous. It was the first modern example of a State throwing off even the pretence of respect for international law. It emphasized and advertised the predominance of Germany in European affairs. It made Austria feel that she could rely on her senior partner to back her up in any extremes of violence towards Serbia. Russia was bitterly humiliated, 'Never again!' growled patriotic Russians. And Serbia and Austria were now openly at daggers drawn, waiting for a chance to fly at each other's throats.

THE NAVAL SCARE. German truculence over Bosnia made Britain look more anxiously than ever to her defences. The nation had for centuries felt secure behind the sure shield of its navy; but it now began to realize that this naval supremacy was dwindling, and the discovery was highly alarming.

Fisher had planned to build four *Dreadnoughts* a year, but the Government had cut down the four to three in 1907 and in 1908 to two; and it now looked as if Germany would soon have more of them than ourselves. Her peremptory refusal at the second Hague Conference (1907) to consider any reduction in armaments was followed by a naval programme providing for four ships of the *Dreadnought* class a year for the next four years. This provoked a lively agitation in Britain, fanned by publicity paid for by the great armament firms, and by an Opposition glad of such a useful stick with which to beat the Government. The Liberals lost several by-elections over the issue, and in March 1908 a pledge was extorted from Asquith that enough *Dreadnoughts* should be built to keep ahead of Germany. But a few months later Krupps called for fresh capital to extend their great works at Essen, and it was rumoured that they were going

to prefabricate guns and armour in order to be able to accelerate naval construction at short notice. The impression deepened that Germany was stealing a march on us.

Sir Edward Grey tried to get Germany to reduce her programme so that we could do the same; but the Kaiser and Tirpitz exulted over this as evidence that the British had become weak-willed pacifists, no longer able to keep their great place in the world. When Hardinge, the British ambassador, entered on the subject in the summer of 1908, the Kaiser was positively insulting. Yet a few months later he complained in an interview published in the *Daily Telegraph* that the British misjudged him. 'You English are mad, mad as March hares!' he exclaimed. 'I strive without ceasing to improve relations, and you retort that I am your arch-enemy!' He went on to claim that he had prevented France and Russia from attacking us during the South African War; that he had originated the strategy by which Roberts had defeated the Boers; and that his High Seas Fleet was designed to fight not in the North Sea but in the Far East. This last statement (apart from raising further awkward questions) was manifestly untrue—the ships had no living accommodation for long voyages; and his references to the Boer War gave offence not only to France and Russia but in Germany itself. His Chancellor made a humiliating defence of his indiscretions in the Reichstag, and he was ever afterwards more or less under the thumb of his generals, who threatened to resign if he interfered any more in politics. He always yearned to stand well with Britain, but henceforth he dared not show it for fear of appearing 'weak'. Hence inconsistencies of conduct which people in this country put down either to frivolous instability of character or to an insidious desire to lull us into false security.

Asquith had the greatest difficulty in holding the Cabinet together over the response to Germany's new building programme. McKenna, First Lord of the Admiralty, threatened to resign unless he could put six *Dreadnoughts* into construction in 1909, and was supported by the Foreign Minister; while Lloyd George and Churchill, who wanted money for social reform, maintained that four would be ample. But public clamour crystallized into the watchword, 'We want eight and we won't wait!' and the Government had to give way. Eight *Dreadnoughts* were

to be laid down at once, all to be in commission by March 1912.

And it was not long before militarism won another victory. The Hague Conference of 1907 had arranged for a Naval Conference to meet in London and draw up a list of cargoes liable to seizure as contraband of war by a blockading fleet. The resulting 'Declaration of London' (February 1909) protected so many articles, including such essential war-materials as cotton and petrol, as to deprive Britain of the right of search which had given her such an advantage in earlier wars. But it required ratification by each of the Governments concerned, and Parliament contrived to set it aside.

Those extra *Dreadnoughts* and that unrestricted right of search were to prove invaluable a few years later.

PROJECTS FOR SOCIAL SERVICE. In the spring of 1909 there appeared the Reports of a Royal Commission on the Poor Law. The idea behind the Poor Law of 1834 (which remained the basis of governmental dealing with the destitute) had been that poverty resulted mainly from people's own intemperance, laziness or vice, and that the poor must be deterred as far as possible from having recourse to Outdoor Relief and the Workhouse. But by the end of the nineteenth century this creed was losing its hold. Humane sentiment was more general; experience had shown that 'cyclical unemployment' was bound to deprive tens of thousands periodically of the means of subsistence; above all, the class affected now had votes. Thus it was generally accepted that 'something must be done about the Poor Law', and the appointment of a Royal Commission on the subject was one of the last acts of the Balfour Government. Half its twenty members were connected with the working of the existing Poor Law under the Local Government Board, and several represented the Charity Organization Society; but its most energetic and active-minded member was Beatrice Webb, who along with her husband had been brought into contact with the subject in the course of studies for their monumental *History of Local Government*. She had great influence on the Commission, but could not win full support for the drastic remedies she proposed. So there were two Reports. Both agreed that Boards of Guardians ought to be abolished and their functions handed over to committees of Local Authorities in the same way as the Education Act of

1902 had treated the School Boards. But the Minority Report (drafted by Sidney Webb) went much further. It took into account the fact, acknowledged by all, that ill-health was the main cause of destitution, and called for a complete Public Health Service, untainted by 'pauperism', with provision for unemployment based on the Socialist doctrine of the 'Right to Work'. But even the Majority Report went beyond the imagination of Parliament or Press or Public at that date, and the existing Poor Law had to drag on an embarrassed life for another twenty years.

Still, something was done for the workless. W. H. Beveridge, a prominent economist, showed in his book *Unemployment* that a large proportion of the persons out of work were so placed for lack of means to get into touch with employers needing their services. Winston Churchill, as President of the Board of Trade, carried a bill creating a network of 'Labour Exchanges' and set Beveridge himself to get the scheme going. It proved highly successful, and in 1916 the Exchanges (later renamed 'Employment Exchanges') were handed over to the new Ministry of Labour.

A great hindrance to enlightened social service was the conservatism of the Local Government Board. No department offered so many opportunities for progressive action—over poor relief, over municipal enterprise, over health services and over housing. But it had never recovered from its origin in 1871, from a mating of the crabbed old Health Board with the still more crabbed old Poor Law Board. When John Burns became its President he congratulated Campbell-Bannerman on the most popular appointment he had made. This breezy egotism may have been justified at the time, but not for long. The labour leader meant well and worked hard, but he could not resist the daily pressure of permanent officials, with their long experience and their advantages in education and social standing. Thus the department not only fended off the Poor Law Report, but devised a Town Planning Bill which checked what it professed to promote. For it tied up town planning with so much restrictive red tape that Town Councils were discouraged from an undertaking spirit at a time when labour and material were abundant. By the time Burns left office in 1914 it

was too late. The war came, and British housing was condemned for a generation to continue planless, shapeless and bungaloid.

'THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET.' The cost of naval expansion coupled with that of Old Age Pensions (now to be met for the first full year) compelled Lloyd George to find an extra £15 millions of revenue for 1909. This does not seem as large a sum to us, accustomed to public expenditure in hundreds of millions, as it did to a generation which had groaned when Hicks-Beach called for an extra £12 millions to pay for the Boer War. And Lloyd George would not listen to suggestions about borrowing the money: those who chanted about wanting eight battleships must pay for them. And he determined that the extra taxation should be part of a bold scheme to adjust the balance between 'haves' and 'have-nots', by making the former pay the cost of social services for the benefit of the latter. Furthermore, the Lords' veto was wearing the Government down; the only chance for Radicalism was a counter-offensive against them. Might not a budget which threatened the pockets of the rich goad them to defy the constitution by throwing it out, and so provoke drastic curtailment of their powers?

'The People's Budget' (1909) raised the rate of Income Tax on incomes over £3,000 from 1s. to 1s. 2d., and imposed on incomes over £6,000 a super-tax of 6d. On incomes below £1,000 the tax was reduced to 9d., and a rebate for children was now made. A new Land Tax levied 20 per cent on increased value due to the growth of towns—'the unearned increment'; and 1s. in the pound was levied on mineral rights. Finally, the cost of public-house licences and the duties on spirits and tobacco were raised to bring in another £6 millions between them.

The outcry was terrific. By modern standards the new imposts seem trifling: such a budget would send us wild with delight. But in 1909 to extort a tax of £250 from an income of £5,000, and to raise the cost of whisky from 3s. 6d. to 3s. 9d. a bottle seemed robbery and rapine. And the Opposition had special reasons for feeling aggrieved. Firstly, it was, undisguisedly a Party budget. Secondly active Tariff Reformers saw that if revenue could thus be increased by direct taxation, they would be bereft of their argument that only by import duties could the money be found for social reform and national defence.

Thirdly—and this was the budget's most alarming feature—it began a process which might be developed indefinitely. The new Land Tax was a special object of attack. It seems clear that where land has risen in value not through the enterprise of the owner but through that of the community, as with the growth of cities, the community has a claim to a share in the increase. But landlords did not see the matter in that light; and they pointed out that the proposal would require the revaluation of all the land in the country—an undertaking so vast as to be impracticable.[1]

A 'Budget League' was formed to explain and extol the merits of the new imposts, a 'Budget Protest League' to castigate it. Its author was assailed in the House and on public platforms as the basest of mankind. One noble lord wanted to throw him to his hounds. Rosebery stigmatized his proposals as 'Socialism—the end of all things, the negation of Faith, of Family, of Property, of Monarchy, of Empire'. But the Chancellor gave as good as he got. He declared this to be no ordinary peace-time budget—it was a war budget, to fight poverty and distress. And never since the Radical days of Chamberlain had the peerage been assailed with such savage ridicule. One speech in the East End of London caused 'Limehouse' to become synonymous with vulgar abuse.[2] Some members of the Cabinet had qualms about such provocative language from a Minister of State; but Asquith stood steadfastly by his Chancellor. The struggle in the Commons was prolonged until November 4th, when the Finance Bill was at last approved by 379 votes to 149.

Then it went to the Lords. The King, who dreaded what Lloyd George wanted—a pitched battle between the Houses—tried to persuade Balfour to keep the Unionist Peers within the bounds of discretion. Their House had not thrown out a budget for centuries. The principle of 'No Taxation without Representation'—the 'Power of the Purse'—is the foundation of parliamentary democracy, established in the Middle Ages and preserved in the constitutional struggle with the Stuarts. It is

[1] This forecast proved correct. After two years of costly attempts to reassess land values the whole project had to be abandoned.

[2] 'A fully-equipped duke costs as much to keep up as two *Dreadnoughts*, and dukes are just as great a terror, and last longer.' (Lloyd George at Limehouse, 30th July 1909.)

recognized in the form of the King's Speech, which is addressed to 'My Lords and Gentlemen,' except for financial matters, which are addressed only to 'Gentlemen of the House of Commons'. But this budget had heated passions beyond the reach of sense and reason. To many peers it was unthinkable that they should submit to the insolent demands of 'a snivelling little Welsh attorney', as one of them called him. They threw out his budget by 350 votes to 75 (30th November 1909).

'HE PARLIAMENT ACT. Liberalism had to take up the challenge or perish. If the Lords could throw out budgets they could hold up Governments and end Parliaments at their pleasure. Asquith carried a motion to the effect that they had acted unconstitutionally, and dissolved Parliament.

The result of the election (January 1910) disappointed both the major Parties: it confirmed the Government in office, but left it at the mercy of the Irish. The actual figures were: Liberals 275, Labour 40, Irish Nationalists 82, Unionists 273. So long as the two smaller groups supported the Government it would have a majority of 125; but the defection of Labour would put it in peril, and that of the Irish would destroy it. But these two groups knew that if they defeated the Government they would let in the Unionists, when their last state would be worse than their first. And in any case they were as eager as the Liberals themselves to get rid of the Lords' veto.

But it now appeared that Asquith was not yet fully armed for battle. Just before the election he had declared, 'We shall not hold office unless we can secure the safeguards which experience shows to be necessary.' Everyone assumed from this that the King had promised, should the election confirm the Liberals in office, to create enough peers to give them a majority in the Upper House. That was how it had been coerced into accepting the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, and the Great Reform Bill in 1832 —though on the latter occasion the mere threat had been enough. But whereas nine new Tory peers had turned the scale in 1713 and fewer than 100 Whigs would have sufficed in 1832, the House was now threatened with something like 300 Liberals —a dilution which would have robbed the peerage of its dignity. And naturally the King, whose throne was maintained by the nation's ingrained respect for tradition, was very anxious that

old landmarks should be preserved from such a convulsion.

The new Parliament at once re-passed the Finance Bill, and this time the Lords let it through without a division. That was in April 1910—by which time another budget was due!

And now the Government and nation had to decide whether the House of Lords was to be made more representative or have its powers curtailed. The discussion had hardly got under way when King Edward died, with startling suddenness, of cardiac asthma (May 1910). His son, George V, lacked his colourful qualities, his enjoyment of travel and gay society, but had the sound, duty-doing common sense which is the most valuable trait that a constitutional monarch can possess. The Party leaders felt that it would not be kind to plunge him straight away into such a complicated crisis. So they agreed to a conference on three crucial questions: What were to be the relations between the Houses as to finance, how continued disagreement was to be settled—by joint session or by referendum, and whether the composition of the House could be changed to give a more even balance of Parties. But agreement was barred by the Irish question. If Asquith had come from the conference without ensuring the safe passage of Home Rule his Government would not have lasted another week; and if Balfour had given up the power of the Lords to veto it he would not have continued to lead the Unionist Party. So the conference ended fruitlessly (November 1910).

The new King took the same view of his constitutional duty as his father: if another election renewed the Government's majority he would enable it to make the will of the people prevail. But he required that it should bring forward its Parliament Bill before the election, so that the nation might know exactly what it was voting on; and that his conditional promise to make peers should be kept secret unless the need to carry it out actually arose. He hated the prospect as much as Asquith did, but neither of them could see any alternative that would not be worse.

In November (1910) the Commons passed a bill which enacted that the Lords could not touch a Government measure certified by the Speaker as a 'Money Bill'; (2) that any other Government bill rejected by the Lords would become law if

the Commons passed it in three consecutive sessions; and (3) that the maximum life of a Parliament should be shortened from seven to five years. Meanwhile, Lord Lansdowne brought in proposals for the reform of the House of Lords—'a death-bed repentance', Lloyd George called them. These would have reduced its numbers to 350, removed any right to touch Money Bills, and provided for a referendum over questions of constitutional importance (e.g. Home Rule). But the plan did not appeal to either Party or either House, and it was allowed to drop.

At the second election of 1910 the Unionists stressed that the Lords' veto alone prevented the surrender of Ireland to 'Redmond and his crew'; they promised not to proceed with Tariff Reform until the country had pronounced thereon by a referendum; and they pointed out that the veto had been exercised with full regard for the interests of the people. The House had passed all measures that really subserved the interests of the working class: the Trade Disputes Act, Old Age Pensions, Labour Exchanges and Trade Boards.

The result was an almost unchanged balance of Parties; and Nationalists and Labour both had aims which the Lords' Veto would thwart. What the Irish wanted we know well. What Labour wanted was a reversal of the Osborne Judgment (December 1909), which declared that Trade Unions could not lawfully spend any part of their members' subscriptions for political purposes. As most of the Labour Members were dependent for their daily bread on Union funds (there being as yet no Payment of Members), and as the Party had no central fund from which to finance elections, this was a terrible blow, only to be parried by legislation like that which had neutralized the Taff Vale Judgment. And that could not be looked for from a Unionist Government.

Asquith hoped that the Peers would now give way, and not compel him to appeal to the Royal Prerogative. But the Unionist leaders, not knowing what had passed between the King and the Prime Minister, let themselves be driven by hot-headed followers into a position from which dignified retreat was almost impossible. Old Lord Halsbury raised the war cry of 'No surrender!' and Lord Willoughby de Broke organized a round-up of 'backwoods' peers who were never normally seen at West-

minster. Under this pressure the Bill was sent back to the Commons riddled with amendments.

Asquith now had to disclose to the Unionist leaders the King's promise. Lansdowne passed on the information to a mass meeting of peers at his house in Piccadilly. Most of them, vexed and indignant as they were, felt that they must withdraw their opposition, rather than make their ancient House a laughing stock. But for some weeks a bitter controversy raged between 'Hedgers' who took this view and 'Ditchers' who were ready to 'die in the last ditch', and maintained that Asquith was only bluffing. In the final debate in the Lords, Lord Morley (recently 'elevated') convinced most of the House that rejection would inexorably be followed by a large and immediate creation of peers. So in the crucial division most of the opposition abstained, and the bill was passed by 131 votes to 114, some thirty Unionists voting with the Government lest the 'Die-hards' should bring ruin on their House.

It is not easy at first sight to see why the Liberal leaders were so anxious (apart from a few Radicals like Lloyd George) to evade the actual creation of peers. Among the Asquith papers is a preliminary list of 250 candidates, mostly men of intelligence and character quite up to the average of the hereditary peerage. And a Liberal majority in the Upper Chamber would have enabled the Government to put through controversial measures like Home Rule and the Reform of the Lords in a single session. But the conservative and constitutional traditions of the British ruling class were nearly as strong among Liberals as among Unionists. And so Home Rule was not passed until Ireland had been torn by ten years of horrible convulsion; and the Reform of the Lords was shelved altogether.

XX

MALICE DOMESTIC, FOREIGN LEVY
1911–1912

No British Government was ever faced with such a variety of perils as Asquith's. It had to meet threats of violence from organized labour, armed resistance to Home Rule, terrorism by women demanding the vote, and a situation in Europe so critical that for weeks the country was on the brink of war. Yet, sorely beset as it was, it contrived to put through National Insurance—a highly significant event in our social history.

THE 'PANTHER' AT AGADIR. After the Bosnian affair Anglo-German relations improved for a time. Austria and Russia were now so hostile that the next time they quarrelled they would inevitably come to blows, and the Germans wanted to make sure that Britain would not help Russia. They even discussed an agreement to limit naval expansion until the middle of 1911, when they asked that in return for a mere retardation of battleship building Britain should repudiate her two *Ententes* altogether. And a month or two later they precipitated another international crisis.

France was making the most of the privileges in Morocco given her at Algeciras (p. 199), and in the spring of 1911 took military possession of Fez, the capital, nominally to protect the Sultan against a pretender. Kiderlen-Waechter, the German Foreign Minister, did not protest—he staked out a counter-claim. In July he sent a gunboat to Agadir, an unimportant little port on Morocco's Atlantic coast. The British Admiralty was perturbed at the prospect of a German naval station on the flank of one of the main sea-routes, and Grey notified the German ambassador that 'His Majesty's Government could not recognize any new arrangements in Morocco made without consulting them'. To this the German Government returned no immediate reply. Day after day, week after week, the ominous silence continued. But Germany was demanding blackmail from France in the form of large concessions on the Congo, and it would only lead to trouble to let the Germans think they

could bully France without taking Britain into account. Lloyd George was due to make a speech at the Mansion House on July 21st. If he made no allusion to the situation it would look as if there was a split in the Cabinet, and the militarists at Berlin might get the upper hand. So after an eloquent laudation of peace he added a passage which he had concocted earlier in the day with Asquith and Grey:

> 'But it is essential to the interests not only of this country but of the world that Britain should maintain her prestige among the Powers. . . . If a situation should arise in which peace could be preserved only by the surrender of the great and beneficent position which Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement . . . then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours.'

Europe was convulsed with excitement. The words seemed specially significant for several reasons. It was very unusual for British Ministers to adopt such a high-and-mighty tone; and if the leading pacifist in the Cabinet took such a strong line, what must be the attitude of his imperialist colleagues? Furthermore his words were greeted with unanimous approval in the Press at a time when the country was torn with discord over every other issue. For weeks the governments of Europe held their breath. Rumours of a rupture in the Franco-German discussions about the Congo caused a panic on the Berlin stock market. But Kiderlen-Waechter's move had been a bluff. Germany was not yet in a position to go to war, with her first *Dreadnoughts* unfinished and the widening of the Kiel Canal scarcely started. In October the dangerous corner was safely turned. Germany, in return for a valuable belt of Congo country, withdrew all claim to share France's 'interest' in Morocco. Morocco settled down under the able rule of General Lyautey, and all seemed to be well. But those months of strain made a permanent change for the worse in the international situation. Patriotic Germans felt humiliated. The Kaiser and his Chancellor would not dare to make another concession in such circumstances.

Thus each of the crises left one of the Powers saying, 'Never again!'—France after the dismissal of Delcassé, Russia after the Bosnian episode; and now Germany after the withdrawal from Agadir.

'PREPARE, PREPARE THE IRON HELM OF WAR!' The episode had permanent effects also, on the disposition of the British forces. On August 23rd Sir Henry Wilson, Director of Military Operations to the War Office, demonstrated the Schlieffen Plan for the first time to the Committee of Imperial Defence,[1] with the aid of an immense wall map. The only doubt was how far the German sweep would extend—whether it would violate Holland as well as Belgium, by crossing the 'Maestricht Appendix'. And he went on to disclose that he had come to an understanding with the French General Staff that the British Expeditionary Force should form the northern tip of France's defences. Even with our six divisions the Entente Powers would only have ninety-one to cope with Germany's 110.

There ensued a sharp clash with his namesake Sir Arthur Wilson, First Sea Lord,[2] who argued that the little British Army would be better employed in amphibious operations (an old British tradition) which could be supported by the Navy, at points behind the German advance where it would upset the enemy's plans and draw off far more than its own numbers. But Sir Henry would not give way: every detail had been arranged —even the places where the troops were to get hot coffee! The fact was that he was 'in the pocket' of the French General Staff. He spoke French like a Frenchman, and had sat at the feet of General Foch, the renowned lecturer on military operations, whose pupils now dominated the General Staff. For General Michel, who as Commander-in-Chief had planned defensive operations on the north-east, had recently been ousted by hot-headed '*Jeunes Turcs*' on the staff, who were obsessed with Foch's doctrine of an all-out offensive where the enemy was weakest; and Michel had been succeeded by Joffre, whose solid,

[1] The Committee of Imperial Defence had been instituted after the South African War. It consisted of the Ministers and Service Chiefs of Admiralty and War Office, the Foreign and Colonial Secretaries and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with the Prime Minister in the chair.

[2] Fisher had retired in 1909 after a violent quarrel with Lord Charles Beresford, Commander-in-Chief, who opposed the *Dreadnought* policy and resented Fisher's principle in making appointments that 'Favouritism is the secret of efficiency'. But all the admirals were agreed that they would tolerate nothing akin to the General Staff which planned German naval strategy.

stolid demeanour was mistakenly assumed to conceal vast profundity and hidden fires.

Haldane refused to remain at the War Office unless the Navy conformed to the Army's war-plans and provided itself with an efficient Staff. Asquith at first thought of sending him to the Admiralty to carry out his own demands, but eventually decided for the Army's plans and took a gamble by appointing Winston Churchill as First Lord (October 1911).

Tirpitz had made Lloyd George's speech to the Bankers an excuse for further naval expansion, and the British Government determined to make a special effort to end a process that threatened both countries with financial ruin. It seemed possible that a personal contact might do what 'Notes' exchanged by Foreign Offices had failed to do. So Haldane, who knew the country, spoke the language, and was well-liked by the Kaiser, was sent to Berlin (February 1912). He brought back a copy of the new Navy Bill, together with a German suggestion that it might be modified if England would promise 'benevolent neutrality' in the event of a war forced on Germany. But war had repeatedly been 'forced' on Germany under Bismarck, and as Asquith pointed out to the Cabinet, Britain could not undertake to let the German fleet range at will in the Channel, whatever our relations with France. So the Government had to resign itself to out-building the Tirpitz programme.

Churchill soon got Fisher (now in his seventy-first year) back as First Sea Lord; and the two of them prepared to give the High Seas Fleet a good hard punch if it ventured to challenge the Royal Navy. Fisher had in 1909 designed a Super-Dreadnought, with 13½-inch guns, and a dozen of these monsters were on the slips. But these were now out-topped by five Super-super-Dreadnoughts, with 15-inch guns and a speed of twenty-five knots. In the balance between armament, speed and armour, one factor could only be increased at the expense of the others: space had to be saved by burning oil instead of coal. Oil had never been used for engines of such capacity, but there was no time for experiment. As there is no natural oil in this country, it would have to be brought in a specially built fleet of tankers, a controlling share bought in the Persian oil-wells, and vast underground tanks constructed. It was not at all certain that the supply of fuel might not break down at any of

these points, but the risk had to be taken. And everything had to be done in profoundest secrecy. A leakage of information about what was going on might have precipitated the conflict, and would certainly have split the Government from top to bottom. But Churchill and Fisher were the men for the occasion, Asquith contrived that the money should be found without inconvenient questioning at the Treasury, and *Queen Elizabeth*, *Warspite*, *Barham*, *Valiant* and *Malaya* were ready for 'The Day'.

INDUSTRIAL FERMENT. In picturing these agitated years we must bear in mind how the various excitements overlapped each other. Lloyd George made his City speech on the evening of the very day when the peers learned from Lansdowne that the Parliament Bill was to be forced on them (p. 223). And all through that summer strikes on an unprecedented scale were crippling the country's economic life.

The enthusiasm which had sent a Labour Party to Parliament in 1906 had evaporated. Much had been gained: the Trade Disputes Act, O.A.P., and so on; but there was a feeling that the Party's zeal was being blunted by contact with well-to-do fellow-Members in 'the best club in Europe'. Faith in parliamentary action had been further weakened because the Government, knowing that Labour dared not turn them out, showed no alacrity to undo the effects of the Osborne Judgment.[1] Furthermore, currents of revolutionary Socialism were flowing in from America (where 'The Industrial Workers of the World' sought to draw all wage-earners into One Big Union), and from France (where Georges Sorel was teaching a gospel of violence as the remedy for all social ills). The idea was gaining ground that salvation for the working-class must be sought in 'direct action' —harassing 'Capital' by sympathetic strikes, lightning strikes, unofficial strikes, until the time was ripe for a tremendous 'General Strike' which would bring down the whole existing economic system with a crash. The storm-centre of this revolu-

[1] It was not until 1913 that the Government put through a *Trade Union* Act giving Unions power to apply their funds in any way they chose, but safeguarding a member's right to withhold support of a political levy without forfeiting his other 'benefits'. But by this time the immediate distress of the Labour Members had been relieved by a resolution (1911) which voted every M.P. an annual salary of £400.

tionary spirit was the South Wales coalfield, where the miners were eagerly discussing a pamphlet called '*The Miners' Next Step*', which attacked Trade Unionism, the Labour Party, and even the policy of nationalizing the mines. The State, it argued, was as much the enemy of Labour as the Employer: the mines ought to belong to the miners and be run by them. This is sometimes called 'Syndicalism'. It was a crude form of the 'Guild Socialism' being advocated by a little group of 'intellectuals', who wanted Trade Unions to become corporations controlling production and distribution.

The protagonist of the Syndicalist movement was Tom Mann, who since the great Dock Strike had been abroad, mostly in Australia. He was sent to prison for issuing a leaflet exhorting troops not to shoot down their working-class comrades if called on to deal with riots, and he instigated a whole series of strikes on a scale never before seen in this country. Here we can mention only a few of the most conspicuous.

They began in 1910 with a revolt in the Merchant Navy. 'Merchant Jack' had long been at the mercy of his employers, but Havelock Wilson had built up a Seamen's and Firemen's Union, and stimulated by Mann it now called a strike. Shipowners were taken by surprise, and the Union won a resounding victory. This encouraged dockside workers to do likewise. They had made little advance since 1889, but the renewed comradeship of Mann and Tillett brought into existence a National Transport Workers' Federation. This exemplified one of the essential principles of the new Unionism—the amalgamation of local and sectional Unions into federations large enough to prevent the use of 'blacklegs'. A dock strike beginning in Hull, and spreading to London, forced managements to raise 'the Dockers' Tanner' to sevenpence or eightpence an hour. But a few months later the Transport Workers tempted fortune too far. The London dockers struck against the employment of non-union labour. This 'closed shop' was another of the new principles, and Lord Devonport, chairman of the Port of London Authority, determined to crush it before it spread. Tillett and Mann called for a sympathetic strike in all other ports—yet another of the methods of the new Unionism. But solidarity was not yet firm enough to make men leave good jobs to support

workers in distant fields of action. There was little response, the strike was broken, and the T.W.F. retired into its shell to recuperate.

In 1911 the railways took the limelight. The root of their grievances was the refusal of the Companies to recognize the Unions by dealing with their officials. The Companies insisted that, the railways being a public service like the Army or the Post Office, grievances could only be adjusted when brought forward by respectful deputations of employees: to treat with paid officials would undermine discipline. Some wage concessions had been made in 1907, but this 'public service' continued to pay wages averaging less than twenty-five shillings a week, and the 'master-and-man' attitude continued to rankle. Three of the five Unions had recently amalgamated into a National Union of Railwaymen, though the drivers and clerks held to their separate organizations. In the autumn of 1911 they all agreed to stop work to enforce a better wage-scale. This was another innovation—a strike which put pressure on the public in the hope that the public would in turn put pressure on the employers. The Agadir crisis was at its height. If the country suddenly found itself at war with its railways in chaos the result would be national disaster. Asquith and Lloyd George could not reveal how acute the danger was, but they intervened with such energy that both sides agreed on a Royal Commission to investigate the claims. The result was some improvement in pay-rates, but still no recognition of the Unions.

This Government intervention in a strike was yet another novel feature of the industrial turmoil. In 1912 came an even more notable instance of it, this time over the Miners. The trouble began with a claim for higher piecework rates at 'abnormal places', where coal-getting was specially difficult. District Miners' Unions had just joined in a Miners' Federation of Great Britain, and the question of local 'abnormal places' became merged in a demand for a National Minimum of five shillings per eight-hour shift for men and three shillings for boys. To enforce it a national strike was called (February 1912). The Prime Minister suggested a compromise, and when both sides rejected this he embodied it in an Act of Parliament which

bound them by the law of the land. It provided that a minimum wage should be fixed by twenty-three District Joint Boards with independent chairmen. The Miners' Federation had won the principle of the Minimum Wage, but it was not National; and their M.P.'s failed to carry an amendment in favour of the 'Five-and-Three'. In a poll of the whole industry, 240,000 members voted for resisting the Act, 200,000 against that course; but the Federation officials decided that the majority was too small to justify a strike against the State, and ordered a return to work.

So ended the biggest strike ever known. It involved a million men, cost the country 30 million working-days, and injured many dependent industries—iron, steel, tin-plate, railways, shipping, fishing. Compared with this, all earlier 'great strikes' had been storms in teacups.

'NINEPENCE FOR FOURPENCE'. This was certainly an enterprising Government. In the autumn of 1912, when the convulsion of the Budget and the Lords had scarcely subsided, with the Agadir Crisis still agitating the air, a stoppage of the railways just over, and a national coal strike pending, it plunged into another social revolution.

One of the reasons for Lloyd George's 'People's Budget' was the need to finance a scheme of National Insurance against sickness and unemployment. Like Old Age Pensions, Health Insurance had long been established in Germany and New Zealand. And as the recent Poor Law Report had shown that sickness was the chief cause of destitution, it seemed that an efficient health service would do much to relieve the nation of its problem of poverty. Unemployment Insurance was more experimental; but as a reservoir of unemployed labour was part of the capitalist system it seemed hardly fair that individuals should starve to keep it going.

Health insurance had long been carried on by 'Friendly Societies' such as the 'Buffaloes' and the 'Oddfellows', the more prosperous Trade Unions, and by great insurance companies such as the Prudential and the Pearl, which sent round agents to collect the weekly premiums. These organizations had all gained valuable experience, and Lloyd George drew on it by using them to carry out his scheme. Provided they

could prove their financial stability, they could be registered as 'Approved Societies' for the purpose of the Act, though people could, if they preferred, pay their premiums and draw their benefits through the Post Office. The scheme was compulsory; otherwise healthy people might have kept outside it, leaving an impossible financial burden on the less fit; and it was contributory, employers paying threepence a week for each employee, the employee paying fourpence, and the State twopence—'ninepence for fourpence' as its author pointed out in commending it to the public. After a certain number of these premiums had been paid (by stamps affixed to cards) insured persons were entitled to free doctoring and dentistry, medicine, appliances and hospital treatment. The scheme covered only manual workers and the humbler ranks of salaried employees; but it ensured that the 15 million British people on or below the poverty-line need not fall into unemployability for lack of medical attention.

The bill was ridiculed by the Opposition as 'trying to make people thrifty by Act of Parliament', while the doctors jibbed at having to apply for admission to a local 'panel' and at receiving only four shillings a year for each person registered with them. That four shillings was too low a figure was proved by the fact that the Government raised it to nine shillings without upsetting the finances of the scheme. And doctors soon found the benefit of the panel system, despite the time spent in filling up forms and signing certificates. For the average number of patients was 2000, and £900 a year was a useful foundation for private practice. And the Chinese basis of doctoring, that it should pay the physician better to keep his patients well than to have them ill, has much to commend it.

The Unemployment part of the Act was limited to trades most liable to fluctuation—building, shipbuilding and engineering—and covered only 2 million workers. Employer, workman and State each paid twopence-halfpenny a week, and an unemployed person was to draw seven shillings a week for one-fifth of the number of weeks for which he had paid premiums. Nobody knew how the scheme would work out, and it was understood that if it proved actuarily unsound the Treasury would come to the rescue. The benefit may seem small, but it must be remembered that the notion of State responsibility for

maintaining people in good times and bad had not yet been fully recognized. Old Age Pensions and National Insurance were but the beginning of it, and the seven shillings a week was intended merely as a nucleus round which the unemployed person could rally his own resources.

IRELAND AGAIN. The Unionists were far from satisfied with the leadership which had resulted in their defeats over the Budget and the Lords. Balfour was often brilliant in debate, but the Party felt that it needed a man of tougher fibre in the struggles ahead. 'B.M.G.' ('Balfour Must Go') became the watchword of a vociferous section and of its organs in the Press, and in November 1911 Balfour went. For the succession there were two candidates, Walter Long and Austen Chamberlain, so evenly balanced in favour that both gave way to Andrew Bonar Law, a Glasgow-Canadian business man. He had never been a Cabinet minister, but he had the reputation of being a fighter, and registered it by a speech of acceptance in the Albert Hall, in the course of which he described the Government as 'artful dodgers', dealers in trickery and cant, and Gadarene swine rushing down a steep place.

These unkind epithets were called forth by the fact that the Parliament Act had opened the way for Home Rule. For nearly twenty years the Liberals had evaded the dangerous subject, but the 1910 elections had put them at the mercy of the Irish Party, who now had to be paid for swallowing their dislike of the whisky duties in the People's Budget. That payment consisted of a Home Rule bill put through the Commons in time to become law within the lifetime of the existing Parliament—i.e., without having to become an issue at the next General Election, due in 1915, which would almost certainly reject it.

The Third Home Rule Bill, introduced by Asquith in February 1912, offered Ireland less independence than either of its predecessors, for it reserved to the Imperial Government control of trade, finance and police, as well as defence and foreign relations. Asquith hinted that it was the first step in a general policy of freeing Parliament from local interests, foreshadowing similar measures for Scotland and Wales. The Irish Party declared that it would bind the Irish and English peoples together as never before in history; and Dominion statesmen wel-

comed it as placating their Irish groups, and so promoting the unity of the Empire.

But the Unionist Party thought otherwise, and declared its intention of fighting the bill by all methods and at all costs. The House of Commons sat in almost continuous session over it for the best part of a year, and the debates at times degenerated into a pandemonium in which abuse, threats and harder missiles were hurled about. (On one famous occasion an angry Unionist threw a heavy book at Churchill and hit him on the head.)

Having eventually passed the Commons by a majority of 112 the Bill was rejected in the Lords by 257. Until 1911 this would have been the end of it, but under the Parliament Act it would become law if passed by the Commons in 1913 and 1914. So the Opposition determined to intimidate the Government into dropping it. For this their chief hope lay in the detestation of Catholicism felt in the Presbyterian north-east of Ireland. Asquith had thought of cutting Ulster out of the Bill, but the Nationalists were set on Irish unity, and the Unionists would not tolerate Home Rule in any part of Ireland in any shape or at any price.

Liberals were, by tradition, averse to 'strong measures', and the Government turned a blind eye on the activities of the Opposition until the situation got badly out of hand. In July 1912 Bonar Law told a party meeting that there was no length to which he would not go in supporting Ulster's resistance. Sir Edward Carson, a Dublin barrister whom the Ulster Unionists had taken as their leader, declared himself ready to break any and every law in the cause; his aide-de-camp F. E. Smith (afterwards Lord Birkenhead) announced that he would not shrink from a crisis that might convulse the whole Commonwealth; and Walter Long said that if the Government prosecuted Carson and Smith for treason the dock would have to be enlarged to hold the whole Unionist Party. In September (1912) at a mass meeting near Belfast, immense numbers signed a 'Covenant' pledging them to use all means to defeat the conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Dublin. Ulster volunteers were formed into a drilled and disciplined army under the command of General Sir George Richardson, who, as Lord Roberts said in recommending him for the post, 'had

learned to know men and war in fighting Pathans and Afghans'. The Ulster Unionist Council organized itself with Carson as President, as a Provisional Government to take over the Province on the passing of the bill.

And still the Government refused to believe what it did not want to believe. It certainly seemed inconceivable that the great historic Party which was the traditional upholder of law and order, the political descendants of Wellington, Peel and Disraeli, would actually support armed rebellion against the King's Government. Asquith kept hoping that things would take a turn for the better without his having to call in the armed forces against political opponents—such a very un-Liberal thing to do! And so the situation drifted on towards chaos and civil war.

'THE WILD WOMEN.' As if these excitements were not enough a violent campaign was going on to win votes for women. In most other spheres of activity their position had in the past half-century made notable advance. They now had Public Schools, and Colleges at the Universities, and had won the right to practise Law and Medicine. An Act of 1907 had made them eligible to County and Borough Councils, and in the following year Mrs. Garrett Anderson had become the first woman Mayor. But the process of emancipation had stopped short of the parliamentary franchise. The parties were divided within themselves on the subject: Lloyd George was for women's suffrage, Asquith against it; Balfour for it, Bonar Law against it. Private Bills were brought in time and again, but to have any chance of success they needed the backing of the Government, and Governments were afraid of splitting their ranks. Up to the beginning of the century the movement had been limited to the educated class; but in 1903 Mrs. Pankhurst, widow of a Manchester lawyer, and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia, founded the Women's Social and Political Union, which made a special appeal to working women and advertized its demands by bannered processions, mass demonstrations, heckling M.P.s at public meetings, and interrupting debates in the House itself. When these methods led to the closing of the House to visitors, they made concerted rushes to burst through police cordons, and forced their way into the lobbies; and when the

police tried to remove them they padlocked themselves to railings.

Of course all this was excellent 'copy' for popular newspapers, and the Pankhursts courted publicity. Old-fashioned constitutional suffragists feared that the tactics of those who, by contrast, were called 'suffragettes', would turn the public against the Cause; but when, in 1910, all sections of the movement came together to devise a bill with safeguards to conciliate opponents, ministers like Lloyd George and Churchill, in general sympathetic to the Cause, opposed it as too half-hearted, and it was dropped.

This reverse stung the W.S.P.U. to a militancy that outdid in fury anything attempted hitherto. The moderates were thrust aside. Christabel Pankhurst set up headquarters in Paris, out of the reach of British law, whence she directed a campaign of crime, designed to make civilized life impossible in Britain until public opinion forced Parliament to give way. Young women of all classes pressed forward as candidates for martyrdom. Shop windows were smashed; houses, churches and public buildings were burned down; the mail was destroyed in letter-boxes; the fire-service was disrupted by bogus calls; famous pictures were slashed and priceless porcelain shattered. Ministers were waylaid, even on golf-courses; some were assaulted with dog-whips, others had their children kidnapped. The climax came when, in the Derby of 1913, a suffragette threw herself in front of the King's horse as it rounded Tattenham Corner, bringing it down and losing her own life. Her funeral was made the occasion for an immense demonstration.

When women were prosecuted for these deeds they registered their contempt for 'man-made law' by going to gaol instead of paying fines. In gaol they went on hunger-strike, and as they could not be allowed to die of starvation the prison authorities forcibly fed them. If forcible feeding is resisted it becomes a peculiarly disgusting form of personal assault, which public opinion would not tolerate. So the Government put through what became known as the 'Cat-and-Mouse' Act (1913) empowering the Home Secretary to release prisoners on licence when their self-starvation was endangering their lives, and to re-arrest them as soon as they had recovered.

To the Government grappling with acute problems of foreign

policy, war preparations, industrial unrest, and a threat of revolt in Ireland, this was an exasperating embarrassment. But even M.P.s who thought that women ought to have the vote dared not incur the imputation of having been 'hen-pecked' into giving it to them; and the general public, moved sometimes to laughter and sometimes to wrath, showed no inclination to force the Government's hand in the matter.

XXI

CATASTROPHE

1913–1914

We now see how the nationalist forces in Europe, recently polarized into two groups of states, produced a detonation which shattered the political and economic system. Of these forces the rivalry of Slav and Teuton was the most potent in bringing the final catastrophe.

THE BALKAN WARS. In October 1911 Italy seized Tripoli, the last remaining African province of Turkey. The Kaiser's protégé had again been despoiled by one of his partners in the Triple Alliance. He raged as he had raged over Bosnia, but was again dissuaded from going to extremes. The 'Young Turk' Government had to give up not only Tripoli but the Greek-inhabited Dodecanese Islands, for Turkey was now faced with an even more formidable threat.

Isvolsky had been replaced by Sazonov, but the latter sought the same traditional Russian aims—Constantinople and the Straits—by the same traditional Russian method—patronage of Turkey's former subjects in the Balkans. Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece were all ravening for bits of Macedonia and Albania, the last Turkish possessions in the peninsula. In March 1912 Sazonov induced Serbia and Bulgaria to lay aside their rivalry and combine to check Austrian influence in the peninsula, and to promise to accept the mediation of the Tsar in any future partition of Macedonia. King Nicholas of Montenegro joined in the agreement a little later.

But Sazonov soon regretted having made this treaty, for it put him on tenterhooks. King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, who himself had designs on Constantinople, might at any moment rush into war with Turkey; and Serbia was on the point of a life-and-death struggle with Austria. The treaty would make it almost impossible for Russia to keep out of such conflicts; but the Tsar's forces were in the midst of a reconstruction which would not be complete until about 1917. And now Poincaré, President of the French Republic, while on a visit to Moscow,

warned him that France, not having been consulted over these Balkan commitments, would not feel bound to support Russia in any war which they might entail.

A month or two later the thing happened. An Albanian revolt encouraged Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro to make demands on Turkey which led to a declaration of war (October 1912). The Ottoman Empire, 'Sick Man' as it had been for so long, was still a considerable Power, and the rest of Europe expected it to make short work of these little states. They were mistaken. The war was certainly short, but it was the Balkan Alliance that won it. The Turkish conscripts, ill-assorted, ill-armed and disaffected, made such a poor showing that within six weeks all that remained of Turkey-in-Europe was three beleaguered fortresses.

This was nearly as great a disaster for the Central Powers as for the Turks. Germany as well as Austria needed Turkey to check Russian influence in the Balkan region. For the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, Germany's economic channel through the Middle East, would be almost useless if its middle section ran through lands dominated by Russian Pan-Slavdom.

Austrian foreign relations were now in the hands of Count Berchtold, a Viennese nobleman too vain and frivolous to be able to resist the fire-eating Chief-of-Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorff, who was thirsting for a chance to destroy the Serbian 'nest of vipers'. Serbia's recent triumph over Turkey had roused great enthusiasm among the Yugoslav subjects of Austria; if she went on to seize Albania she would be an irresistible magnet for them. So Berchtold announced that Austria would not suffer Serbia to take any Albanian territory that would give her access to the Adriatic. As Serbian forces were already in possession of an Albanian port, with full support of Russia, the Foreign Offices of Europe buzzed with excitement. Russia and Austria glared at each other. The slightest spark would have sent up the powder magazine.

That the explosion was averted was due to Sir Edward Grey. Bulgar, Serb and Turkish delegates being in London to make peace, Grey asked the Governments of the Great Powers to authorize their ambassadors to meet him and seek some permanent solution for the Russo-Austrian conflict of interests. They met in St. James's Palace on three or four afternoons a week all

through the summer of 1913. It was like a rebirth of the 'Concert of Europe', to find diplomatists meeting in amicable discussion, far from the madding crowd of military chiefs. Grey, as chairman, persuaded Russia to induce the Serbs to give up the idea of an Adriatic port, and Germany to hold back Austria from attacking Serbia.

Meanwhile the Balkan States were less successful in coming to terms. They signed a treaty in May (1913), but within a month the victors were fighting between themselves. This was what Berchtold hoped when he insisted on keeping Serbia from the Adriatic: he foresaw that she would demand compensation elsewhere which would revive old quarrels with Bulgaria and Greece. Serbia now claimed access to the Greek port of Salonika, and the question was referred, under the Treaty of 1912, to the Tsar; but while waiting for judgment Ferdinand of Bulgaria, on a midnight impulse, ordered an attack on the Serbian army. In the morning his Prime Minister insisted on the order being revoked, and the resultant confusion deprived the Bulgarians of all chance to make their treachery successful. Rumania now took advantage of Bulgaria's plight to stab her in the back and reconquer the Dobruja. And to complete 'Foxy' Ferdinand's discomfiture the Turks returned to the fray and recovered the fortress of Adrianople, his most prized booty in the first war. The upshot of it all was the Treaty of Bucharest (August 1913), which left Serbia with a million and a half new subjects—but still without a seaport, and raging against Austria for thwarting her Adriatic ambitions.

Thus Berchtold's deep-laid plan had gone awry. Conrad, wrathful at Serbia's aggrandizement, wanted to crush her before she had time to digest her spoils; but Germany again put out a restraining hand, and Austria dared not attack Serbia until assured that Germany would hold off Russia.

A DATE FIXED. German readiness to restrain Austria over the Balkan crisis suggested a change of heart, and Grey sought to make hay while the sun shone by settling old disputes over the extension of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway to the Persian Gulf (where it could bring a German army within reach of India) and over the Portuguese colonies in Africa. These discussions moved slowly, but they moved. True, Churchill's suggestion

of a 'Naval Holiday'—an agreed suspension of *Dreadnought*-building—met with a rebuff. (The Kaiser exulted to Tirpitz: 'A fresh proof of my old theory that only manly and ruthless maintenance of our own interests impresses the English. England comes humbly to us not in spite of but because of my Imperial Navy!') But outwardly Anglo-German relations continued to improve. In the spring of 1914 a British squadron visited Kiel, where British and German officers were to be seen promenading arm-in-arm. Lloyd George and the Radicals demanded that, the outlook being so much better, cuts should be made in the Naval Estimates. Churchill had to give some ground—the east coast bases at Scapa, Cromarty and Rosyth were in consequence not finished even at the onset of the war. But he stood firm over his outsize *Dreadnoughts*, and the Prime Minister contrived to support him without driving Lloyd George to resignation.

We now know that early in 1913 the German Government finally decided that, war being inevitable, it had better come at a moment of their choosing. That would be, they calculated, in the August of 1914, when their army would be at maximum strength, while the French would be in the throes of their projected change from a two-year to a three-year system which would later increase their strength by 50 per cent. And by then the Treasury would have collected (and spent) the last instalment of a capital levy of £50 millions. It was a vast sum—how vast we realize when we recall the excitement in Britain over the extra £15 millions called for in Lloyd George's famous Budget. And war would have to come soon after it, for most of it was to be spent on equipment which would be out of date in a few years.

Von Moltke, Chief-of-Staff (nephew of the victorious general of the Franco-German War) rejoiced the heart of Conrad von Hötzendorff at a conference in Berlin in the spring of 1914 by declaring that this was to be the great year, and explaining the Schlieffen Plan in detail. When Conrad asked how soon after the declaration of war Germany would have finished off France and be able to help Austria against Russia, the answer was clear and definite: six weeks. But Moltke disclosed a disagreement between the Staff and the civil Government. The latter was still angling for British neutrality, but the former regarded this as useless—and not worth troubling about. So little did the

General Staff fear the British Army that Tirpitz was instructed not to risk ships in hindering its transfer to France. As to the British Navy, what harm could it do to Germany in the few months that the war was going to last?

No wonder that when Colonel House, President Wilson's personal confidant, came over to get first-hand impressions of the international situation, his report was alarming. In Germany he found the military oligarchy supreme and 'ready to dethrone the Emperor if he showed any disposition towards peace'. In London, on the other hand, he found Ministers still confident that the goodwill expressed by Bethmann-Hollweg, the new Chancellor, and Lichnowsky the ambassador, would prevail over the will-to-war of the German generals.

CAILLAUX AND CARSON. German self-confidence in preparing for war was augmented by the spectacle of France and Britain torn by internal feuds.

France was in the midst of one of her recurrent political crises. Charges of corruption were flying about the Chamber, and Madame Caillaux, wife of the Minister of Finance, had just shot a rival politician who was about to give evidence against him. The three-year service, and the taxes to pay for it, were very unpopular; and opposition parties could not resist the temptation to put their rivalries before the safety of the republic.

And in Britain the schism went even deeper. The suffragettes were trying to make government impossible. Industrial unrest became more threatening than ever when, early in 1914, Miners, Railwaymen and Transport Workers formed a 'Triple Alliance' to make their threats more effective by combined action. Above all, the Home Rule Bill brought the Army to the verge of mutiny. It had been passed by the Commons and rejected by the Lords for the second time in 1913. When the Commons passed it again in 1914 it would come into force automatically. The prospect drove the Unionists to frantic extremes of opposition. Bonar Law and Lansdowne at one time thought of getting the King to dismiss the Government without regard to its majority in the Commons and then dissolve Parliament by the use of his Prerogative. This would have dragged the Crown into party politics; and the last time a king let himself

be so misled (in 1834, when William IV tried to get rid of Melbourne) he had cause to regret his folly. George V was much too sensible to fall into such a trap. Then there was a suggestion that the Lords should blackmail the Government by throwing out the annual Arms Act, leaving the country defenceless with a great war threatening. Various plans were brought up for cutting Ulster, or its Protestant counties, out of the bill; but the Nationalists would not hear of partition, while the Unionists would not hear of leaving the Anglo-Irish gentry of the south and west under a Dublin Government.

The worst phase began when Carson and Bonar Law plotted with officers stationed in Ireland. There has always been a strong Anglo-Irish element among Army officers.[1] Sir Henry Wilson, himself an Ulsterman, took the lead in instigating a revolt against the Government he was serving. In March 1914, just after the second reading of the Bill, the officers at the Curragh demanded from the War Office written assurances that they would not be called on to enforce Home Rule; and General Paget, C.-in-C. in Ireland, gained permission for those domiciled in Ulster to 'disappear' when the time for such action came. It seems probable that if Asquith had dissolved Parliament he would have got a good majority for maintaining discipline; but with the possibility of war in mind he did not venture on such a drastic step—he did not even dismiss Wilson. Even when the Ulster Covenanters landed 30,000 rifles and three million rounds of ammunition at Larne, for the admitted purpose of resisting the King's Government, nothing effective was done. Carson openly challenged arrest, but Asquith avoided a step that might lead to an explosion. 'The worst never happens', and he hoped for the best.

In June George V called a conference of Party leaders to seek a settlement that would enable the country to show a solid front. The discussions turned mainly on the area to be excluded from Home Rule. But neither Carson nor Redmond dared make concessions for fear of being thrown over by his followers; and after three days the conference broke up fruitlessly.

On July 26th the Irish Volunteers (formed to counter those of Ulster) tried to imitate the Larne gun-running at Howth,

[1] e.g., Wellington, Moore, Wolseley, Roberts, Kitchener, Alexander and Montgomery.

near Dublin; but this time the Government was more alert. Troops were called out, and there was a scuffle in which two Volunteers were killed. The attention of the world was now drawn off by the onset of the World War, but Ireland did not forget what looked like unfair discrimination.

SARAJEVO. On June 28th the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir-apparent to the aged Emperor of Austria-Hungary, was shot dead by a young Serbian nationalist at Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. The assassin was an Austrian subject, but the plot had been hatched in Serbia. Although the Archduke was not popular with the Imperial family, Berchtold and Conrad persuaded the Emperor to make the murder a pretext for the long-desired annihilation of Serbia. The first thing to be done was to gain the approval of Germany. The Kaiser, having an almost neurotic horror of treason, at once agreed to give his ally any support she might need. He was due to start next day on his annual yachting trip in northern waters, and he took care not to arouse comment by changing his plans.

The Austrian plotters were delighted. Nothing could have turned out better. Britain and France could not decently support Serbian assassins, and Russia would now be held in check by Germany. But it would take the Austrian forces some time to get into position, and Germany had fixed on August as the month for the war. So it was not until 23rd July that Vienna made its formal demands, requiring Serbia to eradicate all nationalist organizations and to let Austrian officials take part in the process. Grey told the Austrian ambassador that he had never heard of one sovereign state addressing such a demand to another. But the Serbian Government, careful to avoid offence, accepted the terms save for one or two minor points which they suggested might be referred to The Hague Tribunal or to the Great Powers. The Kaiser, back from his trip, was greatly relieved. His spirit had quailed, as well it might, when brought face to face with the immediate and actual prospect of war; and he eagerly pointed out that after such an abject capitulation there could be no occasion for it. But the Austrians were not to be put off their stroke. Declaring that the Serbian reply amounted to a rejection, they broke off relations.

Up to the Austrian ultimatum the general feeling in Europe

(outside Russia) had been against Serbia, with its 'Black Hand' plotting; but that document, and the rejection of Serbia's submissive reply, seemed to reveal a determination to proceed to violence at all costs. And now the network of alliances dragged one Power after another into the fray. Germany dared not desert Austria—even mild people like Bethmann-Hollweg felt that Russia must be prevented from establishing a Pan-Slav domination of the Balkans. Russia could not abandon Serbia, especially after the Bosnian humiliation: to do so would surrender traditions and ambitions as old as Tsardom itself. And if France evaded her obligations under the Dual Alliance, she would later have to face Germany single-handed.

Grey strove desperately to stem the rush of events. He might have checked Austria if he could have proclaimed the solidarity of the Triple Entente; but he knew that not one Englishman in a hundred would support a war in defence of Serbia.[1] The best he could do was to suggest a revival of the previous year's Ambassadors' Conference. But Germany refused to drag Austria before an international tribunal, saying that direct Austro-Russian discussions would be more effective. Still, the Kaiser, much perturbed at the way things were going, supported Grey's proposal that Germany and Britain should jointly further such discussions. Conrad did not object; his preparations for the onslaught would not be complete until the middle of August. But Berchtold told him that the impression made by Serbia's mild reply was having a bad effect in Europe and was even blunting the former eagerness of William II for a good war. So by the time the Anglo-German proposals for intervention reached Vienna, Austrian guns were already bombarding Belgrade across the Danube (July 29th).

It is a disastrous feature of such situations that as the danger of war approaches control passes into the hands of the military authorities who alone can save the state from destruction; that these authorities are obsessed by the idea of getting a start of the other side; and that mobilization makes war almost inevitable, since it involves movements of troops and stores which reveal secret strategic plans.

[1] One popular organ of the Press came out day after day during the crisis with the banner-headline: TO HELL WITH SERBIA!

This was especially the case with Russia. The unhappy Tsar was desperately anxious to keep the peace, but was surrounded by ramping pan-Slavists eager to get to grips with Austria. He agreed that Serbia must not be left to perish, but dreaded to precipitate a general war. At first he thought of mobilizing only on the southern part of his frontier, facing Austria, despite his generals' anxious protests that this would cause frightful confusion if followed by a general mobilization, and that as the process, owing to the uncompleted railway system, would in any case take twice as long as Germany's, there was not a moment to lose. A passionate telegram came from 'Willy' upbraiding his 'Nicky' for siding with barbarous Serbs; to which 'Nicky' replied upbraiding his 'Willy' for abetting Austria in bullying a helpless little state.

Bethmann-Hollweg, alarmed to learn (apparently for the first time) of the Schlieffen Plan, tried to buy British neutrality by a promise that Germany would seek no permanent gains in Europe from either France or Belgium; but Grey rejected such a pact as dishonourable. Meanwhile the Tsar was stampeded into ordering a general mobilization, which led swiftly and inevitably to a declaration of war (July 30th, at midnight).

Germany was now faced with war on two fronts if France fulfilled the terms of the Dual Alliance. To an urgent inquiry France returned an evasive answer, but withdrew all her troops ten kilometres from the frontier so as to avoid any appearance of aggression. But Germany needed to make sure that France would not suddenly attack her when the bulk of her forces were engaged in Russia; and of course the Army's plans all presupposed that the war would begin with an invasion of France. She therefore demanded that the great frontier fortresses, Verdun and Toul, should be handed over for the duration of the war as a guarantee of good faith. There could be but one answer to that. France ordered mobilization at 4 p.m. on August 1st, and ninety minutes later Germany declared war on her.

WHAT WILL BRITAIN DO? Most people in this country had expected this 'Balkan Crisis' to pass off like others without leading to a general war; and in any case there seemed to be no reason why we should be drawn in. We had no concern with the rivalry

of Slav and Teuton, nor were we threatened by the mobilization of armies. We were secure in our island with the Royal Navy commanding the seas around it. The only precaution necessary was to keep together the fleet, which had been undergoing a 'test mobilization'. No one even in the Cabinet, except the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, realized how close were the ties implied by the Entente. And even when Cambon reminded Grey of the withdrawal of the French fleet to the Mediterranean, Grey could only answer that Britain had purposely kept clear of the Dual Alliance so as not to be involved automatically in war (August 1st). But he added, 'Of course, further developments, such as a violation of Belgian neutrality, might alter the position.' As we know, Bethmann had half let the cat out of the bag over this; and the moment France and Germany declared war Grey called on them both for assurances that they would respect the frontiers of Belgium. France complied at once, but Jagow, the German Foreign Minister, had to admit that a direct reply would disclose Germany's war plans.

The Cabinet spent the whole of Sunday, August 2nd, discussing the situation. In the morning it seemed as if half the Ministers would resign rather than countenance war; but at noon a note was brought to Asquith from Bonar Law, promising Unionist support for a breach with Germany. This was important as implying approval of the City, which had hitherto been dead against war. With this encouragement the Cabinet authorized Grey to promise France that the Navy would resist a German sea-attack on her Channel coast. It was only a hypothetical case, but it went too far for two members of the Cabinet, Morley and Burns, who forthwith resigned. And, indeed, it was equivalent to a declaration of war; for (as Grey admitted next day in the Commons) it implied protection of French shipping in the North Sea, and nobody could expect Germany to accept this as neutrality. But the nation as a whole did not realize this; millions went off to the seaside for that Bank Holiday week-end; and the Government could not go to war without a much more definite mandate than this mood implied.

Other resignations would have followed but for rumours about Germany's intention to march through Belgium. This, as Grey pointed out, would alter the whole position. If treaties

could be broken at will the law of nations would be the law of the jungle. And Britain had for centuries been sensitive about the Low Countries falling into the hands of a potential enemy, they are covered with old British battlefields. 'A great Power in possession of Antwerp would hold a pistol pointed at Britain's heart.' Hitherto the enemy to be kept out of them had been France; now it was Germany. Perhaps such a view would have been outside the purview of the average Englishman; but his indignation was aroused when he learned that Germany had demanded from the Belgian Government a right of way for its armies, threatening to treat the country as an enemy if this was refused. The news reached Grey when he was on his way to tell the Commons of the undertaking to defend France's Channel ports (August 2nd). He added to his speech an account of the German ultimatum to Belgium, adding:

> 'If Belgium lost her independence, Holland and Denmark would lose theirs, and if France were beaten to her knees, then England would be faced by the unmeasured aggrandizement of Germany. If in such a crisis we run away from our obligations as regards the Belgian treaty, I doubt whether any material force we might have at the end of it would be of much value in face of the respect we should have lost. . . . Parliament is, as I always promised it should be when the time came, unfettered. Nevertheless, for many years we have had a friendship with France, and how far that friendship entails obligations, let every man look into his own heart and construe for himself.'

He did not explicitly ask the House to approve a declaration of war, but the applause that greeted his speech was so warm and so general (it was followed by emphatic endorsement not only from Bonar Law, but from John Redmond) that the Government knew that it had the nation behind it in making a firm stand. The attack on Belgium had given the country the unity without which it could not possibly have gone to war.

Next day, on learning that German armies had actually entered Belgium, Grey informed Berlin that unless a favourable reply to his request for a guarantee of neutrality was received by midnight, Britain would give Belgium 'all the assistance in her power'. Jagow told Goschen, the British ambassador, that no such assurance could be given: Germany had been compelled 'by strategic necessity' to strike at France by the quickest

way. When the ambassador called on Bethmann-Hollweg for a final interview he found him very agitated.

> 'He said that the step taken by H.M. Government was terrible to a degree—"just for the word 'neutrality', a word which in war-time had been so often disregarded. Just for a scrap of paper Britain is going to war with a kindred nation which desires nothing better than to be friends with her." '

When Big Ben struck 11 o'clock that night (an hour behind Continental time) Great Britain and Germany were at war (August 4th).

Two remarks made by typical Englishmen to Walter H. Page, the American ambassador, deserve to be remembered. Edward Grey in his room at the Foreign Office said, on August 2nd: 'The lights of Europe are going out one by one. We shall not see them rekindled in our lifetime.' It is questionable if they have been rekindled yet. And George V at Buckingham Palace, on August 4th, exclaimed: 'My God, Mr. Page, what else could we do?' And that expressed, as our kings so often contrive to do, just what the average British man and woman was thinking.

THE QUESTION OF WAR-GUILT. As students of history we are concerned only with what happened, not with moral judgments as to what ought to have happened; but the question of Germany's sole responsibility for the war became itself such an important factor in post-war history that we shall do well to look into it, if only for a moment.

Which Government was most responsible for the breakdown of peace? The Central Powers first blamed Russia, on the grounds that she had been the first to mobilize; later, after the war was over, German scholars declared that Austria had dragged a reluctant Germany into it. There was some truth in each of these assertions; both Russia and Austria were in the grip of militarist cliques determined on war. But this was equally true of Germany. And behind all the criss-cross of events and 'Notes' lay the solid fact that Germany had been keyed up regardless of expense for a war timed to begin at this particular moment. Of course, these preparations were the work of military chiefs; the German people's participation in them consisted in letting these chiefs run the Government. But nobody in

Germany—certainly not the discredited and nerve-ridden Emperor—could stand up to them, now that chance had made war possible just when they were best prepared for it. Neither Kaiser nor Chancellor dared to put pressure on Austria to come to terms with Russia until after Austria had actually broken with Serbia and bombarded Belgrade. Only then did the German generals, knowing that these events made Russian mobilization (and therefore war) inevitable, permit them to expostulate with Vienna. The Kaiser was sincerely anxious to avoid a conflict with Britain, but he let himself be carried away by the military arrogance around him until it got complete control.

As for the negative responsibility that has sometimes been thrown on Great Britain, we know now that nothing she could have done would have stopped those German generals. No threats would have been of any effect, for they (unlike Kaiser and Chancellor) were quite indifferent about bringing Britain in. And they could not have given way over Belgium, for they had no alternative plan of campaign. As to direct blame for the conflict, Britain was clearly innocent. Our own military caste was a negligible factor in affairs; it certainly had no influence on the Government's foreign policy. If there was any 'hidden hand' influencing the Government, it was the City, and the City always wants peace at almost any price. Our only share of responsibility lay in our too obvious anxiety to avoid being drawn into war. The reduction in the *Dreadnought* programme under Campbell-Bannerman encouraged the Kaiser and Tirpitz to think they could outbuild us and 'grasp the trident', as the Kaiser put it; Grey's efforts to remove grievances and Churchill's to promote a Naval Holiday confirmed the impression that we had become a soft and spiritless nation of money grubbers, with our 'flannelled fools at the wicket' and 'muddied oafs at the goal'.

XXII

EDWARDIAN BRITAIN

1901–1914

The social history of the Edwardian era does not end with the death of Edward VII, but with the onset of the great cataclysm four years later. Even with that addition it lasted only fourteen years in all; yet it had a decided character of its own.

'SPIRIT OF DELIGHT.' The opening of a new century, coinciding with the opening of a new reign, seemed to freshen the national spirit. There was no more talk of 'decadence'. The Boer War cured the nation of the rampant kind of imperialism, but there was still an ebullient feeling that life was very well worth living. Of the many forms which this exuberance took we can here note but two—the pursuit of pleasure (and not only by the well-to-do), and the pursuit of knowledge (and not only by the scholarly).

The King himself set an example of enjoying life. He attended punctually to his constitutional duties, but he delighted in semi-public pleasures—Cowes and Ascot, shooting-parties, dinner-parties, card-parties. Coming after the dingy seclusion of the Victorian Court it was like the sun bursting forth from behind a bank of cloud. And it represented the spirit of the nation, which thronged to sports and amusements in greater numbers than ever before.

Puritan austerity, the feeling that worldly display and pleasure seeking is sinful, was passing. People making money did not, as in the age when Britain's industrial supremacy was being created, plough all their profits back into business; they wanted to enjoy themselves, and to be seen enjoying themselves. The 'week-end' was officially recognized when in 1903 Parliament ceased to take its short day in mid-week and substituted a short Friday—and no Saturday at all. The custom spread rapidly to Government offices, then to banks and business establishments of all kinds. Foreigners sometimes sneered at John Bull's easy-going ways, but it may be that there was in-

stinctive good sense in thus keeping fresh in body and mind by week-ends of relaxation in the open air.

As to the pursuit of education, we may note that during these thirteen years the number of English Universities doubled. Mason College, Birmingham, had in 1900 obtained a charter as Birmingham University. In 1903 the constituent colleges of Victoria University hived off as the Universities of Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds. Sheffield followed in 1905 and Bristol in 1909. London University took to itself University College in 1907 and King's College in 1910; and by the latter date it had five affiliated provincial colleges: Nottingham, Newcastle, Reading, Exeter and Southampton.

University extension, under which University lecturers gave courses of lectures to adults, had started as far back as 1885; but in 1905 it produced a vigorous offspring in 'The Workers' Educational Association', supported by the Universities and by Local Authorities' Education Committees which brought lectures and tutorial contacts within the reach of working-class men and women.

Ruskin College was founded in 1899 to bring intelligent and ambitious young workers into (or to the fringe of) the atmosphere of Oxford culture for short courses, mostly in industrial history and economics. It was soon torn by dissensions because its lecturers taught 'orthodox' political economy instead of the gospel according to Karl Marx. A malcontent group (including, oddly enough, the Principal) branched off to form 'The Plebs League' and a 'Central Labour College' in London, with financial support from the South Wales Miners' Federation and the National Union of Railwaymen. This was never a very flourishing institution, but its alumni included many of the more ardent spirits among Trade Unionists, who became the propulsive force in the Syndicalist and (later) the Shop Steward movements. And it showed an appetite for knowledge and ideas very characteristic of the age.

TOLERATION AND GOOD HUMOUR. The domestic history of the period sometimes seems full of fierce controversies—Suffragism, Syndicalism, Ulsterism; but some of the religious and social distinctions of the Victorian era were losing their edge.

Among those invited to the Coronation of Edward VII was

General Booth, the patriarchal founder of the Salvation Army. That organization had lived down the ridicule and violence which had assailed it in the 1880's. Most people now recognized that with its brass bands and red flags and gospel of 'Blood and Fire' it did for many of the King's subjects what less stark and primitive forms of Christian faith could not do; and the poor of every city of the Empire, and of many outside it, knew the value of its rescue work. A play like Shaw's *Major Barbara* (1905) would have been impossible a generation earlier.

And the old rancour against Roman Catholicism was softening, too. The House of Hanover owed its throne to the nation's former hatred of 'Popery', expressed in the Coronation oath by an assertion that 'the sacrifice of the Mass is superstitious and idolatrous'. But times were changed, and King Edward was acting in the spirit of the age when, having failed to get these words deleted, he mumbled them inaudibly. And later in his reign he attended a Requiem Mass for the King of Portugal—the first time (except for the brief interlude of James II) that an English sovereign had been to a Roman Catholic service since 'Bloody Queen Mary'. And—this is the point—nobody minded.

Another characteristic phenomenon was the beginning of Pacifism as an element of public opinion (apart from small religious bodies like the Quakers). It began with the appearance in 1910 of Norman Angell's book *The Great Illusion*, the theme of which was that in modern conditions war is scarcely more ruinous to losers than to winners. We are so familiar with that idea to-day that we can hardly understand the sensation which the book caused. Study circles were formed to discuss it, and it was translated into a dozen languages. Even Ministers were shaken by its arguments, especially by the idea that the armament race might lead to a revolt of the masses against the crushing burden of taxation.

There was a general blurring, too, in class distinctions. 'High Society' was no longer so exclusive a circle as it had been in the good old days when Queen Victoria had objected to conferring a peerage on a Rothschild, however well he had served the country of his adoption. Almost anybody could now push his way into the fold if he had money and spent it judiciously. And the House of Lords was no longer aristocratic in the old sense

of the word. Lloyd George in his Budget campaign talked as if peers were still blue-blooded 'transmitters of foolish faces'; but this was out of date. The Upper Chamber had ceased to be a House of Landlords; for landowning no longer provided sufficient income, except for those, such as the Dukes of Bedford and Westminster, whose property lay in towns. The fact that landowning no longer paid was due in the main to the fall in agricultural prices.

Thus peers went into business and business men became peers. Of the peerages in existence at the time of the Parliament Act only ten dated as far back as the seventeenth century. In 1780 the House had 150 members; at the Reform Bill the number had doubled; by the reign of Edward VII it had doubled again. The House had always been recruited from the Law—Lord Chancellors usually become earls, other distinguished judges viscounts or barons; and from the Services—particularly the Army, as until 1914 the Navy offered little opportunity for active service. Another high road to the Lords was politics: an ex-Prime Minister can count on an earldom (if he wants it), other Cabinet Ministers on Viscounties; and the constitutional custom that requires two of the Secretaries of State to be Members of the Upper Chamber sometimes sends politicians there while still on the active list. A few scientists had found their way thither even in Victorian times, e.g. Lord Kelvin; one painter, Lord Leighton; one poet, Lord Tennyson. But there now thronged in self-made men who had acquired fortunes in High Finance (e.g. Lord Rothschild), in Shipping (Lord Inman), as newspaper proprietors (Lord Northcliffe), as Industrialists (Lord Leverhulme); especially if a generous proportion of the fortunes so made were spent in philanthropy. And there was a back entrance—through support of Party Funds. Attention was drawn to the practice from time to time, but the Parties had a kind of 'Gentlemen's Agreement' to damp down inconvenient inquiry.

HUMANITARIANISM. Another symptom of a milder outlook was the stream of legislation to provide against miscarriages of justice, to keep people as far as possible out of gaol, and to make prison life less harsh.

By the *Poor Person's Defence* Act (1903) magistrates and judges

were empowered to provide an accused person with solicitor and counsel at the public expense. In an emergency a prisoner can call on any barrister in court to undertake his defence for a nominal fee.

Herbert Gladstone as Home Secretary under Campbell-Bannerman started a scheme to re-educate young offenders of sixteen to twenty, instead of their being sent to prison, where they would tend to become hardened criminals. The new institutions, at first named 'Juvenile-Adult Reformatories', were afterwards called after the Kentish village of Borstal where the experiment had already been tried.

In 1907 a Court of Criminal Appeal was set up. Till then appeal had been possible only in civil cases. The need for such a court was brought home to people by the case of one Adolph Beck, who served a long term of penal servitude and was sentenced to another before it was discovered that the evidence of identification was faulty.

By the *Probation of Offenders* Act of the same year magistrates were empowered to hand first offenders over to the care and guidance of a Probation Officer attached to the Court. Nowadays about a third of the persons convicted in Magistrates' Courts are so dealt with.

The *Criminal Justice Administration* Act (1914) required magistrates to give people reasonable time in which to pay fines, instead of committing them to prison straight away if they cannot produce the money. This and the Probation Act together halved the population of the prisons—at a great saving of expense to the community.

Finally the treatment of convicted prisoners was humanized. In particular the practice of beginning a term of imprisonment with three months' solitary confinement was abolished—largely, it is said, because Winston Churchill, who was Home Secretary at the time (1910), was impressed by the harrowing depiction of it in Galsworthy's play *Justice*.

THOUGHT AND MOTION. The era produced great changes in man's ideas about the Universe. For one thing the notion of Evolution itself evolved. Darwin had assumed that variations (of which those best suited to existing conditions were perpetuated into species) occurred by chance. But there was an older

view, set forth by Lamarck (1744-1829), that plants and animals developed new characteristics through trying to adapt themselves to their environment. Darwinism had crowded out this conception; biologists did not look for any mind or purpose at work. But now Bergson, the French philosopher, questioned this 'mechanistic' notion, and found as the central fact in Life—the thrust behind Evolution—a Vital Force (*élan vital*); and the outcome of this conception was a 'Neo-Lamarckism' which was popularized by Bernard Shaw and had a great influence on the mind of the next generation.

But by about the turn of the century the centre of interest in scientific inquiry was shifting from biology to physics, and was leading to new ideas about the substance of the universe—even to doubts whether it has any substance, in the ordinary sense of the word, at all. Bergson said that the universe is change—not that it *does*, but that it *is*, change; and this accorded with the investigations that physicists were now making. Nobody any longer supposed atoms to be little billiard balls of varied material; they were now assumed to be little solar systems of protons and electrons in perpetual motion, so dispersed that only a billionth of a plank of wood is solid, all the rest being empty space. It was already surmised that if the nucleus of an atom could be broken up one element might be changed into another, with the release of immense quantities of energy. The stages by which that problem was solved in the course of the next forty years is no part of our story here; all that we must note is that the train of investigation now started (in Britain mainly by Lord Rutherford) eventually put at man's disposal forces with almost infinite possibilities of good and evil.

The earliest practical use of what we may call the New Physics was in wireless telegraphy, developed mainly by Marconi, in Britain and with British capital. The first transatlantic message was sent from Cornwall to Newfoundland in 1901. But its special interest for a seafaring nation was that it enabled ocean-going ships to keep in touch with each other and with the land. Two spectacular incidents brought this home to the general public. When the *Titanic* of 46,000 tons was sunk by an iceberg on her maiden voyage (1912), her wireless signals brought dozens of ships to her aid within a few hours. They were not in time to save more than a third of the 2,400

persons aboard her, but even these would have perished in such circumstances a few years earlier. The other piece of 'front-page news' was when Scotland Yard, wanting one Crippen for murder, was notified of his presence on a ship in mid-Atlantic by her captain.

There were great advances in transport. Electricity had already been used on the Central London Railway; the Bakerloo and Hampstead tubes now followed, and an outer ring of suburbs was thus made available for Londoners. The sulphurous old Metropolitan was soon electrified, too. The internal combustion engine now began to come into general use. The first motor-buses appeared in 1903; two years later taxi-cabs began to replace hansoms and 'growlers'. Private motor-cars were as yet costly to buy and costlier to maintain. There were no petrol stations, tyres were not so reliable as they are to-day, punctures and mechanical breakdowns were frequent, and a hundred-mile trip remained something of an adventure. The first extensive use of private cars was by doctors; and this did not become common until National Insurance enabled the general practitioner to afford them. The roads, which had been almost forgotten since the coming of the railway, now became a pressing problem again; for they had not been designed, as to width or surface, for such swiftly moving vehicles, or for so many of them. In 1903 an Act was passed compelling motor-cars to be registered, numbered and licensed. The fees were paid into a Road Fund to give motorists some return for their money; but it was repeatedly 'raided' by Chancellors in search of revenue; and it was not until the First World War had created the motor-lorry that serious efforts were made to replan and recondition the roads.

It was during this era that men found out how to use the lifting power of an air stream flowing upon wings. Britain had little to do with this. Flying was an American invention (by the brothers Wright, about 1900), developed mainly in France. It was a Frenchman (Blériot) who first flew across the Channel (1909); and few of the British people who acclaimed the feat realized that it implied the end of Britain's insular security.

Back to the Open Air. People became much concerned over the deterioration in spirit and body caused by town life.

One notable attempt to do something about this was the Boy Scout movement. The Commission on National Health after the Boer War elicited startling statistics from the R.A.M.C. about the physique of the young men they examined as recruits. In Manchester, for instance, two thirds of them were rejected out of hand, and only a fifth could be passed A.1. Among those who took this to heart was Colonel R. S. Baden-Powell, who had become a popular hero by his defence of Mafeking; and it was coupled in his mind with the lack of initiative and self-reliance which as a cavalry subaltern he had found in the young soldiers he had to train. He saw that there was a deficiency in their education, and set out to supply it. His book *Scouting for Boys* (1908) outlined a scheme by which boys could learn to enjoy the simple life in camp and bivouac, to take pleasure in disciplined co-operation, and to be good comrades and good citizens. The idea filled such a real need that scout troops sprang up everywhere, under a wide-reaching but loose-fitting organization, with enormous benefit to the nation's moral and physical health. It was soon afterwards adapted to girls, and spread to other countries, where it did something—though not as much as was once hoped—to promote international good-fellowship.

Another symptom was the Garden City movement, to empty over-populated towns into the under-populated countryside, by planned development undertaken by the residents themselves. Cadbury's at Bourneville and Lever's at Port Sunlight enabled their employees to live and work in pleasant conditions; but the vision of Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) was broader, and applicable to the people of any overcrowded town where people are of a sufficiently enterprising and co-operative spirit. Letchworth Garden Suburb was founded early in the century, Welwyn after the 1914-18 war; and in 1933 Manchester adapted the idea for a big municipal scheme at Wythenshawe.

Books and Music. The most notable names among the painters of the Edwardian Era were those of Sir George Clausen, Wilson Steer, and Sir William Orpen. But the outstanding event in the history of British art during this period was an exhibition in 1910 organized by Roger Fry of the work of the French painters who came to be known as 'Poet-Impressionists'. That indeed upset

the equilibrium of orthodox painters, who furiously denied that Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh could rightly be called painters at all. But the exhibition had marked effects on the work of the post-war generation of British artists.

The nation was now outgrowing its reputation as a land without music. More was made, heard and enjoyed than ever before in the history of the country. And the British people now discovered that it had a traditional folk-music of its own, like other nations. This had been submerged by the conditions of modern life, and was on the point of fading out of the memory even of the oldest inhabitants of the remotest villages when it was collected and preserved during this era, mainly by Cecil Sharpe and his friends; and it influenced much of the creative work now going on, especially that of Vaughan Williams. But not Elgar's, despite the fact that Elgar's idiom is very English, making little appeal to foreigners. In that respect it differed from the work of Delius (also now in full flood of creation), for Delius, though a Yorkshireman by accident of birth, was German by descent and a cosmopolitan by disposition. As to Elgar, no British composer ever produced a body of music within a dozen years to compare in calibre with his two big oratorios, his two symphonies, his violin concerto and 'Falstaff'. And the importance of these works from a historical point of view is that they reached the hearts of so many British people: a hundred performances of the First Symphony were given within a year.

Another event of moment was Sir Thomas Beecham's introduction to this country in 1910-11 of Russian opera and ballet, with their bold originality of form and colour, scenery, costume and music. Those two seasons opened people's eyes to the ballet as a serious form of art.

The era was prolific in writing. In John Masefield it had a poet whose racy and colloquial narratives in verse (*The Everlasting Mercy*, 1911, and *The Widow in the Bye Street*, 1912) whatever their literary merits, made thousands of people read and argue about poetry who had never troubled themselves about it before.

The Drama was now thought more of than at any time since Shakespeare's day. Irving's knighthood in 1895 had been a recognition of this advance in public esteem; but actors now appeared constantly in Honours Lists: George Alexander,

Beerbohm Tree, Lewis Waller, Forbes Robertson, Martin Harvey. And theatrical production took a turn for the better. The day when the actor-manager dominated the shaping and production of plays, and when a third of the evening was taken up by waits while scene-shifters changed elaborate 'sets', reached its apogee in Tree's production of *The Tempest* (1905). Thereafter simplicity and directness began to be the aim; producers like Granville Barker and William Poel made the play the thing.

The outstanding figures in literature were H. G. Wells and Bernard Shaw. Both propagated ideas based on Socialism imbibed in the Fabian Society. Shaw, already a national figure, was becoming an international one, for his plays were produced and discussed in Germany and America quite as much as in Britain. They made people laugh at their delusions: *John Bull's Other Island* (1904) ridiculed the Englishman's claim to be a ruling race, *Major Barbara* upset ideas about wealth and poverty; and *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1911) satirized the voodoo of the medical profession. Wells passed from the romance of science (*The Invisible Man*, 1897) to the affectionate portrayal of the Little Man (*Kipps*, 1905); then to political and sociological themes (*Tono-Bungay*, 1909 and *The New Machiavelli*, 1911); all treated with an exuberance that despised literary technique. Then there were the Catholic Liberals, Belloc and Chesterton—witty, versatile and polemical, upholding the hearty life, slashing in satire, and purveying a peculiar brand of history in which 'tradition' counted for more than document, and all the evils of the modern world were ascribed to the Reformation. And to mention only two more authors, Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* and Arnold Bennett's *Old Wives' Tale* and *Clayhanger* also appeared during these years. Never had contemporary literature meant so much to so large a proportion of the nation.

XXIII

'TOTAL WAR'
1914–1916

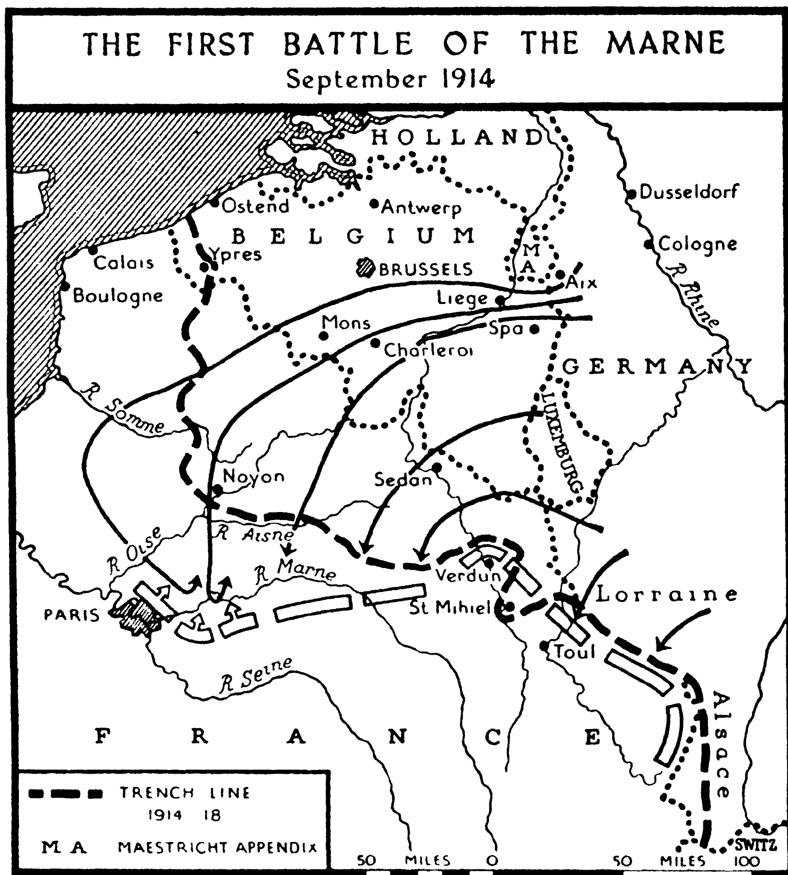
This was a 'total war'—a new high level in human folly. English history during the first half of it was largely the story of how the country was driven step by step to become a 'nation in arms'. This process was particularly foreign to the spirit of Liberalism, and the Asquith Government was first diluted and then destroyed by it.

OVERTURE: 1914. The internal dissensions which the Germans hoped would paralyse Britain ended abruptly. The Unionists let Home Rule pass on the understanding that it was not to come into force until after the war, when a supplementary Act would safeguard Ulster. The Trade Unions, here as in France and Germany, found the call of patriotism stronger than that of the international brotherhood of Labour; and Ramsay MacDonald, as an opponent of the war, was replaced as leader of the parliamentary Party by Arthur Henderson. The campaign for Women's Suffrage was suspended, and the militants demonstrated their fitness for full citizenship in hospital and workshop.

Though the war took the nation by surprise, its moment of impact was in some ways fortunate. Firstly the Fleet had been mobilized for manœuvres and had but to steam off to its war stations. Secondly, the day before August 4th was a Bank Holiday, and by keeping the banks closed for another three days the Government had time to print Treasury Notes to replace as currency the gold which the Bank of England needed for its foreign commitments. Thirdly, Lord Kitchener chanced to be home on leave, and Asquith made him Secretary for War. It gradually became apparent that he lacked qualities essential for Cabinet office, but in the public mind he personified ruthless efficiency in war, and his presence in Whitehall inspired a confidence that at this juncture was worth a million men. People had rather a shock when he called for volunteers for three years' service, but they responded with an enthusiasm that far outran

the capacity of factories to arm and equip them. By the end of August the first 100,000 of 'Kitchener's Army' were drilling —albeit mostly with dummy rifles.

The nation now had its first experience of 'the fog of war'.



Where was the 'Expeditionary Force'? Only after three weeks was it learned that it had been swiftly and silently transported to Belgium. And almost simultaneously came the news that it was in full retreat. Though the German High Command had diluted the Schlieffen Plan, their right wing was much stronger

than the left wing of the French, who had concentrated their main strength for a frontal attack in Alsace, which was shattered by machine-gun fire. Their left, with the British under General French at its tip, was in imminent danger of envelopment. There followed the Retreat from Mons, which was halted only when the enemy was in sight of Paris. On the River Marne, becoming anxious about his lengthening communications, von Moltke checked the headlong advance of his five armies. A breach opened between two of them; the British faced about and marched into the gap, while Galliéni, Military Governor of Paris, sent his garrison troops against the enemy's flank. The Germans retreated to the Aisne, where they dug in. Then followed a 'race to the sea', each side trying to outflank the other until trench-lines stretched from Switzerland to the Channel.

The Germans now tried to cut the British off from their home base by capturing the Channel ports. For the first two months of the war the coast had been practically undefended, but the British Army was now on the spot. The long-drawn First Battle of Ypres (Nov.-Feb.) was the Thermopylae of the 'Old Contemptibles'.[1] They were almost wiped out, but they held the line and won time for new armies to be organized.

Hopes ran high during these early months that the 'Russian steam-roller' would draw off the enemy's main strength to oppose its advance through eastern Germany. The bleak truth, which only came out years later, was that two great Russian armies, advancing prematurely in response to an appeal from the Western Allies, had been totally destroyed at Tannenberg in August. This not only safeguarded Germany's eastern frontier but gave her an inspiring confidence that in General Hindenburg she had an embodiment of the traditional military virtues of Prussia.

At first the British public looked expectantly for news of a mighty sea-battle, but none was forthcoming. The Kaiser would not throw his battleships against the Grand Fleet until the latter should have been reduced by mine and submarine to something nearer equality. Minelaying and submarines were

[1] The Kaiser, in referring in an Army Order to 'the contemptible little British Army', was presumably alluding only to its size; but the epithet was adopted with pride.

newly developed forms of naval warfare, of which nobody could foresee the effects. So all that Admiral Jellicoe and his twenty-four mighty battleships could do was to lie in wait at Scapa, occasionally sweeping through the North Sea. German commerce-raiders gave trouble for a time; and a German cruiser squadron destroyed a weaker British squadron off Coronel but was itself destroyed by a stronger British squadron off the Falkland Isles. The upshot was that by the end of the year the German flag had disappeared from the surface of the sea.

East or West? (1915). Soon each side took a new partner. The Young Turks, hoping to expel Russian influence from the Balkans, joined the Central Powers (October 1914); while Italy accepted the Allies' secret offer of booty at the expense of Austria. Her attack on Austria was soon halted, and the net result was merely another stationary trench-line. But the belligerence of Turkey enlarged the war area to include the Middle East; and it cut Russia off from the other Allies, leaving her unable to export corn or import munitions. On the other hand, the strength of a chain is that of its weakest link; and Turkey was open to attack through her disaffected Arab provinces.

From now on there were two schools among Allied strategists, professional and amateur; 'easterners' who argued that the machine-gun having made frontal attack impossible, the war could only be won by striking at the enemy's 'soft underside'; and 'westerners' who believed in concentrating on the main theatre of war in France and Flanders. Asquith wrote in his diary in January 1915, 'There are two fatal things in war. One is to push blindly against a stone wall, the other is to scatter our forces.' In 1915 Britain did both. On the whole the soldiers were westerners and the politicians easterners. Lloyd George wanted to have a million men landed at Salonika to thrust through the mountains to the Danube; Churchill wanted to force the Dardanelles and take Constantinople. Both projects were attempted, but both were pursued belatedly and half-heartedly owing to the obstruction of the generals. The Gallipoli expedition, after deeds of valour unsurpassed in the history of war, had to be given up in December; and this blow to British prestige changed Greece from being a friendly neutral under Prime Minister Venizelos into an unfriendly one dominated by its

half-Hohenzollern king. It also encouraged Bulgaria (under another German king) to throw in its lot with the Central Powers so as to have an excuse to join (in the autumn of 1915) with Germany and Austria in obliterating Serbia. Thus by the end of 1915 the ring had closed round Russia, the Berlin-Bagdad railway was cleared for transport between Germany and Turkey, and the Salonika bridgehead was isolated. (The Germans jested that it was their biggest and best internment camp.)

Nor could the westerners claim success for their head-on methods. Neuve Chapelle in the spring of 1915 gained a few ruined hamlets at a cost of a quarter of a million lives; and at Loos in the autumn the disproportion between the gains and their price was even more ghastly. This last battle robbed General French of the optimism which he had hitherto shared with General Joffre. At the end of the year he was replaced by Sir Douglas Haig, whose resolute equanimity was braced by a Calvinist faith that he was predestined to lead the British Army to victory.

The strain of war proved too much for the Liberal Government. The Unionists, pre-eminently the 'Service' Party, chafed at being mere spectators of a war conducted by Liberals, especially as damaging facts could not be elicited or grievances discussed in public without 'giving aid and comfort to the King's enemies'. They had hitherto rejected the idea of a National Government, for it seemed impossible to make a war-winning coalition from Parties which had just been tearing each other to pieces over Home Rule. But in the spring of 1915 a crisis was precipitated by the High Command of both Army and Navy.

Long drawn-out trench warfare called for artillery on a scale never before imagined. In the forty-eight-hour preparation for Neuve Chapelle British guns fired more shells than in the whole South African War; and whereas field guns had in earlier wars used mainly man-killing shrapnel, their chief function now was to batter down earthworks and barbed-wire with high explosive. Asquith and Lloyd George, relying on official information, assured the House that the supply was satisfactory; and when the contrary became manifest a 'Shell Scandal' in Parliament

and Press (secretly fomented by emissaries from General French) shook the Government to its heels.

Then Admiral Fisher made trouble at the Admiralty. At first he had worked with Churchill hand in glove; but misunderstandings arose over the Dardanelles, and the First Sea Lord fumed to see Kitchener a member of the Cabinet when he could only deal with it through Churchill. He tried to force Asquith to admit him by suddenly resigning (May 1915). Thereupon the Unionist leaders told the Prime Minister that unless he broadened the basis of his Government they would have to ask awkward questions in the House. After three days and nights of hard bargaining half a dozen Liberal Ministers were replaced by Unionists. Among the newcomers were Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, Lord Curzon, Lord Lansdowne and Sir Edward Carson; the victims included Churchill and Haldane. Asquith and Grey tried hard to keep the men to whom the Services owed their readiness for war, but the Unionists detested Churchill as a renegade from their own Party, and distrusted Haldane because he had once said that his 'spiritual home was in Germany'[1] Nobody, however, really wanted Fisher in the Cabinet, and he found himself 'left on the beach' after all. Lloyd George was put in charge of a new 'Ministry of Munitions' to deal with the shell shortage, and Arthur Henderson was made Postmaster-General to placate organized labour.

THE HOME FRONT: 1915. The creation of a Ministry of Munitions and the appearance of a Trade Union official on the Treasury Bench proclaimed the newly discovered fact that in modern war industrial capacity counts for as much as military capacity.

Lloyd George threw himself into his task with demonic energy and utter disregard of every consideration save that of 'getting the stuff.' He put in charge of the various branches of production 'men of push and go' (to use his own phrase), mostly brought from outside official and Service circles. He stimulated production by giving contracts at high prices and by paying high wages. Manpower had to be economized by

[1] His remark was made long before the war and referred to his studies in philosophy as a young man; but suspicions gathered round his visit to Berlin on behalf of the Government in 1911, and nothing would dispel them.

'dilution'—i.e. by using unskilled workers for tasks hitherto done by craftsmen. Trade customs built up during a century of painful struggle were overridden, and the wages of men who had served full apprenticeships were often lower than those of non-Union 'dilutees' who had to be enticed into industry. This not unnaturally caused ill-feeling; and to cope with it the Government put through a *Defence of the Realm* Act (1915) which gave it power to take over factories and to control their workpeople; and a *Munitions of War* Act (1915) which instituted compulsory arbitration, forbade strikes and lock-outs, and suspended Trade Union restrictions for the duration of the war. But the workers sometimes refused to be bound by agreements made by their Union officials. Workshops often elected 'Shop Stewards', who took a bolder line with employers and Government; and the Act was challenged by great unofficial strikes on Clydeside and in South Wales. It was impossible to imprison a quarter of a million men under D.O.R.A. and Lloyd George hastened down in person to get them back to work on practically their own terms. Thus wages impelled prices upwards.

On the whole the national finances were handled with some success, considering how great, novel and sudden was the strain. The country had spent 800 millions during the twelve years of war with Napoleon; the four years of this war cost twelve times as much; and despite the raising of Income Tax from 1s. 2d. to 6s., and of Death Duties from 8 per cent to 40 per cent, the National Debt soared from 650 millions to 8,000 millions sterling; and a large part of the foreign investments which had been such precious 'invisible exports' had to be liquidated to pay American manufacturers for munitions of war. Never again would the nation be able to spend its income how it liked. If the Treasury had known in 1914 what (profiting by the lessons then learned) it knew in 1939, the burden left by the earlier war would not have been so great; but it did pretty well, and French and German experts afterwards agreed in extolling its methods.

Throughout 1915 the expansion of industry was complicated by the question of conscription. Three million men had joined the new armies, but the demands of the Services were ever growing, and the wastage was rapid. Britons had always pitied foreigners for having to put up with compulsory military service, and the working-class feared that it would lead to a general

regimentation of labour. To 'put 'em in khaki!' had already been advocated in certain newspapers as a method of dealing with strikes). For a long time the Government was divided: Asquith and most Liberals, backed by Kitchener, were for keeping the voluntary system; while Lloyd George and most Tories, backed by Haig, were for compulsion. By the end of 1916 the logic of circumstances and the argument for 'equality of sacrifice' prevailed. A *National Service Act* passed in January 1915 became fully operative the following May. As matters turned out, conscription gave a great fillip to Trade Unionism. For the Government had now to decide which workers were essential to war industry. To leave this to employers would give them power of life and death over their workpeople; and the Government took organized Labour into its counsels by authorizing the craft Unions to issue 'Trade-cards' exempting from military service fully-trained craftsmen engaged on munitions.

HEAD-ON: 1916. Up to now the Allies had made little attempt to co-ordinate their attacks on the great fortress held by the Central Powers. The first general conference for the purpose was held in December 1915 at Chantilly. There it was agreed that in 1916 there should be simultaneous offensives by the Russians in the east and the Italians in the south; and in the west a great Franco-British attack in the region of the River Somme. Unfortunately, Falkenhayn, now the German Chief-of-Staff,[1] put the western plan out of gear by getting his blow in first. He believed that the war would be won by attrition—by a continued process of inflicting more casualties than one suffers.[2] He now launched a great attack on Verdun, to draw masses of French troops to a vital spot where they could be massacred by concentrated shrapnel and machine-gun fire (February 1916). Six months of this slaughter made it impossible for the French to take their agreed part in the Somme battle, which became predominantly British. The attack, which started on July 1st, showed no originality of conception—the tactics were merely a magnification of those that had failed a

[1] The Kaiser was nominally Commander-in-Chief.

[2] The Allies fully accepted this doctrine, too—*Je les grignote*, Joffre would say. But after the war was over they discovered that the enemy's losses had always been much less than their own.

dozen times before. The opening bombardment lasted a week, and was so violent that the generals calculated that nothing could be left alive within the target area. But they were wrong. The moment the guns stopped the Germans rushed up from their dug-outs with machine-guns and ammunition-boxes, and poured death into the advancing infantry. The Allies suffered 100,000 casualties on the first day, and by the end of September Britain had lost half a million of the flower of the new armies, the finest of all classes of the nation in physique, brains and education, to win a strip of shell-torn land two or three miles wide.

Kitchener did not live to see this outcome of his army-building: he had gone down a few weeks earlier in the cruiser *Hampshire*, which struck a mine while taking him on a mission to Russia. His death relieved the Cabinet of an embarrassment; for he could not trust civilian colleagues with military secrets, or work with them as a member of a team. He was succeeded at the War Office by Lloyd George.

The Italian attack on the Isonzo came to nothing; and although the Russians under Brussilov began with a spectacular success against the Austrians, they were later (when the Austrians had been stiffened by some German divisions) driven back far behind their starting-line, suffering losses which practically knocked Russia out of the war. And even their short-lived success had unfortunate effects, for it encouraged Rumania, after long wavering, to declare war on the Central Powers in the hope of acquiring Transylvania from Austria. The Russians were now no longer able to support them, and a brilliant two-pronged German attack under Mackensen put them out of action for good, leaving their oil-wells and wheatfields at the service of the enemy for the rest of the war.

Only once in the whole course of the war did the main battle-fleets come into contact, and then for barely an hour, and at extreme range. The engagement took place off Jutland on the evening of May 31st (1916). Few seamen and still fewer landsmen can grasp its details, but broadly it consisted of a British attempt to draw the German High Seas Fleet up to the twenty-four British Dreadnoughts, followed by a German attempt to draw the British into a minefield. Jellicoe would not put all to the hazard by a 'Nelson touch'. The crippling of the enemy's fleet would not

of itself win the war, the crippling of ours would lose it. The battle left the position virtually unchanged. The German High Seas Fleet did not put to sea in strength again; but the British suffered the heavier losses, both in men and in ships. And the engagement gave some salutary shocks to that Admiralty, for the Germans showed better gunnery, their armour-piercing shells were more effective, their decks were better protected against the plunging fire of long-range battle, and their airships proved invaluable for reconnaisance.

THE DUBLIN RISING: 1916. To add to the Government's distractions there was an outbreak of rebellion in Ireland. The Unionists' appeal to force was an example which extreme Nationalists were only too ready to follow. They had been pacified for a time by the Home Rule Act, but now that Bonar Law and Carson were in the Cabinet it seemed a post-dated cheque which would prove worthless.

Some twenty years earlier a patriotic movement called Sinn Fein (=ourselves alone) had been founded by a group of intelligentsia who encouraged each other to study Gaelic and discussed the possibility of turning the British Isles into a dual monarchy like Austria-Hungary. But the discontents of 1914–16 embued it with a new spirit. Republicanism, lingering on in obscure corners since the Fenian days, began to spread among its members, and a group of them planned a rising for Easter Sunday 1916. They could not hope that the few hundreds of the 'Irish Republican Army' would prevail against the thousands of British troops quartered in Ireland, but they wanted the seeds of their cause to be watered by the blood of martyrs. In this they succeeded. The rising was mismanaged. It was limited to Dublin; it was unpopular with the people in general; and it was suppressed within a few days. But when it was followed by the shooting of prisoners after secret courts-martial there was a sharp revulsion of feeling. Most of the prisoners were soon released, but the damage was done. Henceforward Home Rule and the old parliamentary Party were ignored as timid and out-of-date. Sinn Fein swung over to Republicanism, the Irish people swung over to Sinn Fein, and Ireland was simmering with disaffection all the rest of the war.

The Fall of Asquith: 1916. By the end of 1916 the British people were thoroughly out of humour. Air-raids from 'Zeppelins' brought the novel discomfort of the black-out; shortage of consumption-goods doubled prices; failure to impose rationing led to weary hours of queueing; the war seemed to consist of stagnant misery in trenches, varied by slaughterous offensives against barbed-wire defences, with no glimmer of hope of any end to it all. The Asquith-Bonar Law coalition had held together for twenty months mainly through the Prime Minister's resourcefulness in patching up compromises between conflicting policies. And it had suffered some shattering blows. Serbia and Rumania had been devoured in turn, and though it was hard to see what we could have done to save them, it was easy to say that we had betrayed them. The enemy had been joined by Greece covertly and by Bulgaria openly; and Grey could not explain publicly that this was because of the refusal of our allies Italy and Russia to surrender provinces which the Central Powers (who did not own them) were quite ready to offer as the price of alliance. Then there was conscription: half the nation still felt sore that it had been introduced, and the other half complained that if it had come sooner the war would have been over. Then again, the official account of Jutland raised doubts whether our 'Sure Shield' was as sure as had been supposed. The Government came in for much blame, too, over the Dublin rising, both from those who thought it had been cruel in suppressing it and those who thought it had been slack in letting it develop. And Asquith, ever true to the principle of Cabinet solidarity, was always ready to take the blame for the errors of colleagues.

When Lloyd George became Secretary for War in June 1916 Mrs. Asquith wrote in her diary: 'We are out of Downing Street'. It took six months for her words to come true. Lloyd George always denied that he had had any intention of supplanting his chief until it happened through the force of circumstances; but his supporters in the Press, notably Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Northcliffe, proclaimed that intention from the house-tops; and Lloyd George admitted that he agreed with them that Asquith was not going the right way to win the war. With his calm, judicial frame of mind he dealt sensibly

with each emergency as it arose, but never took a vigorous initiative. Moreover the Cabinet, twenty strong, was too large —'you cannot make war with a Sanhedrin', said Lloyd George. Many Unionists, much as they disliked Lloyd George, felt like him that we were in danger of losing the war if more energy and 'drive' were not put into the conduct of it. Bonar Law particularly wanted Carson back in the Cabinet (he had resigned over our 'betrayal' of Serbia), but Asquith, who had found him an ineffective minister and a troublesome colleague, refused. Lloyd George himself was another cause of dissension: many Unionists wanted to be rid of him, but Asquith felt that he was indispensable at the War Office.

Up to the beginning of December Asquith's opponents sought only to induce him to form a special War Cabinet of three or four members of whom he would not be one. But he would not become a figure-head, responsible to Parliament for a war policy over which he had only indirect control. So the 'Press Barons' started a furious campaign to get rid of him altogether, and the Unionist leaders came reluctantly to the conclusion that Lloyd George must be given charge of the new direction of the war which he and they advocated. In this they were largely influenced by Lord Balfour, now the 'Elder Statesman' of the Party. Lloyd George had severely criticized his conduct of the Admiralty (where he had succeeded Churchill in 1915), but Balfour was as far above personal spite as Asquith himself, and he felt that only under Lloyd George could the nation escape disaster.

On December 4th Lloyd George precipitated the crisis by resigning; whereupon the Unionist ministers did so, too. The bitterness created by the anti-Asquith Press had destroyed all hope of reconciliation, so Asquith himself resigned. The King sent for Bonar Law, who, as prearranged, failed to form a Government and advised His Majesty to send for Lloyd George.

XXIV

THE GRAPPLE

1917

Lloyd George with his promise of 'a knock-out blow' was just what the nation needed to rouse it to fresh efforts after two years of hardships and disillusionment. But there was no immediate improvement in the military situation, and the nation came near to disaster from starvation. Two events of 1917 had permanent effects in history—the intervention in world affairs of the United States, and the Russian Revolution.

THE NEW BROOM. The new Prime Minister was all that the old one was not. Asquith, with his firm, serene leadership of Government and House, his culture, his loyalty to colleagues and to traditions, his disdain for bumptiousness, was replaced by a man of dynamic energy, with immense executive capacity and singleness of purpose. If, unlike his predecessor, he courted publicity, it was essential for his aims; for in wartime a Prime Minister must not only be active but seem active; and the nation was heartened to feel its affairs directed by one who personified its will-to-win.

The small War Cabinet which he now created consisted of himself, Bonar Law, Curzon, Milner and Henderson. None of these, except Bonar Law (Chancellor of the Exchequer), had any departmental duties; and much of their time was taken up with settling disputes between the ministries (now augmented by departments of Transport, Pensions, Labour and Shipping), there being no Cabinet in which such issues could be fought out. Other ministers were summoned from time to time to attend the War Cabinet with their experts and advisers, but that was the only bond of union among them. Collective responsibility was replaced by a system something like the American, with departmental chiefs responsible only to the Head of the State. Another innovation was a Cabinet Secretariat, to prepare agenda, take minutes and circulate memoranda.

Some of the new ministers had never before taken part in

politics. Sir Alfred Stanley, a business man, became President of the Board of Trade; H. A. L. Fisher, an Oxford don, was given charge of Education; and Sir Eric Geddes, a railway expert, took over the Admiralty. At first the Unionists were adamant against Churchill, but in June (1917), having cleared himself of responsibility for the Gallipoli tragedy, he was grudgingly allowed to become Minister of Munitions, and performed miracles of organization in meeting the ever-growing demand for shells, guns and tanks.

The general policy for production was to maintain the incentive of private enterprise and utilize expert capitalist management, but to regulate them for national needs. The railways were amalgamated into four systems and brought under a Minister of Transport. The Merchant Navy was distributed over ocean routes, not by competitive freight charges, but by the requirements of the war interpreted by a Ministry of Shipping. Agriculture was stimulated by a *Corn Production Act*, which guaranteed farmers minimum prices and workers minimum wages, and dictated the acreage of crops.

THE U-BOAT PERIL. The new Government was hardly installed when the country was faced with mortal peril. For the German Government had also just given a new turn to its war-policy. Hindenburg, with Ludendorff nominally as Quartermaster-General but actually the director of his strategy, had replaced Falkenhayn, whose Verdun attack had cost nearly as much German blood as French. Ludendorff reported that the Army was worn out. The British sea-blockade was throttling Germany, especially after the 1916 potato crop failed. Austria seemed at the last gasp; its new Emperor Charles (old Francis Joseph having died in November 1916) was anxious to get out of the war before his Empire fell to pieces. The German Government, now more than ever dominated by the High Command, felt that a decision must be forced before the situation deteriorated, and that this could best be done by strong counter-action against the blockade. A momentous conclave early in 1917, under the presidency of the Kaiser, decided on a daring gamble: to sink without warning all ships found in the waters round the British Isles and France without regard to their nationality. Admiral Tirpitz proved by irrefutable statistics that this would bring

Britain to her knees by August 1st at the latest. To be sure the sinking of American ships might bring the United States into the war, but Britain would have been starved into surrender long before American armies could be raised, equipped, trained and transported to Europe; and with Britain (especially the British Navy) out of the conflict, Germany could not lose it. February 1st was announced as the date after which the coasts of Britain and France would be in a state of blockade.

German anxiety about American reactions were justified. The State Department at Washington gave the German ambassador his papers forthwith; but the President waited for 'an overt act' before calling on Congress for a declaration of war. Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), who now became a dominant figure in world-affairs, was an unusual type of man for the Presidency of the United States. A Democrat and an intellectual—by vocation a professor of History and Political Science—he brought into the public life of his country a kind of American Gladstonism, applying Christian ethics to politics and upholding the pure gospel of liberalism with lofty language. He had just been elected for a second term as 'the man who kept America out of the war'; for though American sympathies were on the whole favourable to the Allies, business men were doing very well out of war-contracts; and to join in a European war was contrary to all (or nearly all) the nation's instincts. The detached tone of Wilson's public references to the war caused some irritation over here, especially a phrase about America being 'too proud to fight'; but he had reasons for going very slowly. A large German element favoured the Central Powers, and an even larger Irish element hated Britain; and there were plenty of Isolationists reiterating Washington's warning against 'foreign entanglements'.

But the U-boat (= *Unterseeboot:* submarine) campaign changed the current of American sentiment. The State Department had protested sharply about Britain's disregard of 'The Freedom of the Seas' in confiscating American cargoes suspected of being destined for the enemy (either directly or via Holland); but the drowning of American citizens crossing the sea upon their lawful occasions swept away every other consideration by its

cruelty and its disregard of international law.[1] The nation was now too proud *not* to fight, in what it felt to be the cause of humanity. The sinking of half-a-dozen American merchantmen during March, and the discovery that Germany was secretly urging Mexico to attack the United States, provided the President with the *casus belli* for which he was waiting. War was declared on April 6th 1917.

Nevertheless, Germany's gamble very nearly succeeded. Sinkings rose in a steep curve. During April nearly a million tons of Allied shipping was lost, and one ship in four of those that left British ports never returned. Jellicoe (now First Sea Lord, command of the Fleet having passed to Beatty, who had commanded the battle-cruiser squadron at Jutland) told the American naval commander-in-chief that Britain could not possibly continue the war if the losses went on, and that no effective remedy was in sight. By mid-May there was only a fortnight's supply of food in the country. Fortunately the nation never knew how close it was to disaster, and after June the number of sinkings began to fall. In September they were less than half those of April, and by the end of the year the crisis was past.

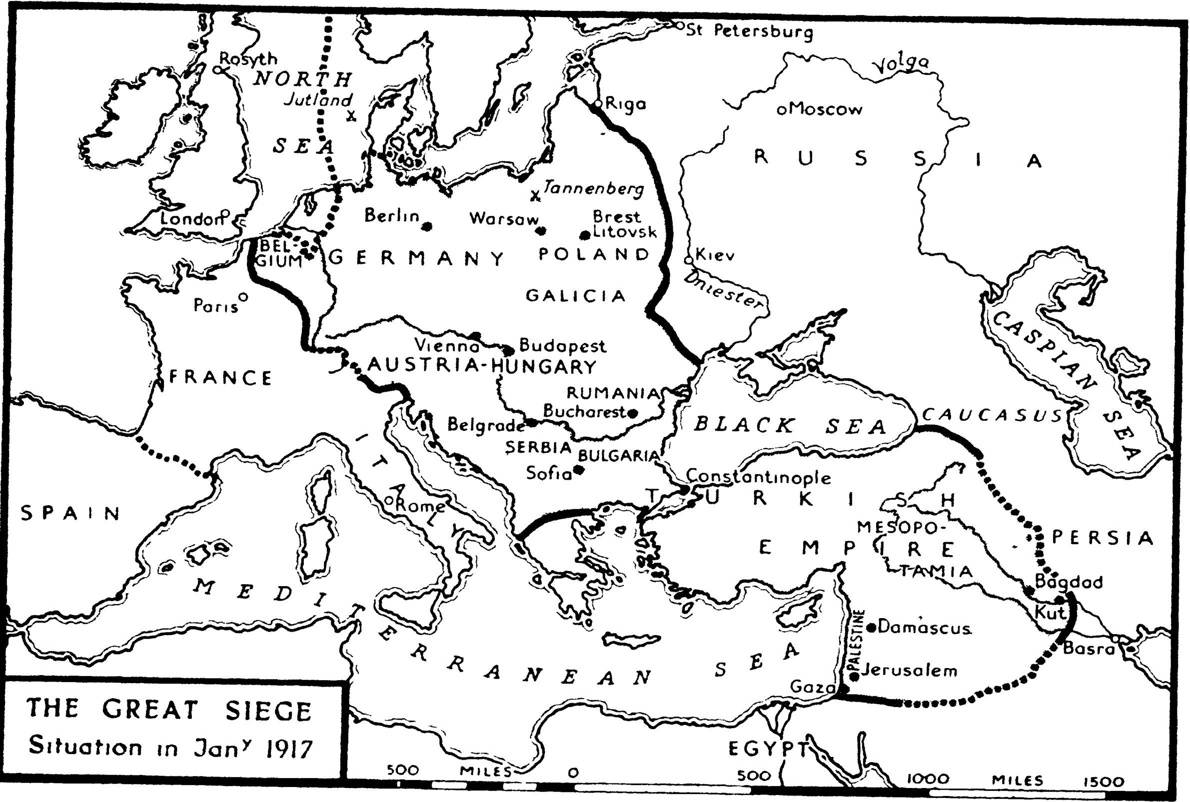
This was due partly to the arrival of American and Japanese destroyers to help in patrol and chase; partly to the sowing of minefields thirty miles wide which reduced U-boat crews to nervous collapse; partly to the development of locating devices and depth-charges; partly to the mass-production of freighters in British and American shipyards; partly to the convoy system, imposed on sceptical naval experts by the inexpert common sense of the Prime Minister; but most of all to the spirit of the men of the Merchant Navy.

Thus Germany's trump-card had failed to take the trick, and she had forfeited her stakes. She lost the war not because of the strength of her foes but because of the sins of her rulers. If they had not brought in Britain by invading Belgium she would have won it in 1914; if they had not brought in America by the U-boat campaign she might well have won it in 1918.

[1] The Geneva Convention (1899) laid down that merchant vessels may be sunk only if actually found to be carrying war material, and even then their crews had to be placed in safety; but this 'law' did not envisage submarines, which run great risks if they come to the surface to deal with their victims.

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1917. Lloyd George's new broom did not sweep effectively in the conduct of military operations. For one thing, Haig and his generals were out-and-out 'westerners', and their resignation would have caused a convulsion which the Government could not face. And the French were equally intractable. True, they had just shelved 'Papa' Joffre, convinced at last that the war would never be won by 'nibbling'; but they were as determined as ever that the expulsion of the enemy from France should be the first and main object of Allied strategy. Consequently, when the Prime Minister went to an Allied Conference at Rome in January (1917) with a cherished scheme for an attack on Vienna from the south, he found himself borne down. Briand, the French Premier—as compelling a rhetorician as himself—countered his plan with one for a great offensive in France under General Nivelle, who had won fame by a brilliant exploit in defence of Verdun. Nivelle now proposed to expand the tactical scheme which had been so successful there to a hundred-mile assault in which suddenness would replace the artillery preparation which had hitherto robbed the Allies of the battle-winning element of surprise. Lloyd George was carried away by Nivelle's lively personality and fluent English, and induced Haig to place himself under the French orders for the operation.

But everything went wrong with it. None of the subordinate generals, French or British, believed in it; and they would have believed in it still less if they had known 'what was going on on the other side of the hill'. For Ludendorff was making up for shrinking man-power by retiring to a specially prepared 'Hindenburg Line', along the chord of the arc which the Allies were about to assault. But ignoring this, and despite the fact that the plan had fallen into the enemy's hands through the imprudence of letting a copy be in the possession of an officer in the front line, Nivelle persisted. The British won a local success at Arras, but the attack as a whole broke down with heavy losses. Nivelle, ignoring his promise to call a halt if he had not broken through in twenty-four hours, kept renewing the assault for three weeks of slaughter. Then the spirit of the French army (which was much more involved in this operation than the British) wilted. After two and a half years of being thrown



THE GREAT SIEGE
Situation in Jany 1917

uselessly against barbed-wire and machine-guns the *poilus* had had enough. They would defend themselves, they said, but they would attack no more. By a miracle of good fortune the Germans failed to discover the true state of affairs. Nivelle was dismissed, and the situation was saved by General Pétain, who brought the army back to duty by a judicious mixture of tact and firmness.

The temporary breakdown of the French threw extra responsibility on the British. By this time 'Kitchener's Army', broken at the Somme, had ceased to exist, just as the 'Old Contemptibles' had ceased to exist after the 1914 Battle of Ypres. The B.E.F. now consisted of professional soldiers, K-men, and conscripts of all ages, jumbled together in battalions and batteries which had outlived regimental identity. But it was now equal to the French Army in numbers, and superior in equipment.

After the Nivelle affair Lloyd George could never get free from commitments on the western front. Partly to give Pétain time to nurse his army, and partly to throttle the U-boats in their lairs, Haig undertook an autumn offensive in Flanders. He disregarded warnings that seasonal rains and the destruction of field-drains by artillery would make the countryside a quagmire. There followed three months of horror for troops living and fighting in slime, often many feet deep, ready to engulf them at a false step; and blistered by mustard gas. Ludendorff had developed defensive tactics which opened a new phase in the art of war. Instead of holding trench-lines in strength, he built concrete machine-gun posts ('pill-boxes'), keeping the bulk of his infantry in reserve for concentrated counter-attacks. Farther down the line, in the drier neighbourhood of Cambrai, massed tanks won a brilliant little success; but this was only a minor episode in the horrible story of Passchendaele.

The untoward result of the Nivelle offensive had violent repercussions on the French Government. There had been three ministries already this year, but all were tainted with corruption and afraid to tackle the defeatism and treachery that were undermining the nation's fighting capacity. There was but one man who would grapple with the situation, and President Poincaré was at last forced to turn to him. Georges Clemenceau

(1841–1929), radical and atheist, journalist and politician, was old enough to have voted at Bordeaux in 1871 for continuing the war (p. 53). In him breathed the spirit of Danton and Gambetta. He had always been a fierce and fearless patriot, and during this war he had kept up constant vituperation of the Government for weakness and indecision. His following was limited, for he was savage and often unfair in controversy, being by nature a 'killer'—whence his nickname 'The Tiger'. Moreover he was on bad terms with Poincaré, he was on the black list of good Catholics, and he was disliked by the Briand Socialists who formed the largest party in the Chamber. But there was a general feeling that he was the Republic's only chance.

When he took office in November people watched with bated breath to see what he would do to the grafters. There were wholesale arrests; traitors were shot; the flow of German money was checked, and with it the propaganda of defeat. When asked his policy he replied, simply, *Je fais la guerre!* First the Army, then the nation, then the Allies, eventually the enemy, became aware of it.

But the fortunes of the Allies seemed to grow darker with every month. In October some German divisions which Ludendorff lent to the Austrians drove the Italians helter-skelter from the Isonzo at Caporetto, with the loss of a million men (nine-tenths of them prisoners or deserters). The one bright gleam on the horizon as 1917 ended was in far-off Palestine, where General Allenby captured Jerusalem from the Turks. But Jerusalem was a long way from Berlin!

RED OCTOBER. And the worst calamity that befell the Allies in that year remains to be told—the defection of Russia.

The Tsarist government had broken down under the strain of war, which had subjected the people to unspeakable suffering. Whole battalions had been sent to the front unarmed. There had been three million casualties in two years. The civil population died like flies of famine caused by the reckless conscription of peasants and the breakdown of communications. The more enlightened members of the ruling class besought the Tsar to save the monarchy by setting up some form of

constitutional government, but Nicholas was blindly devoted to his narrow-minded, superstitious Tsarina, who could not bear that her son should inherit a throne tarnished by limitations of power. And the Imperial pair were too closely hedged in by court etiquette to know anything of the lives and thoughts of their people—or to suppose that they mattered.

The Tsar's decision to take personal command of the army (August 1915) made him seem responsible for its disasters; and when at last (March 1917) he returned to St. Petersburg to consider demands for reform, it was too late. Army chiefs boarded his train and compelled him to abdicate. Even this was belated, for on the very same day there was a food riot at St. Petersburg in which the garrison sided with the rioters. This disturbance resulted in the setting up of a Soviet or Workers' Council. At first it had little power, and the government was carried on by a provisional ministry under Prince Lvoff. But there is generally a leftward tendency in revolutions, and in May Lvoff and his constitutional monarchists were ousted by a party of middle-class republicans under a lawyer named Kerensky.

And now a new ingredient was thrown into the cauldron. At the time of the abortive rising of 1905 (p. 206) Russian Socialists had split into a Majority (*Bolshevik*) Party, which upheld the Marxist doctrine of social and political upheaval, and a Minority (*Menshevik*) Party which was for methods of reform. The leading Bolsheviks were all exiles, of course. The most notable of them, Lenin, drew up detailed plans for the overthrow of society, which displayed a remarkable grasp of mass-psychology. But he was almost unknown outside the narrow circles of international Socialism until Ludendorff decided to repatriate him in the hope that his activities would take Russia out of the war. He and some of his friends were transported from Switzerland in a special train and put across the Russian frontier. In Russia they met other returned revolutionaries, including Leo Braunstein, better known as Trotsky.

The Allies, feeling that a democratic Russia would throw itself into the war with redoubled energy, sent Kerensky large supplies of precious war-material. But this did not suit the Bolsheviks. They saw that victory would merely change one form

of Capitalism for another; whereas defeat would batter the old regime to rubble, clearing the ground for a Marxist paradise. And this accorded with the yearnings of the people, sick of the sufferings entailed by a conflict which they did not understand. The German armies on the east remained tactfully quiescent; and when Russian soldiers heard how the peasants were seizing the estates of the great landowners they began to stream off home to get their share.

The first step of Lenin's practical revolution was for the Communist *élite* to seize the government and entrench itself in power by organized terror. In October, when he and Trotsky decided that their hour had come, they had worked out every detail; they occupied government buildings, post offices, telephones, railway stations and banks almost without resistance. Soon a Congress of Soviets from all over the country gave power to a committee of 'Commissars' with Lenin as chairman. The first act of the new Government was to confiscate estates and factories; the second was to ask the Central Powers for peace. At a conference at Brest-Litovsk in Poland (February 1918) they accepted terms by which Russia lost a fourth of its population, a third of its corn-land, and half of its coal.

THE HOME FRONT: 1917. Success in modern war depends largely on economic staying-power, and (bound up therewith) civilian morale. Failure in these matters had already knocked out Russia; later it was to lead to the collapse of Bulgaria, of Austria and eventually of Germany itself. To prevent such a disaster here was an anxious preoccupation of the Government in the later stages of the war.

People only became acutely conscious of shortages in the summer of 1916. A debate in the Commons on rising prices in October of that year led to the creation of a Ministry of Food. Lord Devonport, the first Food Controller, merely called for a voluntary effort to reduce consumption so that the difficulty and unpleasantness of compulsion might be avoided. But then came the U-boat campaign. Shortages led to lengthening food queues and to rising prices which were among the main causes of industrial unrest, holding back production. In June (1917) Devonport was succeeded by Lord Rhondda (formerly D. A. Thomas, a Welsh coal-owner) with J. R. Clynes of the Labour

Party as his Parliamentary Secretary. Rhondda took control, step by step, of all essential articles of food and drink. A subsidy to millers kept the price of bread stable at ninepence the quartern loaf. Sugar was the first article to be strictly rationed —and that not until January 1918. A solution of the main problem of distribution was found in the ration-book, tying consumers to particular tradesmen. It took another three months to overcome difficulties about extra rations for manual workers and young children, and to print the 40 million ration-books; and it was not till July (by which time Rhondda was dead and there were only three months more of war) that the system was in full operation. The Government feared that people would resent the restrictions, but these were accepted gladly as an end of queues and a guarantee of equal rights for all.

A Commission of Inquiry found that the underlying cause of industrial discontents was the growing conviction among workers that the interests of Capital and Labour were incompatible, and that employers were making fortunes out of war-contracts. An attempt was made to remove the former grievance by 'Whitley Councils'. Each industry was to have a Joint Board representing Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, with District Councils and Works' Committees acting under them. The general aim was to make a concession to the Socialist demand for workers to share in management. But little came of the scheme. Employers would not surrender the power to control their own businesses, and Unions feared that the local Councils would give fresh importance to irresponsible shop stewards.

As to profits, the Government tried to limit them by fixing prices, and by an Excess Profits Duty which rose to 80 per cent. But there were many ways of evading these measures, and vast fortunes continued to be made. Still, workpeople were not doing badly either. Prices doubled, but so did wages; and the expansion of industry enabled more members of a family to contribute to the household budget. Some part of the swollen income was invested in war savings, but much went in wasteful extravagance.[1]

[1] Certain lessons learned at this time were put into practice in 1939–44. In the earlier war it was not so well understood that spending during a shortage of goods leads to inflated prices. Income tax never rose above six shillings, and did not reach that level until 1918; no attempt was made to tap weekly wages by P.A.Y.E., and there was no Purchase Tax.

During the last year of the war two important domestic reforms were passed. The first was the *Representation of the People Act* (1918). This provided that general elections should take place everywhere on the same day; it limited the amount that a candidate might spend on an election to sixpence per elector in counties and fivepence in towns; it discouraged 'freak' nominations by requiring candidates to deposit £150, forfeitable if they failed to secure one-eighth of the votes cast; and it gave the vote to all men over twenty-one and to women over thirty. Opposition to women's suffrage had been silenced by their war-work, both in uniformed services and in civilian jobs hitherto performed by men—as bus-conductors, bill-posters, farm-hands, postwomen, bank clerks and railway porters. Nowadays we are familiar with all this, but in 1914–15 it was a startling novelty, and acted as a more convincing argument for civic rights than smashing shop windows or destroying the mails. (Incidentally it shortened women's skirts—permanently.) The reason for the higher age-qualification for women was that to give them the vote on level terms would, since they outnumber men, have put electoral control into untried hands. As it was, this Act increased the electorate by more than all previous Reform Acts combined. Later in the year women were made eligible to Parliament, the first to take her seat being Lady Astor.

Lloyd George's daring innovation in giving an educationist charge of education resulted in Fisher's *Education Act* (1918). Once more, as in 1870, Parliament having extended the franchise had to educate its masters. Fisher sought to do this by advancing the school-leaving age from fourteen to fifteen; by requiring all young persons to undergo 240 hours a year of 'continued education' up to the age of sixteen and a half; and by encouraging Local Authorities to provide Physical Training Centres and Holiday Camps. Unfortunately the bad times after the war led to the dropping of the more costly provisions of the Act; but the ideals which it expressed worked in all concerned with schooling until they were eventually embodied in the Butler Act passed towards the close of the later World War.

XXV

THE THROW

1918

Now came one of the most dramatic reversals of fortune in the history of war. Germany was like a boxer who, exhausted by his efforts against a heavier opponent, concentrates all that is left of his strength to knock him out. He seems on the point of doing so, but the other manages to hold on until the attacker defeats himself by using up his last reserves of physical and moral energy.

WAR THE MOTHER OF INVENTION. During the middle years of the war each side had tried to destroy the other's man-power by sheer weight of gunfire followed by infantry assault 'over the top'. The French had a phrase for it: *L'artillerie conquiert, l'infanterie occupe.* But these costly attacks never led to gains traceable on any but a large-scale map, for the trench system was elaborated to impregnability, with support and communication lines, and wire entanglements twenty to thirty yards deep. Old siege weapons such as the mortar and the hand grenade were reinvented. Falkenhayn was particularly successful in developing the machine-gun; and in this matter the British were long at a disadvantage, for their High Command began the war with the firm conviction that this was an over-rated weapon ('two per battalion will be ample', Kitchener pronounced).

The Germans, with their highly developed General Staff were more prescient over many things, but not over everything. Both sides blundered over the first use of poison gas, at Ypres in March 1915. The Allied Command had plenty of warning. Prisoners, some of them equipped with respirators, told of the cylinders in their front-line only waiting for a favourable wind; and even more suggestive was the fact that German communiqués accused the Allies of using it. Yet when the chlorine vapour crept into the British trenches the troops were totally unprepared. Thousands suffocated in agony, thousands more fled panic-stricken with surprise and horror. A four-mile gap was torn in the line. But the Germans had provided no reserves

to exploit their advantage, and soon the gap was closed up by heroic Canadians. This use of poison gas was a breach of the usages of war, but not of the letter of the law as laid down in The Hague Convention, which merely forbade 'the use of projectiles, the sole object of which is the diffusion of asphyxiating gases'. But both sides now broke it as soon as shells could be provided, and on the whole the Allies had the better of this competition in barbarity, for they had the whole world to draw on for materials, and the prevailing winds were in their favour.

The last phase of the battle of the Somme had been marked by another new military portent. Machine-gun and barbed-wire so paralysed attack that war seemed doomed to stagnation; but every bane has its antidote. In this case it was a caterpillar tractor such as had latterly come into use for agriculture, armoured and armed to provide cover and locomotion and fire-power all combined in the same unit. Its origin and development were purely British. The War Office having rejected the idea, it had been taken up by Churchill with the aid of naval engineers; and as Minister of Munitions he persisted with experiment and production despite further cold water from G.H.Q. Then, in the closing stages on the Somme the High Command threw the 'tanks ' into action without accumulating the numbers needed to take full advantage of the enemy's consternation on their first appearance. Many came to grief, but the others led the way to the deepest advance so far made by either side on the western front. And the advantage in this form of war remained with the British; for the Germans, oddly enough, never did much to develop tanks of their own, or to find any effective defence against ours.

But, of course, the innovation of greatest moment was the fulfilment of Tennyson's vision of 'aerial navies grappling in the central blue'. When war broke out flying was still no more than a rather expensive and dangerous form of sport. Italy had made some use of aircraft in the Libyan campaign of 1911–12, but military observers were not impressed by it. When the 'Royal Flying Corps' crossed to France in 1914 it consisted of no more than forty machines of variegated sizes and shapes.

At first aircraft were used solely for reconnaisance, and by the

end of September 1914 our airmen had brought back to us valuable pieces of information—about the wide sweep of the enemy at Mons, and about their inward swerve at the Marne. Until the development of wireless-telegraphy in 1915–16 communication with the ground was slow and clumsy. Even spotting for artillery had to be done by visual signalling.

But reconnaissance led naturally to air-fighting, for each side wanted to deprive the other of its scouts. The earliest weapons were revolvers and rifles, and when first a light machine-gun was mounted it necessitated a 'pusher' propeller. Then, in 1915, Germany adopted the design of a Dutchman (previously rejected by the British War Office) with interrupter-gear by which the bullets passed between the revolving blades of the airscrew. This gave Germany air mastery for that year. By 1916, however, it was outdone by the French *Nieuport* and the British *D.H. Scout*, which swept the enemy out of the sky for the Verdun and Somme battles. These were all single-engined biplanes, with a maximum speed of about one hundred miles an hour, and a ceiling of 15,000 feet.

It was only in the last eighteen months of the war that the systematic bombing of supplies began, and even then aiming was so primitive that no decisive results were obtained. The network of railways behind the Channel ports would have been a very tender spot for the British, but the Germans never attacked it. They were pioneers in the bombing of civilians, however. Before the war Count Zeppelin had experimented—disastrously for the most part—with huge dirigible balloons for the transport of passengers and goods. These were now sent to try to set London ablaze with crude fire-bombs; but they proved very vulnerable to explosive bullets from night-fighters, and were abandoned in favour of aeroplanes dropping high explosive. These caused a good deal of perturbation; but by modern standards the actual damage they did was negligible. Thirty raids on London caused fewer than 150 deaths.

Until the spring of 1918 the R.F.C. was a branch of the Army. An 'Independent Air Force' was then established at Nancy under Sir Hugh Trenchard, to undertake the bombing of munition works in the Rhineland; but it had not got into its stride when the war ended.

Few American machines were seen. The manufacturers took

so long perfecting the 'Liberty' engine that at the Armistice production had scarcely begun.

War Aims. Another new form of warfare developed in 1917 was propaganda, circulated in enemy countries mainly by aeroplane. It was important for those directing it to know just what they were to tell enemy peoples they had to expect if they laid down their arms, and this brought up the whole question of what we were fighting for. Since 1914 these war aims had grown, for the most part underground, with little regard for consistency or principle. In fact it had become an embarrassing subject for the Allies. One secret treaty had promised Constantinople to Russia, another had promised Dalmatia to Italy, a third (the Sykes-Picot Treaty, 1916) had partitioned the Ottoman Empire into British, French and Italian spheres. When, towards the end of 1916, President Wilson asked both sides on what terms they would treat for peace, the German Government replied evasively, though patriotic organizations such as Tirpitz's 'Fatherland Union' talked of annexing Belgium and the Longwy-Briey coalfield and most of Russian Poland; while the Entente declared that invaded territories must be evacuated, the subject-races of the Austrian and Ottoman Empires 'liberated', and (somewhat inconsistently) Poland restored to Russia.

But since then America had come into the war, and at the beginning of 1918 Wilson felt that the time had come for a definition of her aims. He hoped this would encourage the opposition in Germany, and would be a reply to the Bolsheviks' call for a general armistice. Moreover, the secret treaties which the Bolsheviks had found in the Imperial Archives and published to the world made him feel that he must warn the Allies that American idealism could not recognize such sordid bargains. So he and his friend, Colonel House, threshed out the famous 'Fourteen Points' which formed the kernel of an Address to Congress in January 1918. Subsequent events made them so important that we must note them *seriatim*.

No. 1 declared that treaties must be "openly arrived at".

No. 2 demanded the "Freedom of the Seas", implying a veto on British interference with neutral shipping in war-time.

No. 3 called for the removal of trade barriers.

No. 4 required armaments to be reduced to the lowest level "consistent with domestic safety".

No. 5 promised "unhampered opportunity of development for Russia under institutions of her own choosing".

No. 6 called for "readjustment of colonial claims", with due regard for the interests of the natives.

No. 7 said that Belgium must be evacuated and restored.

No. 8 laid down that "the wrong done to France over Alsace-Lorraine should be righted".

No. 9 declared that the Italian frontiers should be adjusted "along clearly recognizable lines of nationality". (So much for the Anglo-French-Italian Treaty of London!)

No. 10 required that "the peoples of Austria-Hungary be accorded opportunity for autonomous development". (Presumably in a federation under the Hapsburgs.)

No. 11 suggested that "Balkan relationships should be determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality". (A resounding evasion of the difficulty there.)

No. 12 proposed for nations under Turkish rule "unmolested opportunity for autonomous development". (So much for the Sykes-Picot Treaty!)

No. 13 laid down that "an independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, and should be afforded secure access to the sea".

No. 14 called for the creation of "a general association of nations under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence".'

The Address aroused great enthusiasm in America. One newspaper, usually anti-Wilsonian, called it 'a second Emancipation Proclamation'; another said it was the voice of a hundred million Americans. But the Entente was less rapturous. Italy was alarmed by Point 9, Britain by Point 2, Russian exiles by Point 5; and *The Times* complained that it ignored 'the hard facts of the situation'. The Germans, of course, regarded it as impudent; and they soon afterwards gave an example of their notion of peace-making in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

In later speeches the President elaborated his 'Points' with a number of 'Principles' which were also much quoted when it

came to making the actual peace. There was to be 'no more bartering of provinces in the great game of the Balance of Power'; 'every settlement must be for the benefit of the inhabitants'; 'self-determination was no mere phrase, but a principle of action which statesmen would ignore at their peril'; and so on.

'THROUGH TERROR TO TRIUMPH'. By the end of 1917 Germany's prospects were desperate. Her allies were faltering—the Emperor Charles was known to be sending secret peace-feelers to the Allies. The blockade was reducing the German people to starvation and hopeless misery. There were strikes on a scale never before seen. The Social Democrats, who had declared a party truce at the outset of the war, had been split by the hiving off of an Independent Socialist Party under Wilhelm Liebknecht, who was sentenced to four years' imprisonment for shouting 'Down with the War!' to troops passing down Unter den Linden. And the Centre Party joined the Social Democrats in carrying a Reichstag resolution calling for 'peace without conquests or indemnities'. The turning-point of the debate came when Erzberger of the Centre revealed that the U-boat campaign, of which such wonders had been predicted, had turned out a complete failure—after six months of it Britain was better fed than Germany. Ludendorff and Hindenburg came storming back to Berlin; they would have no talk of negotiation—'peace without victory would be an intolerable humiliation'. They threatened strikers with the trenches and insisted on the resignation of Bethmann-Hollweg. Then they returned to the front, to put into execution a plan of Ludendorff's to end the war at one cataclysmic blow. There was no time to lose. The liquidation of the eastern front had given them numerical superiority in the west for the first time in the war, but the arrival of the Americans would soon restore the advantage to the Allies, and increase it to unassignable limits. Ludendorff trained special storm-troops in tactics which were the offensive counterpart of his 'defensive tactics' at Passchendaele. The assault was to be made by innumerable little groups, covering many miles in depth, and moving forward in an irresistible flood. Surprise, continuity, speed—these were the watchwords.

The spot selected for the first attack was the right of the

British line, where General Gough's Fifth Army was strung out too thinly for safety. Pétain had recently pressed the British to take over another fourteen miles of line, on the ground that the blow was going to fall on the French; but Lloyd George would not let the last British reserves cross the Channel lest Haig should waste them in another Passchendaele. There was no sympathy between the voluble Welsh Prime Minister and the inarticulate Scottish Commander-in-Chief; Lloyd George could not understand Haig but could not dispense with him.

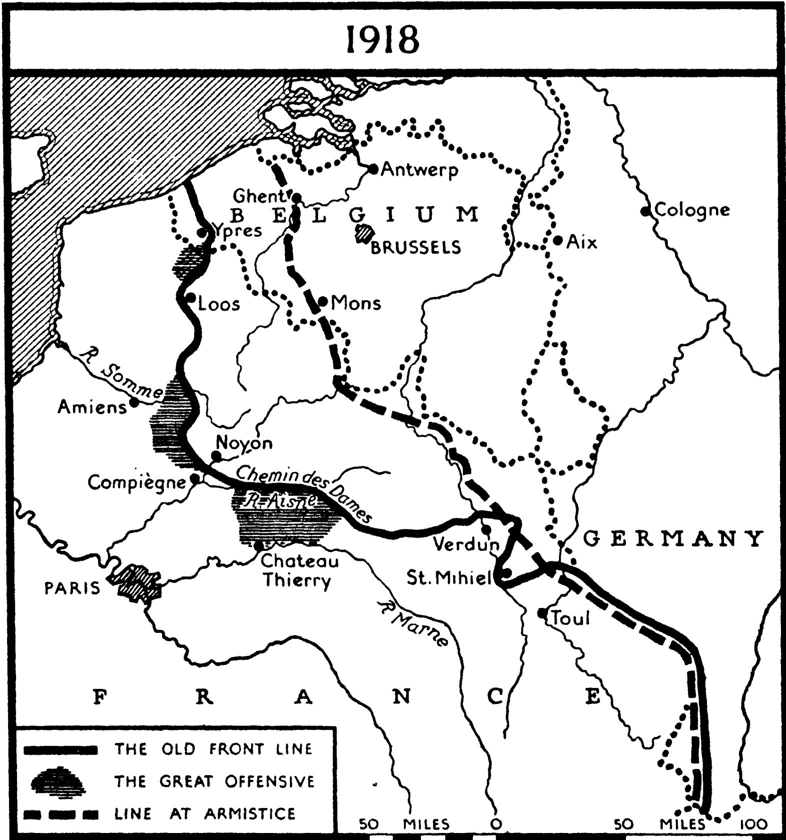
When the storm burst on March 21st (1918) it exceeded in intensity and violence anything imagined. By the 24th the Fifth Army had ceased to exist, and there was a bulge forty miles wide which threatened to burst and let the enemy through to roll back the British on the Channel and the French on Paris. All depended on holding a vital rail-centre at Amiens. It was done—nobody to this day quite knows how.

The crisis touched Haig to greatness. A unified command on the western front had hitherto been prevented by national and professional pride. The Allied Governments had recently got as far as to set up a Supreme War Council of Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, with their military advisers acting as a permanent sub-committee; but these bodies had no power to give collective orders, and in any case wars are not won by committees. But Haig and Pétain now agreed to hand over a consolidated reserve to General Foch, and this developed within a week or so to control over all operations. Foch had been under a cloud since the failure of his offensive during the first weeks of the war; he was sixty-five years old, and people said he was 'finished'. But now that a generalissimo was needed there was no one else of the required stature.

A few weeks later another bulge was made in the British line, near Ypres; and then a similar onslaught on the French brought the Germans back to the Marne, and even for a week or two across it. But such violent assaults are like the ripples when a stone is thrown into a pond—the farther they go the weaker they get. By the middle of June Ludendorff's impetus was spent, he had a long and complex line of improvised positions to hold, and he had suffered irreplaceable losses. Moreover, his troops were demoralized by finding stores of food and

drink which proved how much better off the Allies were than Germany.

In this time of peril the British people were not found wanting. Under Lloyd George's inspiring leadership their faith and courage never faltered. Recruiting depots were thronged with



volunteers as in 1914, and all industrial disputes were suspended. All the vast losses in men and material were quickly made good. The arrival of the Americans was accelerated and the appearance on the scene of these fresh divisions, with plenty more to follow, was a disheartening portent to the war-weary

Germans. In July the tide of battle, after standing still for some weeks, began to ebb. The movement was hardly perceptible at first, but on August 8th came what Ludendorff afterwards called 'the Black Day of the German Army', when 600 tanks (at last used intelligently, in masses and without preliminary bombardment) punched a fifty-mile hole in the German line.

So far the most the Allies had hoped was that they might recover by autumn the ground lost in the spring; but when at the end of September they burst through the Hindenburg Line, and Bulgaria, worn out by six years under arms, sued for peace, it began to seem possible that the war might be won in 1918.

Armistice. The negotiations which followed call for attention, in view of the charges of bad faith afterwards brought by the Germans against the Allies.

On August 13th Ludendorff, by his own admission, informed the War Council that there was 'no longer any hope of breaking the enemy's will by military action', and the Kaiser empowered Chancellor Hertling (successor to Bethmann) to take up the question of peace terms 'at the first favourable opportunity'—i.e. as soon as the retreat was halted for a moment. But it never was halted; and the cracking of the Hindenburg Line, coincident with the collapse of Bulgaria (which left Austria defenceless), broke Ludendorff's overstrained spirit. On September 29th he told the Kaiser ('who remained unusually calm') that President Wilson must at once be asked through the Swiss Government to open negotiations. Meanwhile the Kaiser, to strengthen his position in dealing with democracies, issued a proclamation announcing his Imperial Will that 'men supported by the confidence of the people should henceforth take part in the government'. Even this slight impairment of autocracy shocked Hertling, and he made way for Prince Max of Baden, a mild and well-meaning 'parlour liberal', who formed an all-party Cabinet. Ludendorff, still in a panic lest the morale of the Army should break under the strain of retreat, urged him to call at once upon Wilson to arrange an armistice based on his 'Points' and 'Principles'. But Ludendorff can scarcely have read them, for he told Max that as a great concession G.H.Q. would be prepared to go as far as the surrender of a part of French-speaking Alsace! He seems to have thought that Wilson would

call on Foch to cease fire while the German Army retired in good order to a new line.

But the President was not so easily caught. He asked if the message came from 'the authorities who had hitherto conducted the war'. Ludendorff wanted to evade this query, but the situation had got beyond his control. He resigned, and Prince Max was able to assure the President that 'arbitrary power is now abolished in Germany'. Thereupon Wilson transmitted the request to the Supreme Council in Paris. That body, acting as if it had never before heard of the 'Points', demurred to some of them. Lloyd George, for instance, declared that Britain would never agree to 'the Freedom of the Seas', if that meant letting neutrals carry contraband to her enemies. But Clemenceau bluffed the Council into leaving all such questions to the Peace Conference, while insisting that France's claim to full reparation should be made more definite. In the end a reply was sent to the German Government accepting the Fourteen Points as the basis for an armistice, with the proviso that 'compensation must be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies by her aggression, by land, sea or air'.

Meanwhile the enemy was collapsing on each of the other fronts. In Palestine Allenby, having overwhelmed the dispirited Turks at Megiddo (September 20th) swept on to take Damascus and Aleppo, and the Turkish Government capitulated. In Italy, Austria received her *coup de grâce* at Vittorio Veneto. The Dual Empire was already in an advanced stage of decay, its Hungarian divisions having been called home by a Provisional Government which had set itself up at Budapest; and on October 30th the Austrian High Command asked for an armistice.

And now revolution broke out in Germany. The people had been carried through years of misery and privation by the assurance of ultimate victory; and defeat and the overthrow of their military demi-gods came too suddenly for them to be able to adjust themselves. The Army was infected with Bolshevism by troops coming from the eastern front. The crust of discipline crumbled. The crisis came when the High Seas Fleet refused to put to sea on what the crews regarded as a 'suicide cruise'. When the ringleaders were arrested their comrades insisted on

their release, and next day there were 40,000 sailors careering over the roads of Northern Germany announcing the revolution and setting up Soviets.

The generals saw that order could not be restored by force—the troops would no longer obey. The monarchy had lost its glamour. Wilson having hinted that the Kaiser was an obstacle to peace, the Staff induced their 'All-Highest' to abdicate and flee to Holland. In Berlin Scheidemann, a Socialist leader, proclaimed the German Republic from the steps of the Reichstag, and Prince Max handed over his office to one Ebert, the cobbler chairman of the Social Democratic Party.

Ebert managed to get a ministry together, and on November 9th Erzberger the new Secretary of State, accompanied by a general and an admiral, crossed the lines in a white-flagged car. The party was received by Foch at his headquarters in a railway carriage in the Forest of Compiègne. General Weygand, his Chief-of-Staff, read out the conditions, which included the surrender of war material on a scale that would prevent any chance of the Germans resuming resistance. This was a disappointment to the German delegates, but they could congratulate themselves that the Army was saved from complete disintegration, and that they had been able to thrust the responsibility for accepting defeat upon the new Socialist Government.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of November 11th the 'Cease Fire' took effect all along the line. Just before that hour British troops entered Mons, thus ending the war where their predecessors had opened it fifty-one months before.

XXVI

PEACEMAKING

1919

Democracy had shown that it could, in the long run, wage war more successfully than autocracy; but after the strain, moral and physical, of war-time it showed up badly in the making of peace.

THE COUPON ELECTION. When the end of the war came in sight Lloyd George and Bonar Law decided on an immediate general election. We have heard in our own time the arguments for and against such a course in such circumstances. In 1945 as in 1919 the nation, fevered by war, was in no condition to resettle itself or the world; but in each case the existing House was old and tired, having been elected over issues that had now become past history; in each case the Government that had won the war needed fresh authority to make the peace; and in each case there had just been a redistribution of seats.

But other considerations also weighed with the leaders of 1918. Bonar Law saw that the existing half-Liberal House no longer represented the nation; and Lloyd George knew that he could only remain in power by Unionist votes. The two of them, standing side by side as the men who had won the war, would sweep the country. Any candidate certified by them as a faithful supporter of their Government was practically certain of election. Such certificates (Asquith derided them as 'coupons') would naturally go to the 250 sitting Unionists and the 130 Liberals who had supported Ll. G.'s displacement of Asquith; but Coalition candidates would have to be found to contest (and in most cases win) the seats held by the 130 Asquithian Liberals and the thirty Labour members. And as Lloyd George had few fresh candidates of his own and no control of the Liberal Party organization, these 160 new candidates were practically all Unionists.

The Prime Minister had hoped to keep the Labour Party in the Coalition, but its leaders saw that the growth of the Trade Unions in the war, the stimulus of the Russian Revolution, and

the Liberal split, opened glorious vistas for them, provided they struck out boldly. Henderson, leaving the Coalition Government in 1917, had rebuilt the Party on broader foundations. Hitherto it had been merely an alliance of the Unions and the Socialist societies; people could only join it by membership of one of these. Henceforth local Labour Parties were to be set up, with individual as well as indirect members. Labour declared itself 'the Party of Workers by Hand and Brain'; and in June 1918 it issued *Labour and the New Social Order*, a statement of policy which avoided anything startling or revolutionary. Thus at the Armistice the Party was all ready to withdraw from the Coalition—and to fight it.

At first the Coalition leaders were for a sensible and far-sighted peace. Lloyd George exhorted his followers to 'set aside all base and sordid ideas of vengeance and avarice'; and Bonar Law was always the mildest and least assertive of men (except about Home Rule). But their election agents all over the country warned them that the public was in no mood for forgiving and forgetting. Government speakers, carried away by the atmosphere at their meetings, promised the speedy hanging of war-criminals (including the Kaiser), and the extraction of the whole cost of the war from the German people. Much use was made on Coalition platforms of a statement by a Special Committee of City men (including the Governor of the Bank of England), that Germany would be able to pay £2,000 millions a year for an indefinite period. Ll. G. was too old a hand at electioneering to commit himself to this or any precise figure; but he did not disclose that his Treasury experts gave £2,000 millions as the total sum that was likely to be forthcoming; nor did he trouble to check the exuberance of supporters like Sir Eric Geddes, who enraptured a Cambridge meeting by promising that the German lemon should be squeezed 'till the pips squeaked'.

This soap-box oratory cheapened British democracy just when it had most need of self-respect, and burdened the Coalition with pledges impossible of fulfilment. And events proved it unnecessary. The election sent to Westminster 528 supporters of the Coalition (of whom four-fifths were Unionists), while the Opposition totalled 96, consisting of 63 Labour men and 33 Liberals. The effects were unfortunate. The Government's

majority was too big to be coherent, and soon began to fall into cliques. And our parliamentary system needs an Opposition able to provide searching criticism, and strong enough to have a prospect of forming an alternative Government. Moreover many highly respected and experienced public men were removed, at any rate temporarily, from the scene, to be replaced by plutocratic nonentities. And the great Liberal Party which had swept the country only thirteen years before had shrunk to a negligible fragment.

FIRST POST-WAR PROBLEMS AT HOME. When the reconstituted Coalition got to work it was soon seen that Lloyd George had no intention of restoring the constitutional customs suspended in 1916. The full Cabinet was revived on paper, but its meetings were irregular, and the work of government was carried on mainly by little groups of Ministers under the occasional and remote control of a Prime Minister primarily concerned with foreign affairs. The Ministry of Transport was set to bring order into the Local Authorities' management of the roads, now becoming of vital importance through the growth of motor-traffic. The true nature of the Local Government Board was at last made manifest when by an Act of this year it became a 'Ministry of Health'. Austen Chamberlain as Chancellor of the Exchequer was faced with a deficit of £350 millions—largely the effect of inflated prices. There was some talk of paying off the floating debt while money was still plentiful and cheap, by a Capital Levy on war profits. But approval of such a measure was not to be expected from such a House, and the money was soon irrecoverably dispersed in investments.

At the War Office Churchill characteristically found whirlwinds to ride. They arose over demobilization. Plans had been prepared in 1917 by which key-men were to get released first to get the framework of industry into shape before the masses came trooping back. This was sensible and far-sighted, but unfortunately it took no account of human nature. The most 'essential' men had been kept back from the forces as long as possible—many had only been 'combed out' in the emergency of March 1918. Were these now to snap up all the best jobs before men who had been out in the slough of mud and blood for years? The two months of idleness since the Armistice had

given time for impatience to fester. There were mutinies and riots, both in France and in England—some of them suppressed with difficulty after critical moments. Churchill abandoned the original scheme in favour of one with less logic but more common sense—first in, first out, with necessary exceptions. A fresh army was raised for the occupation of Germany.

Contrary to expectation the returning millions were quickly absorbed in industry. For people had so many arrears to make up in housing, furnishing, travel, food, drink and amusement, and there was so much money about from war-gratuities and war-wages and war-profits, that demand kept ahead of supply and prices continued to soar. The years 1919-20 reverberated with the biggest boom ever known, and vast sums were thrown into industrial and commercial enterprises.

This hectic prosperity reacted on the Trade Unions, which had swelled visibly during the war, in size and influence. They had doubled wage-rates; and had been cajoled and consulted by the Government. These gains they resolved to maintain, even after the conditions that had produced them had passed away. And working like a leaven within the movement was a feeling that Labour had an inherent right to a larger share not only in the profits of production but in its management. The Party had doubled its numbers in the House, and was now, owing to the eclipse of Liberalism, 'His Majesty's Opposition'; but of course a group of sixty members had little actual power in a House of six hundred. So organized Labour bethought itself how it could put direct pressure on employers, and through them on the Government. Capital, foreseeing the coming fight, had already closed its ranks by forming a 'Federation of British Industries'; and the Unions, feeling themselves threatened with a concerted attack on their war gains, forestalled it by seizing the initiative. In 1919-20 there were two thousand strikes, great and small.

Two of them had important consequences. The delegates of the Miners' Federation meeting at Southport in 1919 formulated a threefold demand: three shillings more per daily shift, a seven-hour day, and the nationalization of the mines; and the local branches of the Federation all agreed to stop work if these concessions were not made by March 15th. The Government, which had taken control of the mines during the war, set up a

Royal Commission to inquire into the position, and undertook to act on its findings; and on this understanding the men agreed to postpone their strike. The Commission consisted of three coalowners, three other industrialists, three miners' officials, and 3 other Socialists, with Mr. Justice Sankey as Chairman. It sat in public, and its examination of witnesses made excellent 'copy' for the newspapers. Bonar Law on behalf of the Government (Ll. G. being in Paris, peacemaking) accepted its interim report in favour of more pay for less work; but the full report issued a month later was by the Chairman's casting vote in favour of nationalization, and a government could hardly be justified in launching a social revolution on such slender authority. So it adopted a scheme of rationalization[1] instead of nationalization, and formed a Department of Mines under the Board of Trade, with its own Parliamentary Secretary, to bring some degree of system into the exploitation of the nation's greatest asset. But the miners felt that they had been cheated. They complained to the Trades Union Congress, which passed a resolution of sympathy. There the matter rested—for the time.

Then it was the railwaymen's turn. The Government had taken control of the railways, too; and was determined not to stabilize the swollen wages of war-time. In September the Minister of Transport announced a schedule of wage-rates involving reductions of from two shillings to sixteen shillings a week; and the N.U.R., led by J. H. Thomas, resisted this by a strike. It had two novel features. One was that each side, feeling the need of moral support from the public which was inconvenienced by the stoppage, bought space in newspapers, including whole-page displays in *The Times*, to set forth its case. The other was the mediation of a group of officials of other Unions. These negotiated a settlement by which existing wage-rates were continued for another year, and a joint Wages Board was set up.

How Not To Run a Peace Conference. The delegations of the Allies assembled in Paris, full of faith and hope, during the third week in January (1919). But they had unconsciously

[1] A word much in vogue just then, signifying cutting production costs by means of planning.

blighted their work in advance, by what they had done, and by what they had not done, since the Armistice. One misfortune was the Coupon Election which hampered the British delegation with impossible pledges. Another was the selection of Paris, the capital of an embittered belligerent, as the scene of the Conference, instead of some quiet neutral spot like The Hague or Geneva—especially as this involved the presidency of Clemenceau, a very *rusé* and adroit old politician who had all his life been looking forward to this day of revenge on Germany.

Equally unfortunate was President Wilson's decision to attend in person. Hitherto his very remoteness had given him an Olympian authority which might have served to keep the Conference at a high level. But for the give-and-take of argument with experienced negotiators he had no aptitude; and he was soon driven to accept lower standards of principle. Nobody in world history ever commanded such homage as he did in the first weeks of 1919.[1] Heartfelt greetings acclaimed him in London, Rome and Paris. Germany would have accepted drastic penalties from him without demur. But his halo faded on personal contact, especially when people began to realize that he did not really speak for the American people, having offended quite half of them by treating the success of American arms as a victory for the Democratic Party.

No agenda was prepared. It had been tacitly assumed that Wilson, having acted as the Allies' spokesman over the Armistice, would have in mind a plan for making the peace; but he had none. Procedure, too, had to be improvised as the Conference went along. Twenty-seven nations were represented, but the smaller fry concerned themselves with little beyond their own interests. Obviously if all the members of all the delegations debated everything they would never make a workable treaty; so it was agreed that the two chief delegates from the five Great Powers should form an inner Council, and periodically present their decisions to Plenary Sessions for endorsement. And the Ten soon found they had to meet in private; otherwise none of them could make concessions without being attacked by political opponents at home. From the other delegates, and from the swarms of experts who attended them, there were formed committees to inquire into all manner of subjects—geographical, political, historical, ethnographical, cultural—

for the information and guidance of the Big Ten. One of these committees was given executive power—the Supreme Economic Council, which under the chairmanship of Herbert Hoover (later President of the United States) took measures for the restoration of prostrate, diseased, starving Europe. But there was much confusion and overlapping, which it was nobody's business to rectify.

From the débris of the shattered Austrian, Russian and Turkish Empires a dozen nationalities were emerging—Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Albanians, Arabs, Armenians, Jews—all with delegations at Paris, demanding opportunities to explain their claims to the Ten, which put them in the humiliating position of suitors pleading before judges. And the Ten as 'Supreme War Council' had to keep order among peoples trying to seize disputed territory by main force. President Wilson gravely pointed out that such conduct implied doubts as to the validity of their claims; but they were too busy quarrelling to listen to reason, and the Council expended much energy in deciding what, if anything, was to be done about them. And how was Russia to be treated? The Powers dreaded the spread of Communism, and they could hardly hope to resettle the world without regard to the people who occupied so much of it; but they could not bring themselves either to destroy Bolshevism by force or to recognize it as a legitimate form of government.

And behind all these difficulties was the fact that the delegates long supposed themselves to be merely preparing for a full Congress in which the defeated States would take part. That had been the procedure at previous peace-makings; and, incredible as it may seem, no formal decision to the contrary was ever taken at this one. It just happened. Some of the Commissions suggested demands which they expected to be whittled down in argument with Germans and Turks, and were taken aback to find their maximum proposals imposed on the defeated peoples without discussion.

'Le Combat Des Trois.' Thus in the early stages progress was very slow. The only real achievement during the first month was that Wilson forced the Covenant of the League of Nations (the outcome of his Fourteenth Point) into the forefront of the Treaty. Determined that it should be accepted by the middle of

February, when he would be returning to Washington for a week or two, he got a drafting commission appointed at once with himself as chairman. Some thorny problems cropped up. One was the future of the German colonies and the Arab States of Turkey. This was settled by 'mandating' or entrusting them to Great Powers which were to be responsible to the League for ruling them properly. Another was the French desire for an international armed force under control of the League; for the American Constitution forbade such alienation of its forces, and Parliament would certainly not agree to the Royal Navy passing from British control. However, all these difficulties were smoothed away sufficiently for the Covenant to be accepted at a Plenary Session on the night before the President was to sail.

Just at this time Orlando, the Italian Premier, and Lloyd George also had to attend to affairs at home, so the meetings of the Ten were suspended. When they were resumed Lloyd George urged speedier methods and an end to the leakage of information which was leading to trouble in Parliament. It was therefore announced that henceforth there would be 'informal discussions by the chief delegates'. The Japanese, having by this time registered their country's status as a Victor Power, stayed away from these purely European discussions; and Orlando was not really interested in anything unconnected with the aggrandizement of Italy. Thus it was in effect the 'Big Three' who settled the new order, seated round the fire in hotel sitting-rooms, with Sir Maurice Hankey taking notes, and experts waiting in the ante-room to be called in for consultation.

This closer secrecy came just in time, for French demands now came up which might have wrecked the Conference if they had been debated in public.

The first was over reparations. One of the Wilsonian 'principles' was 'No annexations, no contributions, no punitive damages'; but the French and British peoples were counting on Germany being made to pay the whole cost of the war. The French talked airily of 2,000 millions sterling to start with and then 600 millions a year; and British hopes were nearly as fantastic. To justify these demands the French argued that Germany must reimburse all separation-allowances and all war-pensions, as well as paying for all damaged property. At first Lloyd George stood by Wilson in resisting this, but when ru-

mours of his moderation reached London he was adjured by a letter from three hundred Coalition M.P.s to fulfil his pledge to 'make the Huns pay' the uttermost farthing. So he had to give way, and his surrender led to Wilson's. The sum to be extorted was too vast to be computed then and there—that was left to a Reparations Committee to be formed later; and Article 231 of the Treaty declared that:

> 'Germany accepts responsibility for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Powers[1] and their nationals have been subjected in consequence of the war imposed on them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.'

Thus in later years the Germans felt that they had but to free themselves from the charge of sole responsibility for the war and they would escape liability for reparations.

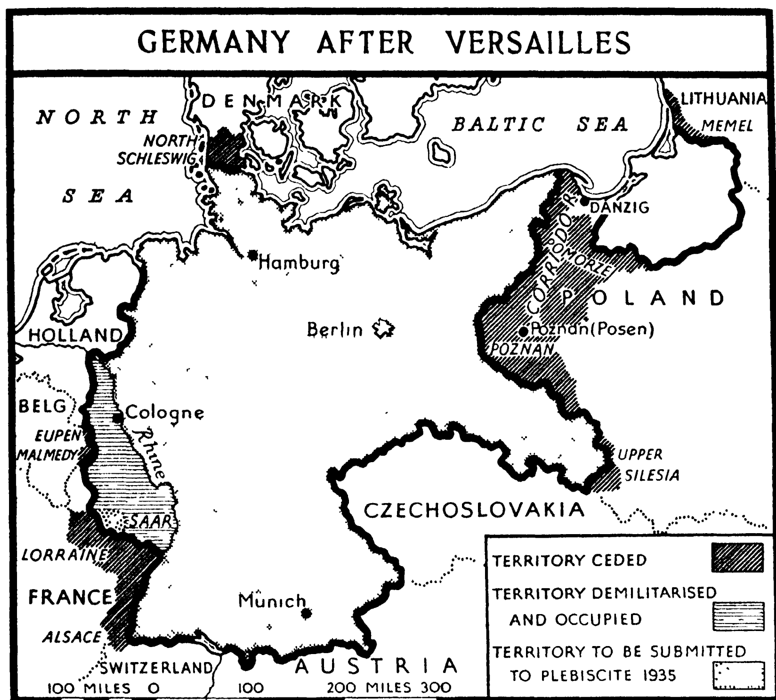
Extravagant territorial claims were made by Poland. Point No. 13 had promised the new Republic 'all territories indisputably Polish', and 'access to the sea'; but the Conference handed over to it a million indisputable Germans, and a 'corridor' to the Baltic which cut the Reich in two and included the old German Hanse-town of Danzig. Lloyd George pointed out that this was a breach of the Wilsonian 'Self-determination,' and that such a large German minority would only weaken the Republic. But he was overborne, for France wanted to build up a strong Polish ally on the other side of Germany, while Wilson had been captivated by Paderewski, the famous pianist who was the leading Polish delegate. He could only win two minor concessions: that a plebiscite should be held in Upper Silesia[2] and that Danzig should become a Free State under the League.

Even more critical was the future of the Rhineland. There was no question about the return to France of Alsace-Lorraine; but the French demand for wholly German lands on the left bank were quite incompatible with 'Self-determination'. The French declared this to be their only real safeguard against future German aggression, but the Anglo-Saxon Powers resisted the creation of a new cause of international hatred. At

[1] The United States never, strictly speaking, made an alliance with France and Britain. That was why President Wilson acted as intermediary when the Germans asked for an armistice.

[2] The plebiscite went overwhelmingly in favour of Germany.

length a compromise was reached. The left bank was to remain German but to be occupied by Allied armies removable by stages during the next fifteen years, provided that Germany fulfilled her obligations under the Treaty. The Saar coalfield was to be left in French hands for the same period as compensation for the damage done to the mines of north-eastern France; and



(above all) Britain and America pledged themselves by a 'Tripartite Pact' to come to France's aid should Germany ever again attack her.

The German Army was limited to 100,000 men, with no big guns, no tanks, and no aircraft; the Navy to six small battleships, six cruisers, twelve destroyers—and no submarines. The Allies, feeling that they must justify these restrictions by a refer-

ence to Wilson's Point No. 4, began this section of the Treaty thus:

> 'In order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations, Germany undertakes strictly to observe the military, naval and air clauses which follow.'

The Germans afterwards maintained that this preamble made their disarming conditional on that of the Allies.

Wilson and Lloyd George, in allowing blemishes to be incorporated in the Treaty against their better judgment, consoled themselves with the thought that these could be rectified when passions had cooled and the League had got into working order. Unfortunately these expectations were not fulfilled.

THE TREATIES. At length the draft was complete, and the German Government sent a deputation to receive it. A republic had been set up by a constituent assembly at Weimar. The constitution was a model of democratic enlightenment, on paper at any rate; for the assembly hoped to placate the Powers which were settling Germany's fate in Paris, and the officer-Junker class was glad to let the despised Republic saddle itself with the blame for a humiliating peace. Perhaps the Allies would have been wise to treat Germany as their predecessors had treated France after the Napoleonic Wars, forbearing to weaken by severity the new regime on which they relied to keep down the militarism that had given so much trouble. But the peacemakers of 1919 were not so free as those of 1814 to act with good sense.

The Germans learned the terms of the treaty with astonishment and indignation. They had already complained of the naval blockade, continued after the Armistice to keep them in check, and killing more civilians than during the war; and they had been expecting terms in accordance with Wilson's Principles. They asked what hope their Republic would have of maintaining itself against Communism seeping in from Russia and the forces of militarism at home, if its birth certificate was to be besmirched with such shameful conditions. Worst of all was the fact that it was to be left out of the League, the only instrument by which the Treaty could be revised.

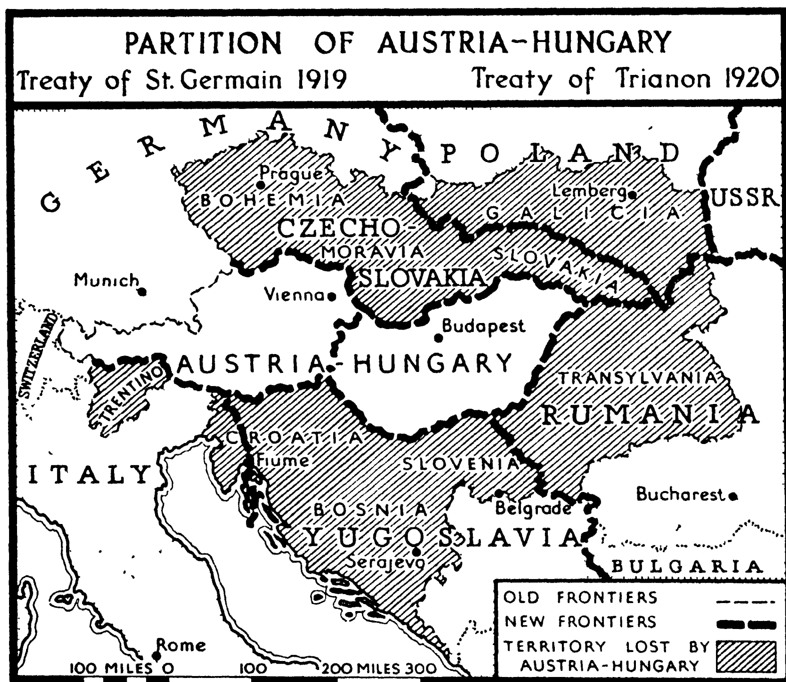
The British delegation was moved by these protests. Lloyd George had tried to have the Germans admitted to the final stages of the discussions, and had urged that they should be given a definite prospect of admission to the League; but all in vain. They were given a fortnight, afterwards extended to a month, for written protests; and they certainly made full use of their time. What they resented most were the concessions to Poland and the economic demands which they could not possibly meet when deprived of some of their best coalfields and industries. They protested against the annexation, thinly disguised as 'mandates', of colonies which they averred had in recent times been quite as well ruled as those of the mandatories. Above all, they repudiated the stigma of sole war-guilt. Again Lloyd George and his colleagues were for concessions; but Wilson was in a hurry to get back to Washington, and Clemenceau pointed out that to reopen discussions would be to admit that the terms were unjust. They had not been designed to give pleasure to the Germans, anyway.

At first the German Government thought of refusing to sign, and defying the victors to do their worst. But discretion prevailed, and the Treaty was signed on June 28th in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, where half a century earlier the Hohenzollern Empire had come into being.

The chief delegates had to go home as soon as the German treaty was signed; but they had already made a good deal of progress with the other settlements, and the Conference continued in existence for another year, the Supreme Council meeting from time to time with varied personnel to add final touches and signatures. The treaty which set up a Republic of Austria was signed at St. Germain (September 1919); a Provisional Government of Hungary was recognized in the Treaty of Trianon (June 1920); and in August a settlement with Turkey (shortlived, as matters turned out) was made at Sèvres.

The dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was not the work of the Conference. Its peoples had already hived off—the Czechs and Slovaks to combine in a new Republic, the Galician Poles to join their compatriots who had been under Germany and Russia, the Transylvanians to form part of Rumania, and the Croats and Slovenes to join with Serbia in

a Kingdom of Yugoslavia. All that the Conference had to do with these 'Succession States' was to fix their boundaries; but that proved a difficult task, especially the adjustment of Italian and Yugoslav claims of Istria, Fiume and Dalmatia. These territories had been used as bait to get Italy into the war (p. 264), but the promises of the Treaty of London were given without



regard for Self-determination; and when the matter came up at the Conference Wilson, not having been party to the secret treaty, refused to be bound by it. There was a prolonged crisis ending in a compromise which left both sides unhappy—Wilson in his conscience, and Italy in her *sacro egoismo*, a much-quoted phrase of Orlando's.

As to Turkey, the Sultan's Arab provinces had fallen away during the war; territories had been carved out of Asia Minor

for Greece, Italy and France; and in the end the Sultan had nothing left in Europe save a few square miles at the back of Constantinople, with the Straits (hitherto his best diplomatic asset) internationalized.

THE GREAT REFUSAL. President Wilson returned to America a tired and disillusioned man. Conference and Treaty had fallen sadly below the hopes with which he had set out for Europe six months before, and he was nervous about the reception that Congress would give to his handiwork. The Constitution of the United States requires treaties to be ratified by a two-thirds majority in the Senate, where his Party was now in a minority. However, he had contrived that the Covenant should be part of the Treaty, and he hoped to be able to rally the nation so strongly to his ideals that the opposition would be borne down.

But he found that disgust at the Treaty and at the prospect of America being dragged into European affairs by the Covenant was much stronger than he had supposed. He went on a great oratorical tour of the Middle West and the Pacific States, and it seemed that his eloquence was taking effect, when his nervous system, strained by the Conference, broke down. After some months he rallied a little, but was never again able to engage actively in public affairs.

Thus in the long Congressional struggle over the Covenant there was no one to take the lead in its defence against the Isolationists who wanted America to shake the dust of Europe off her feet. There were many in both Parties who were willing to accept the Covenant provided that it left Congress free to decide whether it would act with the League on each particular issue as it arose. But Wilson declared from his sick-bed that this was contrary to the whole system of collective security, and he called on the Democrats to vote against such a half-hearted proposal.

By the time the final vote was taken, on 19th March 1920, there was no longer any hope that the original Covenant would be accepted. A Democratic Senator made a great effort to induce his Party to ignore the President's message and support an amendment which would have preserved to Congress freedom of action under the League; but he could not win

enough votes to save the Covenant. The voting went as follows:

For the Treaty as amended: 28 Republicans, 21 Democrats, total 49.

Against it: 12 Republicans, 23 Democrats, total 35.

The majority of 14 in favour was 7 short of the two-thirds required by the Constitution; and the Treaty, including the Covenant, was rejected.

Thus the League had to begin life deprived of the enormous assets of unanimity among the victor Powers, and of the moral and material support of the greatest democracy in the world.

APPENDIX

A Summary of the Covenant

We shall not be able to understand the history of the twenty years between the wars without acquaintance with the significant parts of the Covenant.

It laid down that any fully self-governing State, Dominion or Colony could become a member of the League, if approved by a two-thirds majority of the existing members. Any member could withdraw on giving two years' notice.

The League was to have an Assembly, a Council, and a permanent Secretariat, housed at Geneva. The Assembly, which met once a year, consisted of representatives of all the members. The Council, which met more frequently, consisted of the Principal Allies together with four other members selected by the Assembly from time to time. Decisions at Assembly or Council had to be unanimous.

Art. VIII declared that the Council was to formulate plans for the proportionate reduction of armaments by all member-states.

We come now to the heart of the Covenant—the Articles which provide a substitute for war.

Art. X. The members undertake to respect and preserve the territorial integrity of all members.

Art. XI. Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the members or not, is declared a matter of concern to the whole League.

Art. XII. The members agree to refer any dispute to arbitration.

Art. XIV. The Council shall set up a Court of International Justice.

Art. XV. A dispute which does not seem suitable for arbitration shall be submitted to the Council; and members agree not to go to war with a party which complies with the Council's Report.

Art. XVI. SHOULD ANY MEMBER RESORT TO WAR IN DISREGARD OF ITS COVENANT UNDER ARTICLES XII, XIII, OR XIV IT SHALL *ipso facto* BE DEEMED TO HAVE COMMITTED AN OFFENCE AGAINST ALL THE OTHER MEMBERS, WHICH HEREBY UNDERTAKE IMMEDIATELY TO SUBJECT IT TO THE SEVERANCE OF ALL FINANCIAL, COMMERCIAL OR PERSONAL INTERCOURSE. IT SHALL BE THE DUTY OF THE COUNCIL IN SUCH CASE TO RECOMMEND TO THE SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED WHAT EFFECTIVE MILITARY, NAVAL OR AIR FORCE THE MEMBERS SHALL SEVERALLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE ARMED FORCE TO BE USED TO PROTECT THE COVENANT OF THE LEAGUE.

Arts. XVIII-XXI dealt with treaties between individual members.

Art. XXII instituted Mandates, by which backward States were entrusted to the care of certain members, who were responsible to the League for their good government.

Art. XXIII dealt with conditions of labour, and with the prevention of disease. It led to the setting up of an International Labour Office at Geneva, the Constitution of which was incorporated in the Peace Treaties. The preamble of that Constitution declared that peace could only be established on social justice, and that 'the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve conditions in their own countries'. Its annual conferences drew up 'Conventions' on the subject, but these were only binding on Governments which ratified them.

XXVII

DECLINE AND FALL OF THE COALITION 1920–1922

The shock which the war had given to the 'body politic' had delayed effects, which needed more drastic treatment than had been realized. The application of the peace settlement on the Continent was equally difficult, and the Entente came near to breaking-point over the treatment of Germany. These difficulties eventually brought down the Coalition Government.

SLUMP. By the end of 1920 the post-war boom was over. Continental countries had used up their purchasing power and wanted to be self-sufficing. The war had created new frontiers, twice as long as the old, along which new patriotisms were erecting higher tariff walls than ever. In America high 'protection' was one of the main tenets of the Republican Party now in office with Warren Harding as President. Germany, weighed down with reparations, was no longer able to buy from Britain—she could only meet her obligations by exporting without importing. India, now controlling its own tariff, excluded Lancashire cotton goods. Foreign markets could only be recaptured by lowering production costs, and four-fifths of these were wages; but Labour clung desperately to its war-time standard of life, and this was the underlying cause of the mass unemployment which blighted the country for the next twenty years.

A certain amount of unemployment is essential to the Capitalist system, without it there would be no reservoir of labour on which employers could draw to expand their businesses. Before 1914 about 7 per cent of organized labour was thus idle. War industries practically ended it, and during the boom year 1920 the percentage was about three. But in the spring of 1921 it rose to eleven, and by midsummer it was twenty-three. In numbers it rose from 700,000 to nearly two millions in the course of that year; and it continued to range between 1½ and 2½ millions until in 1939 war again provided work for all.

An immediate effect of this onset was a difficulty in financing National Insurance. During the war boom the Insurance Fund

under the Act of 1911 accumulated a reserve of 25 millions; so in 1920, with trade still buoyant, a new Act brought in other industries and doubled both premiums and benefits. But the revised scheme was hardly started when the slump falsified all the calculations on which it was based. The nest-egg was quickly consumed, and the coffers of the Fund stood empty. Many of the unemployed had not paid enough contributions to entitle them to benefit, but these could not be allowed to starve; and rather than drive them to Poor Law institutions (which would have cost as much and might have fanned discontent into flame) the Government decided to let them draw a weekly 'dole' of fifteen shillings outside their contract rights. A special Act authorized loans to meet the cost, often amounting to a million sterling a week.

Unemployment would have been less acute if emigration had recommenced. In the ten years before the war 6½ million persons had settled abroad—half of them in the United States, a quarter in Canada; but in the ten years after it only 1½ millions did so. The United States now restricted immigration; and though the quota for Britain was higher than for some other countries, it kept out all but the most determined applicants. An *Empire Settlement Act* (1922) provided £3 millions a year to help people to make new homes in the Dominions and Colonies, but the imperialist glamour had faded. Many of the emigrants did not find conditions in the Dominions to their taste, and the fund remained largely unspent. And after 1930 the flow actually turned back: more people returned from the Dominions to this country than settled in them.

'BLACK FRIDAY.' The Trade Unions struggled hard to resist the reduction of wages by which employers were trying to reduce costs and recover markets. In 1921 the Lancashire cotton mills were shut for six months over a cut of 30 per cent in piece-rates; but the mill-owners did not mind much, as they had been producing at a loss, owing to Japanese and Indian competition. Conditions were much the same in other industries. In 1922 there was a three months' lock-out in the Midland engineering shops.

But the dispute with the most serious implications was in coal mining. The miners had gained something in wages and hours

following the Sankey Report, but it was characteristic of their idealism that this improvement in material conditions seemed less important than the principle of nationalization, which had been side-tracked. Their smouldering resentment blazed up again in the spring of 1921. There had been a catastrophic fall in the world-price of coal, owing partly to new mines being sunk, partly to the increased use of liquid fuel. In 1920 it had stood at 85s. a ton; in 1921 it fell to 24s.—far below the cost of production. The Government, harried on all sides to reduce expenditure and relax controls, saw danger ahead. Under the *Coal Production Act* (1917) it would become responsible for making up deficits in guaranteed wages and profits, at a cost of something like £5 millions a week. The Act would expire in August, but on February 28th the Government announced that decontrol would be brought forward to March 31st, giving miners and owners a month to find some way of getting a pint each out of a pint pot. Discussions came to a halt over whether wage-scales should be nation-wide or should be settled for each coalfield separately. In some districts conditions made coal getting much harder than in others, and to the miners equal pay for equal work was a fundamental principle. What they wanted was a National Wages Pool; the owners could apply the same principle to their profits if they chose—that was their affair. The owners refused, offering regional agreements as before; and over this issue the mines closed down on April 1st.

And now the Triple Alliance threatened to come into action. The National Union of Railwaymen and Transport Workers' Federation announced that unless the Government opened negotiations with the Miners' Federation they would support it by a sympathetic strike. These were bold words, to which it would not be easy to give effect. The T.W.F. was as yet only a loose agglomeration of Unions, with no centralized authority; and the Railwaymen's officials were solid men with no relish for daring strokes. And while rank-and-file Trade Unionists were ready to support the Miners' defence of the living wage, they could not work up much interest in their National Wages Pool.

This duality of aim was the rock on which the Alliance was to founder. The night before the sympathetic strikes were due to begin some M.P.s, distressed at the Government's muddling, asked miners and owners to come and explain their cases in a

committee room of the House. Frank Hodges, Secretary of the M.F.G.B., argued against wage cuts and local agreements; but, having come to the conclusion that united action could not be expected over the Wages Pool, he hinted that the Miners might postpone their strike if they were given an immediate guarantee of a living wage. His Federation promptly disavowed this, and he had to resign his post; but nothing could undo the effect of his words. The leaders of the Railwaymen and Transport Workers seized their chance to retrieve the gage of battle which they had incautiously thrown down. On the next afternoon (15th April 1921—'Black Friday' in the annals of Trade Unionism), J. H. Thomas announced from the steps of Unity House, Euston Road (H.Q. of the N.U.R. and the T.W.F.) that as the Miners were not agreed on their demands the sympathetic strikes were cancelled.

The Miners felt betrayed again—this time by their comrades. They held out until July, when they accepted a Government offer of a final £10 millions to be spent in limiting the wage cut to an average of 11s. a week for the next three months. Owners' profits were to be restricted to 17½ per cent of their wage bill; but in the matter of the Pool the men were completely defeated.

Meanwhile a new complication had appeared in the relations between Government and organized Labour. Very few people knew what was happening in Russia, but the revolution there was producing a novel example of Socialism in power, and the Bolsheviks were offering 'fraternal support' to the victims of Capitalism in other countries. Naturally this aroused deep-seated hostility in the ruling classes of Britain, France and America. At the time of the Peace Conference Lenin and his colleagues were by no means firmly in the saddle; it was not at all certain that a counter-revolution might not hurl Communism into oblivion in Russia, as it had done in Germany and Hungary. So the Supreme Council encouraged and supported armed forces raised by 'White' adventurers—Generals Denikin in the south and Yudenitch in the north, and Admiral Koltchak in the east. But there was no cohesion or common purpose among them, and Trotsky's Red Army destroyed them one by one. The last fling of the counter-revolution came in 1920 when the Poles, dissatisfied with the eastern frontier suggested by Lord

Curzon on behalf of the Supreme Council, invaded Russia. They were thrown back by the Red Army, which advanced to striking distance of Warsaw. The Western Powers were alarmed, but could do very little about it. Fortunately, Trotsky knew better than to tempt fortune too far. He withdrew to the Curzon Line, and the Poles were able to claim that they had saved Europe from barbarism.

While the crisis was at its height the Railway and Transport Unions exerted 'direct action' by refusing to handle munitions of war being sent to Poland for use against their 'Russian comrades'. It was a brief interlude, unimportant in itself, but it raised a question which was to be posed with greater emphasis a year or two later: Is it permissible for any section of the community, however numerous and important, to dictate policy to the legitimate and constitutional government of the country?

THE IRISH 'TROUBLES'. Another running sore for this Government, as for so many before it, was the Irish question, now posed in a more terribly insistent form than ever. Sinn Fein had swept the old Nationalist Party away at the election of 1918, and the eighty members elected had set up an assembly of their own in Dublin instead of crossing to take their seats at Westminster. This clearly put the Home Rule Act out of date; but what was to take its place? Self-determination for all Ireland would give a three-fourths majority to a government which the other fourth would die rather than accept. The *Government of Ireland Act* (1920) tried to solve the problem by partition. It set up a Parliament and Ministry for Southern Ireland and another for Northern Ireland, with members from both at Westminster as well. The North reluctantly acquiesced, but Sinn Fein indignantly refused. It was certainly odd that this small island, whose inhabitants all consider themselves Irish, should be divided into two separate States; but religious antagonism seemed to make any form of union impossible.

The Act having been passed, the next thing was to put it into effect. Sinn Fein, basing itself on the sovereignty of the people as expressed at the polls, regarded the British as usurpers, whereas the British Government declared that until the new constitution was set up, it (the British Government) was the only lawful authority. The Sinn Fein Government under de

Valera, a half-Spanish ex-schoolmaster who had been an Easter rebel, contrived to take over many of the legal attributes of power, including the collection of taxes; and the 'Irish Republican Army' assassinated members of the Royal Irish Constabulary and burned their barracks down, until the King's writ ceased to run in the west and south. Lloyd George, aware that the first duty of a Government is to govern, sent over a special force recruited from recently demobilized officers and men, who from their khaki tunics with black R.I.C. caps became known as 'Black-and-Tans'. There followed a horrible war of ambushes and gang murders. The situation encouraged nationalist rebellions in India and Egypt, and the Government's attempts to deal with it caused anger in the Dominions and America with their active Irish minorities.

However, de Valera became convinced that Britain would, in the end, prove too strong to be overcome by the forces at his command. When in June 1921 King George V in opening the new Parliament of Northern Ireland appealed to both sides to let bygones be bygones, his words came at an opportune moment. An armistice was arranged and a Sinn Fein delegation came to London. Negotiations were long and difficult. At one point they seemed to be breaking down; but dismay at the prospect of the bloodshed starting again impelled the Irishmen to accept the proposed settlement (December 1921).

The Treaty (a word which itself seemed to imply the sovereign status of both parties) made Southern Ireland a 'Free State', whose Ministers and officials were not to swear allegiance to the King, but merely to promise to be 'faithful to the group of nations forming the British Commonwealth'. This settlement, which gave Ireland far more Home Rule than Liberals had ever proposed, was the work of a predominantly Unionist Government —one of its chief authors was Lord Birkenhead, who as F.E.Smith had done so much to organize resistance before the war. The Unionist Party reverted to the name 'Conservative'.

De Valera denied that the delegates had any authority to accept terms short of an All-Ireland Republic; but after a long and strenuous debate the Dáil (Assembly) accepted the Treaty by a small majority; whereupon de Valera resigned. The new Government set up a constitution with a Dáil elected by proportional representation and a Governor-General nominated

thing at all. The total was eventually fixed at £6,600 millions —a great reduction from the £1,200 millions per annum suggested at first, but about three times as much as British experts now calculated that Germany could pay.

The Cannes meeting was an attempt by Lloyd George to make reparations part of a general settlement of political and economic problems left by the Treaty. He suggested that a great conference should be held a few months later at Genoa, to which Soviet Russia and Germany should be invited; that the security of France should be guaranteed by Britain; and that reparations should be reviewed in the light of these proposals. Unfortunately, photographs appeared in the French Press showing Briand, the Premier, taking a first lesson in golf from Lloyd George on the Cannes links—confirmation, it seemed, of suspicions that the Welsh wizard was weaving spells to make the Frenchman forget the interests of France. He was driven from office and replaced by ex-President Poincaré, the incarnation of hatred of the Boche. Thus the Cannes Conference had merely embittered Franco-British relations. The Genoa Conference was duly held, but with Poincaré (who began his term as Premier by declaring that he would not let fall one of the weapons given to France by the Treaty) in control of French policy, it naturally resulted in nothing—save the further (however unjust) discredit of Lloyd George and his 'amateur' meddling with foreign affairs.

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE. The Treaty had implied that the Powers were about to disarm, and in 1921 a hesitant step was taken in that direction.

What really led to this first Disarmament Conference was American concern at the rising ambitions of Japan, especially at her attempts to monopolize the trade of China and Manchuria. This, and a recent Anti-Immigration Law, which had practically forbidden Japanese to settle in the United States, threatened to lead to war; and by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance this would involve Britain—an appalling prospect. The American Government hoped that Britain would let the Alliance drop when the time came for its renewal in 1921; but this was a good deal to ask; for the United States, having suffered from Britain's command of the sea in the first two years of the war, had now

started building a fleet that would soon be the strongest in the world. Japan was also building super-*Dreadnoughts* which, if the Alliance was renewed, would redress the balance. But for Britain to have to fight alongside Japan against the United States would not bear thinking of, and it seemed mad that just after jointly fighting 'a war to end war' the two English-speaking nations should be vying with each other in producing instruments of destruction. These feelings were shared by Americans, and the Harding Government was eager to prove that, although they declined to join the League, they were as ready to work for peace as anybody. So the President invited the Powers to a conference at Washington for the reduction of armaments and for a reconsideration of the situation in eastern Asia. It met in November 1921, and in the course of three months produced a Four-Power Treaty, a Five-Power Treaty, and a Nine-Power Treaty.

By the Five-Power Treaty Britain and the U.S.A. agreed to limit their total battleship strength to 500,000 tons each, while Japan was to have 300,000 tons and France and Italy 175,000 tons apiece. Thus Britannia formally renounced the rule of the waves; but it was a consolation that 'our American cousins' (who could have outbuilt us to any extent they liked) were content with equality. The attempt to limit other categories of warships broke down; while as to armies, France flatly refused to dismiss one of her million soldiers, or to stop supplying large sums to her allies (Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Poland) to enable them to build up similar forces, so long as Britain and America refused to guarantee her against another German attack.

The Four-Power Treaty replaced the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. It saved Japan's 'face' by including the United States and France in a general agreement by which the signatories promised to respect each other's possessions and to act in consultation in all matters concerning the Pacific. Japan tried in vain to induce Britain to refrain from building a naval base at Singapore, required now that we should no longer have an ally in Far Eastern waters; but she succeeded in getting the United States to demilitarize the Philippines and Britain to demilitarize Hong Kong, without any reciprocal undertaking on her own part.

By the Nine-Power Pact Japan very reluctantly joined Britain, the United States, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Portugal, in promising to respect the sovereign independence of China, and to maintain 'The Open Door' there for the trade of all nations on equal terms.

END OF THE COALITION. There had always been something bloated and unhealthy about the Coalition, and it had now become an object of derision. Governments are generally blamed for bad times, and this one had shown little resource in dealing with the feverish boom of 1920 or the depression which followed. In a spasmodic attempt to cut expenses it had appointed an Economy Committee under Sir Eric Geddes, but the dismissal of some thousands of officers and officials (the so-called 'Geddes Axe') had no appreciable effect on the Budget. A hundred millions sterling had been spent on abortive expeditions against the Bolsheviks and another hundred millions in pacifying Iraq, which resented being 'mandated' to Britain by the League. The Prime Minister's well-meant excursions abroad had left the European situation more confused and difficult than ever; and now in the autumn of 1922 there was an alarming crisis in the Levant.

After the Treaty of Sèvres the Turks had been ready to lay down arms to the British, but resented the Greeks (for centuries their vassals) being authorized by the Supreme Council to occupy some of the best portions of Asia Minor. They rose in revolt under Mustafa Kemal, a hard-bitten soldier-adventurer who had made a name in the war. He set up a National Government at Ankara which repudiated the Treaty and the supine Sultan who had accepted it. King Constantine of Greece was confident that his army of 200,000 would quickly make an end of Kemal and his followers. British military experts had a poor opinion of the Greek army, and said that in advancing from its base at Smyrna into Asia Minor it was risking disaster. But Lloyd George had no faith in generals, and he saw in a rosy vision a strong and friendly Greece guarding British interest in the eastern Mediterranean. So he determined to support her, despite the fact that this annoyed the French (who had just made a treaty with Kemal), and affronted the eighty millions of the King's Moslem subjects in India.

During most of 1922 Kemal and Constantine glared at each other in the middle of Asia Minor, gathering strength and nerve for an attack. The Coalition Government was at sixes and sevens. Curzon was having difficulty in preventing an open breach with France; and E. S. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, allowed the Viceroy to issue a pro-Turkish memorandum without consulting the Cabinet. His defence was that in existing conditions (p. 298) 'joint responsibility' had become a farce; but he had to resign.

At the beginning of August the Prime Minister made a speech in Parliament so encouraging to the Greeks that King Constantine had extracts from it issued as an Army Order to his troops; and Kemal, expecting that it would incite him to attack, determined to be beforehand. On the night of August 10th he struck, and within twenty-four hours the Greek army was in headlong flight back to the coast. The Kemalists, drunk with slaughter, now came up against the French and British troops occupying the Straits zone which had been demilitarized by the Treaty of Sèvres. A little group of Ministers in London (including Churchill the Colonial Secretary, but not including Curzon the Foreign Minister) issued a proclamation announcing that the Government would stand no nonsense from Kemal, and that it was seeking military aid from the Dominions. Thereupon the French Government withdrew its contingent from the Straits, leaving the British (about 1200 strong) unsupported at Chanaq. Fortunately, under the tactful handling of their commander, Sir Charles Harington, Kemal decided that it would be premature for him to challenge the British Empire. He agreed to a conference at Mudania, which led in the following year to the Treaty of Lausanne (July 1923), the starting-point of the Turkish Republic of to-day.

Lloyd George and Churchill could claim that their bluff had been successful; but the Chanaq crisis finished off the Coalition, whose impulsive and unpredictable actions had endangered the peace of Europe. By-elections were going overwhelmingly against it, and many Conservative back-benchers were becoming very restive under the leadership of a Radical 'outsider'. They believed that the nation wanted a respite from wizardry and a return to more staid and sober methods of government. Some senior members of the Party, on the other hand—such as

Austen Chamberlain, Lord Balfour and Lord Birkenhead—felt that it would be shabby to discard in summary fashion the brilliant leader under whose banner they had gained office. The issue was fought out at a meeting of Conservative members at the Carlton Club on October 19th (1922). Chamberlain and Birkenhead spoke strongly for maintaining the Coalition; the chief speeches for ending it came from Bonar Law (who had resigned from it six months before), and from Stanley Baldwin, an almost unknown member who had only recently been admitted to the Cabinet. Baldwin prophesied that if the Party continued any longer under Lloyd George it would be irretrievably shattered. When a vote was taken there was a majority of more than two to one in favour of quitting the Coalition.

Lloyd George at once resigned, along with Chamberlain, Balfour and Birkenhead. His place was taken by Bonar Law (the first Conservative Prime Minister since 1905), with Baldwin as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Parliament was dissolved in November, and there ensued a most confused General Election, in which the Coalition was attacked not only by the Asquithian Liberals and the Labour Party, but by the Conservatives who had been its mainstay, its only defenders being the Lloyd George Liberal group and a handful of Conservative ex-Ministers. The result was a House consisting of 356 Conservatives, 144 Labour Members, 60 Asquithians and 55 Lloyd Georgians. Ramsay MacDonald, re-elected to Parliament and to the leadership of the Labour Party, became official Leader of the Opposition, and people wondered if there could be any future for Liberalism.

XXVIII

REACH EXCEEDS GRASP

1922–1926

Having broken up the Coalition, the Conservative Governments of Bonar Law and Baldwin made attempts—high-hearted in motive but depressing in effect—to restore Britain to her pre-war financial position. Labour attained ambitions both in parliamentary and direct action: it formed a Government and conducted a general strike; but in neither of these adventures did it gain more than the lessons of experience. And both Conservative and Labour Governments tried hard but unsuccessfully to restore goodwill among the nations.

THE BONAR LAW GOVERNMENT. The Conservatives, with 'normalcy' as their aim, began with an attempt to fund the war-debts owned by and to the country.

During the war we had paid for indispensable American supplies by the sale of securities—vouchers for money which earlier generations of British investors had put into American enterprises; and when these were exhausted we had bought on credit. France and Italy had also needed munitions, but had been obliged to use British credit to get them. Thus by the end of the war Britain owed £1,000 millions, but was owed double that sum. So far, these debts had been left 'unfunded', with interest added year by year, but nothing settled about repayment. Britain had proposed at the Peace Conference that all international war-debts, incurred in a common cause, should be cancelled; but this project fell through. And by 1923 Americans had outlived their Wilsonian idealism. 'Why', they were asking, 'should we be called on to pay for Europe's crazy war? Surely we have done enough in sending our lads to fight in it. And how can European Powers plead inability to pay their debts when they are building up great armies and navies?' So Congress set up a Foreign Debt Commission to collect the money, with interest.

Britain could not resist such a demand; but whereas the debt had been incurred in the form of goods at inflated prices, its discharge by similar means was prevented by American tariffs;

and payment in gold would cripple our internal credit system unless the Bank of England could get some from our Continental debtors. So Balfour, acting as deputy Foreign Minister, asked the French and Italian Governments to repay enough of their debt to enable us to meet immediate American demands. But this made bad feeling all round. The French did not intend to pay anybody anything unless they got full reparations from Germany, while the Americans denied that there was any connection between war-debts and reparations, and resented being placed in the position of money-grubbers preventing Britain from acting generously to her former allies.

Thus when Baldwin, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, went over to Washington to arrange a settlement, he had to accept terms which laid a grievous burden on the British tax-payer. Britain was to pay £33 millions in gold annually for ten years, and then £38 millions for fifty-two years. The effects were unfortunate. Britain's debtors repaid little and grumbled much; while the outflow of gold across the Atlantic held up Britain's industrial recovery and did more harm than good to the United States.

France and Britain now parted company altogether over reparations. Bonar Law and Curzon (Foreign Secretary) left the last of the conferences on the subject (at Paris, January 1923) 'regretting that there should be irreconcilable differences on a subject so serious'. For Poincaré had decided to get what he called 'productive guarantees' of payment from Germany; and declared that if Britain would not co-operate, France would act alone. A week later French troops marched into the Ruhr coalfield to make the Germans pay—in coal if in nothing else—by the pressure of military occupation. But they were met by a boycott which soon had all Germany behind it. The miners refused to get coal, the railwaymen stopped working the railways; all public services ceased; no one would supply the intruders with anything. The effect was that France and Germany ruined each other. German industries came to a stop for lack of fuel; by the end of the year there were 10 million unemployed. The German Government met its expenses by printing more and more paper marks unbacked by real assets, and this caused the most catastrophic inflation in history. At the beginning of 1923 the value of the mark had already fallen to 2000 to the £

instead of the pre-war 20; by May it was 100,000; by September it was 5 millions. The result was a social revolution, for the savings of a lifetime might disappear in a night, and the middle classes lost what raised them above the proletariat. The effect on France was not so bad as that, but it was bad enough. Gone for ever was the hope of full reparations on which Governments had been relying; and national credit fell so badly that the franc, which before the war had stood at 25 to the £, fell to 90. In the autumn a new German 'Government of Fulfilment' promised to pay what it could, and the French troops were withdrawn. But the amount likely to be forthcoming had been reduced rather than augmented by the occupation, and Poincaré resigned.

THE FIRST BALDWIN GOVERNMENT. Bonar Law had been a sick man when he became Prime Minister, and after only seven months in office he had to resign and go away and die (1923). The circumstances of his career and his lack of personal ambition prevented him making a deep mark on history. His fierce fight against Home Rule, his self-effacing support of Lloyd George in the war, and his zeal for his Party: these are what he is chiefly remembered by. As Asquith remarked, when pall-bearer at his funeral, he was 'The Unknown Prime Minister'.

Who was to succeed him? Circumstances compelled the King to anticipate the Conservatives' choice of a leader. Austen Chamberlain had put himself out of court by upholding the Coalition at the Carlton Club meeting, and it seemed that the King would send for Lord Curzon. He certainly thought so himself. He was (apart from Balfour, now no longer in the running) the senior member of the Party; he had been Viceroy of India, and a member of the War Cabinet. But he was too haughty in demeanour and too uncertain in temper to make an effective chairman of a Cabinet; and it was felt to be almost impossible in twentieth-century conditions for a Prime Minister to conduct national affairs from the House of Lords. So at the last moment he was passed over in favour of Stanley Baldwin, who came of a prosperous Midland manufacturing family, but had scarcely been heard of until the last year or two. Curzon hid his chagrin from the public eye, and accepted Baldwin's invitation to remain at the Foreign Office.

However, the Government did not last long. Baldwin was a genial, shrewd, well-liked man, his Government had a solid majority, and there was no reason why it should not continue in office for years. He certainly was not disposed to make trouble in Europe: he discouraged Curzon from any thrusting of British ideas upon France over reparations; and when Mussolini (now establishing his Fascist dictatorship in Italy) occupied the Greek island of Corfu, Britain joined France in putting the brake on effective action by the League of Nations.

But this masterly inactivity could not safely be applied to the great domestic problem of the day. The figures of unemployment were always tending upward; areas that had once throbbed with activity, such as the coalfields of South Wales and the shipyards of the north-east, were falling derelict; thousands of men were becoming unemployable by losing their technical skill and the habit of work; tens of thousands of lads were coming on to the labour market every year with no prospect of jobs. To many Conservatives, including the Prime Minister, it seemed that the remedy was Tariff Reform. But the Government's hands were tied by the fact that at the recent election Bonar Law had placated Free Traders by promising not to adopt any fundamental change in fiscal policy during that Parliament. Thus when Baldwin, in a speech at Plymouth in October (1923), avowed a belief that Protection was the only long-term cure for unemployment, he was practically announcing a dissolution of Parliament; for he could not very well remain in office without asking the country for a mandate to apply what he proclaimed to be a panacea for its ills. It later appeared that he had not realized the implication of his words, but they could not be recalled, and a fortnight later he dissolved the one-year-old Parliament.

He promised the electors to let wheat and meat come in free, and to put his duties mainly on manufactured goods. But his Party was divided and half-hearted: some blamed him for taking up the subject, others for stopping short of the food taxes which alone could save farming. The Liberals, on the other hand, closed their ranks to fight for their 'good old cause', and Labour was as firm as ever against Protection in any shape or form. In the election (December 1923) the Conservatives lost a hundred seats. They were still the strongest Party, with

256 members; but Labour now had 191 and the Liberals 158.

When the new House met Asquith had to make a momentous decision. During the weeks between the election and the meeting of Parliament he had been (to use his own words) 'cajoled, wheedled, taunted, browbeaten, all but blackmailed' to support the Conservatives in saving the country from a Socialist Government. But he considered it against the spirit of the constitution for the older Parties to combine to withhold from Labour the opportunity they would have accorded each other without question. Liberals could support a Labour Government over an agreed programme of social reform; and if it tried to push its Socialism too far they would be in a position to throw it out. And he tacitly assumed that when Labour found itself unable to carry on the government it would in turn support the Liberals in doing so. That was a miscalculation which cost his party dear.

THE FIRST LABOUR GOVERNMENT. When Parliament met the Liberals supported a Labour Motion of No Confidence, putting the Government in a minority of 72. Baldwin resigned, and the King sent for Ramsay MacDonald.

The Labour programme at the election had been pure Liberalism, and the personnel of the Ministry was equally reassuring to those who had feared that it would hurl the country into red ruin. Haldane was its Lord Chancellor, Lord Chelmsford its First Lord—both solid ex-Liberals; there was a nucleus of Trade Union officials like Stephen Walsh (War) and J. H. Thomas (Colonies), who had never been doctrinaire Socialists; Philip Snowden, at the Exchequer, was a Gladstonian Free Trader, and his budget provided 'a free breakfast-table' by halving the duties on sugar, tea and coffee. The Ministry included a few 'intellectual' Socialists like Sidney Webb and Noel Buxton, but these were all apostles of 'gradualness'. The only doubtful factor was the Executive Committee of the Party—a non-Parliamentary body to which Ministers were answerable for their policy and Members for their votes.

The Prime Minister took over the Foreign Office, which left him little time or attention to cultivate good relations with the Liberals on whom his Government depended for survival. Liberals found themselves called on to save the Government by

voting for measures with which they had little or no sympathy; and they got tired of being 'patient oxen', especially when the Government ignored their request for a measure of Proportional Representation.[1] Moreover, it soon became obvious that a Labour Ministry was no guarantee against trade-disputes—there were strikes and rumours of strikes all the time, and the Party's election-promise of bold remedies for unemployment remained—an election-promise.

But it was generally agreed that MacDonald brought a breath of fresh air into the sultry atmosphere of European politics. As a matter of fact fortune had put some good cards in his hand. Firstly, the stern, unbending Poincaré had just been displaced by the easy-going Radical Herriot. Secondly, Germany had just taken up a 'policy of fulfilment'. Thirdly, the Reparations Commission, which had always been dominated by French politicians, had been replaced by a committee formed at American suggestion to deal with reparations not from the point of view of patriotism but from that of economic common sense. This Dawes Committee (so named after its American chairman) worked out a sliding-scale of payments, and a scheme to enable Germany to buy foreign currency with which to pay, without crippling her re-established monetary system. These good cards MacDonald played with skill. A long week-end at Chequers with Herriot led to a London Conference which resulted in American financiers lending Germany the money to set the Dawes Scheme going. Their loan proved the first thrust-off down a slippery slope, but nobody could foresee that at the time.

Yet it was over foreign policy that the Government fell. One of MacDonald's first acts had been to recognize the Soviet Government. It had now lasted five years; and though Lenin

[1] A system by which minorities would have more representation than in our 'first-past-the-post' elections. It would lump together small constituencies, making them jointly return eight or ten Members, and enabling the voter to put figures opposite the candidates' names in the order of his choice. The drawback to it is that our parliamentary system works best with two strong parties, which form the Government and the Opposition, the latter being sobered by the knowledge that it will some day be the Government.

had recently died there was no sign of its being overthrown. Delegates came to London to discuss a commercial treaty which would give the Soviet badly-needed credits. Prejudice was still very strong against the Bolsheviks, however; and there was general relief when the Prime Minister announced that, as the Soviet Government would not pay the debts of Tsarist Russia no loan would be given to it. But the Party Executive insisted on the negotiations being resumed; and in August, at the very end of the parliamentary session, MacDonald had to announce that he was about to sign a treaty which would guarantee a loan as soon as the Soviet had paid half the old debt. And the outcry thus provoked was redoubled when the Government suddenly halted proceedings against a Communist journal which had been prosecuted for preaching disaffection to the armed forces—another instance, it was surmised, of pressure from the 'reds' of the Party Executive.

When Parliament reassembled Liberals and Conservatives joined to pass a vote of censure and MacDonald dissolved Parliament. A week before polling-day the Foreign Office published what purported to be an intercepted letter from Zinoviev, the head of the Comintern (the 'Third Socialist International', with headquarters in Moscow—practically the propaganda department of the Soviet Government) to Communists in Britain, urging them to undermine the loyalty of the Army. The Soviet Government denounced the document as a 'clumsy forgery'. Whether it was so or not was never clearly proved; but the election could not wait for the result of the inquiry which MacDonald ordered, and the effects of the 'Red Letter' was to increase the swing of the pendulum which would in any case have carried the Conservatives back into office. In the new House they had 413 Members to 151 Labourites—and 40 Liberals. The Liberals found another argument for Proportional Representation in the fact that, if each party had been represented in proportion to the votes cast for it, they would have had 125 Members. And it was noteworthy that the total Labour vote was greater than before. The Party's first Government was dead, but its spirit was marching on.

GOLD AND COAL. Baldwin healed the breach in the Conservative Party by bringing the ex-Coalitionists into his Cabinet—

Austen Chamberlain for Foreign Affairs, Birkenhead for India, and Balfour as Lord President. But his most remarkable appointment was Winston Churchill to the Exchequer. For Churchill had not yet rejoined the Conservatives. Liberalism obviously held no future for him, but he had stood at the recent election as an 'Independent Constitutionalist'—i.e., anti-Socialist. Perhaps Baldwin wanted to keep his active spirit within the pale of the Government until such time as he should feel able to re-enter the Conservative fold; and the appointment gave comfort to all Free Traders.

But any office held by Churchill seemed stirred to 'make history'. As part of his first budget (1925) he restored the Gold Standard. At the start of the war the Government had suspended the obligation which Peel's *Bank Act* laid on the Bank of England to pay out gold in exchange for foreign currencies. Most other countries (but not the United States) had taken similar measures; and since then the value of the £, as of all these currencies, had fluctuated in the world's money market according to supply and demand. During the war Britons had to buy dollars to pay for American goods so much more than Americans had to buy pounds to pay for British goods that the exchange value of the £ fell from $4.86 to $3.30. This encouraged Americans to buy British goods; but British bankers and financiers did not like to see the £ losing its position as international currency. And now the City and the Treasury working as usual hand-in-glove, judged that the time had come to restore its old position.

It was a gallant gesture, but it crippled British exports. For the past ten years an exporter for every £-worth of goods got foreign money which when exchanged for pounds brought him twenty-two shillings; the same amount of foreign money now brought him only eighteen shillings. He had either to ruin his sales by raising his price or to lower his costs by reducing wages. The effect was seen at once in the coal trade. On June 30th the Mineowners' Association gave the statutory month's notice to end existing wage agreements, and announced that in future they would pay less for a longer day. On July 28th Baldwin told a Miners' deputation that in no circumstances could the Government come to the rescue with a subsidy. Three days later, on the eve of the breakdown, 3000 delegates from other Unions

met in London and decided that railways and road-transport would stop carrying coal forthwith. At this Baldwin promised to ask the House for a subsidy to make up the miners' wage cuts until the end of the following April, and announced that the Government would meanwhile appoint a Royal Commission to devise some long-term solution of the problem. He upheld this retreat by the argument that a strike would have cost the nation a great deal more than the amount of the subsidy; but it seemed to support the contention of the 'red' element in the Unions that united action by Labour would master any Government. Still, the Prime Minister had purchased a respite in which to prepare for the decisive struggle with organized Labour that seemed to lie ahead.

LOCARNO. The problem of reparations seemed to have been solved by the Dawes Plan; but the French were still anxious about their security. The Versailles Treaty had not given them the Rhine Frontier, nor had it created a buffer Rhineland State; and the Tripartite Pact had fallen through. As for the League of Nations, it had too many loopholes to inspire confidence. Three British Governments in succession had tried to put France at her ease by repairing the shortcomings of the Covenant. The Baldwin Government had worked on a 'Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance', the signers of which agreed to submit all disputes to arbitration and to assist victims of aggression; but this was rejected by MacDonald, who substituted—another outcome of his collaboration with Herriot—the 'Geneva Protocol'. This made obligations under the Covenant more definite: any Power which took up arms instead of submitting its case to the League was to be treated as an aggressor without more ado. It was eagerly ratified by France and other 'consumers' of security; but Britain, the chief 'producer' of that commodity, did not like the prospect of having to put the Royal Navy at the disposal of the League, and Austen Chamberlain, Foreign Secretary in the second Baldwin Government, refused to go on with it.

That really ended the hope of a universal organization of peace; but the Government was quite ready to consider a more limited undertaking. Something of the sort was urgent, for the

time was at hand when by the Treaty of Versailles the Asllie were to withdraw their troops from the Rhineland, and France was refusing to do this because the German Army was evading the disarmament clauses of the Treaty. Fortunately Briand and Stresemann, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries, were men of good will, ready to go as far as their countrymen would permit. Stresemann was an ardent nationalist who took care to keep in with the military clique which was working to undo the effects of defeat; but he was a practical politician, and it was from him that the new proposal came. It aimed at allaying the two most dangerous causes of unrest—France's quest for security and Germany's for self-respect. France, Germany and Britain were to join in guaranteeing the existing Franco-German frontier, Britain undertaking to support either if attacked by the other; and Germany was to be admitted to the League of Nations. Britain would not extend her guarantee to Germany's eastern frontier; but the success of the negotiations was largely due to the tact, persistence and resource of Austen Chamberlain.

The agreement made at Locarno, on Lake Maggiore (together with one in which Belgium and Italy joined, whereby the signatories undertook never to go to war with each other), was signed on 1st December 1925. It was greeted with general rejoicing; people felt that at last the war era was really over, and that, as Briand said, we were now 'all good Europeans'. Events were to show that the hope had begotten the faith; but the international atmosphere became more genial for a year or two, at any rate. Chamberlain was rewarded with the Garter, being one of the very few commoners to be so honoured in the long history of that Most Noble Order.

THE GENERAL STRIKE. The Coal Commission appointed in pursuance of the Government's promise to the Miners was a very different affair from the Sankey Commission of five years earlier (p. 300). It had neither miners nor mineowners on it, and no publicity disturbed its six months of calm deliberation under the chairmanship of Sir Herbert Samuel. Its Report, presented in March 1926, emphasized the need for the industry to be reorganized. It did not propose nationalization, but recom-

mended that the State should buy out the royalty-owners[1] in order to facilitate the amalgamation of the innumerable little collieries that hindered economical working. It pronounced subsidies to be radically unsound, and declared that a reduction of wage by 15 per cent and an increase of hours from seven to eight was for the time being inevitable.

The subsidy, which had cost the nation £20 millions—double Baldwin's estimate—would expire on April 30th; so the crisis was at hand, and the Miners' officials lost no time in laying their case before the country. Why, they asked, should they be penalized for the chaotic state to which private ownership had reduced the mines? A. J. Cook, Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, proclaimed the watchword: 'Not a minute on the day, not a penny off the pay!' and claimed that they had the backing of the whole Trade Union Movement. The T.U.C. (or rather its Industrial Council, which alone was in continuous being) had not really given definite assurance of active support, but did not like to weaken the arm of comrades going into battle by saying so. For the Miners' officials had convinced their own members, at any rate, that a united effort by the Trade Union movement would extort a permanent subsidy, which would be a long step towards nationalization. Ever since the days of Robert Owen Socialists had sometimes talked of coercing the Government by a General Strike, in which all the essential industries would stop work simultaneously. It had hitherto been a pipe-dream of visionaries, but the moment seemed to have come for the dream to be materialized.

After an April spent in fruitless negotiations the Miners' Federation called out its members rather than accept wage scales no longer augmented from the Treasury. The Trades Union Committee felt that if the Miners were again deserted as on 'Black Friday' the whole working class would be at the mercy of employers for a generation. And they thought (perhaps *made* themselves think) that a Government which had granted a subsidy to prevent a coal-strike would be even more strongly impressed by the threat of complete paralysis. So it called for a strike in certain 'first-line industries'—transport, railways, en-

[1] Apart from the colliery company which owned and worked the mines, a royalty had often to be paid on each ton of coal raised to the landowner beneath whose property the workings ran.

gineering, iron and steel production, electrical work, and printing—to take effect on May 3rd. The Government replied with a Royal Proclamation declaring a State of Emergency, and bringing into effect measures for safeguarding essential services which had been worked out during the winter.

The T.U. Committee spent May 2nd trying to induce the Government to renew the subsidy for another fortnight, within which time they 'confidently believed' that a settlement could be reached 'on the lines of the Samuel Report'. But meanwhile the printers of the *Daily Mail* refused to set up a leading article abusing the Miners, and on this pretext the Prime Minister broke off negotiations. It seems that he had been convinced by Churchill and Birkenhead that since a clash was inevitable this was the moment for it.

So the strike-notices took effect at midnight on May 3rd. It was a peculiar affair. Most strikes are to extort better wages or conditions from employers; this one aimed at putting pressure on the public to put pressure on the Government to put pressure on the Coal-owners to reopen negotiations with the promise of a renewed subsidy. And the strikers had made some serious miscalculations. Firstly, the rapid development of the motor lorry, which could be driven by amateur strike-breakers, greatly reduced the effect of the railway stoppage. Secondly, it was soon manifest that the public to be inconvenienced consisted mainly of working-men and their families. Thirdly, the absence of newspapers was such a startling break in daily routine that people began to believe the Government's warning that this was an attempt at revolution; and it gave the Government a monopoly of the manipulation of news through the only channel left open—broadcasting. And, lastly, those who supposed that a few days, or even weeks, of inconvenience would demoralize the British people, underestimated its toughness and good humour.

Still, however mistaken the leaders may have been in calling the strike, there was nothing half-hearted about the response. The completeness of the stoppage was a demonstration of the strength and solidarity of the Trades Union movement which surprised the officials themselves. But the T.U.C. Committee in London was disconcerted. It had started the strike without really intending it or preparing for it, and it had been deceived in the hope of a speedy victory. On May 8th its members were

alarmed to learn from a speech in Parliament by Sir John Simon, a distinguished Liberal lawyer, that a strike called not in furtherance of a trade dispute but to coerce the Government was illegal—a breach of contract; and that in trying to substitute their own will for that of Parliament they were attacking constitutional government. Men who had really 'declared war on the community', in Simon's words, would not have been disturbed by his *obiter dicta*; but the members of the T.U.C. Council were not Marats or Trotskys. They intensified their anxious search for a way out of their dilemma; and in the nick of time there appeared a *deus ex machina* in the form of Sir Herbert Samuel. He gained the Cabinet's 'unofficial' approval for a 'Memorandum of Proposals for the Settlement of the Coal Dispute'. These proposals were a renewal of the subsidy pending further negotiations, and the setting up of a 'National Wages Board' with a neutral element. The T.U.C. lost not a moment in agreeing that this was a reasonable interim settlement, adding that it was 'forthwith taking the necessary steps to terminate the General Strike'. The King in a Proclamation called on his people to set aside all rancour; and the B.B.C. broadcast the nation's gratitude to the Prime Minister, ending with Blake's call to build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land.

The Miners felt that the other Unions had betrayed them again. They struggled on until the autumn, with some help from foreign mine-workers. But a million men and their dependants could not support life indefinitely without regular wages, and one district after another gave in. The general effect of the terms was a slight reduction in daily pay for eight instead of seven hours.

XXIX

'REST AND BE THANKFUL'
1926–1931

After Locarno and the General Strike there were five years of placidity, at home and abroad; but the miasma of unemployment kept national vitality at a low level, and the outward tranquillity of Europe concealed insecure and impermanent conditions.

LEGISLATION IN TRANQUILLITY. The second Baldwin Government put through six important Acts. Two, the first and the last, emanated from the new Ministry of Health. The Minister was Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940), half-brother of the Foreign Secretary who, like their father, had as Lord Mayor of Birmingham concerned himself with the health and housing of their native city. The first fruit of his new appointment was a *Widows' and Orphans' Contributory Pensions Act* (1925), which filled some of the gaps left by National Insurance and Old Age Pensions. It enabled working-men's widows to draw ten shillings a week, with allowances for children under fourteen, and it lowered the qualifying age for O.A.P. from seventy to sixty-five. Towards the cost of these benefits employers contributed fourpence a week, employees twopence, and the Treasury found the rest—and a very considerable 'rest' it turned out to be. Such a benefit from an ordinary Insurance Company would cost a man of, say, twenty-five a premium of 1/6 a week.

In 1926 an *Electricity* (*Supply*) Act brought Britain somewhere near other modern countries in availability of the most important source of light and power. Our backwardness in the matter was due to a lingering prejudice against anything being done by Public Authorities that could possibly be done by private enterprise. That prejudice was circumvented by a characteristically British compromise. A Central Electricity Board was set up, consisting of paid Commissioners under the remote control of the Ministry of Transport, who answered for it in Parliament. It was charged with constructing main transmission-lines (the 'grid' which now disfigures our countryside), purchasing

current from approved generating-firms, and distributing it to 'authorized distributors'. Within three years the consumption of electricity doubled, and Britain rose from seventh to third of the nations in this respect.

The Government followed up its victory in the General Strike by a measure designed to prevent a recurrence of it. The *Trade Disputes* Act (1927) declared any strike illegal which aimed at coercing the Government or the community, and any sympathetic strike by Unions not directly concerned in the dispute; it forbade Civil Servants' Unions to belong to any federation of other Unions; and it laid down that members of a Union could only be called on to subscribe to its Political Fund (with which it supported M.P.s and paid election expenses) if they declared in writing their wish to do so. (Hitherto they had had to contract *out* of the levy if they had conscientious scruples against it.) There was some talk of another General Strike to protest against this Act, but the Unions had had enough of that sort of thing for the present, and many of them were almost bankrupt.

In 1928 the Government completed the process begun in 1832 of making the House of Commons representative of the whole adult population. The Act of 1918 (p. 284) had restricted women's votes to those over thirty, owing to a hesitation to give them electoral preponderance; but the time seemed to have come to cast such fears aside and let women vote on exactly the same terms as men. Some Conservatives feared that this 'Flapper Vote', as they called it, would lead to the eclipse of the Party; but as matters turned out the Conservatives won two of the next three elections.

Churchill tried in his 1928 budget to give more elasticity to industry and agriculture, and thereby diminish unemployment, by relieving them of the rates payable to Local Authorities. Farmland was exempted altogether, factories and transport undertakings as to four-fifths of their annual value, the cost being spread over the community by an increase in the petrol tax. And this led to an important change in the financial relations between the Treasury and the Local Authorities. County and County Borough Councils already drew grants-in-aid for Education and the Police (subject to good reports by inspectors of the Board of Education and the Home Office respectively);

henceforth it was to give all Local Authorities, including District Councils, a block grant towards general expenses. This varies according to their population, of course, but the figures are also 'weighted' to meet local conditions. Thus 100,000 residents of a fashionable watering-place, where rateable value is high and there are practically no unemployed to be maintained, may count as only 250, whereas the same number in a town in a 'distressed area' may count as a million.

Then in the spring of 1929, just when the sands of the 1924 Parliament were running out, Neville Chamberlain put through a great *Local Government Act*. When the Ministry of Health was created in 1919 it took over from the old Local Government Board the administration of the Poor Law, condemned by the famous Report of 1909 (p. 216), but still dragging on an unhonoured existence. It was hoped that most of the need for Poor Relief would be met by National Insurance and Old Age Pensions, the Boards of Guardians being retained merely to meet any cases which those Acts did not cover. But post-war unemployment put out all such calculations and threw burdens on the Guardians which they could not possibly support. Public feeling, even on the Boards themselves, prevented any reimposition of the 'Workhouse Test', and scales of outdoor relief were increased; but no sympathetic handling could remove the aversion which the very words 'Parish Relief' inspired in those who needed it. The time had come to abolish the old Poor Law altogether, as the Report of 1909 had recommended. The new Act handed over the main duties of the Guardians to 'Public Assistance Committees' of County and County Borough Councils, while hospitals and institutions for the blind and for infant welfare were to be controlled by the existing 'Public Health' and 'Education' Committees of those Councils.

DISARMAMENT AND WORLD PEACE. Locarno opened a period of Anglo-Franco-German goodwill, based on the friendly relations of the three foreign ministers; but no progress had been made towards disarmament since the Washington Conference. Locarno had guaranteed only one frontier; and nobody could suppose that Germany, now represented on the League Assembly and a Permanent Member of its Council, would long acquiesce in her existing position, or feel secure while she remained defence-

less amid neighbours armed to the teeth. Insecurity breeds unrest, and inequality rancour. And there stood Article VIII of the Covenant for all to read.

In 1925 the League Council set up a Preparatory Commission to clear the ground for a full Disarmament Conference later on. But it made slow progress. Was peace-footing or war-footing to be taken as the basis, in reckoning the relative strength of armies? How were armies, navies and air-forces to be measured against each other? And were they to be measured by personnel, or by cost? At the fourth session Soviet Russia was represented, and its delegate Litvinov gave the Commission a shock by suggesting that the States should *disarm*, liquidating all armed forces and destroying all apparatus of war. The other Powers became unanimous at last—in rejecting this proposal as quixotic.

In the same year British, American and Japanese naval officers met at Geneva to carry the Five-Power Treaty of 1922 a stage further by limiting the number and tonnage of cruisers and destroyers. This did much more harm than good to the cause of disarmament. The delegates quarrelled in the most unseemly manner over the British claim for extra cruisers to guard the oceanic trade-routes of the Empire; and after the Conference had broken up in disorder it was disclosed that American armament firms had clubbed together to send a paid agent to stir up disagreement.

The next move to strengthen the Covenant came from an unexpected quarter. Briand took the picturesque phrase 'Outlawry of War' (coined by an American lawyer) as the core of a draft for a Franco-American non-aggression pact; and Frank Kellogg, the American Secretary of State, widened the scope of the pact to make it open to all States willing to 'abolish war as an instrument of policy'. There was little real substance to it, for a State that would keep this pledge would in any case keep the Covenant; but Kellogg wanted to advertise the Republican Party for the Presidential election of 1928, and European statesmen were not disposed to question too closely so welcome a sign of American interest in non-American affairs. The pact was signed in Paris, amid universal acclamations, in August 1928. Its official title was 'The Pact of Paris'; but it was generally named after its two original sponsors. It consisted of two short clauses:

> 1. The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy.
>
> 2. The High Contracting Parties agree that the settlement of all disputes which may arise among them shall never be sought except by pacific means.

There was no provision for the interpretation of its vague wording, or for compelling the signatories to fulfil their pledges. Perhaps that was why it was signed by sixty-three States—seven more than had accepted the Covenant. Its chief interest to-day is the melancholy one that it was the nearest approach the nations ever made between the wars to unanimity.

THE 'SAFETY FIRST' ELECTION. As the 1924 Parliament drew towards its constitutional end in 1929, the three Parties prepared for the fray; but no very clear issues divided them. The Conservatives relied mainly on their record: Widows' Pensions, Abolition of Poor Law, Kellogg Pact. The Government had given the country sane, sound rule, and would go on doing so, and the nation would do well to bear the ills it knew rather than fly to those it knew not of.

This would have been more convincing but for the ever-darkening cloud of unemployment. By this time it was noticeably worst in the heavy industries and in textiles—the foundations of Victorian prosperity. For in coal, steel, machinery and ships, and woollen and cotton goods, our industrialists had to contend with French and German competition using plant and methods developed since 1918, and with Americans cutting costs by mass-production more successfully than ever; while British firms handicapped themselves with out-of-date machinery and father-to-son traditions of management, and British Trade Unions obstructed 'speeding-up' lest employers should be able to do with fewer hands.

The Conservatives' failure to deal with this industrial decline, even in their election propaganda, invited the other Parties to fill the gap. There was a great revival of Liberalism, now reunited under Lloyd George after the retirement and death of Asquith. The Party funds which Lloyd George had divided with Bonar Law at the break-up of the Coalition now

became available for a great effort to recover lost ground. A committee produced a five-hundred-page treatise on *Britain's Industrial Future* which addressed itself largely to providing jobs for all, expecially by public works such as road-making, to be financed by a great loan.

The Labour Party had now fully recovered from the General Strike. In fact that episode, though depressing to the Trade Unions, gave fresh impulse to parliamentary methods as opposed to the direct action which had been such a fiasco. In a comprehensive statement of its aims entitled *Labour's Appeal to the Nation* MacDonald and his colleagues announced as their chief aims: Peace and Disarmament, Housing and Slum Clearance, Development of the Transport Services, Reform of the Coal Industry, Raising of the School-leaving Age, a fairer deal for Agriculture, bigger and better Pensions and Unemployment pay—all to be paid for, apparently, out of the reduced taxation which was also promised. None of the proposals was specifically Socialist; and from now on Marxist organizations (notably the I.L.P., once under MacDonald the germ of the Party but now a left wing 'splinter' led by James Maxton of Clydeside) dwindled to mere 'ginger groups' outside the fold.

In the tactical conduct of the campaign the Labour Party instructed its supporters in constituencies without Labour candidates to vote Conservative rather than Liberal. This was an astute move, for it tended to make Labour the only alternative to Toryism. The result was a House of 288 Labour Members, 260 Conservatives and 58 Liberals. Labour was for the first time the largest Party in the House, though the Liberals, forlorn remnant as they were, still held a precarious balance of power. They had more reason than ever to complain of the electoral system, for with half as many votes as Labour they had only a quarter as many seats. (Incidentally, the Conservatives actually polled more votes than Labour.) But to the two major Parties it seemed that the true remedy was not Proportional Representation but the extinction of Liberalism.

This time Baldwin did not wait to be turned out, but resigned at once, and MacDonald formed his second Ministry. His desire to absorb Liberalism was shown in his Cabinet-making. Wheatley, the most 'advanced' member of the 1924 Ministry, was now omitted. The Prime Minister did not return to the

Foreign Office; his tenure of it had brought him some personal credit, but had left the Government lacking in direction and control. The new Foreign Secretary was Arthur Henderson, ex-Boilermakers' official, prominent lay-preacher, member of the Lloyd George War Cabinet, and now Secretary of the Party—soundness and moderation personified. The constitutional requirement that at least two Secretaries of State must be Peers was met by the appointment of Lord Thomson as Secretary for Air, and by making Sidney Webb, who took the Colonial Office, Baron Passfield. J. H. Thomas became Lord Privy Seal with the special task of dealing with unemployment. A notable innovation was the appointment of a woman Cabinet Minister—the Right Honourable Margaret Bondfield, Minister of Labour.

And now the nation sat back to see what Labour would do.

LABOUR ON THE DEFENSIVE. It did not do much. The Government had a special mandate to cure unemployment, but in this its failure was positively spectacular. J. H. Thomas had old George Lansbury and young Sir Oswald Mosley as ministerial assistants, and a new department of specially selected members of the Civil Service. After a much publicized trip to Canada he anounced that he was returning with a complete cure; but the nature of it never became apparent; and when after a year the number of unemployed rose from 1½ million to 2½ million he was quietly transferred to the Dominions Office. Meanwhile Mosley, a rich and highly connected young man whose energetic personality had already carried him out of Conservative and Liberal Parties in turn, produced a memorandum of his own, comprising a grandiose scheme of public works. But this the Prime Minister pigeon-holed until Mosley lost patience, resigned, and formed a 'New Party', with 'action' as its watchword. The fact was—we can see it much more clearly to-day than anybody could then—that the whole world was already in the tightening grip of the greatest economic crisis of modern times—a crisis which no one nation could tackle single-handed. And the disease was fated to get a good deal worse before it began to get better.

Henderson did first-class work in preparing for the long-talked-of Geneva Disarmament Conference; but C. M. Trevel-

yan's Education Bill, extending the leaving-age to fifteen, with five shillings a week compensation to parents for the loss of their children's earnings, was killed by the financial crisis of 1931, much as Fisher's Bill had been by the slump of 1921.

Profiting by experience MacDonald co-operated with the Liberals more readily than in 1924. To please them he appointed a Parliamentary Committee under Lord Ulleswater (ex-Speaker) to inquire into electoral reform. Nothing came of it, but Churchill in one of his slashing attacks on the Government ridiculed the Prime Minister as 'The Boneless Wonder' because of his pliability over such questions. The Government took it somewhat amiss when the Liberals joined the Conservatives to kill a Government bill amending the *Trade Disputes* Act of 1927; but it was said that MacDonald was not really sorry for its demise. Churchill pictured him saying privately to Lloyd George: 'Just look at that monstrous bill the Trade Unions have foisted on me. Do me a favour and I'll never forget it. Take it upstairs[1] and cut its dirty throat!'

However, the Conservative Party was also fissured by discontents and dissidences. There was grumbling at Baldwin's flaccid leadership, and the Protectionist element complained that after the rebuff at the polls in 1924 he had gone too far in his reaction against Tariff Reform. Lord Beaverbrook of the *Daily Express* had founded an 'Empire Free Trade' crusade, and Lord Rothermere of the *Daily Mail* a 'United Empire' party, both advocating preferential duties on the staple products, including foodstuffs, of the Dominions; and these groups actually won several by-elections against official Conservative candidates.

Another dissentient group resented Baldwin's support of plans (with which we shall shortly make closer acquaintance) to give Home Rule to India. Churchill actually withdrew from the 'Shadow Cabinet' on the Opposition Front Bench over this issue, thereby forfeiting his claim to office when the Party should return to power.

Thus the Labour Government, anaemic as it was, seemed to

[1] Every bill has to be examined by a Committee of the Whole House, or by a Standing Committee, forty or fifty strong, representing the Party-strength of the House. A bill sent before a Standing Committee is said to be 'taken upstairs'.

be secure for some years to come, if only from the weakness of its opponents. 'Regardless of their doom the little victims played', happily unaware of 'the ministers of fate and black Misfortune's baleful train' gathering around them.

XXX

THE GREAT BLIZZARD
1929–1931

Modern conditions tie the prosperity of every country to that of its customers; to Britain, dependent on foreign trade for its daily bread, their prosperity is vital. In 1929 a world slump began in the United States. Britain had not so far to fall as America, but it was far enough to be extremely uncomfortable, and it destroyed not only the Labour Government, but almost the Labour Party. It even swept away the nation's traditional Free Trade.

WORLD TRADE IN THE DOLDRUMS. After the boom of 1920 and the slump of 1921 a fairly stable balance of prices and production seemed to have been reached in Britain by 1923. But towards the end of 1927 foreign markets began to decline again, dragged down by the combined weight of a number of causes which had hitherto worked only fitfully.

In the first place, improvements in machinery and organization economized skilled labour and thereby diminished purchasing-power.

In the second place, France's demand for reparations from Germany and America's demand for war-debts from Europe, coupled in each case with refusal to take payment in goods, led to the silting up of bullion in the banks of those countries, which meant the withdrawal of much of the world's gold from its normal function of backing business credits.

In the third place, economic patriotism in the form of tariffs produced glut in some countries and dearth in others. Take for example the most stable of commodities, wheat. When the war checked production in Europe the farmers of the great wheat-growing countries outside it—the U.S., Canada, the Argentine, Australia—borrowed money recklessly to bring new areas under cultivation. After the war the extra demand fell away; even countries which before the war had imported wheat now kept it out so as to become self-sufficient—perhaps with an eye to 'the next war'. Consequently, since man cannot live by bread alone, the wheat countries were unable to buy goods from their former

customers. Hence a situation all over the world in which people starved because there was too much of what they needed.

This slump did not in Britain actually kill people by the million, as it did elsewhere; for our highly developed social services enabled the unemployed to draw on the national 'hump' of wealth accumulated by past generations. But that hump was fast being drained. For whereas in pre-war days a decline in material exports had been partly made good by the flow to this country of interest on investments (American railways, for instance, had been made mainly with British capital), together with freight-charges and marine insurance premiums, we had been obliged to sell most of our foreign bonds to pay for war-material, and the collapse of world trade left our shipping idle.

Then in the autumn of 1929 an atomic bomb exploded in the American stock market. Under President Coolidge (1923–28) the United States seemed to have found the secret of perpetual prosperity. There was feverish development in the production of motors, radios, cinemas and electrical gadgets, the characteristic labour-saving and pleasure-providing products of the age; and consumption was stimulated by expert salesmanship and deferred payments. In 1928 Herbert Hoover succeeded Coolidge with the promise of 'another four years of prosperity'. The brisk trade in commodities enlivened the buying and selling of industrial shares, by which a fortune might be won in a few months. This became a craze. People of every walk of life joined as amateurs in what had hitherto been mainly the vocation of specialists. The state of the stock-market became the main topic of conversation wherever two or three were gathered together. By the spring of 1929 people were growing impatient at humdrum investment and turning to sheer gambling—buying shares to sell again immediately, often without the scrip actually changing hands, the trading being in 'options' and 'margins' which fluctuated in price from day to day. And to finance these transactions millions of dollars were borrowed, often at fantastically high rates of interest.

But there came a time when cooler heads, seeing that the sums involved were enormously greater than the value of the actual wealth (i.e. goods) which they represented, realized that the boom could not last. They began to draw their profits and get out of the market; and herd instinct made others follow

their example. The trickle of sales swiftly grew into a flood. On October 24th ('The Black Day of the American Stock Market') sixteen million shares were dumped, at prices which turned millionaires to paupers. And as all classes had shared in the fever, all shared in the reaction. Soon there were fourteen million people workless in a country which had prided itself on having, and needing, no Unemployment Insurance.

And the repercussions in Europe were equally shattering. To Germany the American boom which preceded the crash had already brought much harm. After the Dawes settlement Germans had begun a vigorous reconstruction of their industries, mostly with money borrowed from America; and the Republic found loans from the same source a convenient way of paying reparations—so long as more could be borrowed from year to year to pay the interest. But by 1928 Americans wanted all their money for stock gambling—in fact they were borrowing from Europe for the purpose, thereby sapping still further the life-blood of its industry and commerce. And now after the crash Americans had no funds to invest. The German Government had to find an alternative quickly, and the only one available was a short-term loan which Britain raised to save one of her best customers from collapse. Another international committee—called after its chairman, another American, the 'Young Committee'—rearranged the payment of reparations; but the failure of an Austrian State Bank in May 1931 caused a rush to withdraw money from Germany. London once more came to the rescue, mainly with money borrowed on short term from France, and at the request of old Hindenburg (now President of the German Republic) President Hoover called for a moratorium—a suspension of debt payments, to let Germany get on its feet again. Unfortunately France hesitated so long about agreeing to this that the spirit of the German people was broken by panic. There were frenzied withdrawals from the banks by people who feared that the Republic would go bankrupt; in two days 100 million marks were turned into foreign exchange.

And now these financial convulsions on the Continent brought Britain herself to the brink of an abyss.

'NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'. When Philip Snowden opened his budget in April 1921 he warned the House that falling receipts

(mainly through the drop in foreign trade) and rising expenditure (largely through unemployment) were producing a situation of increasing gravity. If things went on as they were going there would soon be an unbridgeable gap. He added that this was no time for luxuries like the Trevelyan Education Bill, and the Lords promptly killed it.

As a matter of fact the Government had already inadvertently cut its own life-line. In February the Opposition had moved a vote of censure on its 'continuous additions to public expenditure'; and the Liberals had obligingly proposed an amendment calling for a small independent committee to inquire into the extent of the evil and suggest remedies. To fend off the vote of censure the Government accepted this amendment, and the committee was duly set up, with Sir George May, formerly head of Prudential Insurance, as chairman. Its Report, published towards the end of July, foretold a deficit of £125 millions in the 1932 budget, and recommended economies amounting to £96 millions, mostly in the uncovenanted Unemployment Benefit, commonly called 'The Dole'.

The Government can scarcely have realized the effect that this disclosure would have abroad. True, Britain's finances were in a sounder condition than those of almost any other country in the world; but London had always been such a synonym for stability that the shadow of a doubt about its solvency sent a shiver down the backs of foreign bankers and finance ministers. Many small States kept part of their cash reserves in the Bank of England for safety, and some of these now hastened to withdraw their deposits before the coffers were empty. People (especially French people) began reconverting into francs the money they had turned into pounds when the franc was falling in value in 1923 (p. 327); and subscribers to the recent short-term loans demanded prompt repayment. But when, to meet these obligations, London tried to get back the £70 millions it had just lent to Germany, it was blocked by the Hoover Moratorium; while large sums owing from Argentina and Australia were 'frozen' by the collapse of the wheat and meat and wool markets. The outflow from the Bank accelerated. On July 15th the gold in the issue-department stood at £164 millions; by the 28th it had fallen to £132 millions. Another fortnight of loss at this rate would bring it below the minimum

allowed by the Bank Act. The Government borrowed £50 millions for the Bank, half from Paris, half from New York. This staved off immediate disaster but intensified world-wide doubts of its solvency.

The Government had to do something, and at once. MacDonald called the Cabinet back from holiday-making, and Snowden laid before it proposals to cut Service pay and Unemployment Benefit to a total of £78 millions. After three days of anxious discussion this sum was whittled down to £58 millions, but still with no general consent to a reduction in the 'Dole'. Snowden failed to convince a joint meeting of the T.U.C. and the Executive Committee of the Party that the reductions were really necessary. The general view of the meeting seemed to be that the crisis was a plot by the Bank and the City to undermine the Labour Government. As a matter of fact, the Bank had just applied to Paris and New York for a further advance of £80 millions, but had been told that no more would be forthcoming until there was evidence that Britain was not going to drift into bankruptcy.

The majority of the Cabinet held out against reducing the Dole below thirty shillings a week for a family of three; many—perhaps most—would have resigned rather than consent, and this would have broken up the Government. MacDonald seems to have foreseen this and to have mapped out a course to circumvent it. He called for the resignations of the Ministers and went off to Buckingham Palace. Next day he informed them that the King had asked him to form 'a Cabinet of individuals whose task would be confined to dealing with the emergency', and that the leaders of the two Opposition Parties had promised to join it.

This was a thunderbolt. Everybody, including prominent Conservatives like the Chamberlains, had assumed that the resignation of the Labour Government would lead to the Conservatives taking office to carry through with Liberal support the economies to which Labour could not agree. But perhaps the King and the three Party leaders felt that a mere change from one minority Government to another would not inspire the necessary confidence abroad—that only a Government labelled 'National' would win enough support to meet the crisis.

MacDonald explained the situation in a broadcast to the

nation, laying special emphasis on the fear that if the drain on the Bank was not stanched by a revival of confidence it might be necessary to suspend once more its obligation to pay out gold on demand in return for foreign securities (p. 382) a—catastrophe not only dishonouring in itself, but likely to lead to a depreciation of the £ which might rob British people of half their savings.

The 'Emergency Cabinet' consisted of 4 Labour men (MacDonald, Thomas, Snowden and Sankey), 4 Conservatives (Baldwin, N. Chamberlain, Sir Samuel Hoare and Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister) and 2 Liberals (Sir Herbert Samuel and Lord Reading); but the voting power behind it was almost entirely Conservative, for the Labour Party disowned MacDonald, and with very few exceptions went into Opposition under Henderson. The Government announced that it was not a coalition—merely 'a Government of co-operation for one purpose only'. It forthwith carried an *Economy Act*, making reductions of 10 per cent in the pay of all official persons—Ministers of the Crown, Members of Parliament, civil servants, judges, insurance doctors, soldiers, sailors, and airmen, teachers, policemen and municipal employees. Then Snowden brought in an emergency budget which not only raised income-tax from four shillings to five shillings but reduced allowances for children so drastically as to double the demand upon people of moderate means. The frail little Chancellor's peroration, quoting Swinburne's

Bear us witness: come the world against us
England yet shall stand!

was greeted with prolonged cheers from Conservatives—but none from his former colleagues on the Labour benches.

These measures persuaded the French and American banks to advance the desired £80 millions; but the fierce attacks of Labour—still the largest party in the House—made foreign depositors fear that the policy might not be continued, and this loan began to melt away like the earlier one. Then came stories of trouble in the fleet at Invergordon, where the crews of several ships refused duty in protest against cuts in pay, the need for which had never been explained to them. The trident seemed to be quavering in Britannia's grasp; rumours spread round the startled Continent that British battleships were bombarding

Dover and Brighton. The run on the Bank redoubled. On Friday, Sept. 18th, £18 millions were withdrawn, and by closing time on Saturday the new loan was completely exhausted. The leak had to be stopped at once. So on the Monday morning the Prime Minister, who a fortnight before had publicly declared that to go off gold would be a national disaster, had to bring in a bill doing that very thing; and the legislative process was telescoped so that it received the royal assent the same day.

The effects were nothing like so catastrophic as had been feared. The £ fell to two-thirds of its value abroad, which gave a fillip to British exports, and would have given more if other countries had not gone off gold themselves, or put on special duties to prevent British 'dumping'. And at home the pound-note bought as much as before.

THE DEATH OF FREE TRADE. When the National Government declared that it would break up as soon as the crisis was over, the public assumed that this would happen in a few weeks—a month or two at the outside. But it was arguable that the emergency would not really be past until they had amended the conditions which had caused it. And, quite incidentally of course, some of them soon began to see in the situation possibilities for their own careers and for causes they had at heart. Baldwin and Chamberlain believed as firmly as ever in Protection. After their experience in 1924 they hardly dared to mention the word aloud; but the nation might now accept duties to restrict imports as part of a bulwark against financial disaster, especially if these were brought in by a National Government. And the Labour members of the Government, having been formally expelled from their Party, would have no political future when the National Government was wound up.

So early in October MacDonald dissolved Parliament, and called on the electorate to give the National Government 'a doctor's mandate' to apply any remedies required by the rapidly changing situation. 'Will you', Baldwin asked the voters, 'in the hour of your country's need entrust her destiny to a Government selected from all the great Parties who are willing to work harmoniously to pull her through without disaster to your money, your food or your employment?' Other speakers pointed

out that a large part of the assets of the Post Office Savings Bank had been lent to the Insurance Fund, which would (they maintained) be wiped out altogether by the Labour Party's programme of huge borrowing and increased taxation. Henderson and his colleagues thought that their stand against cuts in the Dole would gain them enough support to win the election—the three million unemployed voters would, they hoped, make a solid foundation for victory. But the hopes and fears inspired by the Government's propaganda made an immensely stronger appeal, and the result was a greater electoral cataclysm even than that of 1918. In a House of 615 Members 558 were 'National'—471 Conservatives, 68 Liberals and 13 'National Labour'. The official Labour Party was reduced to 57, among the casualties being the whole of the former Front Bench except old George Lansbury, who now became leader of the dishevelled remnant. And the crisis shattered Liberalism beyond repair. Some, led by Sir John Simon, identified themselves in all but name (they called themselves 'Liberal National') with Conservatism; the others, led by Sir Herbert Samuel, remained faithful to Free Trade, and were with difficulty induced to continue support of a Government evidently about to tamper with it. And their former leader, Lloyd George, who had been off the political stage during these critical months owing to severe illness, gave a blessing from his sick-bed to the Labour Party.

MacDonald now enlarged the Cabinet to normal dimensions, with Baldwin as Lord President and second-in-command, Samuel at the Home Office, Simon at the Foreign Office and Neville Chamberlain at the Exchequer. Most of the other chief posts fell to Conservatives—naturally, in view of their preponderance in the House. But some well-known faces were missing from the Front Bench. Austen Chamberlain stood aside to make an opening for a younger man; Churchill was in disgrace with his party over his attitude on India; and Snowden retired from active politics to the House of Lords.

The first action of the reconstructed Government was to put through an *Abnormal Importations Act* (1931), placing prohibitive duties on goods which foreign exporters were preparing to rush here in anticipation of the tariff which everyone foresaw. Then, in February 1932, the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought in

an *Import Duties Act*, imposing a 10 per cent duty on all imports except foodstuffs, raw materials and Empire produce; and giving power to a non-political Advisory Committee to increase the duty up to 33 per cent on non-essential articles. Chamberlain expressed the Government's hope that this would (1) correct the balance of payments, (2) raise revenue to maintain the value of British currency, and so keep down the cost of living, (3) give British industry and agriculture work hitherto done abroad, (4) enable the country to bargain with others for tariff-reduction, and (5) strengthen the bonds of Empire. He ended with a reference to his father.

> 'His work was not in vain. Time and the nation's misfortunes have brought conviction to many who would not agree with him then. I believe he would have found consolation for his disappointment if he could have seen that proposals directly descended from his own conceptions would be laid before the House of Commons in the presence of one and by the lips of the other of the two immediate successors of his name and blood.'

He sat down amid general cheers, while Sir Austen came from his seat below the gangway and shook his hand. The bill was carried by a ten-to-one majority, and a new chapter opened in the country's fiscal history.

As to the 'Dole' on account of which the Labour Government had resigned, the new Government made a comprehensive change in policy. It was obviously time to end the chaos which had resulted from successive Governments bolstering up the Insurance Fund with loans and subsidies from year to year. Some thirty Acts had been passed for the purpose since 1921. So, in 1934, Neville Chamberlain put through an Act which relieved the Fund of responsibility for maintaining people who had exhausted (or had never acquired) claims under the Insurance Act. The support of these unfortunates was now handed over to an Unemployed Assistance Board, which was to be quite independent of the Ministry of Health and the Assistance Committees of the Local Authorities. Its members were to be nominated by the Ministry of Labour, and it was to sit in Whitehall with a 'Field Staff' dispersed about the country in local offices to investigate claims. The great advantage of this scheme was that it could be worked on definite principles and uniform

scales of relief. Unfortunately it involved a 'Family Means Test', by which the amount of relief varied with the total income of the household. Thus if a son or daughter, living at home, got a rise of ten shillings a week, that amount was deducted from the Unemployment allowance paid to the father. The bitterness and grief caused by this provision is beyond all computation; but the Government felt that it would not be fair, in the existing emergency, to call upon the heavily burdened taxpayer to do more than keep families as a whole from starvation. Fortunately it became possible to ease the hated Test with the return of better times in 1936–7.

PROTECTION IN PRACTICE. In the long run results seemed to justify the adoption of a tariff. It certainly did not raise the cost of living, as Free Traders had always prophesied it would. But it raised a number of difficulties.

One of these was over agriculture. British farming was in a bad way again. Within the last five years 100,000 workers had left the land for town-life. It was prophesied that if this continued the nation's physique would suffer, and its food-supplies be more than ever at the mercy of the foreigner. The main cause of the decline was that prices were kept below a profitable level by overseas competitors with lower production-costs; but the Government was pledged not to tax staple articles of food. Walter Elliot, the new Minister of Agriculture, evaded this difficulty by imposing State control upon private enterprise, in much the same way as the supply of electric current had been put under a Government-appointed Electricity Board, and as the buses and tubes of Greater London were now coming under a London Passenger Transport Board. By the *Agricultural Marketing Act* (1933) each branch of the industry—Bacon, Milk, Stock-breeding, Potatoes—was made into a controlled monopoly, limiting production to demand, deciding 'quotas' of imports from different foreign countries, and fixing prices to be paid by the public. The results were not always quite satisfactory. For instance, the Milk Marketing Board under the Act bought up all milk at a fixed price (usually about 1s. 3d. a gallon). One third of the 'pool' was re-sold to manufacturers of butter and cheese at 5d. a gallon to enable them to compete with imports from the Dominions; but to make up for this it

had to charge about 2s. 3d. a gallon for the other two-thirds which were sold tothe public in liquid form. Under old-fashioned 'Free Enterprise' this, of course, would not continue: all the milk would be attracted to the 'liquid' market; but 'Planned Economy' was now the order of the day—not only in Britain, but all over the world.

The Milk Marketing Board merely 'robbed Peter to pay Paul'; but some crops, such as sugar-beet, which could only be produced in this country at an uneconomically high price, had to be supported by subsidies from the Treasury—i.e., from the pocket of the taxpayer. The glut of sugar was a typical example of the effects of economic nationalism; for scientific horticulture had doubled the productivity of the sugar-cane; and artificial encouragement of sugar-beet in Europe intensified the fall in world price. The result was to reduce the purchasing-power of millions in Asia, America and Europe, and to choke up the channels of trade still further. And once granted such subsidies cannot be withdrawn or lowered without hardship—sometimes ruin—to the industries built on them. Some people argue that it would pay the British taxpayer for the Government to pension for life everybody engaged in the sugar-beet industry rather than continue the subsidy which keeps them in employment.

These were some of the expedients by which the National Government sought to adjust the flow of internal trade. It also tried to clear the choked channels of commerce with other countries, including the Dominions. The overthrow of 'the idol of Free Trade' raised the hopes of those who wanted an 'Imperial Tariff-union'; and in the autumn of 1932 a conference was held at Ottawa to see if a move in this direction would not help Britain and the Dominions to recover from the slump. But it was not to be expected that the Home Government, having received a mandate to protect British farming by duties on corn and meat, would forgo the opportunity; or that the Dominions would encourage British industries to compete with their own, as a cure for depression! The best that could be done was to arrange, after some hard bargaining, a number of separate agreements between different pairs. The Old Country, in return for increased preference in Dominions markets (mostly created by raising duties on non-British goods), promised to

impose new 'Ottawa Duties' on certain foreign commodities which competed with Dominions produce.

But the Ottawa policy did not achieve much. The Dominions found that they could not prosper on markets limited to the Empire, especially now that British agriculture was protected by the 'quota' system. One by one the bi-lateral agreements were dropped—to let Canada come to terms with the United States, Australia with Japan, and so on. And some of the indirect effects were unfortunate. European countries, finding themselves unable to do business with Britain, had to make terms with Germany which put their economic life at her mercy.

The Free Traders in the National Government, Samuel and Snowden, had become very restive at the passing of the *Import Duties Act*. It would have greatly weakened the Government's claim to be 'National' if two of the very few non-Tory members of it had resigned, so MacDonald persuaded them to accept an 'agreement to differ' on this one topic, and the strange sight was seen of Ministers attacking each other's arguments from the same Front Bench. But the Ottawa Agreements in the spring of 1933 went beyond what their consciences would allow, and they resigned.

The war-debts and reparations which had done so much to cause the trouble succumbed to it. The crisis made it quite impossible for Germany to go on paying France and for Britain to go on paying the United States. At a conference at Lausanne MacDonald and Herriot agreed to make an end of reparations provided that the United States would agree to a reduction in the payment of war-debts; but Americans, now in the trough of depression, did not feel that this was the moment for gestures of generosity, especially with a presidential election just coming on. So the Lausanne scheme lapsed. This, as we shall see in the next chapter, was the last link in the chain of events that produced the Nazi Revolution; and the first thing the Nazis did was to repudiate reparations altogether. But the United States gained little or nothing by their refusal to co-operate. For France and Italy, also wallowing in the slough of financial despond, made no further debt payments at all; and though Britain managed to send one more full instalment (despite the fact that the depreciation of the £ increased the cost of the

necessary dollars by 30 per cent) she could do no more.

Americans made a desperate effort to drag themselves out of the pit by a change in leadership. The Republican Party had been no more responsible for the bad times than it had been for the good which preceded them; but it had boasted so much about the boom that it had to take the blame for the slump, and at the election of November 1932 Hoover was bundled out of the White House in favour of a Democrat. Franklin D. Roosevelt had no experience of finance, but he brought a vigorous mind and a bold spirit to bear on the situation, and the nation felt that it had nothing to lose by trying the 'New Deal' which he proposed.

XXXI

COMMONWEALTH AND TRUSTEESHIP 1919–1935

By 1919 the Imperialism which had been a kind of religion to the late Victorians was quite dead. We are now to see how the conception of a Commonwealth of Nations replaced it, and how pride of possession gave place to a sense of trusteeship for backward peoples under our care.

'Dominion Status'. The Great War hastened the evolution of the British Empire. Under Edward VII the self-governing colonies had come to be called 'Dominions', and their Premiers had met in Imperial Conferences to take counsel with the Home Government on questions of foreign policy and defence. They had taken part in the war independently and voluntarily, not to help Great Britain but to defend the Empire; and their statesmen took part occasionally in an Imperial War Cabinet. At the Peace Conference each had its own delegation, and some of their representatives left their mark on Treaty and Covenant;[1] and in the League of Nations each had a status equal to that of second-class Powers such as Poland or Spain. At the Imperial Conference of 1917 General Smuts (who fifteen years earlier had been in arms against Britain) declared that:

> 'the successful launching of her former colonies among the nations of the world, while they remain members of an inner Britannic circle, will ever rank as one of the outstanding achievements of British political genius.'

But the relationship continued to be undefined. At the Imperial Conference of 1921 Lloyd George gave a good reason for leaving them so: 'You are defining life itself when you try to define the British Empire; you cannot do it.' The Dominions were now fully independent in their foreign relations, and were beginning to influence those of Britain. They were given separate invitations to the Washington Conference, and put effective pressure on the Home Government to end the Japanese

[1] Smuts was one of the chief authors of the Covenant.

Alliance. Their attitude at the Chanaq crisis ended British support of Greece against Turkey. In 1923 Canada made a Fisheries treaty with the United States without a representative of Great Britain being invited even to countersign it. In 1924 the Irish Free State set an example, followed by Canada and South Africa, of keeping its own Ministers at foreign capitals. And the existence of the League of Nations seemed to remove the need for any perfecting of the mechanism of the Commonwealth. Were not the Dominions fellow-members with Britain of a world-wide body which governed the relations of all its members?[1]

But the Locarno Treaties (in which the Dominions had no part), and the rising spirit of nationalism in South Africa (already expressed in a revolt against *God Save the King* as a National Anthem and the Union Jack as a national flag), made it seem advisable to make clear what the Commonwealth was *not*. General Hertzog, the South African Premier, came to the Imperial Conference of 1926 determined to force this issue: Had a Dominion the right to be neutral in Britain's wars, or to secede from the Empire altogether, if it wanted to?[2]

The Conference (which included the Premiers of Newfoundland and the Irish Free State, as well as those of Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, and a representative of India) resolved that henceforward the Governor-General of a Dominion was to be regarded as representing not the British Government (which now became 'The Government of the King in the United Kingdom') but the Dominion itself. Henceforward the Dominions nominated their own Governors-General. They usually invited Royalties or British notabilities, but the eligibility of Dominion subjects was registered by the appointment of Sir Isaac Isaacs by Australia in 1930; and of course Irishmen were nominated by the Free State. This recognition of Dominion sovereignty led to the creation of a separate Secretaryship of State. The new Minister has quarters in the Colonial Office, but he does not administer the Domin-

[1] Experience was to show that the Commonwealth was much tougher of fibre than the League because its flexibility allowed, what the rigidity of the League prevented, adaptation to changing circumstance.

[2] It is, of course, a human trait that an acknowledged right to do things may remove all desire to do them.

ions as the Colonial Secretary administers the Crown Colonies; he negotiates with them, as the Foreign Secretary negotiates with a foreign Power.

The Conference set up a committee under Lord Balfour to define the Commonwealth; and this committee eventually achieved a famous example of evasive phraseology:

> 'Great Britain and the Dominions are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. . . . But the equality of status does not universally extend to function. In the sphere of defence the major share of responsibility rests, and must for some time continue to rest, with H.M. Government in Great Britain.'[1]

Hertzog agreed that this gave South Africa all she wanted; when he returned he became as firm a supporter of the British connection as Smuts. And the Dominions certainly had no reason to question the proviso that the British taxpayer should continue to bear almost the whole cost of the Royal Navy which is their main defence.

All the Dominions were not so keen on this formula-hunt. As James Scullin of Australia pointed out, family relations are not improved by having the rights of the members set out in a book of rules. After the Conference of 1931 (when the formula was embodied in the *Statute of Westminster*) it was left to each of them to adopt it or not as they thought fit, and to this day they have not all done so.

So ended the dream of Imperial Federation. It seemed for a time that the Ottawa Agreements might draw the Commonwealth together in a customs-union, but this was never closely knit and soon began to disintegrate. Even in defence there was little co-ordination until the very eve of the World War. The Dominions shared the Old Country's faith in the League of Nations; and in the matter of disarmament they went even further. In 1919 they rejected Admiral Jellicoe's proposal for an

[1] Another limitation to complete equality lies in the fact that the Dominions have closer relations with Great Britain than with each other. None of them keeps a 'Dominion Office'; and their final Court of Judicature is the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council sitting at Westminster.

Imperial Navy; and when in consequence of the dropping of the Japanese Alliance (largely to please them) Britain started to build a naval base at Singapore, New Zealand alone among them agreed to contribute to the cost. Furthermore, when the possibility of another Great War began to threaten, a strong party in South Africa headed by Dr. Malan demanded a declaration of neutrality in future European wars; and in Canada a desire was expressed for an independent French Catholic Republic of Quebec. No wonder Hitler thought the British Empire was finished.

But he was wrong. When war came it drew the Commonwealth together more firmly than ever, by making its members conscious that it stood for a range of ideas incompatible with, and in danger from, the dictatorships of Italy, Germany and Japan.

NATIONALISM IN INDIA. In India the War intensified a demand for Home Rule. Indian troops and industries made substantial contributions to victory, and after a war for democracy and self-determination such claims could not be ignored. In 1917 E. S. Montagu, Secretary for India in the Lloyd George Coalition, announced in Parliament that India was to have

> 'the greatest possible development of self-governing institutions as an integral part of the British Empire, with the proviso that the British Government, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare of the Indian peoples, must be the judges of the measure of each advance.'

Ten years earlier John Morley, Gladstonian Radical as he was, had declared (in presenting reforms which gave Indians more share in their government) that anything in the nature of parliamentary democracy was impossible for them. For nine-tenths of the people could not read; 200 distinct languages were spoken; there were 2000 rigidly divided castes and 50 million people whose very shadow pollutes the food of the well-born; and scarcely a month passed without bloodshed between Hindu and Moslem. Majority-rule for peoples thus divided over the essentials of life can be the crudest kind of tyranny. These were some of the difficulties which the British Government now set itself to overcome in order that India might take a place among the self-governing Dominions.

Montagu himself carried through the first stage, in collaboration with the Viceroy; Lord Chelmsford. A central parliament was set up at Delhi, with local parliaments in each Province of British India, elected by a system which gave a fixed proportion of seats to each 'Community' (i.e., the members of each race or religion in the area). But all the Ministers in the central Government were nominated by the Viceroy, and some of those in the Provinces by the Governors. This 'dyarchy' (two-fold rule) offended active nationalists, and they set themselves to wreck it. Their chief organ was the 'Indian National Congress', a society founded (by an Englishman) in 1885. Though it did not embrace more than 2 per cent of the population, a larger proportion gave it their sympathy and moral support; and it could claim to speak for the peoples of India with more authority than any other single organization. It met annually, about a thousand strong, and elected a Working Committee which acted as an executive body. The nationalist leader was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who, combining politics with sainthood, began in 1914 a campaign for the regeneration of India based on the simple life and the brotherhood of man. Such ideals are incompatible with imperialism and capitalism, and the western way of life generally, and Gandhi sought to eliminate British power and influence by 'non-violent non-co-operation'.

Unfortunately, Anglo-Indian relations were at this juncture embittered by an incident at Amritsar (April 1919), when a British officer ordered Gurkha troops to fire on a crowd which had assembled in defiance of his decree, killing some hundreds of them. Whether this was justified or not, it greatly strengthened the nationalist movement. Gandhi, calling on Indians to end British rule by refusing to recognize it, soon had immense influence. Congress obtained financial support from rich Indian industrialists who wanted to put pressure on the Government, and these funds enabled its leaders to make it a powerful political force. In 1924 it took part in the elections, and being the only organized party won majorities in most of the Provinces. Some of the Ministers (mostly chosen by Congress) showed high capacity for administration; but they aroused opposition from minorities which had always accepted British rule (which whatever its shortcomings was always impartial as between the

various communities) and fresh disturbances broke out.

In 1928-9 a Royal Commission with Sir John Simon as chairman went out to report on the working of the Montagu-Chelmsford system, and to suggest the next steps towards self-government. Its massive Report, published in 1930, recommended immediate 'responsible government' for the Provinces, with the Central Government becoming 'responsible' by stages. But some way had to be found to safeguard minorities against a monopoly of power by a Hindu majority directed by Congress, and to give the Princes who ruled under the direct suzerainty of the British Crown a share in the All-India Government. So a 'Round Table' Conference of all parties and interests was held in London (1931-2). This eventually recommended that the Central Government should be federal, and that the communities should have proportional representation. But the Moslems objected to any scheme that would make them subject to the Hindu majority, and demanded that the predominantly Moslem Provinces should form 'Pakistan', a sort of Indian Ulster. Congress, on the other hand, rejected both federalism and communalism. It insisted on the unity of India, and demanded a government elected by universal suffrage by all Indians, including the subjects of the Princes.

The British Government sought the maximum of agreement among these factions in a *Government of India* bill (1935). Part I set up a federal government representing Princes as well as Provinces, with all but two of the All-India Ministers responsible to an Assembly elected indirectly by communities. Part II set up a similar constitution for the Provinces, save that in them *all* Ministers were to be responsible. The bill was fiercely resisted by a section of the Conservative Party led by Churchill, who declared that it would wreck the devoted work of generations of Englishmen in India. But it had the support of the Liberal and Labour Parties; and Baldwin (who had all along been strongly in favour of bold concessions, and was now Acting Prime Minister) had no difficulty in forcing it through.

But Indian nationalists were far from satisfied, even when the Government renewed its pledge to give India full 'Dominion status' as soon as she was ready for it. They suspected that the Princes had been brought into the Federal Government to counteract the power of Congress, and that the communal

system was designed to perpetuate the religious feuds which enabled Britain to 'divide and rule'; while the Moslems continued to demand 'Pakistan' as their only safeguard against oppression by a Hindu majority. And the federal part of the constitution was blocked by the fact that many of the chief Princes could not bring themselves to surrender any of their sovereign rights to a government which would be dominated by the 'intelligentsia' of Congress. Part II of the Constitution fared rather better. As after the Montagu-Chelmsford Act, Congress began by boycotting the Provincial assemblies; but later Gandhi felt that the opportunity ought not to be missed of carrying through social reforms, especially in education; and Congress ministries came into office again in most of the Provinces. And, as before, they did useful work, though—also as before—they aroused a good deal of resentment among minorities.

NATIONALISM IN EGYPT. In Egypt, as in India, the war gave fresh impetus to an existing nationalist movement. British Governments had repeatedly promised that the country should become independent as soon as it could maintain itself; but as decade followed decade Egyptians grew impatient. At the outbreak of the war Egypt was still nominally under Turkish suzerainty, and its Khedive was living at Constantinople. When Turkey joined the Central Powers this situation could not continue; if the Canal fell into enemy hands the British Commonwealth would be cut in two. So Egypt was made a British Protectorate, with a member of the Khedive's family as a puppet Sultan. But the situation put a new edge on nationalist feeling among all classes. Though the country was not admitted as an ally its goods were requisitioned and its people conscripted for labour, while Imperial troops stationed there were prone to treat 'Gippies' as a subject race.

At the end of the war, with 'self-determination' on the lips of allied statesmen, Zaglul Pasha, leader of the Wafd (literally 'the Delegation', the Nationalist Party) presented to the British High Commissioner a demand for independence. When this was rejected delegates went to the Peace Conference in Paris, but the 'Big Five' would not listen to them. Zaglul next proposed to visit London and lay his country's cause before the Coalition

Government, but was told that it had no time to attend to him. No doubt Lloyd George and his colleagues were very busy, but the snub inflicted a wound which rankled for twenty years, and cost Britain dear.

The Nationalists resorted to strikes, riots and political murders; and, like the Irish and the Indians, found violence more effective than argument in drawing sympathetic attention from British Governments. In 1919-20 a Commission of Inquiry was sent out under Lord Milner. It was greeted with insult and boycott; but eventually Zaglul and Milner agreed that the country had best become a constitutional monarchy in permanent alliance with Great Britain. After another year of palsied hesitation on one side and spasmodic violence on the other, the British Government declared Egypt an independent monarchy, but reserved four subjects for further discussion: the security of the Canal, the protection of foreigners, the control of the armed forces, and the government of the Sudan. A country which lacks complete authority over its army and its law-courts cannot be called sovereign, and the nationalists much resented these restrictions. But Britain could not leave to its own devices a small and defenceless State on the main artery of the Empire; and Egypt could not justly oust Britain from the condominium of the Sudan—a non-Egyptian State which owed its prosperity entirely to British administration.

In 1922 Egypt held the first general election in the hundred centuries of its history. Zaglul became Prime Minister, but the four reservations led to disturbances which culminated in the murder of Sir Lee Stack, Governor of the Sudan, in the streets of Cairo. The British Government blamed the Wafd, and Zaglul resigned. After a series of corrupt and inefficient administrations, King Fuad suspended the constitution in 1929 and set up an authoritarian government under his friend Sidky Pasha. In 1936 Fuad died; his son Farouk reinstated constitutional rule and another Wafd Government took office. But Italy had just conquered Abyssinia. Drawn together by a common danger, the Egyptian and British Governments made a treaty which restricted the British forces to the Canal zone, reaffirmed the condominium over the Sudan, and provided for an alliance in case of war.

THE MANDATED TERRITORIES. The idea that rule of backward peoples must be justified by care for their welfare had long prevailed at the Colonial Office. Throughout most of the nineteenth century our Governments had tried—somewhat spasmodically, it must be admitted—to curb the greed of traders and settlers; and this impulse, like so many others, gained fresh momentum from the war.

By Article XXII of the Covenant the tutelage of lands 'inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world' was entrusted to more advanced nations acting on behalf of the League. There were three classes of these 'mandates'. Class I consisted of those which with advice and help would soon be fit for independence. (Of these Britain was entrusted with Iraq, Palestine and Transjordania.) Those in Class B the Mandatory Power would administer for a longer period, giving the inhabitants 'assurance of religious liberty and a fair share of foreign trade'. (Of these Britain received Tanganyika and shared Togoland with France.) Under Class C came small islands and lands with population so sparse or primitive as to give little prospect of attaining full nationhood. (Of these South-West Africa was practically annexed by the Union, Samoa fell to New Zealand, and part of New Guinea was taken over by Australia.)

The African mandates gave Britain little trouble, and the position of Tanganyika soon became almost indistinguishable from that of the adjacent Uganda Protectorate. But the Arab provinces presented difficulties. The war had kindled nationalism in them, as in India and Egypt; and in the course of it the British had induced the Emir Hussein, hereditary guardian of the Holy Places of Islam, to revolt against his nominal overlord the Sultan of Turkey. His sons, Feisal and Abdulla, who directed the revolt, were assisted by T. E. Lawrence, a young Oxford archaeologist, who showed unsuspected talent for irregular warfare. Hussein and his sons planned a great federation of all the Arab peoples, and were given assurances of British support for their scheme. But when after the war the time came for fulfilling these pledges, obstacles appeared. The British, with their Navy now dependent on oil fuel, wanted to make sure of the produce of the Mosul oilfield in northern Iraq; the French

were unwilling to give up Syria; and, above all, there was a conflict of rights and promises in Palestine.

That country, about the size of Wales, had half a million inhabitants of whom three-fourths were Arabs, the rest Jews. There had long been a world-wide 'Zionist' movement to set up a National Jewish State in the ancient fatherland of the race.[1] During the war the Allies needed the support of Jewish international finance; and Britain wanted to have a friendly State covering the approaches to the Suez Canal. So in 1917 Balfour as Acting Foreign Secretary made a formal pronouncement of support for the Zionist cause:

> 'His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people . . . provided that nothing be done to prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities there.'

At the Peace Conference Dr. Weiszmann, the Zionist spokesman, was wisely moderate: he asked merely that Palestine should be put under a British mandate, and that 80,000 Jews should be admitted every year until there were enough to set up an independent parliamentary State. But Hussein claimed Palestine as part of the Arab federation which the British had promised to support.

Furthermore, the people of Syria and Iraq objected to being mandated to anybody. The French drove Feisal out of Damascus by main force, and the British had to send 100,000 troops to subdue Iraq. Friction between France and Syria went on for twenty-five years; but the British Government contrived to come to terms with Iraq and Transjordania. Instead of accepting formal mandates for them it obtained the League's approval for treaties by which it gained all the control that a mandate would have given, without imposing any humiliating signs of dependence on the Arabs. Feisal became King of Iraq, with Britain keeping enough soldiers and airmen there to protect the Mosul oilfields from Kemalist Turkey (which also claimed them); and his brother Abdulla became Emir of Transjordania. In 1922 Iraq became a member of the League.

But Palestine continued to be a troublesome and expensive

[1] By no means all Jews are Zionists. Many of the best-educated prefer to be good citizens of the country of their adoption.

responsibility. The Arabs feared they would be swamped by Jewish immigration, especially as wealthy Zionists in America and elsewhere were piously eager to invest money in agricultural and industrial undertakings in the Promised Land of their race, and these throve in the hands of industrious and enterprising Jewish settlers. Sporadic rioting made the mandate almost unworkable and impeded progress towards independence. A Royal Commission recommended partitition, but neither Arabs nor Jews would accept the area allotted to them —a testimony to the impartiality of the award. At last, in May 1939, the Government announced that immigration was to continue on a reduced scale until there was a fairly even balance between Arabs and Jews, when a parliamentary State was to be set up, bound to Britain (like Egypt and Iraq) by a treaty of alliance. Few people really expected this to prove a final solution of the problem; but later in the year the outbreak of the World War, bringing mortal peril to Jew and Arab alike, drew their attention away from their differences for the time being.

TOWARDS DOMINION STATUS. The Crown Colonies had varied fortunes in the inter-war decades. Some drew visibly nearer to Dominion status. In 1923 Southern Rhodesia, for instance, became a British colony instead of being a territory administered by a Chartered Company. It gained responsible government and was represented at the Ottawa Conference; but its foreign relations and dealings with its natives are still controlled from Whitehall. Ceylon, by an Order in Council of 1931, came under a complicated dyarchy, in which everyday matters were conducted by Ministers responsible to an elected assembly, though the Governor had an over-riding power in certain emergencies. The franchise is wider than that provided for India in 1935, but religious and communal divisions do not go so deep, and educational standards are higher. Newfoundland lost ground, for it had to make a temporary surrender of its Dominionhood in 1933, when the great slump brought collapse to its already tottering finances. The British Government met the deficit and appointed a Commission to control its treasury until equilibrium could be restored.

The West Indies retained something like the 'Old Colonial

System', with Governors sent from Britain, and Assemblies partly elected and partly 'official'—i.e. nominated directly or indirectly by the Colonial Office. Genuine democracy is impossible while the negroes and coloured folk who form 90 per cent of the population are mostly illiterate; and the islands are too small and too poor for effective autonomy. Efforts were made to overcome these disabilities. It seemed at one time that federation, by making State services cheaper and more efficient, was the key to the problem; and some enthusiasts foresaw a day when a West Indian Federation would become a new Dominion. In 1932 a Commission went out to see what could be done about it; but though a large proportion of the inhabitants welcomed the idea in theory, local interests and jealousies prevented a practical outcome.

The West African colonies have still further to go to be ready for democracy; for ingrained tribal instincts are incompatible with representative institutions. But Britain has given them the nearest approach to self-government possible in the circumstances. This is the system of 'Indirect Rule', through and by native chiefs, developed by Lord Lugard during his long service in Nigeria between 1900 and 1919. He further laid down the principle that the interests of the masses are not to be subordinated to those of a minority, whether of Europeans or of educated Africans; and that Europeans can claim access to the products of tropical lands only if they enable the natives to cope with the forces to which they are exposed by the resultant contact with European civilization. This means, in effect, seeing to it that their economic conditions provide them with adequate food, clothing, shelter, health-services, and educational opportunities which will enable them to take an increasing share in government.

But in some colonies Whitehall's ideas of trusteeship have continued to conflict with the desires of the settlers on the spot. A notable example was Kenya. There an upland area has been developed by 10,000 Europeans with African labour; while in the coast towns 25,000 Indians and Arabs are mostly engaged in commerce; and the rest of the country is inhabited by half a million native Africans. Democracy cannot function in such conditions. The British settlers want an electoral system that

will ensure their control; and the Indians demand political equality for all non-Africans; but the Colonial Office have reminded Europeans and Indians alike that 'primarily Kenya is an African territory in which the interests of the natives must prevail over those of immigrants'. It is not so easy for the 'immigrants' to change from the ideas of Cecil Rhodes to those of Lord Lugard as it is for officials in London. Yet the Colonial Office cannot leave the different elements of the population to fight the issue out amongst themselves.

A similar clash arose in Southern Rhodesia; for the British Government did not want any extension of the 'Colour Bar' which keeps as helots the African subjects of the Union of South Africa. And it hesitates to hand over the Protectorates of Bechuanaland, Swaziland and Basutoland to the Union lest they should be turned into cisterns of cheap labour for the service of white employers in the Union.

XXXII

TOTALITARIANISM
1919–1934

A dominating feature of Europe after the war was the rise of authoritarian states in which power was wielded not by elected assemblies but by dictatorship, accepted by the people as a means of welding the State into a powerful force to win respect abroad and prosperity at home. Between them they brought to nought the hopes of international co-operation through the League of Nations.

SOVIET RUSSIA. By the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (p. 282) the Bolsheviks thought to free themselves for the conversion of the world to Marxism; but after the Red Army was checked before Warsaw (p. 316) the Bolsheviks, leaving the spreading of their faith to the 'Third International' (commonly known as 'Comintern', with headquarters in Moscow), devoted themselves to turning Russia into a model Soviet State. That word 'Soviet' first came into common use in 1905 to signify a meeting in village or factory for the election of committees to co-operate with the revolutionary movement. Lenin revived the idea in 1917, perceiving that a pyramid of soviets would be a more suitable form of democracy than a parliamentary system for a population of 150 millions, very various in race and speech, mostly illiterate, and wholly unused to political liberty. Mass-meetings could by a show of hands choose delegates for county soviets, which could send delegates to provincial soviets, which could send delegates to a national soviet, which could appoint a Council of Commissars to carry on the actual work of government; and the stream of power which thus passed upward would return down to the masses in the form of laws and 'directives'.

Marx had always seen that the ignorant and apathetic multitude would at first need a leaven of instructed devotees to guide and inspire it, and the Bolsheviks transformed themselves into a 'Communist Party' for this purpose. Of course it was not, and is not, a party in our sense of the word, contending with other parties for the right to govern the country. It is more like a religious Order. Membership, attained after probation and for-

feited by misconduct, calls for a higher standard of knowledge and zeal than is expected from ordinary folk, and it has almost a monopoly of administrative posts under the Government and in factories and agricultural areas. Its power is unseen—it was not even mentioned in the Fundamental Law of 1918 or the Constitution of 1923. But this invisibility makes its power the more irresistible. During the 1930's Kalinin as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was head of the Republic, but far greater power was wielded by Stalin, who was merely General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party.

The Republic had some severe growing-pains. It suppressed opposition by a ruthless reign of terror; but its early attempts to 'socialize' industry and agriculture led to frightful chaos, and revolts were put down with wholesale executions. But these measures did not feed the hungry, and during the winter of 1921-2 the worst famine in the history even of Russia was followed by raging pestilences. Lenin, seeing that he had been trying to go too fast, started a 'New Economic Policy' by which peasants were allowed to sell their produce, and private traders to do business alongside the co-operative organizations.

Lenin wore himself out in creating the Republic, and in 1924 he died. There followed a struggle for the succession between Trotsky and Stalin. Trotsky held by the view of the early Bolsheviks that the Communist revolution must be spread as quickly as possible all over the world; but Stalin proposed to begin by making the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics a shining example of a Communist State. Trotsky fought hard, but was driven step by step out of the Government, out of the Party, and finally out of the country.

Stalin now turned to the immense task of creating a modern industrial State in quick time. In Capitalist countries the industrial revolution was spread over decades, by private persons working haphazard for their own interest; but in the Socialist Republic it had to be carried through by the State, by scientific planning enforced with unflinching rigour. A start was made in 1928 with a Five Years' Plan for heavy industries and agriculture, involving a capital expenditure of £5,000 millions. Other governments might have raised loans, but nobody in Russia had anything to lend, and the Soviet State had destroyed its foreign

credit by repudiating the Tsarist debts. So the imported machinery had to be paid for by export of timber and wheat while the Russian people went cold and hungry. Agricultural production could only be secured by large-scale farming with tractors, which involved turning village lands into collective farms.

Some of the results of the great plan were disappointing. Quantity had been achieved at the expense of quality; machines rebelled against inexpert handling; and the world slump nullified the parts of the plan that depended on external trade. But another was started even before the first one was completed; and the workers began to enjoy some return for their labours and privations, until the threat of Nazism compelled the Soviet State to build up its defences. In 1936 it adopted a new constitution, with 'Direct Election by Universal Suffrage and Secret Ballot'; but this phraseology did not mean what it means to us, inasmuch as the nomination of candidates is controlled by the Party, directed from Moscow.

One striking feature of the U.S.S.R. is the absence of artificial barriers between social classes, and between men and women, and between the varied races (speaking sixty different languages) that inhabit its vast territories. Another is the great attention given to education and to public health. But if Karl Marx came back he would be surprised to find that the revolution had occurred not, as he prophesied, in a highly industrialized country but in an extremely backward one; and that so far from the State 'withering away' it has a tighter grip on the daily lives of the people than any other government in the world.

FASCIST ITALY. The Italians came out of the war a sick nation. The kingdom had been in existence barely sixty years; there was no real unity among the people; parliamentary democracy had never taken root; the war had been a severe drain on their resources, economic and spiritual; and they were bitterly disappointed that they had played such an ineffective part in it and had got so little out of it. There was a general lack of confidence in the government and of respect for the law.

Thus the country was ripe for revolution; and there was a man at hand to exploit the fact. Benito Mussolini (1883-1945),

ex-schoolmaster, ex-socialist, ex-journalist, had imbibed the gospel of violence from the books of Sorel, and after the war he started an association of ex-servicemen, the *Fasci de Combattimento*, to focus the general discontent. He was a half-sincere adventurer, who took care not to frighten off possible supporters, Socialist or Conservative, by making his objectives too definite. Order, and discipline, national greatness, the duty of striking down the 'Reds', and of supplanting parliamentary dotards by men of action—this was his general line; and the Government turned a blind eye on him, hoping that he and his ruffianly followers would at least keep Communism at bay. But in October 1922 he organized a 'March on Rome', to demand control of the Government. The Ministry asked the King to call out the troops to suppress it, but he timidly refused—and thereby decided the ultimate fall of the Monarchy.

Mussolini ranted the Chamber into voting him special powers for one year 'to safeguard Italy from Communism'; and by the end of that year he had made himself master of everybody and everything. A 'Blackshirt Militia' was paid and armed by the State to safeguard the regime. Non-Fascist Ministers were removed from public life. Opposition was silenced by personal violence or consignment to penal islands. The bombardment and occupation of Corfu, to avenge the murder of some Italian officers by Greek bandits, notified the world of new methods in foreign policy highly gratifying to a nation suffering from a sense of inferiority.

In the Fascist State which Mussolini built up, he himself as *Il Duce* (the leader) directed everything. Parliament and Monarchy remained in existence, but only as the instruments of his will. No other Party was permitted. The whole of the lives of the whole of the people were to be absorbed in that of the community, its welfare, honour and glory. Strikes and lock-outs were forbidden, wages and profits being regulated by 'Corporations', representing employers and employed, for each industry; and it was these bodies, not territorial constituencies, that 'elected' a thousand candidates for Parliament, from which the Fascist Grand Council selected four hundred.

The most notable event in the internal history of Fascist Italy was the Concordat with the Catholic Church. The quarrel between the Church and the Italian Monarchy had gone on ever

since 1870 (pp. 35, 39); but Mussolini (though himself a free-thinker) wanted the influence of religion (since he found it could not be eliminated) on the side of his State. So the Holy See was accorded sovereignty of the Vatican City; two million *lire* were paid to it as compensation for the revenue it had lost during the fifty years of the breach; and on 11th February 1929 the Pope gave his blessing once more *urbi et orbi* from the outer loggia of St. Peter's.

Mussolini had boundless zest for administration. He abolished slums, drained swamps, restored ancient monuments, made trains run punctually, and screwed the Italian people up to a higher level of general efficiency than ever before in their history, though at a sacrifice of personal liberty which democracies would not care to suffer. He felt himself to be a man of destiny who had led his people up from anarchy and was reviving the grandeur that was Rome; and he succeeded in imposing this view of himself, by his command of bumptious rhetoric, on the simple-minded masses of his fellow-countrymen.

JAPAN IN MANCHURIA. Throughout the 1920's people had gone on paying lip loyalty to 'Collective Security' and the League which existed to enforce it. Many seemed to hope that by proclaiming their faith long after it had been contradicted by experience, they were helping it to come true. But the war, so far from purging away the passions which had caused it, intensified them. The League, though it had some success on non-controversial matters such as the control of disease and problems of labour, failed to quell conflicts of ambition between the Powers, because these Powers were really more concerned for their own interests than for justice and peace. Britain's sins in this matter were of omission rather than of commission, but they came at fateful moments.

The first of these critical episodes was in the Far East. Britain had for her own ends encouraged Japanese Imperialism by the Alliance of 1902; and one outcome of that was that Japan became one of the Big Five of the Peace Conference and gained a mandate for Pacific islands formerly belonging to Germany, thus extending her range of influence half-way to America and Australia. The winding-up of the Alliance in 1922 stirred up nationalist feelings in Japan and strengthened a militarist fac-

tion which aimed at extending the power of the God-born race all over northern Asia. Economic and political domination over China had long been the dream of Japanese patriots, and two circumstances were now giving it fresh immediacy. In the first place Chiang Kai-shek was converting the amorphous Chinese Republic into a unified State strong enough to resist such intrusion. In the second place the world depression of 1929-31 almost wiped out the foreign trade on which Japan was even more dependent than Great Britain.

These motives impelled the ruling clique to conquer Manchuria, and to take violent action at Shanghai, ostensibly to break down a boycott of Japanese goods. Immense American and British investments were threatened by these acts—which broke the Four-Power Pact, the Five-Power Pact and the Nine-Power Pact, as well as the Covenant of the League. But of the four broken treaties, the Covenant was the only one which provided for enforcement; and as neither the U.S.A. nor the U.S.S.R. were members of the League, the whole burden of fighting the Japanese Navy, thousands of miles from a base, would fall on Great Britain, just at a time when the British Treasury was on the brink of bankruptcy. Frank Stimson, the American Secretary of State, and Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Minister, had some correspondence on the possibility of 'diplomatic pressure', but each knew that his people would not face the expense of doing anything more. Simon would not even impose an embargo on munitions. 'However we handle this matter,' he said in Parliament, 'I do not intend my country to get into trouble over it.'

So all that the League Council could do was to gain a brief respite from the need to make a decision, by sending an international Commission with Lord Lytton as chairman, to make inquiries on the spot.

This was a particularly unfortunate moment for such an 'incident' (to use the Japanese euphemism—they would never admit that they were making war on China); for the long-expected Disarmament Conference had just met. The victors' obligation to disarm was part of the Versailles Treaty; Clemenceau, who certainly could not be accused of softness towards

Germany, had written to the German Government admitting this in the clearest terms:

> 'The Allied and Associated Governments wish to make it clear that their requirements in regard to German armaments were not made solely with the object of rendering it impossible for Germany to resume her military aggression. They are also the first step towards that general reduction and limitation of armaments which . . . it will be one of the first duties of the League of Nations to promote.'

But the problem had never been seriously tackled; and it was becoming evident that if there was no scaling-down of armaments there would soon be a scaling-up, especially in view of the state of public feeling in Germany. So it was a great relief to learn that at last the League Council had been able to fix a date for the grand opening of the Conference—2nd February 1932.

It met in a hall specially built for it at Geneva, under the presidency of Arthur Henderson. The Preparatory Commission (p. 341) had managed to prepare a Draft Convention, but each of the Powers had registered some objection to it; and when it was debated they could not agree as to which weapons were defensive and therefore allowable. France, with a large fleet of submarines, claimed that they were required to protect her coasts and harbours; Japan wanted aircraft-carriers forbidden because they deprived her of the security afforded by her remoteness from foreign air-bases; and Britain vetoed the abolition of bombing from the air because she found this the most economical method of dealing with fractious frontier tribes. Above all, Germany resented a clause in the Draft which kept in force 'all earlier treaties by which certain of the High Contracting Parties had agreed to limit their armaments'. It was too much, they said, to expect them to join in reforging the shackles of Versailles when the victor Powers had not even begun to fulfil their own obligations under the Treaty. And after the summer recess they refused to return to the Conference unless they were treated as equals.

Then early in 1933 the Lytton Commission made its report to the League. It was to the effect that there had been faults on both sides at Manchuria, and that the province had better be made an independent republic under the control of the League. The Council carefully avoided making any charge

against Japan that would call for action under Article XVI of the Covenant; but it did not succeed in soothing the culprit. When the Assembly formally accepted the report the Japanese delegates walked out, and a week later gave notice of Japan's withdrawal from membership. That action began the disintegration of the League; and it struck a mortal blow at the Disarmament Conference. For how could the White Powers put themselves at the mercy of a Yellow Power which remained fully armed and tore up treaties like waste paper?

And a fortnight later events in Germany killed disarmament stone dead.

THE NAZI REVOLUTION. The National Socialist Workers' Party was one of several organizations that sprang up after 1919 in revolt against the humiliation and distress resulting from Germany's defeat. The Weimar Republic was a respectable institution, but the Junker class despised it, while many of the workers hoped to replace it by a Soviet system. The Nazi Party, as its name implied, combined both these extremes—fervid nationalism and better times for the poor; and it had as leader a demagogue of genius. Adolf Hitler was a half-educated, shiftless young man, who after an undistinguished career in the war dreamed dreams of restoring Germany to greatness. The Party attracted a number of unscrupulous adventurers who looked to it for personal advancement; and it gradually built up a more or less coherent body of doctrine, set forth by Hitler in a long-winded book called *Mein Kampf*, but more effectively by his passionate and foaming oratory. He preached the duty of purifying the German race from Jewish blood; the invincibility of the German Army, which had in 1918 been 'stabbed in the back' by Jews and Bolsheviks at home; Germany's right to more 'living-space' at the expense of her neighbours, especially in Alsace-Lorraine, Poland and the Ukraine; contempt for parliamentary, and horror at Soviet, democracy, and the substitution of a dictatorship ratified by occasional plebiscites—a system by which a heroic nation could confide power to a leader who would co-ordinate all its resources for national greatness.

The Party had a setback in the elections of 1929, when the country was still prosperous, but its chance came with the great

slump which began later in the year. The Government's efforts to find money to keep up the payments due for reparations under the 'Young Plan' curtailed bank credits, which had the effect of restricting trade and threw millions out of work; officials and civil servants were turned adrift to reduce expenditure; the lack of commodities raised prices. Many people turned to National Socialism as a last hope, while the distress and discontent frightened Junkers and rich industrialists into supporting it as a defence against Bolshevism. And Germans of all classes, except for a few 'intellectuals', longed for a government that would restore national pride and give the victor Powers a renewed respect for the Fatherland. Old President Hindenburg—a picturesque survival of Hohenzollern militarism—was disgusted at the idea of these unsavoury gangsters gaining power; but the Nazi chief managed to win over influential people around him, and on 30th January 1933 Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich.

The gang lost not an instant in digging themselves in, by installing members as officials and by giving a free hand to the S.S. and the Gestapo[1] established by Himmler, the organizing genius of the movement. An election to the Reichstag had now to be held, and every device was used to create public alarm. The Reichstag building was burned down as evidence of a deep-laid Communist plot against the State; and the President was cajoled into issuing an 'Emergency Decree' suspending the constitutional guarantees of personal liberty. All this terrorism produced only a 51 per cent majority for the Nazi Government, but it was enough for their purpose. Opposition parties were dissolved; potential opponents hustled off to concentration camps; the Trade Unions (the strongest in Europe) were abolished and their funds confiscated; schools were 'purged' of non-Nazi teachers; bonfires were made of books which did not meet with Nazi approval; control was taken of newspapers, of the radio, of the cinema and the theatre—of every channel through which ideas permeate the minds of men.

[1] S.S. = Schütz-Staffel, a highly disciplined band of young gunmen, carefully selected for 'purity of race', patriotism, physical efficiency, ruthlessness and unquestioning devotion to the Party.
Gestapo = *GEheimes STAats POlizei*—secret political police.

The seizure of power in Germany by a rampantly nationalist party completed the ruin of the Disarmament Conference. Of course, to have conceded her claim to complete equality would have authorized large-scale rearmament on her part—a strange outcome of such a conference! On the other hand it was vitally important to wheedle her into rejoining it. So when it reassembled Britain proposed that until the other Powers had agreed upon their own disarmament, Germany should be allowed 'tokens' of the forbidden weapons. Hitler's reply was to withdraw the German delegation altogether. Thus the Conference to which the world had looked to free it from the burdens and perils of competing armaments, foundered ignominiously. Shortly afterwards Germany followed Japan's example by withdrawing from the League of Nations also. Henceforth she was not to be restrained even by the paper bonds of the Covenant.

Any lingering doubts which the rest of Europe might have felt as to the real nature of the National Socialist movement were removed by a 'Night of Long Knives', as Hitler called it, in the following summer. Early in 1934 it seemed as if it might be weakened by its own success. There were murmurs of disunity, and Hitler, Himmler and Goering secretly planned a 'cleansing' of the Party by the simultaneous assassination of the grumblers. On June 30th and the two following days about seven hundred persons were murdered, mostly by organized parties of the S.S. The horror of the nation at this deed of blood was allayed by loud and continuous propaganda to the effect that the victims were miscreants plotting against the nation's reviving hopes. And when on the death of Hindenburg in the following August Hitler abolished the office of President and assumed the all-embracing position of 'Leader' (*Führer*), the nation condoned his actions and approved his self-elevation by an overwhelming majority.

XXXIII

THE END OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY 1934–1936

Britain made a good recovery after the Blizzard; but the failure of her Government and people to uphold the authority of the League of Nations falsified their lip-service to it. The only large-scale attempt of the peace-loving Powers to make its judgments prevail was a ridiculous failure, and showed the Dictators that they could ignore it.

PLANNED ECONOMY. The National Government achieved much of the financial recovery which it had promised. The improvement was partly due to world conditions, just as the slump had been, and the process was slow and difficult. But Neville Chamberlain at the Exchequer 'pegged away', as he himself put it, with many and varied expedients. Cuts in expenditure did something, for though they reduced the spending power of a great many people they gave an impression of 'sound finance' which put fresh confidence into business men, and there can be no prosperity in a capitalist country unless those who control the capital are in good heart. One of his long-term remedies was the conversion of £2,000 millions of war debts from 5 per cent to 3½ per cent. This was a process which cannot be explained except in terms that would require further explanation; all that we need note here is that it not only saved the taxpayer £30 millions a year but led to a general lowering of interest rates—another potent stimulus to business enterprise. And cheap money was further encouraged by an embargo on new issues of capital abroad—British money was reserved for British concerns. Thus what with one thing and another the dangerous corner was safely turned.

Unemployment remained a stubborn problem. In 1934 it was only half what it had been in 1932, but it fell little below 1½ million, a total which in 1929 had seemed calamitous. Still, the number of persons in employment was higher than at any time since 1921, and the volume of industrial production was not only 50 per cent more than in 1931, but 25 per cent more

than before the depression set in. The 1934-5 budget actually showed a surplus, which Chamberlain used to restore the cuts in the Dole and half those in Service pay, and to remove the extra sixpence which had been put on Income Tax.

The measures taken to deal with the crisis were the final stages in the decay of *laissez-faire*. Its gradual fading has been one of the chief phenomena of Recent Times. Humanitarian laws had directed the conditions of labour and the treatment of children and sick persons; educational laws had compelled people to learn; sanitary laws guarded their health, commercial laws restrained the abuse of capital; social laws took money from the rich for the benefit of the poor. And now the National Government with its 'Doctor's Mandate' abandoned all pretence of leaving trade and profit and incomes and living conditions to find their own level. From measures directed to national recovery it went on to what had once been ridiculed as 'grandmotherly legislation', directing people's lives and curtailing their liberty for their own good. Two characteristic examples were the *Restriction of Ribbon Development* Act (1935) which gave Local Authorities powers (not always used) to prevent disfigurement of the countryside, and the *Public Health* Act (1936), the most comprehensive measure of the kind ever passed, regulating everything from the quality of meat to the air space in bedrooms. And as the State had to shoulder the burden of unemployment resulting from industrial failure, it began to use its authority and its resources to give direction to Capital and Labour. On the strength of the Report of a Royal Commission on the Geographical Distribution of the Industrial Population (1937) it directed and supported the establishment by private enterceased to regard *laissez-faire* even as an ideal. And other countries were carrying 'Planned Economy' further than Britain.

Russia, as we know, had already carried through a Five Years' Plan to create a highly industrialized State in quick time. Clouds of distrust hid from the outside world much of what was going on in the U.S.S.R., but enough could be seen to convince all but the most determined sceptics of what wonders could be achieved by large-scale organization.

The conversion of the United States to 'State Socialism' was far more sudden and startling than Britain's; for the swift growth of American prosperity had always been ascribed to free

enterprise and individual liberty, and never had that gospel been so confidently proclaimed as in the decade immediately preceding the Great Blizzard. But the nation was so prostrated by that cataclysm that in its efforts to struggle to its feet it was ready to abandon its oldest beliefs and traditions. Roosevelt's 'New Deal' was a grandiose use of governmental power to stimulate bank credits, to set on foot public works, and to encourage spending by advances from the Treasury—'pump-priming' as he called it. The *National Industrial Recovery* Act (1933) gave him power over the whole field of industrial enterprise—to fix quantities, wages and prices, and to allocate raw materials and markets.

Germans, unlike Americans, have always looked to the State for direction, but that tendency was exploited to an unimaginable degree by the National Socialist Government. The revolution that had brought it to power was made possible by the conditions resulting from the world depression—the sudden withdrawal of American loans and the struggle of the Republic to preserve its solvency by methods which raised home prices, lowered wages, and threw a third of the nation out of work with another third on short time (p. 381). Hitler restored the situation by taking women off the labour market, by compulsory labour service (especially on road-making), by controlling currency and investment, and by limiting dividends to 6 per cent so that the rest might be ploughed back into production. Only such enterprises were permitted as would help to make Germany self-contained. The imports that were absolutely necessary, such as raw materials, were obtained from countries which would take German products in payment, by a system of 'blocked marks' which could not be converted into other currencies but had to be spent in Germany.

HITLER FLUTTERS THE DOVECOTES. Hitler's next stroke of foreign policy after quitting the League was to make a ten-year non-aggression pact with Poland. This was startling, for the existence of the 'Polish Corridor' had always been one of his bitterest complaints against the Versailles Treaty. But he believed in doing one thing at a time. His first big (as yet very secret) scheme was to incorporate Austria in the Reich, and until this was safely accomplished he was ready to drop all other conflicts. France was taken aback, for she had relied on her

alliance with Poland to keep Germany in check. So she turned to Soviet Russia, hitherto an outcast among the States. And Soviet Russia, aroused from absorption in internal planning by a threatened renewal of German aggression, was glad to make a Franco-Soviet Pact (1935), as a condition of which the U.S.S.R. became a member of the League of Nations. But this revival of the Dual Alliance seemed ominous!

Germany had been evading the disarmament imposed on her by the Treaty almost from the moment it was signed: that had long been an open secret. And the Nazis greatly accelerated the process. Everybody knew that the vast building going up on the Wilhelmstrasse was to be the headquarters of a great air force; but none of the Powers had the nerve to protest. January 1935 was the date fixed at Versailles for the plebiscite about the return of the Saar coalfield to Germany; and until this was safely carried through Hitler could not openly repudiate the rest of the Treaty.[1] But in March 1935 he boldly issued a decree re-instituting conscription, and fixing the peace-time strength of the Army at 550,000 men. This was nearly double the number which he had always declared Germany needed for self-defence.

There was general consternation. Britain complained that the decree 'destroyed the prospects of a general settlement'; France appealed to the League; and Italy invited both to a conference at Stresa on Lake Maggiore. There, in April (1935), Mussolini, Laval and MacDonald agreed to place this resolution before the Council of the League: 'Germany has failed in the obligation lying upon all members of the international community to respect the undertakings they have contracted.' But none of the three was prepared to *do* anything; for Mussolini was nursing a secret project which would take all his available resources outside Europe, France was seamed by corruption and faction, and Britain was paralysed by a flaccid pacificism.

The attitude of the British nation and Government during these years calls for some attention, for it had momentous consequences. Nazi propaganda, conducted by Goebbels with uncanny grasp of the weaknesses of human nature, was having

[1] The result of the plebiscite was: For return to Germany 90·8 per cent; for remaining under the League 8·87 per cent; union with France 0·33 per cent.

considerable effect, both in Britain and in the Dominions. There was an uneasy feeling that the Versailles Treaty had been harsh, and that, however regrettable the conduct of the Nazis, it would be unfair to maintain the injustices of that settlement by force of arms. And underlying these considerations was a deeply engrained tradition of helping up an opponent whom we have knocked down. Sir John Simon, setting forth British policy in the House, said that Germany's claim to equality of rights could not be, and ought not to be, resisted. Another very prevalent feeling was that a prosperous and satisfied Germany was essential to the revival of foreign trade. Yet another was the fear of Bolshevism; one prominent public man declared in 1934 that the disarmed condition of Germany was, in view of that threat, the greatest menace to the peace and security of Europe.

The nation's state of mind was a combination of idealism, parsimony, and sheer slackness. A Labour pacifist won a by-election at Fulham, a Conservative stronghold, despite Baldwin's declaration that it was 'a calculated lie' to accuse the Government of not being sincere about disarmament. And a similar spirit was evinced in the famous resolution at the Oxford Union against 'fighting for King and Country'.[1] The Government seemed to acquiesce in this general feeling. Churchill widened his breach with his Party by drawing public attention to the danger of letting Germany re-arm without taking counter-measures. Baldwin felt that counter-action would only lead to competition in cruelty.

> 'Whatever people may tell you, the bomber will always get through. The only defence is offence, which means that you have to kill more women and children than the enemy, if you want to save yourselves. . . . Are we going to defile the earth from the air as we have defiled it on the ground for nearly all the years that mankind has been on it?'

When in 1934 Parliament showed anxiety about our air strength, he promised that it should never fall lower than that of 'any country within striking distance of our shores'. In

[1] It would, of course, be unfair to suppose that the vote represented serious views. The voting after these debates is largely a verdict on which side has produced the best speeches. On this occasion the protagonists were C. E. M. Joad and Quintin Hogg. But it made a very unfortunate impression outside Oxford.

February 1935 Hitler suggested an Air Pact, and Sir John Simon arranged to visit Berlin to discuss details.[1] But just then the Government published a White Paper to explain an increase in the Estimates of the Fighting Services. It expressed regret that our example of disarmament had not been followed, and that Germany's 'uncontrolled' re-arming caused a feeling of insecurity. It declared that the Government still had confidence in peace, but felt that some degree of re-armament was required to preserve it. Fortunately it was only the Air Estimates that called for any appreciable increase: they would be raised from £17 millions to £20 millions. Despite the meek tone of this pronouncement Hitler took offence, and intimated that Simon would no longer be welcome in Berlin. And the Opposition Parties in Parliament were outraged that there should be any increase at all. Did the Government believe in Collective Security, or did it not? challenged Attlee. Baldwin replied that its reliance thereon was as complete as ever. And as token of its adherence the special post of 'Minister for League Affairs' was created for Anthony Eden, the ablest of the younger Conservatives. Churchill insisted that the Government was underestimating Germany's potential air strength, but Baldwin assured the House that we were a long way ahead and likely to remain so. Six months later, when the R.A.F.'s programme of construction had been fixed for the next two years, he had to admit that he had been misinformed.[2]

Of course, Hitler was not in the least affected by the Stresa resolution. But to keep the Powers quiet while he was rearming he assured them that Germany would most faithfully keep all voluntary pledges such as the Locarno Pact that perpetuated the demilitarization of the Rhineland. It was only restrictions forced on her at Versailles that she repudiated. He had not the slightest intention of interfering with Austria, he said. As to

[1] It should be remembered that the Treaty of Versailles forbade Germany to have any Air Force at all. Acceptance of the proposal for an Air Pact seemed to treat Versailles as a dead letter, and encouraged Hitler to avow rearmament a little later.

[2] It was very difficult to get accurate figures from Germany. Where Germany was getting ahead was in preparing machine-tools and prototypes rather than in the actual production. And the time was not wholly lost to Britain, for it enabled superior types, such as the 'Spitfire' and the 'Hurricane', to be put into production.

armaments, he was always ready to limit Germany's to any extent adopted by the other Powers. In the air he would accept parity with France, he would be content with a mere fraction of Britain's strength at sea.

This last hint led to a Naval Treaty (June 1935) by which German naval tonnage was limited to 35 per cent of Britain's except in submarines. France and Italy were indignant that Britain should thus break 'the Stresa front'; but our Government replied, in effect, that being unable to prevent Germany from building warships, we were making the best of a bad situation.

At this juncture MacDonald, whose vitality had long been waning, resigned in favour of Baldwin, and two years later he died. The character of the 'National' Government became more Conservative than ever. National Liberalism was now represented in the Cabinet only by Simon, National Labour only by J. H. Thomas, and neither faction contributed anything noticeable to the Government's immense majority in Parliament.

THE 'SANCTIONS' FIASCO. Hitler's successful defiance of the Powers over re-armament encouraged Mussolini to proceed with his own design—the conquest of Abyssinia. This was an unattractive country which would be expensive to develop, and produced none of the commodities—coal, oil, rubber and cotton—which Italy most needed. But a spectacular conquest was required to advertise her claim to be the heir of Imperial Rome, and Abyssinia was the only field for it within reach. True, the intended victim was a fellow-member of the League (sponsored by Italy only a few years before), but the Duce was not to be intimidated by the prospect of verbal protests which it seemed were all that he would meet from Geneva.

He fixed the invasion for the winter of 1935-6. At the time of the Stresa Conference Italian store-ships and transports were already streaming through the Suez Canal to establish bases, but neither MacDonald nor Laval ventured to ask inconvenient questions of their host, and he took their silence for consent. So when Haile Selassie, Emperor of Abyssinia, applied to the League for protection, the only positive response was a ban on the supply of munitions to either party—which did not

affect the fully armed aggressor, but prevented the defenceless victim from getting as much as an anti-aircraft gun.

And now the lack of a firm and consistent policy on the part of Britain led to disaster. The 'National' Government made no serious attempt to use its inside knowledge to lead and instruct public opinion; it reflected only too faithfully the nation's lack of vision, and was afraid to tell it the facts. We had shut our eyes to the possibility of another major war, and disliked people like Churchill who tried to open them. 'Pacifism' (using the word in its broadest sense) had always been part of Liberal and Labour creeds; and although the leading Conservatives (apart from a few zealots like Lord Cecil and Austen Chamberlain) were less enthusiastic about the League, they could not flout the popular faith in it. It was perhaps illogical for people who called for support of the Covenant to begrudge money for the forces necessary for the purpose; but a 'League of Nations Union' had just held a 'Peace Ballot' in which 11 million voters declared their devotion to the League, but only half that number were willing to support it by armed force.[1] So when the time came for a general election in the autumn of 1935, the National Government pledged themselves (a) to 'give full support to the League', and (b) to 'abstain from any substantial rearmament'.

In September (1935) Italy's intention to attack Abyssinia was too manifest to be ignored at Geneva any longer, and Sir Samuel Hoare, British Foreign Secretary, nailed the colours of Collective Security to the mast with a rousing speech to the Council of the League.

'My country stands for the maintenance of the Covenant in all its integrity, and particularly for resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression. This is a principle . . . to which the British people and Government hold with firm, enduring and universal persistence.'

And Laval was equally emphatic: 'Our obligations are inscribed in the Covenant. France will not evade them.' People's hearts beat high; the Great Powers were at last going to give actuality to the ideals of the League.

But the Duce gambled on their bark being worse than their bite; and in any case he had gone too far to turn back. On

[1] See Appendix to this chapter.

October 3rd an Italian army invaded Abyssinia. Thereupon Britain and France, maintaining their bold front at Geneva, led fifty-one nations in pronouncing Italy an aggressor and pledging themselves not to supply her with war materials. But on the published list of such banned goods there was one notable omission: fuel oil. For this was a commodity which Mussolini really needed, and he had rudely announced that he would treat an embargo on it as an act of war. Nor would Britain close the Suez Canal to shipping—an equally effective way of stopping the invasion; for nobody as yet knew what might be the effects of bombing warships from the air; and in any case, a general war was just what the League had been created to prevent.

At the general election in November (1935) the nation endorsed the Government's programme and gave it a substantial, though somewhat reduced, majority. But Mussolini was using the League's threat of 'Sanctions' (=penalties) to stoke up the war-passions of his people, hitherto lukewarm, and was hurling defiance and contempt at the Powers. From this embarrassing situation Hoare sought relief by a plan to prevent the annihilation of the little State which he had encouraged to resist. He and Laval secretly devised a partition of Abyssinia which assigned the best part of it to Italy. There was no evidence, or likelihood, that Mussolini would have accepted the proposal; but it was never presented to him. For it leaked out and aroused such a storm of bewildered resentment in Britain that Baldwin had to repudiate it. Hoare resigned and Anthony Eden became Foreign Secretary.

Abyssinia's doom was now inevitable. The Emperor repeatedly besought the League to fulfil its obligations, but the Powers were unwilling to risk another Great War to rescue him. The end was hastened by the spraying of mustard gas from the air. On May 2nd (1936) an Italian force entered Addis Ababa, and on June 9th in Rome Mussolini proclaimed King Victor Emmanuel 'Emperor of Abyssinia'. Another month passed before the British Government could bring itself to the humiliating step of proposing to the League the cancellation of the 'sanctions' which had failed so ludicrously. 'To-day', jibed Mussolini, 'a white flag has been hoisted in the ranks of the world-sanctionists!' Faith in the League as an instrument of

Collective Security had received a blow from which it never recovered.

THE WATCH ON THE RHINE AGAIN. Of course the Sanctions fiasco was a great stroke of fortune for Hitler, and he hastened to assure Mussolini of his good wishes. The split between Italy and the Powers removed the last chance that the League would be able to act against Germany. Hitler had defied them by re-arming; he now went on to re-militarize the Rhine Provinces. This was a much more drastic step; for Germany's undertaking not to keep troops west of the Rhine had been voluntarily confirmed at Locarno, and Hitler himself had more than once declared his intention of abiding by it. His generals opposed the reoccupation, urging that France and Britain could not possibly let it pass unchallenged, and that the German Army, still weak in numbers and only half trained, would be overwhelmed. But Hitler insisted on taking the chance, and the event justified his judgment.

On the morning of 7th March 1936 the German Foreign Office informed the ambassadors of the Powers that German troops were at the moment marching into the Rhineland. Britain took the news quite calmly: there was a general feeling that the Germans had a right to do what they liked with their own country. France was more upset, for she had lost her last safeguard. Her generals were of opinion that a mere mobilization of the army—still immensely stronger than the German—would make Hitler draw back. But the unstable position of French politics made even this seem too risky. The Flandin-Laval Ministry was collapsing; Italy was fuming over Sanctions; no support could be expected from Britain. So the critical moment passed with nothing stronger than a verbal protest. And when Flandin mildly suggested that the legality of the move should be brought before The Hague Tribunal of International Justice, Hitler laughed him to scorn: 'Germany has no intention of being dragged into any international court, for no such court has the responsibility towards the German people that I have.'

Hitler now began to demand the return of Germany's former colonies which had been 'mandated' (mostly to Britain) by the Treaty of Versailles. Of course he would not accept respon-

sibility for their good government to the League—Germany was not even a member of it; and the objections—strategical, economic and humanitarian—to their return in 1919 were infinitely stronger now that Germany was under a government which made a gospel of military might, self-sufficiency and racial pride. There were people in this country, many of them in high political and social circles, who felt that the return of some, at least, of the colonies would not be too high a price to pay as part of a general settlement which would satisfy German aspirations once for all. But the Dominions—particularly South Africa—would have been outraged if the British Government for the sake of peace and quiet in Europe had suffered Nazi Germany to set up as a World Power. So Hitler was left with a first class grievance.

THE ABDICATION CRISIS. The year 1936 was an eventful one in the annals of the British Monarchy. In the course of it three kings reigned.

In January George V died at Sandringham. His Jubilee, the year before, had been the occasion of a demonstration of affection and respect. He himself had been surprised at its warmth. 'After all, I'm only an ordinary sort of fellow', he is reported to have said; but that was the secret of his success as a king. We do not look for showy qualities in our sovereigns; our constitution works best with one who is unostentatious, faithful to duty, steadfast and level-headed. And all these qualities George V had to the full.

The Prince who now became King Edward VIII was of a different type. He had seen the world and mixed with all sorts of people, and had displayed a taste for adventure. There were hopes that his lively sympathies and active mind would be of service to the nation and the Commonwealth in their difficulties; but these hopes were doomed to swift collapse.

He had reached the verge of middle age unmarried. For twenty years there had been speculation as to whether he would find a bride among the British aristocracy like his brother York, or among foreign princesses like his brother Kent. And the question had now become urgent: a bachelor king seemed inconceivable. During the summer there were rumours (despite a self-denying ordinance among British newspapers to keep the

subject out of their columns) that he was seeing a great deal of a Mrs. Simpson, an American lady who, having already divorced one husband was now obtaining a decree against another. It was a bishop who broke the silence by a reproachful reference in a diocesan address. At once the newspapers were flooded with fact and fiction on the subject, and the question naturally arose whether the King was thinking of marrying the lady. On November 26th the Prime Minister told the Cabinet that the King had consulted him, saying that he would not ask for Mrs. Simpson to be recognized as Queen, or for children of the marriage to have any right of succession to the throne. The Cabinet was of the opinion that such an arrangement would need a special Act of Parliament, which they were not prepared to sponsor. The Dominions, when consulted, agreed—a pronouncement of special importance in view of the fact that the Monarchy is now the sole bond of union among the members of the Commonwealth, and that the marriage might dissolve the Empire.

For a week the King remained in seclusion at his private home, Fort Belvedere, wrestling with his problem. There was a widespread feeling that 'in these democratic times' a King ought to be able to marry whom he liked; and the Rothermere and Beaverbrook newspapers urged the nation not to let its king be driven from his rights 'by political intrigue'—a back-handed blow at their old enemy Baldwin (p. 345). But Parliament realized the constitutional difficulties that would arise from such a marriage. At last, on December 3rd, the Prime Minister announced that the King had decided to abdicate. The necessary legislation was rushed through. That night 'Prince Edward' broadcast that he was giving up the throne because he could not undertake the tasks it involved without the companionship of the woman he loved, and commended his former subjects to his brother King George VI: 'God bless you, and God Save the King!' An hour or two later a destroyer took him across the Channel, and as Duke of Windsor he married Mrs. Simpson as soon as her decree *nisi* was made absolute.

Foreigners felt that the British nation had come through the crisis with commendable good sense and good feeling; and it did something to restore the prestige of Baldwin, a good deal

damaged by the Hoare-Laval humiliation and the mishandling of 'Sanctions'.

APPENDIX

The Peace Ballot (August 1935)

So much is heard of the Peace Ballot that a few facts about it should be noted. It was organized by the League of Nations Union as propaganda. The wording of the questions indicate this: they are more tendencious than questions in the impartial Gallup Polls in the United States. Ballot papers were widely distributed, but it was never suggested that there was much plural voting, or unfairness in the collection and counting of the papers. Left-wing newspapers urged their readers to vote. Right-wing papers mostly took the opposite line; the *Daily Express* was very emphatic that the ballot papers should be thrown into the waste-paper basket.

The voting went as follows:

1. Should Great Britain remain a member of the League of Nations?
   Yes: 11,090,387. No: 355,883.
2. Are you in favour of all-round reduction of armaments by international agreement?
   Yes: 10,070,489. No: 862,775.
3. Are you in favour of the all-round abolition of military and naval aircraft by international agreement?
   Yes: 9,533,558. No: 1,689,786.
4. Should the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit be prohibited by international agreement?
   Yes: 10,417,329. No: 775,415.
5. Do you consider that, if a nation insists on attacking another the other nations should combine to compel it to stop.
   By economic and non-military measures?
   Yes: 11,027,608. No: 695,074.
   If necessary, by military measures?
   Yes: 6,783,386. No: 2,351,981.

XXXIV

THE SOFT ANSWER
1936–1938

We come now to two years in which British national character showed to little advantage. The nation and its Government contrived to believe what was most comfortable to believe—that the dictators would be kept quiet by kind words and by condoning their violence and bad faith. But the possibility that this might not avail was already forcing itself upon the Government, and a half-hearted strengthening of the forces now began.

BRITAIN BEGINS TO REARM. At the beginning of 1936 the tide of British disarmament reached its low-water. It is easy for us to be wise, for we know what happened, but Baldwin and his colleagues had not that advantage. Still, the tide now turned. In the 1936 budget the cost of the fighting services was raised from £138 millions to £178 millions—nearly double the Estimates of 1930. This was not extravagant if there was any truth in Churchill's statement (October 1935) that Germany was spending £800 millions on armaments that year; but the Government apologized for the increase in another White Paper.

Three other defensive measures taken the following spring were equally mild. An 'Air Raid Precautions Office' was set up to direct Local Authorities in providing shelters and first-aid posts and in training wardens and stretcher-parties. But the scheme hung fire because the Government would not provide more than three-fourths of the cost, and the Authorities refused to contribute anything out of the rates. Clearly the nation did not take the possibility of war very seriously!

Secondly, a 'Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence' was appointed to allocate industrial man-power and materials between the forces, and to act as liaison between them and manufacturers. Churchill had long been demanding this, and everybody expected that he himself, with his unique knowledge of all the three Services would be appointed. But the post was given to Sir Thomas Inskip, a lawyer with no experience of the Services or of administration. Doubtless Baldwin felt that it

would be provocative to bring into the Ministry the man whom Hitler was always denouncing as a war-monger; but the appointment confirmed the impression that we were not really expecting a war.

Thirdly, the manufacture of munitions, and especially aeroplanes, was largely divided among 'shadow factories' specializing in different parts and sending them to a central depot to be assembled. This scheme enabled firms to continue their normal production, to run up fresh buildings and install machinery with Government subsidies, and start on 'educational orders' with relays of employees so that all should get experience of the work. But it had drawbacks. It needed years to get the synthesis working smoothly; experience alone could show how long a factory would take to produce a given quota; and a single bomb might create a 'bottle-neck' that would bring the whole production schedule to a halt. Some able industrialists (notably Lord Nuffield) would have nothing to do with it; and it seemed unlikely that a Government seriously preparing for war would entrust an activity so vital to so happy-go-lucky a system.

But those who blame the National Government for not rearming more promptly, now that Collective Security had broken down, should remember that Britain was a peace-minded democracy. Hitler *knew* that he intended to re-establish Germany's position in the world by war (or by the fear of it, which amounts to the same thing); and he *knew* when the aggression was coming, for he was going to be the aggressor. He could raise money to almost any amount by astute juggling carried through by his financial experts, without having to make public explanations or to placate a carping Opposition. He could win the unanimous support of his people by his monopoly of Press and Radio—and his Gestapo. Britain, on the other hand, cherished Free Press and Free Speech and Parliament. Baldwin and his colleagues misjudged Hitler; but in any case they could not have taken a bold line without the concurrence of the City and of Organized Labour, and both were dead against re-armament. The City argued that it was unproductive, and that after the blizzard we needed to build up our foreign trade and foreign investments—which incidentally would be our economic mainstay if war really did come. And the Trade Unions were on the watch against the 'dilution'

of labour which would be required to carry through an intensive armaments programme. The threat of any kind of industrial conscription was much more immediate and real than alarmist views about the intentions of Hitler.

Still, by the autumn of 1936, the nation was becoming convinced of the need for strengthening the Services, provided that this was carried out with moderation and discretion; and Baldwin was able to explain why he had not called for it a year before. The country was then, he reminded the House, on the eve of a general election. Fulham and the Peace Ballot had displayed its pacifist mood.

> 'Suppose I had gone to the country and said that Germany was rearming, and that we must rearm, does anybody think this pacific democracy would have rallied to the cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election more certain.'

And though this looks at first as if he had been thinking more of his Party than of the safety of the State, we must not forget that defeat for the National Government would have put in the Labour Party, which was (as yet) opposed to re-armament altogether; and that at the time of which he was speaking, Hitler had not yet proved by tearing up Locarno that he was not to be bound by his own pledges.

Nevertheless, it is arguable that it might have been better for everybody (including Hitler) if Britain had been under a more enterprising Prime Minister at this juncture. Baldwin's temperament resembled Asquith's in some respects. He was essentially a Liberal—his steadfastness over the 'Flapper Vote' and the India Act matched Asquith's over the Budget and National Insurance; while Asquith was essentially a Constitutionalist—his dealing with the Peers matching Baldwin's dealing with Edward VIII. And we know that by 1936–7 Britain could not afford to concern herself with Liberalism or Constitutionalism —or with the (often sound and statesmanlike) policy of 'Wait and See'.

Appeasement. After the coronation of George VI in May 1937 Baldwin retired with an earldom. Neville Chamberlain who succeeded him made no claim to literary airs and graces; he

never made speeches that kindled the imagination or warmed the heart. But his rivals for the Premiership had all fallen by the way: Churchill had cut himself off from the main body of the Party, and Hoare's false step over Abyssinia was still fresh in the public memory. He was himself conscious that it was a strange turn of the political wheel that had brought him the supreme position which had eluded his father and brother. He had not entered politics till over fifty, after an early manhood of business and municipal office in Birmingham, and his age was now sixty-eight. Still, if he could not call forth glowing affection he inspired sober confidence. He had made a mark as Minister of Health, and as Chancellor of the Exchequer had been the chief architect of Recovery. But to foreign affairs —the department which was now presenting the most urgent and anxious problems—he had never given close attention, and his brother Austen, who might have counselled him from long experience in them, had just died. If the prevailing current of events was not checked, it would sweep Europe to disaster. As he said in accepting the chairmanship of the Conservative Party, the next two years would be critical, and whether they ended in chaos or in a gradual appeasement of old enmities would depend largely on the part played by this country.

Thus he entered on the Premiership with a mission. He would bring European politics back to ordered good sense and good will by methods of discussion and compromise such as he had always found successful in dealing with business men and committees. He felt that interests were seldom so contrary as they looked if only people would get round a table and talk things over in a spirit of give-and-take and with a desire to see the other fellow's point of view. It was unfortunate that the Nazis should be so un-British as to persecute Jews, but this was no business of ours; and the new Germany was at any rate a stouter bulwark against Bolshevism than the Weimar Republic had ever been. We had muddled away our chance of taking a firm line with Hitler at the start, and had let him get ahead of us in armaments. But he could not be so foolish or so wicked as actually to plunge Europe into another war; and he must see, what all sensible people must see, that war does nobody any good in the end. And if the sacrifice of an African colony or two would put him in a good humour, it would be bad business

to refuse.[1] It was equally urgent to restore our traditional friendship with Italy, clouded over by the 'midsummer madness' of Sanctions. Mussolini ought not to have done what he did to Abyssinia, but it was no good crying over spilt milk.

But Chamberlain prided himself on hard-headed dealing in facts. It was a fact that war was a terrible form of folly, but it was also a fact that Collective Security having become a myth, our determination to keep peace in Europe would be ineffective if our armed forces were not strong enough to inspire respect in the Powers that might be disposed to break it. One of his last acts as Chancellor had been to arrange a Defence Loan, followed by a White Paper which revealed that the Government planned to spend up to £1,500,000,000 in modernizing the Services during the next five years. Earlier White Papers had paid deference to the League and Collective Security, but those phrases had now lost currency—there was nothing about them in the 1937 Paper. All hope, it seemed to admit, now lay in pacts between individual States. But although Britain was now vaguely conscious of a need to rearm, she was at a disadvantage compared with States which regarded war as an integral part of their economic system. It was like a boxer preparing for a contest which he does not want, and does not really expect. In this very year 1937 Nazi Germany spent £1,000,000,000 on armaments and not a dog barked; whereas when the British Government proposed to spend about a quarter of that sum there was a great deal of barking. The Opposition Parties choked with indignation, and Big Business—hitherto staunch Chamberlainites—wrecked a scheme of National Defence Contributions (a kind of Excess Profits Duty) which he had devised to help to pay the cost.

One of Chamberlain's ministerial appointments showed considerable daring—that of Leslie Hore-Belisha, a Liberal and a Jew, as Secretary for War. The new broom swept vigorously. Hore-Belisha's main aim was to mechanize the Army under the influence of Liddell Hart, a military writer and thinker of great influence at this time. Old-fashioned generals—'the bow-

[1] This view was not confined to supporters of the National Government. Sir Archibald Sinclair, leader of the Opposition Liberals, said early in 1937: 'If Germany were willing to take part in a general settlement and come back into the League, it would be folly not to meet her by some adjustment of the colonial problem.'

and-arrow brigade'—had to make way for younger and more progressive officers, and a scheme for quicker promotion guaranteed a career to ambition and intelligence. The object was a small army, trained, mechanized and equipped to offer resistance to a 'knock-out blow' of sudden invasion. France everyone assumed to be secure behind her Maginot Line—a belt of fortifications along the German frontier, immensely stronger than the Germans' Hindenburg Line which had given us so much trouble in the last war. Thus, in the case of war, the Allies had only to sit down and wait for our naval blockade to take effect. Then the whole crazy, top-heavy structure of Nazi finance ('No balanced budgets!') must topple down with a resounding crash. Of course there was the threat from the air—Lord Trenchard drew a horrific picture of London receiving more bombs in an hour than in the whole of the last war; but the R.A.F. was developing some very fast eight-gun fighters that would soon be in full production.

'NON-INTERVENTION' IN SPAIN. Unfortunately another cloud of discord was rising. In 1931 the Spanish people had set up a republic, but democracy cannot thrive where a nation is not at one on fundamental issues. The landed class, the army and the Church detested being ruled by 'the rabble', and in July 1936 a group of leading officers and officials led by General Franco, after consultation at Rome and Berlin, launched a revolt which aimed not at restoring the monarchy, but at setting up a totalitarian regime like those of Italy and Germany. The rebels hoped that the army would gain instant success against civilians, but the bulk of the nation rushed to defend its Republic. A savage civil war began in which murderous battles were followed by mass executions and ruthless devastation.

The country became the battleground for Communism and Fascism. An International Brigade was formed from volunteers who came from almost every country in the world to fight for the Republic. Stalin, engaged in his Five-Year Plan and in a great purge which 'eliminated' thousands of people in authority accused of working against the regime, was not at all eager to intervene in Spain; but general sympathy in the U.S.S.R. for 'our Spanish comrades' compelled him to send some tanks and planes and the crews to man them. Support from Italy and

Germany for the Insurgents was on a much larger scale. Germany sent thousands of 'volunteers', specially selected from the technical branches of the army and air-force, to test their new apparatus under war conditions; while from Italy came fully equipped divisions, and eventually an entire army corps, complete with General Staff. Of course, all this had to be done 'under the rose'; for no country is entitled to support a faction trying to overthrow another country's government; but the two dictators denounced as slanders the suggestion that they were responsible for sending these forces.

It did not take Mussolini long to realize that the affair opened far-reaching vistas of policy to Fascist Italy. Control of the Mediterranean had always been one of his aims; for, as he pointed out, that waterway, to other sea-going Powers only *una via*, a route, was to Italy *una vita*—life itself. If, under Italian patronage, Franco became master of Spain, Gibraltar might be wrested from Britain. Then, with an Arab revolt stirred up by anti-British propaganda from the radio-station at Bari, her command of the other end of the sea would be checked too. It would become, as in the palmy days of Rome, *Mare nostrum*. Hitler and his generals had no great opinion of Italians as fighters, but when the Duce's son-in-law, Count Ciano arrived in Berlin (October 1936) with these proposals, the chance to raise up another enemy for France and Britain was too good to miss. Germany and Italy simultaneously recognized Franco as legitimate ruler of Spain. Mussolini declared that the line between Rome and Berlin was an AXIS on which the affairs of Europe would henceforth turn. And, Japan having just launched another attack on China, they admitted a kindred spirit to a tri-partite 'Anti-Comintern Pact', directed ostensibly against the Communist propaganda put out by the Third International at Moscow, but really to provide distraction for their enemies.

All this was very embarrassing for Britain and France. That the Axis was aimed against them was obvious; but to oppose it in Spain would lead to a general war, which of all things they most wanted to avoid. So their obvious course was to induce Italy, Germany and Russia to withdraw their forces from Spain. With this in view they set up a 'Non-Intervention Committee' which sat in London and organized international guards at the

Spanish forts and frontiers. The German and Italian Governments could not refuse to join it without admitting that they had forces in Spain; and membership enabled them to see that nothing effective was done to stop Franco from crushing the 'Reds'. And so there was played a solemn farce, the Axis Powers pretending that they had sent no national forces to the Insurgents, while France and Britain politely ignored what everyone knew was going on. And the scheme made the ultimate victory of Franco certain; for Russia had by this time ceased to send help to the Republic.

There were frequent protests in Parliament, especially over British warships having to let Italian bombers attack British merchantmen plying to Spanish ports. But the Government rigidly adhered to its policy of avoiding any action that could possibly lead to war.

ANOTHER 'CHINA INCIDENT'. These events were watched with interest by Japan's military caste. The breakdown of Sanctions had proved that the Covenant was waste-paper, and the Powers who had professed to uphold it were allowing violence and deceit in Spain without a word of protest. The time seemed ripe for another move in China. There had been a lull since the Manchurian incident. Of course no peace could be made between China and Japan, for Japan never admitted she had made war—the laws of the United States prohibited the export of war material to a belligerent, and Japan could not have continued the operations without American oil and scrap-iron; moreover, it was part of her case that there was no 'China' to make war or peace with. There had formerly been some truth in this charge; but Chiang Kai-shek at Nanking now held sway over most of the country, and Japanese aggression was creating a national spirit that had never before existed in China.

So the warrior-rulers of Japan decided to strike again before the Chinese Republic became solid enough to resist their domination. When all was ready a second 'China Incident' began at a railway junction near Pekin, and within a few weeks Japanese troops had overrun the whole district, including Pekin and Tientsin. Collective Security, now on its deathbed, gave a convulsive last kick. The League condemned the aggression and invited its members to consider how they could

individually aid the victim; and the signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty (minus Japan, of course) met at Brussels in November. But it was the old story: all condemned the wrong, none volunteered to right it. Even the wanton destruction of British property to the value of millions sterling at Shanghai, and the sinking of American and British gunboats, followed by the machine-gunning of survivors, did not call forth more than a request for apologies. America was too absorbed in 'recovery' to engage in military action which would mean coping with the powerful Japanese navy on the other side of the Pacific; and of course Britain was too intent on watching Japan's partners in Europe to be able to give serious attention to events so remote.

So Japan's actions went unchecked. Chiang Kai-shek's Government withdrew to Hankow, and Chinese national life became centred in the mountains of the north-west, where it could draw supplies from Siberia and up the Burma Road. Japanese airmen destroyed whole towns, and took as special targets schools, universities, hospitals and other centres of culture. But it was found here, as elsewhere, that the bombing of civilians has little effect on the fortunes of war. The Japanese were never able to control more of the country than the range of their weapons.

Appeasement in Full Swing. Chamberlain went on unweariedly trying to wean Mussolini from the Axis. The bargain he had in mind was for Britain to recognize the King of Italy as Emperor of Abyssinia in return for a promise to withdraw all Italian troops from Spain; and he was convinced that the best way to win the Duce's heart would be to show confidence in his good faith. But there was one member of the Government who did not agree. Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, pointed out that Mussolini had so far broken every promise he had made, including a 'Gentlemen's Agreement' to maintain the existing balance of power in the Mediterranean. He, Eden, felt that he had found the right way to deal with dictators. It had been an open secret that 'mysterious' attacks on British merchantmen in the Mediterranean had been made by Italian submarines. Eden had called an international conference at Nyon, which authorized the naval Powers to patrol the infested waters with destroyers—and the attacks had immedi-

ately stopped. He now argued that no further concession should be made to Mussolini until he had proved his good faith by withdrawing (not merely promising to withdraw) a substantial proportion of his troops from Spain. But ambassador Grandi hinted that his Duce might not always be so ready for reconciliation as he was at the moment; and Chamberlain pressed on with negotiations for an Anglo-Italian pact. So Eden resigned. He could not, he said, agree to the shirking of facts for the sake of quick results. Lord Halifax, his successor at the Foreign Office, summarized the case for appeasement when he replied that, in a conflict between unpractical idealism and practical devotion to peace, he could not doubt that the stronger claim was that of peace. But it looked to the outside world as if Eden had been dismissed at the behest of the dictators. They themselves certainly thought so, and publicly exulted in their triumph.

The Agreement, signed in Rome in April 1938, consisted on the Italian side in a reiteration of promises about Spain, and an undertaking to withdraw an army recently sent to Libya as an unspoken threat to Egypt. In return Britain recognized Victor Emmanuel II as Emperor of Abyssinia.

The spring of 1938 was the heyday of Chamberlain's policy. One of its chief supporters was now Foreign Secretary, and as Halifax was a peer the Prime Minister himself became spokesman for foreign affairs in the Commons. And the opportunity was taken to remove Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who knew too much about the dictators to trust them. Sir Horace Wilson, Chief Industrial Adviser to the Government, and an expert 'appeaser' in industrial disputes, now became unofficial consultant on foreign affairs. Sir Nevile Henderson, who of all British diplomatists was most in sympathy with the authoritarian rule, was sent as ambassador to Berlin, with express instructions to promote a good understanding. Hitler responded with Ribbentrop, his own specialist in foreign relations. We know now that the real aim of Ribbentrop's mission was to judge how far Britain would acquiesce in Nazi designs; but he exuded charm, sent his son to an English public school, and became a lion of fashionable society.

The Prime Minister was anxious that the process of re-armament should not give offence. Fortunately it was the expansion of the Air Force that was likely to arouse most comment, and with Lord Swinton as Secretary for Air, Chamberlain could speak for this department as well as for the Foreign Office. He dexterously warded off indiscreet inquiry. In May (1938) he admitted that there had been delays and disappointments, but declared that all was now going smoothly. There was every hope that the target of 1750 planes would be completed by 1939, and a Committee of Inquiry such as the Opposition was demanding would only get in the way. As for the Ministry of Supply that Churchill advocated, it would be useless without dictatorial powers to direct manufacturers and workers-powers such as no Government could ask for in time of peace. A good deal of the criticism came from the Conservative back benches, but this was kept firmly in hand by the Whips, and the Government could always get substantial majorities.

One circumstance that gave Chamberlain a good deal of anxiety was the state of France. In 1936 the Radicals, Socialists and Communists had formed a *Front Populaire*, demanding suppression of Fascist societies like the *Croix de Feu*, full support for the League, and a forty-hour week without reduction of pay. A dastardly attack by a mob of Fascist roughs on Léon Blum, the Socialist leader, helped to swing this Popular Front into office under Blum. Organized Labour tried to compel this Government to bring its promised New Deal into force at once by a series of 'stay-in' strikes which paralysed French industry. It put out all Chamberlain's calculations that French plane production should be almost at a standstill at a time when Germany was gearing up for the production of war material on the most gigantic scale ever seen or heard of—with the express purpose, avowed by her leader, of striking France to the dust.

Appeasement was exemplified within the British Isles by a new Irish Treaty. De Valera, becoming Prime Minister in 1932, had abolished the oath of allegiance to the King, and had made the Free State (now renamed 'Eire') as near to an independent republic as he could without sacrificing the advantages of the connection. He had refused to pay the annual interest on loans

raised in Britain in 1892 to enable Irish tenants to buy their farms, and the British Government had obtained the money to pay the annuitants by putting heavy duties on Irish produce. The treaty brought to an end the tariff-war that ensued. Eire compounded for annuities amounting to £2 millions a year by a lump payment of £10 millions, and recovered the naval bases at Lough Swilly and Berehaven which had been maintained by the Royal Navy under the Treaty of 1923. There were misgivings about the return of these bases, for they would be of enormous importance for the defence of the Western Approaches in a future war; but Chamberlain felt that this would be outweighed by the advantage of having a friendly, instead of unfriendly, Ireland on our flank. But it was impossible for a British Government to hand over Northern Ireland to Eire, even for the sake of appeasement; and this left de Valera with the grievance of Partition. Although he promised that Eire should not be used as a base for attacks on Britain, his forces were too weak to prevent that from happening; and when war actually came Ireland owed its security from invasion to the Royal Navy which was so severely handicapped by the lack of these bases.

FAREWELL AUSTRIA! But Hitler was always creating fresh anxieties. At the Nuremberg Party Rally in February 1938, he declaimed that in two neighbouring states there lived ten million Germans whom it was Germany's sacred duty to protect. When he said 'protect', did he mean 'absorb'? It was no doubt natural that he should want his native Austria to be within the Reich, but as recently as July 1936 he had publicly pledged himself to seek no influence, direct or indirect, over its affairs. That pledge, however, had now served its purpose of pacifying Italy, whose security would be threatened by the advance of German power to the Brenner Pass; and since then Mussolini's wrath over Sanctions, coupled with his ambitions in Spain, had thrown him into the Führer's arms. Thus Austria could no longer look for support to Italy, and experience had shown that the League was powerless in such cases. Throughout February the little country was inundated with Nazi propaganda, directed against Chancellor Schuschnigg (successor to Chancellor Dollfuss, who had been murdered in an abortive

Nazi revolt four years earlier). In March Schuschnigg was decoyed to Berlin and brow-beaten into appointing Nazis to the chief posts in his Ministry; and a few days later, when he called on the Austrian people to vote in a plebiscite for or against National Socialism, German troops marched in across the frontier and made Austria a province of Germany.

The Powers did what Hitler calculated they would do: nothing. He greeted Italian acquiescence with a dramatic telegram: 'Mussolini, I will never forget this!' France was in one of her intermittent crises. In such circumstances Britain could only express regret. As Halifax pointed out, the people of all civilized countries lamented the submergence of Austria, but nothing short of war would undo it, and none of them was prepared to go as far as that. When the Opposition twitted the Government with abandoning the Collective Security it had won an election to maintain, Chamberlain admitted that events had made him change his mind, not as to its desirability, but as to its practicability. The same argument of expediency underlay his replies to attacks on the Government's Spanis policy. The Opposition pointed out that to ban supplies (including food for civilians) to the Republican Government was in effect intervention on behalf of the Insurgents, who continued to draw supplies from Italy. But to Chamberlain the prevention of another European war overrode all other considerations. The Insurgents were winning, and the sooner they finished off their opponents the better for everyone. He brusquely declined a proposal from Moscow for an Anglo-Franco-Russo-American conference to consider how to deal with any further aggression in Europe. Such a course, he said, would only form another of the 'blocs' which his policy of appeasement was designed to break down. And he appealed for more effort to understand the dictators' point of view. 'There they are. You cannot remove them. . . . And do not forget that we are all members of the human race, subject to like passions and affections and fears and desires!' (Birmingham, April 1938.)

XXXV

NEMESIS

1938–1939

We have now to follow the final stages in the disillusionment of those who had hoped that totalitarianism and democracy could live side by side in Europe. Chamberlain, with the support of the bulk of the nation, continued his efforts at appeasement until Hitler made them absolutely impossible; and then the sins of the dictatorships and the errors of the democracies had to be expiated.

THE SUDETEN PROBLEM. Hitler, in his Nuremberg harangue, had alluded to German peoples whom he intended to protect. Austria had since been absorbed; there now remained the Sudeten minority in Czechoslovakia. This time it was not the whole country that he coveted, but a strip along its hilly northern and western frontiers. The inhabitants were mainly German-speaking folk who had migrated into Bohemia in the Middle Ages and had come under the Hapsburg Monarchy with the rest of that kingdom in the Thirty Years War (1618–1648). When the Peace Conference of 1919 enlarged Bohemia into Czechoslovakia, nobody had questioned the inclusion of these Sudeten lands. The inhabitants showed no desire to become citizens of defeated and impoverished Germany; they lived within the natural frontiers of the Czech Republic, and their industries were complementary to those of its people. Their three millions were about a quarter of the total population.

The Republic had not given its minorities complete equality of status, but the Sudeten-Deutsch were represented in the Ministry and had their own schools and law courts. They disliked becoming a mere minority among people who had formerly been a subject race, but their resentment did not become vocal until it was stimulated by Nazi propaganda. Hitler's yearning to have all people of German race in One Reich, under One Leader, was doubtless quite sincere; but it is also true that men in his position have to be continually advertising themselves, and the position of the Sudeten people offered him an opportunity not to be missed.

This was going to be a bigger undertaking than the seizure of Austria, for the Sudetenland consisted largely of a fortified mountain barrier, which the Czechs could defend with the best-equipped army in Europe and a fine air-force. Moreover, the independence of the Republic being essential to the security of France and to the effectiveness of the Franco-Soviet alliance, France and the U.S.S.R. had given it repeated assurances of support against aggression. But the absorption of Austria had given Germany direct access to a long stretch of undefended frontier; and the Czechs could not feel entirely reassured when Hitler and Goering asseverated 'on their honour' that they had not the smallest intention of interfering with them. So when in April 1938 Henlein, leader of the Sudeten Nazis, demanded Home Rule for the Sudetenland and a reversal of the Republic's foreign policy, nobody was very surprised to note that Germany backed him up with a campaign of violent abuse of the Czech Government, on and from the air.

The similarity to the procedure before the seizure of Austria could not be mistaken. The outlook for France was alarming, for she was bound by treaty to go to the aid of the Czechs, but was in a state of dire confusion, both political and military. The Premier Daladier and the Foreign Minister Bonnet came over to London to confer with Chamberlain and Halifax. They said that France would stand by her engagements; but Chamberlain advised them to urge the Czechs to make every possible concession. He sent Lord Runciman to Prague to give similar counsel, and at the same time tried to check Hitler by declaring that, although we had no specific obligations towards Czechoslovakia, we might be involved in its defence through our close connections with France, the sharer of our ideals of democracy and liberty.

For the next three months the Czech Government fought a rearguard action, making one concession after another, with Henlein following up relentlessly with growing demands. And all the time the German Press and radio were shrieking with indignation about alleged sufferings inflicted by 'bestial Czechs' on hapless German folk who looked beseechingly to the Fatherland and longed for reunion with it.

These developments were watched with growing anxiety

in Britain; and on September 7th *The Times* had a leading article suggesting that the Czech Government

> 'would do well to consider making Czechoslovakia a homogeneous state by the cession of that fringe of alien populations who are contiguous to the nation with which they are united by race.'

Great was the excitement all over the world. Foreigners often regard *The Times* as a semi-official organ of the Government, and it looked as if Britain was advising the Czechs to give way without more ado. Hitler now demanded the 'return' of the Sudetenland instead of merely Home Rule within the Czech Republic. This, he declared, was his last territorial claim in Europe, but it was Germany's holy right which she must, and would, maintain. The succession of events now became ever faster and more clamorous. Henlein's partisans provoked clashes with the police which forced the Czech Government to proclaim martial law. Thousands of Sudetens, declaring themselves in fear of their lives, fled into Germany. The agitation was organized to reach a climax by the end of September, when the Führer was due to address another Nuremberg rally. Would he announce the seizure of the disputed areas by force? If so France would be involved, with unpredictable consequences for Britain, and perhaps another general war.

THE SEPTEMBER CRISIS. It was in these circumstances that Chamberlain, on September 13th, sent a momentous telegram to Hitler:

> 'In view of the increasingly critical situation I propose to come over at once to see you, with a view to trying to find a peaceful solution. I propose to come by air and to start tomorrow. Pleace indicate earliest time at which you can see me.'

It was a courageous enterprise for a man in his seventieth year, of a quiet and unadventurous nature; nor had a British Prime Minister ever so humbled himself—the Nazi regime received a tremendous advertisement from the spectacle of the proud victors of 1919 humbly seeking an audience of the Führer. But Chamberlain felt that no sacrifice of personal feelings or of national prestige would be too great if thereby he

could dam up the torrent which threatened to sweep the world to disaster; and he was still convinced that all disputes could be cleared up by sensible men meeting face to face. At all events it was the last hope, and his initiative was applauded by all Parties and by all nations.

At the interview, which took place at Berchtesgaden, Hitler's home in the Bavarian Alps, the Führer did no more than announce his intentions. He was going to bring the Sudetens into the Reich, even if it meant a world war; but if France and Britain could induce the Czechs to agree to this, he was ready to discuss ways and means.

When Chamberlain got back to London Daladier came over for further consultation, and his revelation of the disorganization and defeatism spreading in France, and of the corroding effect of the Nazi 'Fifth Column',[1] especially among leading industrialists and financiers, made peace more necessary than ever. The situation was growing more critical with every hour that passed. Hungary and Poland were taking advantage of the Czechs' extremity to make demands of their own, while the U.S.S.R. was urging them to stand firm and promising to come to their aid. It was most important that they should not be either bullied or cajoled into resisting the German demands, so Chamberlain and Daladier resolved to call on them to cede the areas where more than half the population was German-speaking. The Czech Government was dismayed at this demand from their own friends, but circumstances compelled them to acquiesce.

Chamberlain flew back to report this decision to Hitler, who came to meet him as far as Godesberg on the Rhine. The Führer was surprised that his demands had been accepted—and forthwith raised them. He now required larger areas (indicated on a special map) to be handed over forthwith, with all buildings, armaments, equipment and fixtures intact; and demanded certain concessions to Hungary. His insolence ruffled even the mild Chamberlain, who (as he afterwards reported to Parliament) 'bitterly reproached him for his failure to respond to my

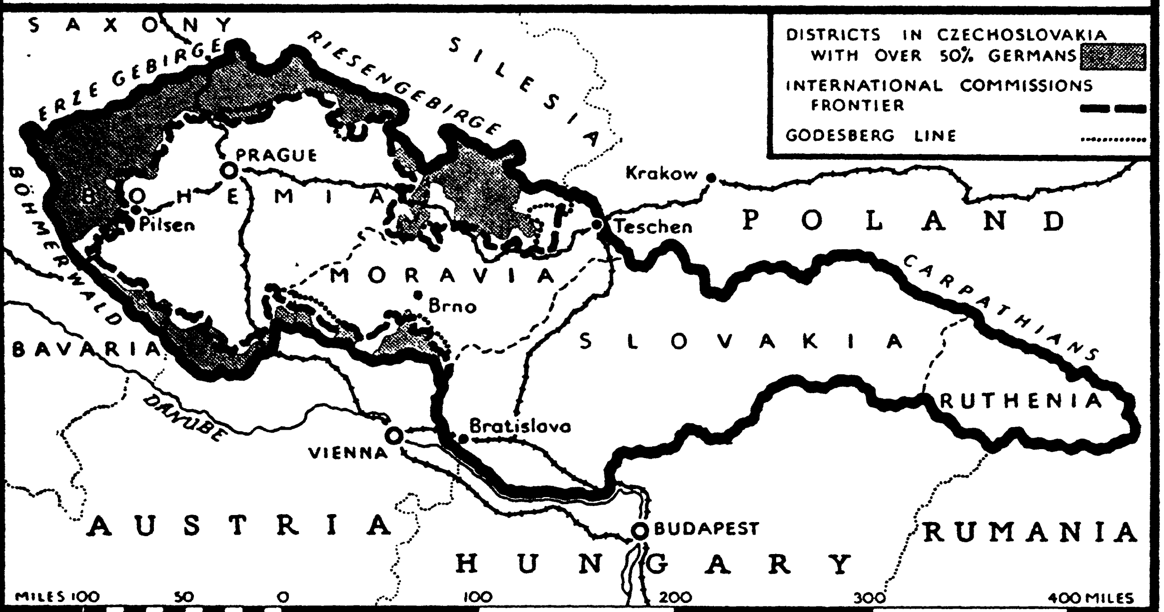
[1] This expression originated when Franco boasted, in the early stages of the Spanish Civil War, that besides his four columns bearing down on Madrid, he had a 'Fifth Column' of supporters working for him within the city.

efforts for peace'. When the Prime Minister returned from this second trip it seemed as if war must come within a few days. The Czechs refused the new demands, and neither France nor Britain felt it decent to insist on them. An Order in Council declared a 'State of Emergency'; the Service Reserves were called up; gas-masks were issued; the Fleet was mobilized; slit-trenches were dug in the parks. On September 28th the Prime Minister broadcast:

> 'I see nothing further that I can usefully do in the way of mediation. . . . How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing.'

But he had one last card in his hand. Mussolini, somewhat vexed at being left out of the discussions, agreed to approach his Axis partner with a proposal for a conference in which he (the Duce) would take part; and Hitler, a trifle shaken in spite of himself by the Anglo-French preparations for war, was not sorry to accord a gracious consent. Chamberlain broke off a grave statement in the Commons, on the very eve of the date fixed by Hitler for the invasion, to read a telegram that had just been brought to him; and at the end of his speech he announced that Hitler had agreed to a Four-Power conference at Munich. The House vented its relief in hysterical cheers, and a Member's cry, 'Thank God for the Prime Minister!' expressed a general feeling in the country.

Next morning (September 29th) the intrepid Chamberlain set out on his third air-trip. Representatives of Czechoslovakia though summoned were not admitted to the conference. And there was another notable absentee. Soviet Russia was indisputably a great Power, bound to France by a military alliance, and closely concerned with the fate of the Czech Republic; but the dictators would not sit down with Bolsheviks, and the Prime Ministers would have been incommoded by the participation of the State which had encouraged Czech resistance. Hitler's only advance on his Godesberg terms was an offer to receive the surrender in stages, to be completed by October 8th. These demands were taken in by Chamberlain and Daladier to the unhappy Czech delegates at 1.30 a.m., with an intimation that



The mountain ranges of the Riesengebirge, Erzebirge and Bohmerwald form the natural frontier defences between Germany and Czechoslovakia. Behind them were concentrated the Czech military forces to block a German advance into the great grain-growing basin of Central Europe. Munich deprived Czechoslovakia of these defences and Germany could straighten her eastern frontiers between the southern tip of Silesia and Vienna. She now held the Moravian Gateway, this important route of armies since the beginning of armies, and she was in military and economic control of all Czech railway

they must be accepted within twelve hours. The Republic, deprived of all hope of support, was forced to submit.

The Prime Minister's return to London was greeted with an enthusiasm exceeding the reception of Disraeli after the Berlin Congress; and in addressing the crowd at the aerodrome he did not fail to draw the parallel: he too, he said, was bringing 'Peace with Honour'. More important even than the immediate settlement, he said, was a document signed that morning by Hitler and himself, agreeing that future Anglo-German relations were always to be settled by discussion and not by war. They could go home and sleep securely in their beds, assured of 'Peace in our Time'. Parliament received him with acclamations of joy and gratitude; one enthusiastic speaker called him the greatest Prime Minister Britain had ever had. That night he had to appear with the King on the balcony of Buckingham Palace and bow acknowledgements again and again to the cheering throngs below; and next day the Press of the whole country—of almost the whole world—praised his achievement. One national newspaper declared that his firmness of spirit and gentleness of heart had raised humanity to new levels.

APPEASEMENT IN ECLIPSE. There were a few discordant notes, however. Duff Cooper resigned from the Admiralty rather than share responsibility for terms which, he said, were such as a cruel enemy might have imposed after a long war; and Winston Churchill declared that Munich was the most humiliating reverse in our national history. And there was severe criticism from America, where the surrender was regarded as the betrayal of a little country into the hands of its enemies. But three thousand miles of ocean blurred the difficulties of the situation in which Chamberlain and his colleagues found themselves. The French Government had revealed that it would be utterly unable to fulfil its guarantee to the Czechs. Russia could do little for them, with its air force operating six hundred miles from its bases (a far more serious handicap then than it would be to-day), and with Rumania and Poland categorically refusing passage to the Red Army. And what could we ourselves do for a country in the middle of Europe? The Dominions had intimated that no help was to be expected from them in a war

to prevent Sudeten Germans from joining their own folk in the Reich. And experts prophesied that the first week of bombing would lay London waste with the loss of a million lives and the paralysis of government.

Thus for the moment relief at our escape overbore all other feelings in this country, and ingenious excuses were found for the surrender. We were sorry for the Czechs, but no doubt a loan of £10 millions would console them, and we would join France and Italy in a guarantee of their new frontiers which would give them greater security than before, especially as Hitler had loudly and contemptuously declared that he wanted no Czechs in his Reich. Maps appeared in the newspapers showing that the territory conceded was really quite trifling.[1] In any case it would have been madness to risk a war before our rearmament was complete.[2] And people hoped what it was pleasant to hope, that Hitler was not really a bad fellow—that he would, as he said, regard the Sudetenland as his last claim, and settle down now and be a good citizen of Europe.

FAREWELL BOHEMIA! But it was soon evident that the surrender had made him more rampant than ever. He took it as a personal affront that Britain should go on rearming after his pacific assurances; he asked what guarantee he had that 'war-mongers' like Eden, Churchill and Duff Cooper would never return to office; and he pointed out that if Britain really wanted to be on good terms with him she could return Germany's colonial empire 'as a whole'. In November (1938) a particularly violent pogrom was launched against the Jews throughout the Reich; synagogues were burned down, shops were smashed, thousands of persons were dragged off to concentration camps, and the Jewish community as a penalty for these 'disturbances' was fined £80 millions. These outrages aroused indignation all over the world, but Lord Baldwin's appeal for a relief-fund for the

[1] But this was before the Commission had completed the demarcation of the new frontiers. It took from the Republic half its coal, more than half its important glass industry, and fourteen of its twenty-seven large towns.

[2] The validity of this argument depended, of course, on what use Germany was making of the extra time, and how much she gained by making Czechoslovakia defenceless and seizing the famous Skoda armament works—the second largest in the world. German production in 1939 was at least three times Britain's and about ten times that of France.

victims was greeted with frantic abuse in the German Press, and Hitler called upon 'people in England to give up the airs and graces of the Versailles epoch': Germany would no longer tolerate admonitions 'as from a governess'.

Chamberlain and Halifax resolutely refused to take offence; and they redoubled their efforts to win the heart of Mussolini, despite the revelation in Marshal de Bono's book *Anno XIIII* of the Duce's perfidy towards Abyssinia. Early in 1939 they visited Rome, where at a State banquet Chamberlain toasted 'The King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia'. Thus they tacitly accepted the withdrawal of 10,000 'volunteers' (mostly time-expired veterans) from Spain as evidence of good faith, ignoring the 60,000 still fighting there.

For two months longer the Government continued to keep its eyes and ears closed. Early in March the Prime Minister remarked to a Press Conference how wonderfully the policy of appeasement had been justified. But on the 15th of that month Hitler struck again. He summoned the President of the Czechoslovak Republic to Berlin and bullied this decrepit invalid into 'placing the fate of his country in the hands of the Führer'. And even before he signed this surrender, in the early hours of the 16th, German tanks and armoured cars were rolling across the frontier to take possession.

At first the Prime Minister told the Commons that he saw no reason for accusing Hitler of bad faith; but a day and night of reflection and consultation forced him to the bitter conclusion that his policy had broken down completely and finally. He announced his conversion in a speech at Birmingham on March 17th.

> 'These events must make us ask ourselves: Is this the end of an old adventure or the beginning of a new? Is it in fact a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force? Man of peace as I am. I firmly hold that such an attempt must be resisted even by force of arms.'

Newspapers of all Parties concurred. *The Times*, hitherto the organ of appeasement, called the suppression of the Czech Republic 'a crude and brutal act', while the Socialist *Daily Herald* summoned the nation to face the facts and the threats that they implied.

FAREWELL POLAND? These events gave special significance to the visit of the President of the French Republic a day or two later, and to his unprecedented reception in Westminster Hall by the two Houses of Parliament. As soon as it was over the Government hurried on with preparations for the cataclysm that everyone now saw ahead. At long last a Ministry of Supply was set up, though the claims of Churchill were again deferred to those of a less-known person, lest Hitler's fury should be aggravated to the pitch of picking an immediate quarrel. Sir Thomas Inskip was replaced as Minister for Co-ordination by Admiral Lord Chatfield with a seat in the Cabinet. A Ministry of Civil Defence was created, with Sir John Anderson in charge of it. The nation which had seemed so flaccid braced itself with its accustomed resolution now that the danger was imminent. During the summer two million persons were trained for A.R.P. duties and as Auxiliary Firemen. Hospital accommodation was doubled. Above all, a bill was passed for compulsory military training. Only six months earlier the Prime Minister had given a pledge that no such measure would be adopted in peace-time, but he claimed that recent events had changed the whole outlook. The Labour Party opposed the bill, for the voluntary principle was deeply ingrained in the national character, and the Trade Unions had always feared that conscription for fighting would lead to conscription for labour. But the opposition was only half-hearted. Everybody (or nearly everybody) deplored the breakdown of a cherished tradition; but everybody (or nearly everybody) agreed to the necessity for it; and the first batch of 'militiamen' reported for training on August 1st.

It was already fairly obvious that the Nazis' next victim would be Poland. The creation of the Corridor and the Danzig Free State had always been particularly bitter grievances to German patriots. Hitler's pact with the Polish Republic (p. 385) had still five years to run, but it had now served its purpose. His Ministry of Propaganda, under Goebbels, turned its jet of abuse against the Poles, with almost inarticulate raging about the oppression suffered by good Germans at the hands of brutish Slav degenerates. Chamberlain decided that there was not a

moment to lose. On March 31st he made one of the most fateful declarations of policy ever heard in Parliament. He hoped, he said, that impending questions between Germany and Poland would be settled by negotiation, but

> 'in the event of any action which threatened Polish independence His Majesty's Government would feel bound to lend the Polish Government all the support in their power.'

And a week later a similar guarantee was offered to Rumania. Never before had Britain allowed involvement in war to depend on circumstances so completely beyond her control. Yet the nation was as solidly behind Chamberlain over this as it had been behind him in keeping out of trouble six months before.

Why was Britain so ready to do for the Poles in 1939 what she had not been willing to do for the Czechs in 1938?

Because the Government and people felt that this was the last chance to call a halt to the dictators. Every successful aggression gave them more power and will for the next. To a Germany swelled by Polish, as well as Austrian and Czech, resources, the rest of Europe would be an easy prey. What would happen to the Low Countries, whose independence Britain has always regarded as the most vital of her Continental interests, and to the Balkans, commanding the waters through which runs the lifeline of the Empire? If the Nazis continued to range about Europe at their will, we should sooner or later be called on to defend France in most disadvantageous conditions. It was now or never. And what the Prime Minister had gained at Munich was time for Hitler to convince the British nation and the Commonwealth that nothing but force would stop him from destroying the liberties of mankind.

In the debate which followed Chamberlain's statement Lloyd George drew attention to the futility of a guarantee which we could not fulfil without the aid of Soviet Russia, and asked if the Government was taking steps to secure that aid. But the military clique ruling Poland would not tolerate the prospect of being 'rescued' by Bolsheviks, and influential members of our own ruling class sympathized with their feelings. So when Stalin proposed a Six-Power Conference to concert resistance to German aggression, the British Government returned an eva-

sive reply. Meanwhile Hitler furiously declared that these guarantees to Poland and Rumania had darkened the whole aspect of European politics. He denounced his peace-pact with Poland and his naval treaty with Britain; and Rumania declined the British guarantee for fear of offending him.

BACK INTO THE ABYSS. On May 4th Moscow announced a significant change at the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Litvinov, known to favour alliance with the democracies against Germany, was replaced by Molotov, who had no such predilections. Now, when it was too late, the British Government opened negotiations with the U.S.S.R. for a pact of mutual assistance. But its guarantee to Poland had given Stalin the price which might have bought such a pact; he had now everything to gain and nothing to lose by coming to terms with Hitler.

At first sight it might seem that a pact with Soviet Russia would be impossible for the Nazis. The movement had started as a crusade against Bolshevism, and no language had been too lurid for them to use against 'the bloodstained criminals of the Kremlin'. And could Hitler give up his dream (set forth at length in *Mein Kampf*) of conquering the Ukraine to make it the granary of the Reich? But the prize was worth the postponement of that aim. One thing at a time. When Germany had absorbed two-thirds of Poland she would dominate Central Europe from the Baltic to the Danube. Then she would be in a far stronger position to move eastwards against Russia to seize the Ukraine and westwards against France to seize Alsace-Lorraine, in whichever order should seem expedient. So secret negotiations were opened for a Russo-German treaty.

If Chamberlain or Halifax had gone to visit Stalin as they had visited Hitler and Mussolini, there might have been a different story to tell. The member of the Foreign Office staff who was sent to Moscow could not carry the same weight; and he had a poor hand to play from, for he could not offer Stalin what Hitler offered him—*carte blanche* to do what he liked with the Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

On August 20th came the thunderclap: Germany and Soviet Russia announced a pact by which each promised not to side with the enemies of the other. The last check on Nazi aggression had been removed. The guarantee to Poland had become waste

paper. Hitler believed—and recent experience justified the belief—that Britain and France would now repudiate it. But there he was mistaken. Indeed, the effect of the pact on Britain was to harden the national resolve and the national unity. It was a disillusionment both for the right-wing politicians who had regarded the Nazis as a bulwark against Bolshevism, and for the left-wing who had looked to Soviet Russia to lead resistance to every form of Fascism. The Prime Minister, in announcing that the Government would stand by its obligations, was supported by a vote of 427 to 2. An *Emergency Powers Act*, rushed through both Houses in twenty-four hours, gave the Government power to do by Order in Council much of what in normal times requires an Act of Parliament.

It had often been said that Germany would not have gone to war in 1914 if Sir Edward Grey had been able to announce in unequivocal terms that Britain would side with France. Chamberlain determined that there should be no such ambiguity this time. He wrote a personal letter to Hitler. There was nothing, he declared once more, which could not be settled by negotiation, and Great Britain would be happy to act as mediator between Germany and Poland; if, however, any act of aggression were committed, Britain would fulfil her pledges. But Hitler did not believe it, especially after Ribbentrop's report on the amiability which he had observed in Britain's ruling classes. He replied that he must deal with Poland his own way. That done, he would be magnanimous; and he would pledge his word of honour for the continuance of the British Empire. The British ambassador in discussing this proposed abandonment of Poland quoted Blücher's well-known words, 'Our word is our bond; we have never broken it and never will.' Hitler replied, 'Ah, things were different in those days!' He could not now draw back without a disastrous loss of 'face'. Ribbentrop served an ultimatum on the Polish Government with an impossible time limit, and on September 1st German troops crossed the frontier. Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later.

In announcing the news to the nation over the wireless, the Prime Minister was stirred to unwonted eloquence:

'We have a clear conscience. We have done all that any

country could to establish peace; but a situation in which no word given by Germany's ruler could be trusted, and no people or country could feel themselves safe, had become intolerable.

'And now may God bless you all, and may He defend the right. For it is evil things that we shall be fighting against: brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression, and persecution.'

XXXVI

GEORGIAN BRITAIN

1922–1939

We are too close to the era between the wars to be able to judge what were the features of social and mental life which were most characteristic and which mattered most for the future of the nation. What follows is a mere sketch of what struck a contemporary most about what kind of people the British were, and the ideas and interests that occupied their minds.

THE NEW INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION. These years saw Britain in the throes of a second Industrial Revolution. Of the two and a half millions by which the number of insured persons increased during the period, nearly a million were engaged in distributive occupations by which goods reach consumers; and over half a million earned their living by services to the public. The number of those engaged in production was stationary; and the only staple export industries actually employed fewer people in 1939 than in 1922. The number of miners decreased by half a million, textile operatives by nearly as many. Another aspect of the same change is displayed by the statistics of unemployment. At the end of our period unemployment in London and the Home Counties was no more than 6 or 7 per cent. The terrible increases of 30 and 40 per cent were confined to the Distressed (afterwards euphemistically renamed 'Special') Areas —the minefields of South Wales and Durham, the shipbuilding districts of Clyde and Tyne, and cotton towns of Lancashire. And whereas in earlier slumps it was the unskilled who felt the pinch most, it was now the craftsmen whose special skill was no longer in demand because the export trade, lost during the war, could not be recovered. Another tragic fact about the situation was that the unemployed were segregated in particular districts they were 'out of sight, out of mind', unless they drew attention to their plight by 'hunger marches'.

The heavy industries which had made Britain prosperous and powerful in the nineteenth century were largely replaced by the manufacture of 'consumption goods'—motor-cars, wireless sets,

electrical apparatus of all kinds, bicycles, artificial fabrics, and so on, in the production of which electric power largely replaced steam. And a large proportion of those engaged in these industries were employed not in the processes of production but in the organizing of it—in salesmanship and in office work, such as book-keeping and correspondence and advertising. Thus there grew up a large new lower middle class. And the rapid growth of the population of the northern counties which had marked the first Industrial Revolution was now reversed; for these light industries, being less dependent on coal and iron, tended to be established in the south, especially in the neighbourhood of London, where there is a large aggregation of consumers, a great port, and facilities for transport by road and rail to all parts of the country.

Thus between 1922 and 1939 the population of London and the Home Counties increased by 15 per cent; that of Lancashire and Yorkshire by only 2½ per cent; and that of Scotland was practically stationary. And the fairly even balance of rural and urban populations in 1868 had been upset. By the end of the Victorian epoch three-fourths of the nation were townsmen, and by 1939 four-fifths. And whereas in 1868 the nation was still producing two-thirds of its food, by 1939 the proportion was only one-third. Moreover, British farmers had largely given up growing cereals (and although the nation now ate less bread per head than when there was little else for the poor to eat, it was still the staff of life to most people) in favour of producing milk and meat; and it often paid better to feed even cattle on imported rather than on home-grown crops.

And there was another significant fact about the population. After fifteen years of rapid growth, the rate of increase slackened during the twentieth century. Between 1931 and 1941 it was negligible, and is seems quite possible that by 1951 the population will have begun to shrink. Thus, since we can no longer pour out industrial produce created by a teaming population of underpaid workers, we have to aim at protecting our home markets, raising the standard of living, and increasing productive power by better methods and machinery.

This new Industrial Revolution somewhat weakened the Trade Union movement. The T.U.C. represented 6½ million workers in 1920; in 1935 only about half that number; and

although there was some advance in the next few years it had not reached 4 million by 1939. The fiasco of the General Strike and the hard times consequent on the Great Blizzard were responsible for much of this decline; but even more potent was the fact that workers in the new industries, and especially the large proportion engaged in administration, marketing and office work connected with them, do not take to being organized for class-interests. Even the productive workers serve no apprenticeship, and take little pride in their craft and its traditional practices and standards. They do not for the most part feel called on to improve conditions for themselves and their fellow-workers by united effort and self-sacrifice. If they do not like the pay and conditions in a job, they leave it and try another.

DOMESTICITIES. After 1921, when the fall in world prices reduced the cost of building materials, the Government began to see about the 'Homes for Heroes' which it had promised in the Coupon Election. It did this mainly by subsidies to enable Urban, Rural and Borough Councils to give contracts to local builders, who had to conform to regulations (a model set of which was provided by the Ministry of Health), as to construction, drainage, the provision of baths, water and other services. The result was rows of 'Council Houses', usually somewhat dully uniform in appearance, but infinitely better to live in than the squalid dwellings which they replaced. And great blocks of flats, many constructed of concrete on steel framework, were run up in the working-class districts of big towns. These, too, were not very attractive to look at; a famous architect remarked that they looked like pickle factories, 'but very good pickle factories'. They lacked many of the amenities and conveniences —parks and storage for cycles and perambulators—provided in the workmen's tenements then being built (mostly with money borrowed from America) in Central Europe; but they were generally situated out of the main streams of traffic, and some had paved playgrounds where children could play in safety.

The new lower middle classes just mentioned were housed in thousands of semi-detached villas and bungalows, often adorned with imitation half-timbering, ridge-tiling and rough-cast. Haphazard building was forbidden; careful town-planning was

enforced, certain areas being scheduled as 'shopping centres', and the number of houses to the acre being laid down according to the 'class' of the neighbourhood. A large proportion of these small houses were bought by their occupants through Building Societies, which advance most of the purchase price on the security of the house itself. There had been such societies in Victorian times, but they now expanded with immense rapidity: in 1913 they collectively lent about 10 millions sterling, in 1938 the amount was near 150 millions. They gave their clients a pride of ownership and a sense of having a stake in the country comparable to the advantages which Co-operative Societies had given to the working class in early Victorian times.

Hire-purchase was applied to many other commodities besides houses. People who lack the dogged self-denial needed to put money by each week until the cost of a desired article has been accumulated can often contrive to meet weekly instalments due on an article already in use. This trait was first exploited in America before the war; it was now developed enormously on both sides of the Atlantic, and applied to all sorts of goods—furniture, clothes, books, motor-cars, sewing-machines, bicycles, pianos, radio sets, gramophones.

Great advances were made in eliminating household drudgery. Stainless cutlery did away with the knifeboard; washable paint, electric irons, and vacuum cleaners made easy the cleanliness which is next to Godliness. The sale of packeted and branded goods relieved the housewife of the need for watchful discrimination in shopping; puddings and cereals were sold precooked; more and more comestibles needed only a tin opener to be ready for the table. And the spread of multiple shops standardized all articles of common consumption. At any of the new 'shopping centres' there were almost certain to be branches of multiple chemists, grocers and provision merchants, fishmongers, butchers, tailors, shoe purveyors, stationers and newsagents; and a fixed-price store, run on the principle of 'small profits and quick returns', and of 'showing the public the goods'.

The range of household gadgets was greatly increased by the development of 'plastics'—substances manufactured from very

varied materials (e.g. wood, coal, milk) which can be moulded into almost any shape and retain it when the process is complete. It has been prophesied that a 'Plastic Age' is about to succeed the Iron Age, as the Iron succeeded the Bronze Age and the Bronze the Stone Age. Without going so far as that, there is no doubt that more and more uses will be found for these synthetic substances. Their insulating quality makes them specially suitable for electric equipment, and they already take such varied forms as imitation silk, unbreakable cups and plates, and artificial rubber.

Changes in dress mostly tended towards lightness and informality. The new artificial fabrics such as nylon and rayon take bright colours, and reduce the weight of a woman's clothes from a matter of pounds to a matter of ounces. They were not very durable, but that was in itself a virtue, since it enabled fashions in shades and styles to spread rapidly through all classes of the community. The shortening of women's hair—from the 'bob' to the shingle, and from that to the 'Eton crop' in the course of five or six years—began, like the shortening of skirts, with the girls who worked in factories during the war. In men's wear there was the same tendency towards the easy-going. Soft shirts and collars were worn on more and more occasions, flannel trousers and tweed jackets were to be seen even in Parliament; and the soft 'trilby' hat drove out the hard 'bowler' as the bowler had driven out the silk hat, for all save the most formal occasions.

AMUSEMENT. A striking feature of social life between the wars was the rapid development of facilities for pleasure. Two of them affected the daily lives of almost the whole nation.

The cinema was already becoming popular before 1914, but it was not till after 1918 that the capital became available for building chains of 'picture palaces' all over the country. It had at first seemed as if this country would be able to hold its own in the production and exhibition of motion pictures; but the war gave the United States a great advantage, for Britain was engaged in it much longer and was much more severely strained by it. Consequently American films gained almost a monopoly of the British market, with the result that American ideas

coloured the mental background of a generation of British people. This was intensified when in 1928 the sound film began to make American English seem the mother-tongue of romance, humour and adventure. In 1927 an Act of Parliament compelled exhibitors to put a certain proportion of British-made films into their programmes; but the American firms who controlled distribution contrived to minimize the effect of this by taking only cheaply made 'quota quickies', which gave British films a bad name with the public. However, in the early 'thirties British producers began to make a mark with semi-documentary films like *Drifters* and *Men of Aran*; and beginning with *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1935) full-length British films began to find a world market.

By this time about sixty million seats were taken at cinemas each week in Great Britain—that is to say, the average Briton (male and female, young and old, rich and poor) 'went to the pictures' three times a fortnight. This was in itself a revolution; for whatever the artistic level of most of the films, they greatly enlarged people's range of vision and knowledge of the world.

Even more far reaching were the effects of broadcasting. Wireless transmission had, as we have seen, been used at the beginning of the century for sending messages, and was developed for military purposes during the war. After 1918 amateurs made transmitting and receiving apparatus, and exchanged signals with each other. To encourage the sale of the components, manufacturers clubbed together to provide programmes for a few hours a day; and this Broadcasting Company, having obtained from the Government a monopoly of transmitting entertainment, and drawing revenue from receivers' licences, established itself at Savoy Hill, off the Strand, in 1922. During the General Strike it was almost the sole means of disseminating news, and the Government used its control over the Company to considerable effect. The episode gave a great fillip to the sale of receiving sets, and in 1927 the Company received a charter by which it became a public corporation—a peculiarly British system by which the Government exercises only an indirect and remote control over the broad lines of policy. By 1930 a radio receiving set was part of the normal equipment of a British home, and eleven million annual licences

were issued. The infinite variety of matter put out by the B.B.C. supplied something for every type of mind, and for millions home life gained a new attraction.

The appetite for amusement and excitement seemed to grow by what it fed on. Swimming and dancing became almost universal accomplishments of the younger generation, while older folk played card-games more than ever, 'auction bridge' holding the field in the 'twenties, with 'contract' beginning to oust it in the 'thirties. Although bridge was usually played for money stakes, comparatively few who played it did so with financial gain as their main object. But the gambling instinct was catered for by two new outlets. In 1926 a Greyhound Racing Association opened a track at Belle Vue, Manchester. People doubted at first whether dogs could be induced to chase an electrically propelled dummy hare when experience had shown them that they could never catch it. But greyhounds proved as gullible as the humans round the track, and within a year the new sport had spread all over the country. It lacked the picturesque features and traditions of horse-racing, but was a cheaper and more accessible means of betting for people of small means. The other new form of gambling was football pools, started in 1936. These enabled people to enjoy excitement from sport without any knowledge of or practice of it—without even stirring from their own homes. It must be perfectly obvious that the millions of people who 'invest' in these sweepstakes week by week are bound collectively to lose money by it for the benefit of the promoters and their staffs; but the one-in-about-a-million chance of gaining £1,000 from a penny stake, and thus having money to spend without working for it, satisfies a craving for 'romance' which lies deep down in most of us. By the end of our period something like a million sterling passed through the hands of the promoters each week, and 50,000 persons were employed in the 'industry'.

LOCOMOTION. Much of the interest and pride of the age was concentrated on facilities for getting from place to place. Henry Ford's conception of 'motoring for the million' now began to be realized over here, though not so completely as in the United States. At first the only cheap cars available were

Ford's own 'Tin Lizzies', box-like and black; but British manufacturers (mainly centred round Birmingham) were protected by import duties imposed during the war, and by a tax on horse-power which bore heavily on foreign cars with engines not designed to minimize it. By 1923 several firms were mass-producing cars, and the public could enjoy the advantage of using a standardized article with which every mechanic in the country was familiar, and spare parts for which could be procured on the shortest notice.

It took longer to adapt British roads to the new traffic. Even when the new Ministry of Transport remade the main roads, by-roads—especially in old-fashioned towns—remained too narrow and crooked for convenience or safety; and time was needed for Local Authorities to provide adequate parking places and for the police to learn to cope with traffic problems in busy towns.

By the mid-'twenties the country was becoming knitted together by motor-bus services. They did a good deal of harm to rural amenities; but they made living in fresh air possible for more people than ever before, and brought village folk within the orbit of neighbouring towns, for shopping, for education and for amusement—another facet of the social revolution that went on during the period.

By the 'thirties motor vehicles were making the roads unsafe for pedestrians, especially for children and old people. When in 1933 the number of road deaths rose to seven thousand the Minister of Transport, Oliver Stanley, put through a *Road Traffic* Act (1934), empowering Local Authorities to institute a thirty-mile speed limit for 'built-up areas', and requiring applicants for driving licences to pass a test of efficiency. (There had once been a universal twenty-mile limit, but this had been abolished in 1930 as too rigid and undiscriminating.) The enforcement of the Act fell to Hore-Belisha, who succeeded Stanley in July 1934; and to him were due the steel-studded safety crossings, marked by 'Belisha beacons' within which pedestrians have prior rights; and 'roundabouts' at dangerous crossroads. But despite these endeavours the deathrate refused to make any appreciable decline.

The advances in flying hastened by the war were applied

after it to the transport of passengers and goods; but designers still had much to learn that could be learned only by experience. Britain was first in the field with a regular 'line', when in August 1919 Handley Page and Holt Thomas, associated in 'The Air Transport and Travel Co.', started a service between London and Paris. But the conditions were primitive; and as passengers were carried in an open cockpit it was perhaps as well that the speed seldom approached 100 miles an hour. This

pioneer venture was knocked out by a French competitor; but by 1923 conditions began to improve. Aircraft were now designed specially for civil flying, and an international system of communication by radio was established. All-British companies joined to form a State-aided organization, 'British Airways', still one of the leading passenger-carrying concerns in the world. The possibilities of long-range travel were demonstrated in 1926 by Alan Cobham's flights (for which he was knighted) to Capetown and to Sydney. By 1930 Europe was covered by a web of

scheduled services carried out by aircraft of all nations; and the winning of the Schneider Trophy three times in four years (1927-31) was a first-rate advertisement for British designers and engineers. As to the expansion of civil aviation by British firms, a graph may convey a better idea than words.

For a time the Air Ministry experimented with giant airships of the Zeppelin type. But they were very costly; and after the R 101 crashed in flames in France (October 1931) while on a maiden flight to Australia, with Lord Thomson, Minister for Air, among the victims, work was stopped on her sister ship, and the Government abandoned the development of lighter-than-air flying, totally and permanently.

SCIENCE AND HEALTH. The war shook the self-confidence of our Western Civilization. In Victorian times *homo sapiens* had felt confident that he was in a fair way to understand the working of the universe. Newton seemed to have expounded its eternal laws of motion; Dalton's Atomic Theory to have explained the nature of matter; Darwin's hypothesis to have lit up the dark places of biology. During the first decade of the twentieth century pioneers of science had shaken these assumptions, but it was not until after the war that the thinking of ordinary folk was affected by these new points of view. Particularly shattering to their self-confidence was the fact that Relativity and Atomic Physics were outside the comprehension of any save a very special type of mind, very specially trained, and even these specialists could not agree as to what the facts were and what they implied. Post-war man did not feel, as his father had felt, that he could look the world in the face and apprehend its nature. Indeed, the world no longer seemed to have any face, and was only to be apprehended as a shifting tissue of abstract formulae and mathematical inferences.

Moreover, many people were thrown somewhat off their mental balance by the shocks and strains of the war. There was much talk of 'neuroses', nerve-sickness, which brought into notice the work which had been carried on at Vienna by a group of psychologists of whom Freud, Jung and Adler were the most conspicuous. Until their time psychology had been almost entirely theoretical, but they made it a practical branch of medicine, by applying various forms of psychotherapy

(especially psycho-analysis) to afflictions, fears and obsessions of people's minds and souls. Some people consider Freud's investigations into the 'Unconscious Mind' the greatest scientific work of the century. However that may be, many people talked half-understood jargon about 'complexes' and 'inhibitions' and 'repressions'; and a good many drew the unwarrantable assumption that it is injurious to repress one's natural instincts.

Notable advances were made in the prevention and cure of disease. The experimental methods by which in the nineteenth century Pasteur, Lister and Koch had revolutionized the study now bore valuable fruit; and the practical spirit of the age coincided with political 'collectivism' which made it the business of the State to enable its citizens to attain this blessing. Governmental concern for the health of the nation was focused in 1913 by the setting up of a Medical Research Council, which stimulated and integrated a number of existing schemes, such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Lister Institute. And the Ministry of Health (substituted in 1919 for the old Local Government Board) developed Public Health Services, raised the status and broadened the sphere of medical officers and sanitary inspectors, and encouraged Local Authorities to provide ante-natal clinics, child-welfare centres, hospitals and sanatoria. The results were striking. The death-rate of infants in their first year fell from 185 per thousand in 1895 to 57 per thousand in 1935. In 1870 the death per million from tuberculosis was nearly 3,000; in 1900 that number had been halved; to-day it is about 500. In 1870 the deaths per million from typhoid fever were 340; to-day the number is negligible. In 1870 over 7000 people died of scarlet fever; in recent years the number has been under 30. And so on.

Of course, these improvements were largely due to rising standards of social and industrial hygiene—to better housing, with drains and baths, to sanitary restrictions culminating in the great Health Act of 1936; to higher standards of education; and to shorter hours of labour, giving more opportunity for building up sound physical health by breathing fresh air and playing games. But among specifically medical developments should be noted (a) the investigation into food values, resulting, to take one typical instance, in the elimination of rickets by giving children sufficient of the foodstuffs containing 'Vitamin D';

(b) the development of a branch of bacteriology by which the injection of serums and anti-toxins have exorcised the terrors of diphtheria and other fevers; and (c) the study of the secretions of the ductless glands, sometimes called endocrinology, which has made possible the preparation of insulin as a cure of diabetes, and other valuable specifics.

BOOKS, PICTURES AND MUSIC. The fine arts were affected by the shocks of war and the disillusions of peace. There was plenty of activity, but much of this lacked spiritual momentum, and displayed anxious efforts to be 'modern', and to impress select circles of initiates by startling modes of expression.

The most notable poet was T. S. Eliot, a naturalized American. His 'Waste Land' (1922) set a fashion by depicting a stream of consciousness flowing through the writer's mind; and he added notes to explain its allusions. But much of the verse of the period was more orthodox in outlook and technique; W. B. Yeats and Walter de la Mare, both now verging on the elderly, did some of their best work during these two decades; and Robert Bridges, the octogenarian Laureate, gave us a 'Testament of Beauty' (1930), which acclaimed beauty as the summit of man's experience and his claim to immortality.

A new method in biography was created by Lytton Strachey, who for long-winded and detailed volumes of adulation substituted vivid character-sketches, concerned rather with the humanness of his subjects than with their greatness.

Prose fiction poured from the press. Some eminent Edwardian novelists survived—notably Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, and John Galsworthy. But the main stream of the English novel was now carried on by Charles Morgan, Hugh Walpole, and J. B. Priestley. Towards the end of the 'twenties a number of novels depicted experiences in the War, and a spate of detective tales set in during the 'thirties. But these were less characteristic of the age than the astringent satire of such books as Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928); and the influence of Freudian psychology was displayed by such writers as James Joyce (who set forth his characters' inner lives at immense length, often by means of apparently disconnected words and syllables) and D. H. Lawrence (who proclaimed as cure for the neuroses of the age a doctrine of virility).

The 'modernisms' which afflicted painting were largely the after-effects of the 'Post-Impressionist' Exhibition of 1910. Various recipes for producing pictures were devised. 'Cubists' took crystal forms as the germs of design; 'Vorticists' assumed that artistic as well as cosmic creation arises in a state of vortex; 'Abstract' pictures were based on geometrical figures, so that nothing should distract the eye from 'significant form'; a Neo-Primitive group tried to recapture the naïveté of children and savages—'art's scornful denial of art', as an unfriendly critic called it; and Surrealists sought to depict the concepts of the subconscious mind.

Many able painters though influenced by these 'isms' refused to be obsessed by them. Of these C. R. W. Nevinson and Paul Nash made their first impact on the public mind as semi-official 'War Artists'. Of the older men Wilson Steer and Walter Sickert continued to do first-rate work; and Frank Brangwyn won international fame with mural decorations. But the central figure in British art was Augustus John, most vital of personalities and most accomplished of draughtsmen. (Incidentally, he created the prevailing fashion in female beauty—tall, lissom elegance in jumper and skirt.)

British sculpture acquired new vitality from the example of Eric Gill and Jacob Epstein, especially from the latter's portrait-busts.

The application of art to industry made great advances. Machines and appliances of all kinds, from telephones to motor-cars, now had to look attractive as well as do their jobs. And 'abstract' art, with its bold simplifications, was specially appropriate to poster-design. Some people said that the standard of art on our hoardings was higher than that on the walls of Burlington House.

The best feature of music in Britain was the growth of a public that cared for it. Broadcasting brought it within the reach of millions who had remained outside the range of Sir Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts, the provincial festivals, and the competition movement; especially after the B.B.C. in 1930 established a permanent orchestra, maintained by what was in effect a subsidy from the public purse. The work of earlier pioneers now came to full effect in making music a recognized part of our educational system. Many schools had orchestras and

choirs able to tackle—and to enjoy tackling—music of the highest class. And musical institutions in the Provinces as well as in London turned out capable performers and teachers in hundreds.

There was much activity in composition, but most of it showed more technical ingenuity than creative power, and there was a revulsion from the opulent romanticism of the Edwardians. Outstanding among the younger men was William Walton (b. 1902), with his 'Belshazzar's Feast' (1931) and his Symphony (1935–6). Composers of established reputation who proved themselves capable of continued development were Gustav Holst (b. 1874) and Vaughan Williams (b. 1872). Their later work not only reflected the spirit of the age but showed the influence of the Elizabethan masters, now revived largely through the research of E. H. Fellowes. Holst died in 1934, but Vaughan Williams remained in full productivity, with symphonic and choral works which attested fine qualities of mind, heart and musicianship.

Music as well as the plastic arts had its cult of the primitive in the form of 'Jazz', which developed in the 'thirties into 'Swing'. But in its higher flights this depended on imported gramophone records made by American negroes, with their inborn talent for concerted extemporization.

Grand Opera languished. Covent Garden never quite regained its pre-war prestige; and the touring companies faded out, except for the veteran Carl Rosa, despite heroic efforts by Sir Thomas Beecham and the British National Opera Company. Ballet, on the other hand, ceased to be a foreign exotic with the establishment of a British School of Ballet at Sadler's Wells.

The leading event in the Drama was Shaw's *Saint Joan* (1923), though Noel Coward's satirical comedies were more characteristic of the age. But theatrical conditions in the Provinces had changed. Touring companies found their place usurped by the Cinema: and not only figuratively, for most Provincial theatres were 'converted' to it. However, the position was partly relieved by 'Repertory', which revived in a new and better form the tradition of early Victorian 'stock companies'; and by Amateur Dramatic Societies, fostered by the British Drama League. By the close of our period they had in the aggregate over a million members and were making the drama a more integral part of the national life than ever before.

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