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SIR ALMERIC FITZROY GIVES AN INSIGHT INTO THE PRIVATE LIVES OF THE FAMOUS MEN HE HAS KNOWN

(By Alex. M. Thompson.)

If you have ever been in the dressing-room of a great actor and seen him—in the days ere Hamlet wore plus fours—covering the prosaic undercloths of modern haberdashery with the picturesque vestments of classic drama; if you have watched him as he transformed a commonplace countenance that would pass unnoticed in the Strand into the noble semblance of one that caused all hearts to palpitate in ancient Verona or Elsinore; if you have heard the illustrious histrion who presently thrilled his audience with the sublime poetry of Shakespeare, expressing his private views of a loathly rival in up-to-date Billingsgate vernacular—if you have ever been privileged to experience these sensations, then you will be able to understand how I felt in reading Sir Almeric Fitzroy's "Memoirs."

The author has been Clerk to the Privy Council for twenty-five years. For a quarter of a century he has been in more or less intimate contact with the men who have played the star parts in this most momentous period of English history. He has talked on familiar terms with the famous personages who directed England's resistance to the mightiest assault ever given shape and body to the British Commonwealth of Free States.

Friends and Enemies.

Sir Almeric intensely admires some of his heroes, and discerns gifts even in those who he least likes. But in taking his readers with him behind the scenes, and representing the actors without the glamor of their public make-up, he contrives to make them seem not miraculously remarkable, but remarkably human.

The normal partisan who regards his party's leaders as a happy family of lofty supermen, "too bright and good for human nature's daily food," and who fondly believes that they never meet their opponents without scowling or sneering severely, will get the shock of his life when he reads Sir Almeric's tales of private friendships between public enemies, and of deadly feuds between Cabinet comrades.

John Burns, for instance, never could "abide" Lloyd George; on hearing that the latter had made himself very popular at Balmoral, he remarked that "I fear Lloyd George has a housemaid's knee from cringing to Royalty." Coming out of the Cabinet room where Lloyd George's first Budget was being discussed, Honest John was asked how his colleagues were getting on. "Like nineteen ragpickers round a 'eap of much," he replied. On another occasion when the subject of debate was the attitude of his friend, John Redmond, Burns broke in with the brotherly remark that "If you tell Redmond to go to 'ell, he'll come to 'eel."

At a Cabinet meeting where Lord Morley had "passed a most emphatic condemnation on Lloyd George's indiscretion in communicating to a Pressman his views on the naval crisis," Mr. Asquith described it as "heedless folly," and Morley prettily replied that "the folly was so flagrant it was difficult to believe it heedless." At another meeting, when Lloyd George had "tried to go back on an agreement to which he had subscribed the previous day," "a scene of some violence ensued," but "the tempest was assuaged by the Prime Minister who, in Lord Morley's Virgilian phrase 'threw dust upon the insects'!"

Morley's type of brotherly love for his colleagues is indicated by many candid outbursts: he talks of Lloyd George's "peurile vanity," and when told of a particularly shining example he affectionately exclaims, "What a little Welsh attorney!" After Morley had left the Government at the outbreak of war, which he opposed—as some of our Communist pacifists may be interested to learn—because of "a very large body of opinion, drawn from banking and commercial authorities in London, including the heads of the Bank of England" towards two of his old colleagues, "who, he thought, if there was to be any hanging of the Kaiser on a lamp-post, ought to be there too, though they were friends of his, and Englishmen."

The worst of these private differences is that they frequently affect public policy. Sir Almeric tells us quite casually that the independent existence of the Insurance Commission "was due to the mutual dislike of Lloyd George and John Burns, and also to the necessity of finding a safe retreat for the rebellious talents of Sir R. Morant."

The Personal Factor.

Personal differences in our naval and military commands disastrously affected our fortunes in the war, and the long-drawn hostility between Asquith and Lloyd George went nigh to cause our defeat. Even in the peace negotiations, we are told, the personal factor asserted itself in "an impatience of facts largely born of ignorance, and a determination to accept none which do not square with their own desire"—Lloyd George's and Wilson's—"to win a superficial success at the cost of leaving open any number of unheeded sores. From the day when the proposal to resolve themselves into an inner Council of Four was accepted . . . every decision has borne the marks of haste and inconsequence leading up to Wilson's final act of frenzied precipitation."

Incidentally, there is a characteristically wicked story about Clemenceau who, as he frequently said to me, was greatly puzzled during and after the war by English concern with comparatively trivial issues. Mr. Balfour had explained to him the purpose of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, whereupon Clemenceau knowingly exclaimed, "Ah, mon cher Balfour, je comprends; it is to make the demimonde safe for democracy."

It is the constant personal touch which makes the eight hundred pages of these "Memoirs" as fascinating as any novel. The time may come when men walking down Whitehall today may be as bitterly execrated by bored schoolboys as Hannibal, Alcibiades, Plato and Socrates. But if Sir Almeric's "Memoirs" were made the future standard of our period's English history, and aptly illustrated by film records of their characters and incidents the lessons would be almost as popular at Eton and Harrow as the cricket and football reports. The performers are as entertaining as actors, and, as I have often observed in my personal dealings with them, they are very like them in character and attributes.

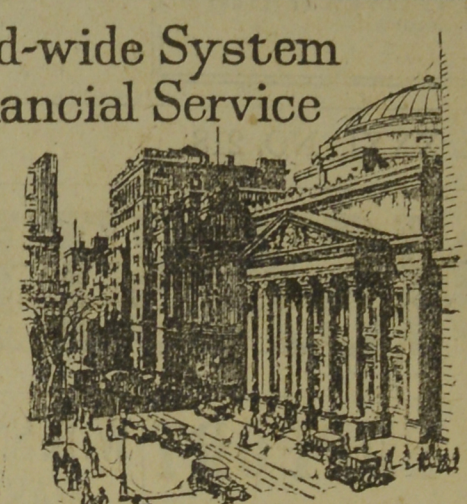
Sealing a Tory Pact.

I like the description of the dignified and stately Lord Curzon, sealing "the pact between Toryism and Labor" by "throwing an overwhelming cordiality into his greeting" of Mr. Hodge, the Labor member, on his admission to the Government; of Mr. Lloyd George, on attaining the summit of his ambition as Prime Minister, "wreathed in smiles" and looking happy beyond precedent; of out-going and in-coming Ministers being kept in "water-tight compartments" at Buckingham Palace for fear of personal encounter, and of some who "behaved like gentlemen," while another "took up a position behind a pillar, whence in melodramatic gloom he glared fixedly upon the villain of the piece—Mr. Joseph Chamberlain; and of Mr. Acland, threatened with loss of office, heroically declaring that "in the last resort he was prepared to take the position of second footman to F. E. Smith."

If I were to pick out the passage of the "Memoirs" which seems most characteristic of the whole, I would quote Sir Almeric's statement that "the aspect of Cabinet-making from inside does not increase one's esteem for politicians. An arpeggio of ambitions, intrigues, and chicanery."

I end as I started, on the theatre. "Le grand jeu"—the great play. Sir Almeric suggests a few notable exceptions—Hartington, Morley, Balfour; but the general moral of his book is that Coquelin chose the nobler part in preferring his section of a common profession.

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STOLEN MONEY FOUND IN RAID ON APARTMENT

New York, Sept. 26—Detectives, raiding an apartment on upper Broadway early today, seized \$10,000 in securities and arrested two men and a young woman on charges of robbery.

Police said the securities were half of the \$20,000 loot obtained from a brokerage firm messenger outside of the office of U. S. Dist. Atty. Buckner in the federal building, August 17.

The prisoners described themselves as Irving Adler, who said he was the son of Jacob Adler, once prominent Jewish actor of the Lower East Side; Albert C. McDonald and Miss Winifred Stewart, 22, a model.

Adler stopped Harold Clasen, messenger for Hellner, King & Goldman, stock brokers, in an office building, police said, when two other men, representing themselves as detectives, came up. They warned Clasen that he was talking to a thief and accompanied him to the federal building to report the matter. The pseudo detectives took the securities from Clasen "for evidence" and disappeared. Clasen had delivered \$40,000 in securities just before he met the men.

SCORNS THE HUNTERS OF SOFT JOBS

Buenos Aires, Sept. 26—In the province of Jujuy in Argentina is a new governor who has undertaken to stand off the flood of politicians intent upon getting soft berths in the provincial government. The Jujuy stalwart is trying sarcasm spread on printed posters addressed to office seekers, pointing out that "professional political job holders are little better than parasites and less than real men." The attitude of the governor and his public denunciation of political office holders and office seekers has created a real sensation in Argentine political circles where the good old formula "To the victors belong the spoils," is as thoroughly entrenched as it ever was in the United States. The governor announces that office seekers do not permit him to sleep at night, but warns them that he is going to attempt to find real workers to man the provincial offices and that he wants fewer professional job holders than previous administrations have permitted to remain on the pay rolls.

TOKIO HAS BUSY CAT KILLER

Tiklo, Sept. 26—An enterprising individual arrested in Tokyo has confessed to the trapping and killing of more than 4,000 cats. The skins he says, bring him a little, but according to the police or the story published in a vernacular newspaper he caught the cats because catgut has a ready sale in Tokyo for the stringing of the "samisen," a part of the geisha's stock in trade. In this way the despoiler of happy hearts says he received more than two yen (nominally \$1) per cat from the trophies of his hunt. It is related that he told how he bought live sparrows for ten sen (5 cents) a sparrow with one of which tied to the end of a string he could usually catch three or four cats before his "bait" was lost. This accounts for the difficulty experienced in keeping a pet cat for any length of time in the residence section of Tokyo.

Grandmother—When I was your age no young man ever kissed me.
 Granddaughter—Yes, but you improved in looks as you grew older of course.

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