

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

America and England have worked and fought together and have brought to a successful conclusion the great war in defence of civilization against a military imperialism which was threatening to dominate the world. They have now responsibilities together in connection with the measures needed to assure the continued peace of the world and to secure, particularly for the smaller states and for communities not in a position to become independent nations, the protection of their liberties, to which they have as assured a right as that asserted by a state of first importance which can support its claims with great armies.

In this work of helping to adjust the present urgent problems of the world, England is demanding cooperation from America. America could not if she would, and would not if she could, escape her responsibilities, as the strongest nation in the world, a nation standing for the rights of men, for leadership in the family of nations. With these joint responsibilities resting upon England and America, the personalities of the men who have during the past few years had in their hands the direction of the affairs of the United Kingdom and of the great British Commonwealth must possess an assured interest for every intelligent American.

The clever author of *The Mirrors of Downing Street* has brought together a series of critical and biographical studies, presented as "reflections" from the mirror in the Imperial council chamber, of thirteen typical Britons who have done noteworthy work during the years of the war and who are now grappling with the problems of the peace. The name of the author is not given, but he is evidently one who has had intimate personal association with the statesmen and administrators whose characters he presents. These analyses are not always sympathetic, and we are not prepared to say that they will be accepted as final. They are, however, based upon full knowledge of the conditions and a close personal study of the men. Intelligent Americans will be interested in the opinions held by a clear-headed, capable English writer of the characters of leaders like Mr. Asquith, Lloyd George, Mr. Balfour, Lord Robert Cecil, Winston Churchill, and others, and they will find in these pages first-hand

information and clever and incisive studies of noteworthy men whose influence has counted, and is still to count, in shaping the history of Britain and of the world.

G.H.P.

NEW YORK, December, 1920.

INTRODUCTION

Let me say that I hope I have not betrayed any confidences in these sketches.

Public men must expect criticism, and no criticism is so good for them, and therefore for the State, as criticism of character; but their position is difficult, and they may justly complain when those to whom they have spoken in the candour of private conversation make use of such confidences for a public purpose.

If here and there I have in any degree approached this offence, let me urge two excuses. First, inspired by a pure purpose I might very easily have said far more than I have said: and, second, my purpose is neither to grind my own axe (as witness my anonymity) nor to inflict personal pain (as witness my effort to be just in all cases), but truly to raise the tone of our public life.

It is the conviction that the tone of our public life is low, and that this low tone is reacting disastrously in many directions, which has set me about these studies in political personality.

There is too much dust on the mirrors of Downing Street for our public men to see themselves as others see them. Some of that dust is from the war; some of it is the old-fashioned political dust intended for the eyes of the public; but I think that the worst of all hindrances to true vision is breathed on the mirrors by those self-regarding public men in whom principle is crumbling and moral earnestness is beginning to moulder. One would wipe away those smears.

My duster is honest cotton; the hand that holds it is at least clean; and the energy of the rubbing is inspired solely by the hope that such labour may be of some benefit to my country.

I think our statesmen may be better servants of the great nation they have the honour to serve if they see themselves as others see them—others who are not political adversaries, and who are more interested in the moral and intellectual condition of the State than in the fortunes of its parties.

No man can ever be worthy of England; but we must be anxious when the heart and centre of public service are not an earnest desire to be as worthy of her as possible.

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MR. LLOYD GEORGE

THE RT. HON. DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

Born, Manchester, 1863; son of the late Wm. George, Master of the Hope Street Unitarian Schools, Liverpool. Educated in a Welsh Church School and under tutors. By profession a solicitor. President of the Board of Trade, 1905-8; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1908-15; Minister of Munitions, 1915-16; Secretary for War, 1916; Prime Minister, 1916-20.



CHAPTER I

MR. LLOYD GEORGE

"And wars, like mists that rise against the sun,

Made him but greater seem, not greater grow."

DRYDEN.

If you think about it, no one since Napoleon has appeared on the earth who attracts so universal an interest as Mr. Lloyd George. This is a rather startling thought.

It is significant, I think, how completely a politician should overshadow all the great soldiers and sailors charged with their nation's very life in the severest and infinitely the most critical military struggle of man's history.

A democratic age, lacking in colour, and antipathetic to romance, somewhat obscures for us the pictorial achievement of this remarkable figure. He lacks only a crown, a robe, and a gilded chair easily to outshine in visible picturesqueness the great Emperor. His achievement, when we consider what hung upon it, is greater than Napoleon's, the narrative of his origin more romantic, his character more complex. And yet who does not feel the greatness of Napoleon?—and who does not suspect the shallowness of Mr. Lloyd George?

History, it is certain, will unmask his pretensions to grandeur with a rough, perhaps with an angry hand; but all the more because of this unmasking posterity will continue to crowd about the exposed hero asking, and perhaps for centuries continuing to ask, questions concerning his place in the history of the world. "How came it, man of straw, that in Armageddon there was none greater than you?"

The coldest-blooded amongst us, Mr. Massingham of *The Nation* for example, must confess that it was a moment rich in the emotion which bestows immortality on incident when this son of a village schoolmaster, who grew up in a shoemaker's shop, and whose boyish games were played in the street of a Welsh hamlet remote from all the refinements of civilization and all the clangours of industrialism, announced to a breathless Europe without any pomposity of phrase and with but a brief and contemptuous gesture of dismissal the passing away from the world's stage of the Hapsburgs and Ho-

henzollerns—those ancient, long glorious, and most puissant houses whose history for an æon was the history of Europe.

Such topsy-turvydom, such historical anarchy, tilts the figure of Mr. Lloyd George into a salience so conspicuous that for a moment one is tempted to confuse prominence with eminence, and to mistake the slagheap of upheaval for the peaks of Olympus.

But how is it that this politician has attained even to such super-prominence?

Another incident of which the public knows nothing, helps one, I think, to answer this question. Early in the struggle to get munitions for our soldiers a meeting of all the principal manufacturers of armaments was held in Whitehall with the object of persuading them to pool their trade secrets. For a long time this meeting was nothing more than a succession of blunt speeches on the part of provincial manufacturers, showing with an unanswerable commercial logic that the suggestion of revealing these secrets on which their fortunes depended was beyond the bounds of reason. All the interjected arguments of the military and official gentlemen representing the Government were easily proved by these hard-headed manufacturers, responsible to their workpeople and shareholders for the prosperity of their competing undertakings, to be impracticable if not preposterous.

At a moment when the proposal of the Government seemed lost, Mr. Lloyd George leant forward in his chair, very pale, very quiet, and very earnest. "Gentlemen," he said in a voice which produced an extraordinary hush, "have you forgotten that your sons, at this very moment, are being killed—killed in hundreds and thousands? They are being killed by German guns for want of British guns. Your sons, your brothers—boys at the dawn of manhood!—they are being wiped out of life in thousands! Gentlemen, give me guns. Don't think of your trade secrets. Think of your children. Help them! Give me those guns."

This was no stage acting. His voice broke, his eyes filled with tears, and his hand, holding a piece of notepaper before him, shook like a leaf. There was not a man who heard him whose heart was not touched, and whose humanity was not quickened. The trade secrets were pooled. The supply of munitions was hastened.

This is the secret of his power. No man of our period, when he is profoundly moved, and when he permits his genuine emotion to carry him away, can utter *an appeal to conscience* with anything like so compelling a simplicity. His failure lies in a growing tendency to discard an instinctive emotionalism for a calculated astuteness which too often attempts to hide its cunning under the garb of honest sentiment. His intuitions are unrivalled: his reasoning powers inconsiderable.

When Mr. Lloyd George first came to London he shared not only a room in Gray's Inn, but the one bed that garret contained with a fellow-countryman. They were both inconveniently poor, but Mr. Lloyd George the poorer in this, that as a member of Parliament his expenses were greater. The fellow-lodger, who afterwards became private secretary to one of Mr. Lloyd George's rivals, has told me that no public speech of Mr. Lloyd George ever equalled in pathos and power the speeches which the young member of Parliament would often make in those hungry days, seated on the edge of the bed, or pacing to and fro in the room, speeches lit by one passion and directed to one great object, lit by the passion of justice, directed to the liberation of all peoples oppressed by every form of tyranny.

This spirit of the intuitional reformer, who feels cruelty and wrong like a pain in his own blood, is still present in Mr. Lloyd George, but it is no longer the central passion of his life. It is, rather, an aside: as it were a memory that revives only in leisure hours. On several occasions he has spoken to me of the sorrows and sufferings of humanity with an unmistakable sympathy. I remember in particular one occasion on which he told me the story of his boyhood: it was a moving narrative, for never once did he refer to his own personal deprivations, never once express regret for his own loss of powerful encouragements in the important years of boyhood. The story was the story of his widowed mother and of her heroic struggle, keeping house for her shoemaking brother-in-law on the little money earned by the old bachelor's village cobbling, to save sixpence a week—sixpence to be gratefully returned to him on Saturday night. "That is the life of the poor!" he exclaimed earnestly. Then he added with bitterness, "And when I try to give them five shillings a week in their old age I am called the 'Cad of the Cabinet!'"

Nothing in his life is finer than the struggle he waged with the Liberal Cabinet during his days as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The private opposition he encountered in Downing Street, the hatred and contempt of some of his Liberal colleagues, was exceeded on the other side of politics only in the violent mind of Sir Edward Carson. Even the gentle John Morley was troubled by his hot insistences. "I had better go," he said to Mr. Lloyd George; "I am getting old: I have nothing now for you but criticism." To which the other replied, "Lord Morley, I would sooner have your criticism than the praise of any man living"—a perfectly sincere remark, sincere, I mean, with the emotionalism of the moment. His schemes were disordered and crude; nevertheless the spirit that informed them was like a new birth in the politics of the whole world. A friend of mine told me that he had seen pictures of Mr. Lloyd George on the walls of peasants' houses in the remotest villages of Russia.

But those days have departed and taken with them the fire of Mr. Lloyd George's passion. The laboured peroration about the hills of his ancestors, repeated to the point of the ridiculous, is all now left of that fervid period. He has ceased to be a prophet. Surrounded by second-rate people, and choosing for his intimate friends mainly the new rich, and now thoroughly liking the game of politics for its amusing adventure, he has retained little of his original genius except its quickness.

His intuitions are amazing. He astonished great soldiers in the war by his premonstrations. Lord Milner, a cool critic, would sit by the sofa of the dying Dr. Jameson telling how Mr. Lloyd George was right again and again when all the soldiers were wrong. Lord Rhondda, who disliked him greatly and rather despised him, told me how often Mr. Lloyd George put heart into a Cabinet that was really trembling on the edge of despair. It seems true that he never once doubted ultimate victory, and, what is much more remarkable, never once failed to read the German's mind.

I think that the doom that has fallen upon him comes in some measure from the amusement he takes in his mental quickness, and the reliance he is sometimes apt to place upon it. A quick mind may easily be a disorderly mind. Moreover quickness is not one of the great qualities. It is indeed seldom a partner with virtue. Morality

appears on the whole to get along better without it. According to Landor, it is the talent most open to suspicion:

Quickness is among the least of the mind's properties, and belongs to her in almost her lowest state: nay, it doth not abandon her when she is driven from her home, when she is wandering and insane. The mad often retain it; the liar has it; the cheat has it: we find it on the racecourse and at the card-table: education does not give it, and reflection takes away from it.

When we consider what Mr. Lloyd George might have done with the fortunes of humanity we are able to see how great is his distance from the heights of moral grandeur.

He entered the war with genuine passion. He swept thousands of hesitating minds into those dreadful furnaces by the force of that passion. From the first no man in the world sounded so ringing a trumpet note of moral indignation and moral aspiration. Examine his earlier speeches and in all of them you will find that his passion to destroy Prussian militarism was his passion to recreate civilization on the foundations of morality and religion. He was Peace with a sword. Germany had not so much attempted to drag mankind back to barbarism as opened a gate through which mankind might march to the promised land. Lord Morley was almost breaking his heart with despair, and to this day regards Great Britain's entrance into the war as a mistake. Sir Edward Grey was agonizing to avert war; but Mr. Lloyd George was among the first to see this war as the opportunity of a nobler civilization. Destroy German militarism, shatter the Prussian tradition, sweep away dynastic autocracies, and what a world would result for labouring humanity!

This was 1914. But soon after the great struggle had begun the note changed. Hatred of Germany and fear for our Allies' steadfastness occupied the foremost place in his mind. Victory was the objective and his definition of victory was borrowed from the prize-ring. A better world had to wait. He became more and more reckless. There was a time when his indignation against Lord Kitchener was almost uncontrollable. For Mr. Asquith he never entertained this violent feeling, but gradually lost patience with him, and only de-

cided that he must go when procrastination appeared to jeopardize "a knock-out blow."

Anyone who questioned the cost of the war was a timid soul. What did it matter what the war cost so long as victory was won? Anyone who questioned the utter recklessness which characterized the Ministry of Munitions was a mere fault-finder. I spoke to him once of the unrest in factories, where boys could earn £15 and £16 a week by merely watching a machine they knew nothing about, while the skilled foremen, who alone could put those machines right, and who actually invented new tools to make the new machines of the inventors, were earning only the fixed wage of fifty shillings a week. I thought this arrangement made for unrest and must prove dangerous after the war. So eager, so hot was his mind on the end, that he missed the whole point of my remark. "What does it matter," he exclaimed impatiently, "what we pay those boys as long as we win the war?"

And the end of it was the humiliation of the General Election in 1918. Where was the new world, then? He was conscious only of Lord Northcliffe's menace. Germany must pay and the Kaiser must be tried! There was no trumpet note in those days, and there has been no trumpet note since. Imagine how Gladstone would have appealed to the conscience of his countrymen! Was there ever a greater opportunity in statesmanship? After a victory so tremendous, was there any demand on the generosity of men's souls which would not gladly have been granted? The long struggle between capital and labour, which tears every state in two, might have been ended: the heroism and self-sacrifice of the war might have been carried forward to the labours of reconstruction: the wounds of Europe might have been healed by the charities of God almost to the transfiguration of humanity.

Germany must pay for the war!—and he knew that by no possible means could Germany be made to pay that vast account without the gravest danger of unemployment here and Bolshevism in Central Europe! The Kaiser must be tried!—and he knew that the Kaiser never would be tried!

Millennium dipped below the horizon, and the child's riding-whip which Lord Northcliffe cracks when he is overtaken by a fit of

Napoleonic indigestion assumed for the Prime Minister the proportions of the Damoclesian sword. He numbered himself among the Tououpinambos, those people who "have no name for God and believe that they will get into Paradise by practising revenge and eating up their enemies."

I can see nothing sinister in what some people regard as his plots against those who disagree with him. He tries, first of all, to win them to his way of thinking: if he fails, and if they still persist in attacking him, he proceeds to destroy them. It is all part of life's battle! But one would rather that the Prime Minister of Great Britain was less mixed up in journalism, less afraid of journalism, and less occupied, however indirectly, in effecting, or striving to effect, editorial changes. His conduct in the last months of the war and during the election of 1918 was not only unworthy of his position but marked him definitely as a small man. He won the election, but he lost the world.

It is a great thing to have won the war, but to have won it only at the cost of more wars to come, and with the domestic problems of statesmanship multiplied and intensified to a degree of the gravest danger, this is an achievement which cannot move the lasting admiration of the human race.

The truth is that Mr. Lloyd George has gradually lost in the world of political makeshift his original enthusiasm for righteousness. He is not a bad man to the exclusion of goodness; but he is not a good man to the exclusion of badness. A woman who knows him well once described him to me in these words: "He is clever, and he is stupid; truthful and untruthful; pure and impure; good and wicked; wonderful and commonplace: in a word, he is everything." I am quite sure that he is perfectly sincere when he speaks of high aims and pure ambition; but I am equally sure that it is a relief to him to speak with amusement of trickery, cleverness, and the tolerances or the cynicisms of worldliness.

Something of the inward man may be seen in the outward. Mr. Lloyd George—I hope I may be pardoned by the importance and interest of the subject for pointing it out—is curiously formed. His head is unusually large, and his broad shoulders and deep chest admirably match his quite noble head; but below the waist he ap-

pears to dwindle away, his legs seeming to bend under the weight of his body, so that he waddles rather than walks, moving with a rolling gait which is rather like a seaman's. He is, indeed, a giant mounted on a dwarf's legs.

So in like manner one may see in him a soul of eagle force striving to rise above the earth on sparrow's wings.

That he is attractive to men of a high order may be seen from the devotion of Mr. Philip Kerr; that he is able to find pleasure in a far lower order of men may be seen from his closer friendships. It is impossible to imagine Mr. Gladstone enjoying the society of Mr. Lloyd George's most constant companion although that gentleman is a far better creature than the cause of his fortunes; and one doubts if Lord Beaconsfield would have trusted even the least frank of his private negotiations to some of the men who enjoy the Prime Minister's political confidence. Nor can Mr. Lloyd George retort that he makes use of all kinds of energy to get his work done, for one knows very well that he is far more at his ease with these third-rate people than with people of a higher and more intellectual order. For culture he has not the very least of predilections; and the passion of morality becomes more and more one of the pious memories of his immaturity.

Dr. Clifford would be gladly, even beautifully, welcomed; but after an hour an interruption by Sir William Sutherland would be a delightful relief.

M. Clemenceau exclaimed of him, lifting up amazed hands, "I have never met so ignorant a man as Lloyd George!" A greater wit said of him, "I believe Mr. Lloyd George *can* read, but I am perfectly certain he never does."

I detect in him an increasing lethargy both of mind and body. His passion for the platform, which was once more to him than anything else, has almost gone. He enjoys well enough a fight when he is in it, but to get him into a fight is not now so easy as his hangers-on would wish. The great man is tired, and, after all, evolution is not to be hurried. He loves his arm-chair, and he loves talking. Nothing pleases him for a longer spell than desultory conversation with someone who is content to listen, or with someone who brings news of electoral chances. Of course he is a tired man, but his fa-

figure is not only physical. He mounted up in youth with wings like an eagle, in manhood he was able to run without weariness, but the first years of age find him unable to walk without faintness—the supreme test of character. If he had been able to keep the wings of his youth I think he might have been almost the greatest man of British history. But luxury has invaded, and cynicism; and now a cigar in the depths of an easy-chair, with Miss Megan Lloyd George on the arm, and a clever politician on the opposite side of the hearth, this is pleasanter than any poetic vapourings about the millennium.

If only he could rise from that destroying chair, if only he could fling off his vulgar friendships, if only he could trust himself to his vision, if only he could believe once again passionately in truth, and justice, and goodness, and the soul of the British people!

One wonders if the angels in heaven will ever forgive his silence at a time when the famished children of Austria, many of them born with no bones, were dying like flies at the shrivelled breasts of their starving mothers. One wonders if the historian sixty years hence will be able to forgive him his rebuff to the first genuine democratic movement in Germany during the war. His responsibility to God and to man is enormous beyond reckoning. Only the future can decide his place here and hereafter. It is a moral universe, and, sooner or later, the judgments of God manifest themselves to the eyes of men.

One seems to see in him an illustrious example both of the value and perils of emotionalism. What power in the world is greater, controlled by moral principle? What power so dangerous, when moral earnestness ceases to inspire the feelings?

Before the war he did much to quicken the social conscience throughout the world; at the outbreak of war he was the very voice of moral indignation; and during the war he was the spirit of victory; for all this, great is our debt to him. But he took upon his shoulders a responsibility which was nothing less than the future of civilization, and here he trusted not to vision and conscience but to compromise, makeshift, patches, and the future of civilization is still dark indeed.