

THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT

Socialism, Internationalism, Votes for All.

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SATURDAY, MAY 25th, 1918

Price Twopence.

THE TOWER OF BABEL. By STEFAN ZWEIG.

Translated from *Le Carmel*, Geneva, April and May, 1916.

The profoundest legends are those which tell of the origin of our race. The symbols of the dawn of human life have enormous poetic power, and these symbols apply, spontaneously as it were, to those great moments of subsequent history wherein the life of races is renewed and when the birth of important epochs is taking place.

Now in the Bible, in its opening pages, immediately following the legend of creation from chaos, we find a wonderful myth. When they had barely emerged from the abyss of the unknown, when they were still plunged in the twilight of ignorance, men united in a common endeavour. They lived in a world strange to them, a world without means of communication, full of obscurity and danger; above them was heaven, serene, pure, and eternal, mirror of the Infinite, towards which they conceived an ardent desire. They met, therefore, and spoke as follows: "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach into heaven; and let us make us a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Joining hands in the work, they kneaded clay, baked bricks, and began to build them a tower which was to reach into the hall of God, to touch the stars, and to attain to the white, dead face of the moon.

From the distant heavens God looked down upon the petty effort, smiling, doubtless, as He perceived men, minute in the vast distance, working like

tiny insects as they assembled things smaller even than themselves, pieces of kneaded clay and carved stone. It must have seemed to him a game, an innocent and somewhat foolish game, which men were playing beneath him, animated by their confused longing for the eternal. But soon he saw the foundations of the tower growing larger and larger, for men were living in a common understanding, working without pause, helping one another. And God said in his heart: "Never will they cease building the tower until they have finished it." For the first time he recognised the greatness of the spirit which he himself had breathed into mankind. He perceived that this spirit differed from his own, which, since the six days of creation, had entered a state of eternal repose. This was another spirit, dangerous and formidable, a spirit of indefatigable obstinacy, which would abandon nothing before completion. For the first time God feared men, for they were strong from the moment in which they became, like himself, a Unity. He began to ask how he could destroy their work and break their power. Recognising that he would not prove the stronger unless men ceased to work together, he sowed discord among them, saying: "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Then for the first time was God cruel to the men whom he had made.

Carrying out his harsh decision, he stretched forth his hand against those who were working harmoniously and zealously, shoulder to shoulder, and touched their spirits. The bitterest hour of human history had arrived. Suddenly, during the night, in the midst of their labours, they were no longer able to understand one another. They shouted each to each, but not one of them could find any meaning in the other's words, and since they had lost their common understanding, they became inflamed with mutual anger. They overturned their bricks, they threw away their pickaxes and their trowels, they quarrelled and they fought, and at length all fled the scene of their common labours, each man seeking his own house and his own country. Dispersing through all the fields and all the forests of the world, they built henceforward each man for himself, each constructing only his own narrow city, whose walls did not ascend to the clouds, did not stretch upwards towards the habitation of God, towns which sufficed merely to provide shelter at nightfall. The mighty Tower of Babel was abandoned to its fate. Its battlements, which had looked upon the heavens so near at hand, were attacked by rain and wind; one by one they fell to the ground and were broken into fragments. Soon nothing remained but a legend whose memory was preserved

(Continued on page 1010.)

WORKSHOP NOTES by W. F. WATSON.

THE ADMIRALTY AND SHOP COMMITTEES.

Official recognition has always been the death-blow to the power of the workers' movements and we fear it. We remember what the repeal of the Combination Laws meant in 1832, the Trade Union Act in 1871; and now the Government is giving official recognition to Shop Stewards and projecting Industrial Councils. The Shop Stewards Movement has become powerful of late. Unofficial in character, extremely active in its operations, it has become a serious menace to the stability of the capitalist State. Hence the attempts to surround the movement with an official atmosphere and to establish State Industrial Councils.

We understand that the Admiralty is getting busy in this direction, and I am asked to express my opinion thereon. I say to my comrades in the Dockyard Towns: It is impossible for us to expect to achieve our freedom through State channels. The very most these councils can do is to make the capitalist system a bit more tolerable; it is very certain the promoters thereof have not in their minds the abolition of the wage-system.

I urge the dockyard workers to build up their own Workers' Committees, upon which shall be represented every grade of worker of both sexes. The Workers' Committees should be erected apart from, and independent of, any Employers' Committee or organisation. The functions of the Workers' Committee must be to attend to the internal organisation of the dockyards, settling petty grievances, tabulating demands, and in every shape and form perfecting the organisation preparatory to taking over control. That and that only is the real road to emancipation.

Since writing the above I have received, from a dockyard comrade a copy of a circular letter issued by the Admiralty and entitled, 'Proposed Committees of Officers and Employees.' It is an amazing document and for sheer audacity beats anything of its kind; and it proves everything I have said in my criticism. Readers should note that the proposed committees consist of officers and employees. Apparently, officers are not considered to be employees. It is proposed that Shop Committees and a Yard Committee shall be set up at each dockyard or depot.

There will be a committee for each shop and one for each large trade which is not included in a shop. Here is a device to foster sectionalism. Why should it be thought necessary to set up a committee for a trade, when a shop committee would embrace everyone working in a given shop? It would certainly enable the authorities to play off one committee against another. Representatives must be nominated by employees who have served not less than five years in civilian employ-

ment under the Admiralty. Why should a worker have to serve five years before becoming eligible to sit on a committee? From the workman's point of view it must be remembered that after five years a worker generally becomes "established" and, thinking he has a permanent job develops into a state of apathy and fear that by any manifestation of activity he will lose his "deferred pay." The most active workers are those who rarely stay long in any shop.

And the functions. Ah, yes! the functions! The Shop Committee should discuss amongst themselves any question as issue, and having arrived at a decision, should bring the matter to the notice of the officers of the department concerned, and thence, if necessary, to the head of the department. Any one conversant with dockyard life knows that the very thing the workers are up against is the arrogance of minor officials. And yet, says the circular, all grievances are first to be taken to them! Several points are cited as possible subjects for discussion at Shop Committee meetings, such as the comfort of workers, output, piece-prices and dilution. Not a word about hours, or workshop control! As to the committee's times of meeting: the circular states that the Shop Committee shall meet outside working hours, but, if the officers wish to discuss any point with the committee, a meeting may take place during working hours. Very nice, too!

The Yard Committee will consist of employees elected from the Shops Committees and will be joined by officers nominated by the Superintendent. The Superintendent (or an officer deputed by him) will preside! The functions of the Yard Committee are to deal with all matters submitted to it by any of the Shop Committees, or by Heads of Departments, and also any questions that the Superintendent may refer for consideration. Thus it will have a self-elected chairman with absolute power to nominate the officers and to refer any question for consideration.

Further than that the Superintendent is the convener of the meetings which are to be held in working hours. Exigencies of space prevent me from dealing more fully with this circular, but I am considering writing a pamphlet upon it. Let me emphasise the advice I have given above. Carry on with the formation of your own Shops and Yard Committees. Have your meetings in your own time and in your own way. Formulate your own demands and then, when strong enough, give effect to them.

A.S.E. AND PARLIAMENT.

The A.S.E. is asking for six additional Parliamentary candidates, and amongst the eighty-one aspirants for these positions we regret to note the names of

T. W. Coates of Edinburgh, David Kirkwood of the Clyde, and Jack Sheppard of Woolwich. We know these three men to be of unimpeachable integrity and uncompromising fighters in the working-class movement, and we do not question the purity of their motives in desiring to carry that fight to the House of Commons. But do they really think that by attaching themselves to a spineless compromising Labour Party they will advance the revolutionary movement? Has the Russian Revolution taught them nothing? We sincerely hope they will not become Parliamentary candidates and that they will concentrate their energies on the Workers' Committee Movement.

AMALGAMATION.

The Sub-Committee appointed by the A.S.E. Recalled Delegate Meeting to draft a scheme of Amalgamation has issued its report and suggestions. Whilst congratulating the Committee on the fearless way in which they have tackled the financial difficulties, and the generosity with which it is proposed to treat the full-time officials, we are on the whole disappointed. Even if all the proposals are given effect it will merely mean an amalgamation of Craft Unions. No scheme of amalgamation will be of any value, unless it has for its immediate object the organisation of all workers, men and women, skilled and unskilled, into an Industrial Union; and for its definite aim complete control of the industry. We suggest as a suitable title for the amalgamated body: "The Engineering Workers' Industrial Union." The basis of the Union should be the recognition of the class struggle. Its structure should be so altered as to make its administrative bodies occupational in character, instead of geographical. It should definitely wage war on Capital and its Executive, the State.

Much time is still being wasted on the north-east coast in reconciling demarcation differences. It is now proposed to fix up a Demarcation Court with a chairman selected by the Chief Commissioners' Department, and two trade union assessors in preference to a single arbiter. It is monstrous to think that in these days trade unionists should fritter away valuable time on such stupid matters. Have the north-east coast workers read the pamphlet 'Demarcation: a Tragi-Comedy in One Act'? We suggest to the local Workers' Committee that it send to this office for a bundle.

Brother Vickers of Chesterfield has received the A.S.E. award of merit. No, Comrades, it is not Sir Albert Vickers.

A.S.E. Organiser, Div. 12, in reporting his attendance before the special tribunal of the Committee of Production says he had the unique experience of hearing an employer quote an old copy of our Correspondence List. There is nothing surprising about that. The Capitalist press is generally the first to get hold of our Monthly Journal. And members of the Committee of Production are in close contact with 110 Peckham Road.

THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT

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THE IRISH PLOT.

Ireland was united against conscription. Sinn Feiners, Nationalists, and priests acting together as never before. A day's general strike, denoting the solidarity of Labour, took place. Money poured in to resist the menace to Irish freedom (according to *The Times*, £136,000 was subscribed by half the Roman Catholic parishes of Ireland, one small town in Mayo sending in £2,700 or £3 7s. per family—a heavy levy upon poor Irish households).

Then, like a sudden bomb, came the proclamation announcing that a pro-German plot had been discovered and about a hundred Irish leaders were arrested, swiftly and without warning.

Lord French's proclamation declares: "That certain subjects of his Majesty the King domiciled in Ireland have conspired to enter into treasonable communication with the German enemy." It protests that "such treachery is a menace to the fair name of Ireland and its glorious military record." It calls upon "all loyal subjects of his Majesty....to aid in crushing the conspiracy, and....to assist in securing the effective prosecution of the war." It announces that further steps will be taken to encourage voluntary enlistment "in the hope that, without resort to compulsion, the contribution of Ireland to those Forces may be brought up to its proper strength, and made to correspond to the contributions of other parts of the Empire."

The words of the proclamation fall with a dull, hopeless barrenness on our ears. Is there, then, nothing in Ireland to which our Government can appeal, save to that sterile thing, a military record? To the Sinn Feiners we know that every phrase, apart from any accusation it may contain, will come as an indignity, because every phrase is a denial of the idea "Ireland a nation." If ever there really should be a serious conspiracy to secure German aid in establishing long-conquered Ireland as an independent nation, who would be to blame? Surely those who have refused to assent to Irish Independence. Prof. Mazarik, the Bohemian, has been honoured in Britain because he has come to this country, which is at war with Austria, in the hope of securing British aid in freeing Bohemia from the Austrian Empire. Mazarik has attempted to make use of Austria's war dilemma in freeing Bohemia.

But is there a pro-German plot? As we write no evidence of such a thing has yet been produced. The press, of course, is full of rumours, but its efforts to weave an important mystery around the fact that two men set sail in a boat for Kings-town and that one of them had with him a document containing a sensational account of an air-raid appears to us extremely far-fetched.

But even should the Government really have discovered a pro-German plot the statements of Mr. Shortt, the new Chief Secretary, indicated that the hundred or more Sinn Fein propagandists who have been deported and imprisoned may be in no wise responsible for any plot. His words are curiously vague:—

"The Irish Government are fully aware that the number of Irishmen and Irishwomen who are in active co-operation with the German enemy is very small, but many of them might unknowingly become involved, and they believe, therefore, that they can rely upon the support of the Irish without regard to creed or political views in the measures they have taken."

Some Unionist organs declare that the evidence against the arrested persons will shortly be disclosed, but *The Daily News'* Dublin correspondent says:—

"Comment upon the situation is apt to centre upon the fact that the prisoners—if such they can be called, for I believe that internees would be a more accurate word—have not been called upon to answer any charge. I have the best reasons for stating that they will not be brought before any tribunal, whether military or civil. The Government intend to exercise to the full their practically unlimited and undefined powers under the Defence of the Realm Act, and these would apparently allow them to keep the arrested persons in custody upon suspicion during the King's pleasure."

It seems to us scarcely credible that any government would follow a course at once so cruel to the accused persons and so certain in the long run to bring the responsible government to disgrace. To guard against all contingencies, an urgent and united demand should be made that the Irish prisoners be brought at once to public trial; or that they should be released. Mr. Shortt says that the arrests have not been made in connection with the anti-conscription campaign. He ought to make the facts public.

RUSSIA.

An article on the Russian May Day by the *Morning Post's* Petrograd correspondent, shows that the stories of Russian chaos and the approaching downfall of the Socialist Republic, which are appearing in British Liberal and Conservative newspapers, must not be taken too seriously. The *Morning Post* correspondent though he expresses hostility to the Bolsheviks yet pays them a remarkable tribute:—

"It is not, of course, the first time in the past 14 months that Petrograd has been turned into a very vulgar village fair, but to-day is the first occasion on which the ideas which alone can prompt such a degradation of the former capital of this great Empire have seemed to hold undisputed sway over the popular mind....The procession itself did credit to the proletarian Government in several particulars. All the fighting arms were largely represented, and some of the sections, especially a certain cavalry regiment and a detachment of maxim gunners, looked like fighting material ready for work....Bands of workmen were interspersed between the fighting arms, and all alike did their utmost to bear themselves with the dignity which they regarded as befitting the great occasion....So far as street processions can demonstrate ability to govern a great State, it may be freely granted that the organisers of to-day's display have justified themselves and their leader. Lenin, whose portrait is published to-day for the first time, whose great speech gives food for thought to many far outside the circles of his followers, whose panegyric is chanted in various organs in all varieties of praise, and, what is almost equally valuable to the political leader, abuse—Lenin to-day seemingly enters into his kingdom, and the pillars of his power are apparently the internationalists at home and the Germans abroad, added to his own thorough understanding of the peculiar psychology of his own people, the Russians of those free-living regions about the Volga. Lenin is not a native of the province of Simbirsk for nothing. He is a Russian and an idealist. As a Russian he postulates a dictatorship for Russia. The Russian, says Lenin, does not know how to work. He must learn to work, and only compulsion will achieve the object in view. Without an economic basis, which ultimately means work, no State can be strong. To work properly presupposes training by qualified teachers. These must be found abroad in more advanced countries which know what work is and how best to get results. For years to come, Russia must be content to pay heavy charges to her teachers, but, if the nation will learn, this will be only a temporary evil. Discipline, discipline, discipline, skilfully alternated with compulsion, forced labour, and dictatorial powers, is the keynote of the whole admirably constructed speech which is reproduced in the official papers over Lenin's signature to-day, and which, closely printed, occupies some fifteen columns of a newspaper."

Mr. Ransome, the *Daily News* Petrograd correspondent also tells of the growing strength of the Socialist power, and records the defeat and death of the counter-revolutionary, General Korniloff.

The Ukrainian people appear to be growing very restive under the German occupation; they resent the decree of the conquering general which has handed the land back to the great owners, and they refuse to deliver up their grain. Peace with Russia is being negotiated and Herr Erzberger was no doubt correct when he told the German Reichstag on May 8th that the Ukrainians now desire to be re-united with Socialist Russia. In Esthonia the German troops are reported to have mutinied. Is this due to Bolshevik influence also?

The Bolshevik power grows: it has need indeed to be strong. M. Tchitcherine complains that the Germans are breaking the peace in the Don and on the Murman coast. More serious, however, it is announced from many quarters that China and Japan have formed an alliance.

Mr. DELL.

Mr. Dell, *The Manchester Guardian* correspondent, with whose articles concerning the Austrian Emperor's attempted peace negotiations we dealt last week, has been expelled from Paris. The expulsion took place by order of the French Prime Minister, decided upon at a Council.

We wonder when the people will weary of being kept in the dark. Surely the day of awakening must come. When it comes the Socialists must be ready to turn the swelling tide of pent-up feeling to constructive Socialist uses, otherwise it will spend itself abortively. The importance of education in Socialism cannot be over-rated.

E. SYLVIA PANKHURST.

Report of W. S. F. Annual Conference unavoidably held over until our next issue.

INDIA.

We take the following from *The Times* of India, published in Bombay:—

"A press communique issued by the Assam Government gives a detailed account of the operations in the jungles of Manipur to quell the Kuki and Naga hill tribes who had given trouble in raising a corps of hillmen for service behind the lines in France. The trouble began in October last when the chiefs refused to obey the summons issued by the Political Agents. About this time the Chin in the neighbouring province of Burma also broke into rebellion. The Chin outbreak, says the communique was soon followed by acts of violence on the part of the Kukis who began by looting Nepali settlements in the south of the Manipur valley and threatened to raid Imphal-Mt. Mr. Higgins marching with an escort against Ukha, one of the chief offending villages, met with considerable opposition and lost some sapoys and followers killed or wounded by fire from Kukis hidden in the jungle. Captain Coote commanding his escort was missed at close range and hit by splinters from a tree. About the same time the escort conveying the Political Agent, Mr. Cosgrave, to the Burmese frontier was fired on at a river crossing and a few men were hit including a Naga who was carrying Mr. Cosgrave across the ford."

Mr. Higgins' column burned Ukha and other hostile villages, but the punishment was not enough to bring the rebels to their senses, for shortly afterwards a party of Kukis raided the Manipur police post at Tengnoupal, killing a havildar and another man. Four Manipuri traders were killed in another part of the hills and communication was interrupted except on the main cart road. Clearly it was necessary to punish and disarm the rebels, and as soon as Mr. Higgins returned to Imphal, after burning Ukha, two strong columns of the Assam Rifles were despatched with Messrs. Cosgrave and Higgins respectively against the rebellious chiefs in the southern and south-eastern hills, while the Government of Burma sent columns to co-operate from their side and the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills marched against the Kuki villages near the border of his district. Mr. Cosgrave met with little serious opposition and destroyed several rebel villages and a good deal of property, and has returned to Imphal after meeting the Burma officers at Tamu. Mr. Higgins had harder fighting, and his escort had several casualties, two riflemen and one follower killed, and eight riflemen and four followers wounded, but he too has been successful in burning a number of the rebel villages and taking their cattle and other property. The Naga Hills column is still operating in the hills having had some fighting, while another column is started from Bihlar to march to Imphal and re-open the trade path. The pacification of these tribes is difficult owing to the nature of the country, the steep and jungle-clad hill and the fighting tactics of the enemy, who lurk in the jungle, fire at the approaching force and disappear without awaiting the attack. They are half nomadic and attach little value to their villages, but they will soon feel the effects of the destruction of their food supplies and of the harrying that prevents them cultivating and with organised co-operation between the forces of the Governments of Assam and Burma their resistance should be soon broken. Two columns of the Assam Rifles are co-operating with the Burma Government in that province."

On another page of the same newspaper a writer, signing himself "Englishman," complains that after strenuous efforts during six months only about 9,000 recruits for the Indian Defence Force were obtained, and of these about 6,000 were declared medically unfit. There is indeed much to be done in putting the British Imperial House in order!

Next Week!

"THE BALKAN STATES AND THE GREAT POWERS,"

BY

ALBERT COURIEL

Socialist Deputy for Salonica, Delegate to the Socialist Inter-Allied Conference in London.

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RECEIVED FOR REVIEW.

Captain Ball, V.C., of the Royal Flying Corps. With a foreword by D. Lloyd George, M.P., and appreciations by Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, K.T., Maj-General Sir Hugh Trenchard, K.O.B., D.S.O., and Chief of the Air Staff, and Brig-General J. F. A. Higgins, D.S.O. 6s. net.

A collection of slangy and often monotonous letters to his family, from an affectionate, generous and cheerful boy, who was animated by a marvellous and refreshing keenness and joy in life and work. He was not thoughtful and introspective: in all things he was one of the majority, though more ardent and thorough than they. On leaving school he wanted to be a "business man": "I shall try my level best to be a good straightforward business man and follow to the best of my ability in my father's footsteps.... I think the place for me is where there is plenty of work and bustle, so that I can keep my mind to it and not be troubling about other things."

The war came when he was 17. He at once enlisted at a recruiting meeting and was wild to be at the front. To him everything active and dangerous was "fine," "ripping," "topping." He wrote: "Nearly all the cyclists who went from Bishop Stortford are either killed or wounded. It will be fine when we go!"

He had joined the Sherwood Foresters but learnt flying in his spare time, and was eventually passed into the Royal Flying Corps. He went to France anticipating "great sport." To his mother's warning that when he came back he would be "a wiser and sadder boy or man," he replied, protesting: "I want a boy and I shall return a boy, not a man.... I shall always be a boy and I like it."

At the front he made himself a hut with blue upholstered furniture and pink bows, a bath, and a garden, where he grew sweet peas, and vegetables for the Mess, as an antidote to the "nerve pull" created by his work. He was always working at the mechanism of his machine and devising improvements as well as being an expert in the handling of it.

Light-hearted in face of danger, he wrote: "I always sing when above the clouds.... I am always happy so it is not strange.... You can think of me

taking a pocket full of cake on my patrol, for I always eat cake when I am excited." Fighting was sport to him. Although it added to his danger, he fitted a large red nozzle to his machine in order that when he brought down an enemy plane his comrades might know that it was he who had done the deed. And counting with eager zest the number of enemies he had put out of action, he took great risks to verify whether the hostile plane was actually destroyed. Early in his service, he wrote: "I have had twelve more fights than any one in Nos. 4 and 13 squadrons.... so I have had tons of kick!" His great ambition was to beat all records: "Only three more to be got before I am on top of England and France again. In order to whack the German man (Boelcke) I'd love to get ten more."

Though once he confessed it to be "mad sport," he fought not for anger but for sport, and because he understood it to be his duty, though he wrote little of that. He wrote to his father: "You ask me to let the devils have it when I fight. Yes, I always let them have all I can, but really I don't think them devils. I only scrap because it is my duty, but I do not think anything bad about the Hun. He is just a good chap with very little guts, trying to do his best. Nothing makes me feel more rotten than to see them go down, but you see it is either them or me, so I must do my best to make it a case of them."

In another letter he referred to the "poor old chap inside" a German plane he had set fire to. He wrote: "Oh, won't it be nice when all this beastly killing is over and we can just enjoy ourselves and not hurt any one? I hate this game, but it is the only thing one must do." And again: "Oh, it was a good fight and the Huns were fine sports. One tried to ram me, after he was hit, and only missed by inches. Am indeed looked after by God, but, Oh, I do get tired of always living to kill and really beginning to feel like a murderer." When, oh, when, will the rulers who keep going the war begin to feel like that?

At last he was killed at 20 years of age, having destroyed in his brief career forty-three German aeroplanes and one balloon. Thus one more boy

born to do good work in this world was thrown away! The book is poorly written and the earlier part especially is tedious, but in spite of their editor the letters tell their own story.

Marx and Modern Capitalism. By J. T. Walton Newbold, M.A. B.S.P., 21a Maiden Lane, Strand, W.C. 2d.

A useful and informative pamphlet.

Ireland: Memoranda on Some Crucial Questions. By the Joint Commission on the Problems of the International Settlement. 72 Avenue Chambers, Vernon Place, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1. 2d.

A weak and colourless statement. We are surprised to find that a Socialist organisation like the B.S.P. is represented on this Commission. Complete independence for Ireland is rejected on the ground that it "has the disadvantage that it is opposed by very powerful sections in the country," and that "it is also unlikely that it will gain the support of internationalists at the present time, many of whom view with distrust and concern the setting up of another small independent state until the future position of small nations is assured by national control through a League of Nations or in some other way." The first reason for refusing independence is objectionable, since the powerful forces opposed to Home Rule are not democratic. The second reason is based on fallacious reasoning. Only pseudo-internationalists will deny the right of any nationality to independence; "international control through a League of Nations" on capitalist lines is unlikely to help either Socialism or the small nationalities. In any case it is not fair to ask Ireland to wait for independence till the other nations have composed their differences and set up new machinery.

Viviane et Hermeland. By Louis N. Le Roux, Idylle Bretonne. Imprimerie Artistique de L'Ouest, 5 Rue Fyver à Moré 1918.

A poem dedicated by a pacifist to his godmother.

PARLIAMENT AS WE SEE IT.

May 13th.—In referring to Lord R. Cecil's statement as to the possibility of a coming German "peace offensive," Mr. Ponsonby asked Mr. Balfour whether he was aware that "offensives" are generally resisted. Mr. Balfour did not attempt to explain away this ill-chosen expression!

A MOCKERY.

Mr. Snowden (Lab.) cited the case of a widow who gave birth to a son three months after the death of the father. Her present sole support is a boy of military age. Mr. Snowden argued that a baby boy of two months could not be regarded as disqualifying the widow from the protection given as regards the only surviving son. And Mr. Hogge (Lib.) asked the Government to explain how a child of two months was going to support the widowed mother. Mr. Beck, for the Government, gave an illuminating reply: "It is not a question of supporting.... It is a matter of entire families being wiped out. There is no question but that many cases of most distressing hardship are brought to our notice which are almost intolerable, but as the war lengthens it brings greater sorrow which we must face if the war is to be won." We admire the frankness of the newer members of the Government! but there is much cant yet to be dispelled before we get the naked brutality of modern warfare made clear to the man in the street.

W.A.A.C.s.

Mr. Macpherson: "Free dental treatment, but not dentures, is given to members of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps who are serving overseas or are under orders to proceed overseas. Other members have to pay for their dental treatment." Yet, we seem to have heard of the great levelling influence of the war and the equality of sacrifice!!

P.R.

On the motion to adopt the limited measure of Proportional Representation recommended in the Franchise Act, the following decision was arrived at: "That in the opinion of the House, the change in the method of Parliamentary representation and elections involved in the adoption of the Report is inadvisable that the scheme is not justified by the nature and extent of the results of the local inquiries held; and that the House declines to proceed further in the matter." This decision was arrived at after a division, when 110 voted in favour of P.R., and 166 against.

SMALL HOLDINGS.

A second reading was given the Small Holding Colonies Amendment Bill, which has for its object the increase in the amount of land which was limited by the Act of 1916 to 6,000 acres in England and Wales and 2,000 acres in Scotland. Mr. Outhwaite (L.) took this opportunity to bring home to the House the failure of former Small Holdings Acts in Scotland; for example, there were fewer small holdings in 1916-17 than when the 1911 Act came into operation. The land monopoly system must go, Mr. Outhwaite insisted, that alone could make any such scheme a success. Soldiers, who believe they are fighting for their country, could well be amused at the legislation which aims at securing a few thousand acres for them, should they care to settle in the country. Where is there any sense of humour?

FINANCE BILL.

May 14th.—A second reading was given to the Finance Bill, which involves much additional taxation, including a "luxury" tax. During the debate Mr. Lough (L.) pointed out the immense increase of taxation this Bill meant for Ireland, yet the possibility was that it would become law whilst the Irish members were absent. We should like to remind Mr. Lough that this is not the only example of government without the consent of the governed!

AT LAST!

May 15th.—We are glad to note the attitude of Dr. Macnamara in reference to women overseers. He said: "Women overseers are in certain cases employed as assistants to Admiralty inspectors.... As regards the point that workmen resent women being so employed, I would point out that there are large numbers of cases where men are appointed to supervise women's work, and necessarily so." But why "necessarily"?

SMALL NATIONS AGAIN.

The Polish Review has been prevented from going to America. Mr. Macpherson said it was because it was likely "to injure the cause of Great Britain and the Allies"! It seems you may fight with the sword for small nations; but with the pen—oh, no!

SUPPLY.

On the Board of Trade vote the vital question of railway traffic was debated. Sir A. Stanley was not disposed to change the great tax imposed on the working population by the increase in fares. We hope the various conferences that have since taken place will produce some effect. We infer that the desire of the Government is to reduce traffic to its minimum; but how are workers who live in cheap suburbs for economy's sake, to go to work? They are not asking for a day's outing, but a necessity! It might be better to make less deportations and fewer transfers of prisoners as a means of having fewer travellers!

MAY DAY.

May 16th.—Sir G. Cave, in reply to Mr. Anderson (Lab.), stated that he prohibited the Finsbury Park May Day meeting because he was satisfied that the meeting "would give rise to grave disorder." The usual explanation!

"PEACE OFFENSIVE."

On the adjournment the House was favoured with a speech from Mr. Balfour on the supposed peace offers. He accused the "pacifists" and advocates of justice in the House of trying to stop "informal attempts at conversations" by discussing such subjects in Parliament! He argued that the letter of the Emperor Karl was a "private letter." What a lame excuse! In referring to the Central Powers he acknowledged that they "desired peace on their own terms." He further pointed out that the Allies amongst themselves had not quite the same views on peace. It would seem from this that there is nothing for it except the round table discussion of differences. We feel that if the Allied nations had no special interest to get something out of the war, no differences ought to exist. There can be but one

way of attaining a declared aim; the difficulty here lies in the secret aims already disclosed in the "Secret Treaties." Mr. Balfour disclaimed the supposed demand of the French President for the Alsace-Lorraine boundary of 1914; we should feel a little relieved had he repudiated the whole idea of restoring those countries to France by the sword, and declared that as the Allies were fighting to free small nationalities, these small nationalities must decide their own destiny.

Mr. Snowden (Lab.) protested against the power Italy was bringing to bear on the counsel of the Allies. He asked whether Mr. Aquith—when he expressed the hope that the original war aims would not be expanded—meant that the secret treaties ought to be repudiated. We want to know that too.

WASTING OUR MONEY.

The Select Committee on National Expenditure reports that the Government subsidising of the 9d. loaf costs £40,000,000, the flour being sold to the bakers at less than cost price. The Committee asserts that the flour price might be raised by several shillings a sack and by £10,000,000 a year in all and yet allow of the bakers selling the 9d. loaf at a profit, £10,000,000 a year of public money is therefore being used to make excessive profits for the bakers. The Committee also tells the story of an attempt, which had to be abandoned, to build an aerodrome in a bog beside Loch Doon.

ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN.

The Daily News states that the Breslau municipality gives financial assistance to unmarried mothers and that in many German towns illegitimate children are placed under a body of official guardians. The piteous plight of the illegitimate child is common to all countries. We hope to gain further information regarding such plans. It is essential that the child should not be allowed to suffer because of anything that its parents may or may not have done. Under Socialism there will be no such being as an "illegitimate child."

EDWARD SCERMUS.

Detectives from Scotland Yard called on Mr. Scermus on May 15th with an order of deportation to Russia to take place within a week. Mr. Scermus tells us that when they found that he has never made a speech but only interprets the Bolshevik spirit through the medium of his violin they expressed the view that "only a few people can understand the music." The deportation order has been deferred till July. Mr. Scermus is an Estonian, and Estonia has been invaded by the Germans. How then can the British Government repatriate him? Mr. Scermus has been rejected by the Russian and British military authorities on account of heart trouble.

SEND US WASTE PAPER.

Friends are asked to collect all waste paper—newspapers, magazines, letters, envelopes, exercise books, &c.—and to send a postcard to "The Dreadnought" office when they have accumulated about half a hundred weight. This is the way to keep "The Dreadnought" afloat!

