

present position in the world. These foreigners doubtless would exaggerate their side of the question, and do us an injustice in much that they said and thought. But what do we suppose a really embittered French or Polish patriot would be tempted to say, or a Belgian who remembers the horrors of the days when we deified Burgomaster Max, on the mere display of our illustrated papers? "Yes; I understand you now. You prefer this Jewish buffoon not only to our dead, but to your own. You leave your crippled heroes to rot in unemployment while you run after this vulgar dwarf, and fawn on him for one of his Asiatic smiles. Why indeed should you have any sense of duty towards us, when you have no sense of dignity for yourselves? No wonder you are again hankering after the flesh-pots of the barbarians, against whom you fought bravely indeed, but, it would seem, very blindly. No wonder you tolerate and even admire the politicians we only suffer and despise. Since your greatest joy is in such Oriental jugglers, no wonder your statesmanship has become an Oriental jugglery. If Charlie Chaplin is your god, what wonder that Moritz Mond is your king! You know your business best, and your business government; but there is one thing we will not take from them or you, and that is a sermon. We will not be lectured by you, because you are frivolous enough to forget the things you yourselves swore to remember. We will not reverence the fickleness of a rabble as if it were the forgiveness of a saint. Mercy may be better than vengeance; but we do not entertain the smallest doubt that our vengeance is better than your mercy, and even more merciful. Do you ask us to admire the sort of magnanimity that your journalism actually substitutes for the indignation of free men? *Panem et circenses*; why should you grumble, slaves, while they give you your Saturnalia?"

Now concerning the qualities that go along with frivolity that estimate is unjust; but concerning the frivolity itself, and even the fickleness itself, it is true. We have not really even changed our mind; we have only changed our mood. We have not really altered our judgment of the Germans, or in other words our judgment of the facts. Captain Fryatt is still dead; he did not come to life again when the diplomatists came to Versailles. The hospital ships are still at the bottom of the sea; they did not rise again on Armistice Day like the dead on Resurrection Day. We have only allowed the Germans to show, in a series of sham trials, how ardently they approve of things like the murder of Fryatt and the firing on the Red Cross. We are not converted on the question; we are merely tired of the subject. We ignore these facts, not because they are no longer facts, but because they are no longer news. And the spirit that can only be concerned with facts when they are also news is a frivolous and even a fickle spirit. It may coexist with many virtues, but it is in this relation not only a vice but a weakness. As long as these facts remain, another and enormous fact remains: the presence of barbarism and the peril of civilisation. The French in founding their arguments and actions on this are building upon a rock of reality, while we are trying to build upon the turning tides of mere topic and fashion. It is as if an Anglo-Indian gentleman should deduce from the fact that he was tired of tiger-hunting that tigers were no longer dangerous; for a man who had dropped his hobby of entomology were to put his nose into a nest of wasps. We may like or dislike the French, we may understand or misunderstand them; but it is just as true as it ever was that France is the key-fortress of historic civilisation; and that Europe is broken asunder if that central fortress falls. We may honestly think that the French are too fierce and vindictive; but upon any argument vengeance is more virtuous than aggression, and ferocity that is retributive better than ferocity that is wanton. If we ally ourselves again with the barbarians, we shall ally ourselves with wanton ferocity and aggressive war. We may have many healthy and humane feelings in the matter; but what France is and what Germany is are facts, and unaffected by what England feels. These objective things cannot alter with what Matthew Arnold called long ago "the hot fits and cold fits of the British Philistine." As he said, we must not be content with picking up and putting down ideas as if they were counters; especially as in this case our counters are other people's coins.

The beauty of Poland may be as much a matter of taste as the playing of Paderewski; and there are doubtless

many who prefer the acting of Charlie Chaplin. But the fact that Poland lies between Prussianism and Bolshevism, holding them apart, is not a matter of taste, but a matter of fact; and the strengthening of Poland is therefore a matter of necessity. Jews may be as charming as most people find Charlie Chaplin, or as undesirable as we find Moritz Mond. But the fact that Jews generally hate Poles, and tend by their policy to destroy Poland, is not a matter of desire or charm; it is a matter of experience; and it is suicidal to allow our moods to falsify our experiences. Our own cheerful desire to change the subject cannot alter the actualities of what things are and where they are. It cannot alter our knowledge of where the Poles are; which is between Prussian organisation and Russian disorganisation. It cannot alter our knowledge of where the Jews are; which is at the head of Russian anarchy and also of English government. This situation is equally serious and obvious however lightly we take it; and we would rather be with the mob raving over a cosmopolitan comedian than with a minority which sneers at the cosmopolitan comedian without daring to murmur against the cosmopolitan financier; who is preparing for us not comedy but tragedy.

### A Wonderful Birthday

The arrival of a new human being in this world usually is heralded as a joyous event. The recurring anniversary of the day of birth is set aside as a period for special observance: it is a memorial in the life of the individual. When a child is born into the world his relatives rejoice; when he attains manhood and distinguishes himself in an extraordinary manner, the nation and, at times, the whole world is filled with rejoicing. Thus it is that certain birthdays are merely dates; they are like the record of the daily temperature: important for a moment and quickly forgotten. Other natal anniversaries, on the contrary, become each year the signal for grateful paeans from an unforgetting people.

When Joachim and Anne felt the thrill of parenthood on the birth of a tiny daughter, their kinsfolk exulted with them. There were the usual festivities suited to the occasion. But the great world about them knew not nor cared. Roman governors and emperors, statesmen and commercial leaders called upon a wide circle each year to join with them in celebrating their natal days; whereas the world would have been immeasurably better off if they never had existed. But the little Jewish maiden down in despised Palestine meant nothing to the world of Roman power and grandeur.

Now, Time and Oblivion worked together; the proud spirit of Rome disappeared with the last vestige of earthly eminence. To-day we know scarcely the names of the great ones of the day; their former power and affluence leave us absolutely unmoved. But the little child down in Palestine grew quietly in the shadow of the Temple. Then by a wondrous miracle she became a mother, and her Son was God. And it was all so strange and mysterious and beautiful that she kept in her heart all that transpired for fear that the world might not believe. And the Son grew up with her as other sons do in their homes. And he wrought deeds that only God could perform; some people thought He was God, while others scoffed at His claims. But Mary knew all the time just what He was. Then His own people crucified Him, just as one's own people so often do. But they could not destroy a God, so He rose from the tomb and worked more miracles and then went to heaven where He waited a little while for His mother to follow.

The little maiden soon joined her divine Son, and the world then began to understand the whole mystery in its human bearings. So delighted was mankind with the great adventure of the Son of God, which had saved the race from eternal destruction, that two birthdays were set aside to be eternally remembered and commemorated.

Thus it is the whole world rejoices on Christmas, the birthday of the Son, and on September 8, the natal day of His Mother.—*Catholic Bulletin*, of St. Paul, U.S.A.

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