

MARGINAL NOTES

DEMOCRACY IN FLOWER.—The constitutional crisis in Great Britain which eventuated in the abdication of King Edward VIII on the eleventh instant will be recorded as one of the outstanding events in the history of Democracy for all time. The crisis arose upon a question of the royal conduct, dependent for its solution upon constitutional convention rather than law, yet vibrant with tragedy for all concerned if lacking amicable settlement. It was composed in a manner reflecting good sense on the part of the King as well as of the people. Its outcome went to establish that he who surrendered an empire for the love of a woman was of real worth as a man if not as a statesman. Furthermore, the event demonstrated that Mr. Stanley Baldwin by his tact and steadfastness of purpose in handling the grave crisis has placed his name not very far below those of Pitt and Disraeli in the list of British Prime Ministers. It was an illustration of the fitness of democratic government for the far-flung empire in which the crisis arose. It was attended by no blood-shed, nor did national excitement express itself in any unlawful or riotous conduct. Verily, the English are a peculiar people, realising that in all times of political strain it is well to look before they leap.

* * *

PROGRESS AND WASTE.—England possesses a useful medium for forensic training in the Law Students' Debating Society. For those who seek admission to the Bar it is a sort of post-graduate course to such instruction in the use of the spoken word as they may have received in the debating clubs of the universities. The Society was formed in the year 1836, and celebrated its centenary by a formal debate in the Law Society's Hall on the 3rd of last month, and a dinner at the Savoy Hotel on the following day. The debate arose upon a resolution submitted for adoption to the effect that "The last hundred years have been wasted". Mr. J. F. Ginnett, opening for the affirmative, pointed out that a century ago Europe had just emerged from the greatest war that history had recorded up to that time, with unemployment, riots by the unemployed, and increased taxation as its sequelae in England. Finding the country in the same condition after a hundred years, he was moved to ask: "What had been happening except misuse of the intervening time?" Men no longer lived "within their own boundaries", and in his judgment "the most damnable thing

which had ever happened to mankind was the invention of the internal combustion engine. The whole world rushed madly from one place to another for no better reason than that people wanted to get out of the first place. . . . Culturally the nineteenth century had resulted in a dead end."

The motion was vigorously opposed by many speakers. One of them, and he gave no sign of *moquerie*, said that he was disposed to regard the production of the "Annual Practice" as a sufficient vindication of the century's claim to progress; and another, a lady, declared that a century in which the emancipation of women was achieved could not be regarded as a period of waste. Undoubtedly she would have the applause of the tobacco trade in making this claim.

It is a commonplace that civilisation throughout the ages has suffered both spiritual and material waste in the course of its advance towards the ultimate bourne of right social living. It is also true that civilisation's loss and retardation consequent upon this waste is greater in some periods than in others. So far as the last hundred years are concerned unparalleled progress in the sciences and arts which make for the social welfare of men has been accompanied by the creation of inventions of such destructive power as to threaten the extinction of civilisation in the event of another world war. The capacity for destructiveness of these inventions has been greatly enlarged since the close of what is now known as the Great War, and the economic repercussions of that conflict are still distracting the world. Today it would be as easy to destroy a nation as it was to destroy a battalion one hundred years ago.

Another form of waste is that to be found in productive effort and technical achievement in machinery. The policy prevails of manufacturing low-quality textile fabrics which quickly go to pieces and have to be replaced. This policy we are told by Mr. Leonard in his recently-published book, *Tools of Tomorrow*, "is caused by the commercial desire to 'make a market' for the output of surplus machines. . . . It causes tremendous waste of material, labour and machine efficiency. Often the same machines could produce long-wearing goods at almost the same cost if adjusted differently or fed with slightly better material."

Then there is the prodigious waste of unemployment relief, lingering on as it does and causing the sheer demoralisation of its recipients. By its incitement to laziness it is undermining the spirit of independence in the proletariat. In some rural

areas in Canada relief has become a racket and in the cities its fair administration has ever been a problem. Wherever it has been adopted it has prejudicially affected the national welfare. The danger of it all to civilisation was well put by Mr. Ramsay Macdonald when he said: "It is the poorest of games to make people believe that they can get money endlessly for nothing, and to call it 'socialism'."

* * *

FLEEING FROM CIVILISATION—In the preceding item we have expatiated on waste as a baleful concomitant of progress in civilisation. That there are those who despair that civilisation will repent itself of the evil in their day and generation is manifest in the press announcement that a small group of English and American people plan to found "a haven from civilisation" in the West Indies. The leader of this band of pilgrims to Eutopia is Major Edwyn Tyrrell-Beck, D.S.O., M.C., who was called to the English Bar in 1909 and devoted himself to Chancery practice until the outbreak of the Great War, when he joined the army and proceeded to France. He retired from the army in 1922. Speaking of the mind of these voluntary expatriates, Major Tyrrell-Beck said :

For a long time a number of us have been dissatisfied, sickened by the trend of civilised life. There is the ever-present threat of war, taxes, and the unhealthy mode of living. We want to get away from it all—to find a little haven of refuge and peace.

Our idea is to have a colony. Native labor is cheap and we believe it will be marvellous to get away from all the stress and fuss of modern civilisation.

We intend to be under the British flag—the members will be chiefly British—but will be a little self-supporting colony of our own.

What form of government will prevail in the colony is not disclosed, but with a quondam soldier functioning as the leader of the enterprise autocracy rather than communism is adumbrated as its polity.

CHARLES MORSE.

Ottawa.
