

The Case Against Corruption

*Cecil Chesterton and the Marconi Scandal:
A Chapter of Autobiography*

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MY BROTHER, Cecil Edward Chesterton, was born when I was about five years old; and, after a brief pause, began to argue. He continued to argue to the end; for I am sure that he argued energetically with the soldiers among whom he died, in the last glory of the Great War. It is reported of me that when I was told that I possessed a brother, my first thoughts went to my own interminable taste for reciting verses, and that I said: "That's all right; now I shall always have an audience." If I did say this, I was in error. My brother was by no means disposed to be merely an audience; and frequently forced the function of an audience upon me. More frequently still, perhaps it was a case of there being simultaneously two orators and no audience. We argued throughout our boyhood and youth until we became the pest of our whole social circle. We shouted at each other across the table, on the subject of Parnell or Puritanism or Charles the First's head, until our nearest and dearest fled at our approach, and we had a desert around us. And though it is not a matter of undiluted pleasure to recall having been so horrible a nuisance, I am rather glad in other ways that we did so early thrash out our own thoughts on almost all the subjects in the world. I am also glad to think that through all

those years we never stopped arguing; and we never once quarrelled.

Perhaps the principal objection to a quarrel is that it interrupts an argument. Anyhow, our argument was never interrupted until it began to reach its conclusion in the proper form; which is conviction. I do not say that at any particular moment either of us would have admitted being in error; but as a matter of fact, it was through that incessant process of disagreement that we came at last to agree. He began as a more mutinous sort of Pagan, a special enemy of the Puritan, a defender of Bohemian enjoyments, sociable but entirely secular. I began with more disposition to defend in a vague way the Victorian idealism, and even to say a word for Puritan religion, chiefly from a dim subconscious sympathy with any sort of religion. But in fact, by a process of elimination, we came more and more to think that the same sort of non-Puritan religion was the more plausible and promising; and to end eventually, but quite independently, in the same Church. I think it was a good thing that we had tested every link of logic by mutual hammering. I will even add something that sounds too like a boast; though it is meant to be a tribute. I will say that the man, who had got used to arguing with Cecil Chesterton, has never since had any reason to fear an argument with anybody.

The editor of *The New Statesman*, an acute critic of quite a different school from ours, said to me a little while ago; "Your brother was the very finest *debater* I have ever heard or heard of"; and such editors, of course, had known all the politicians and popular speakers. The qualities of his speaking were those

of logic and lucidity combined with a sort of violent and startling courage. Indeed, he illustrated what I think is a common error on the subject of logic. The logician is too often presented as a prig; as a thin and frigid person of a pallid complexion. Both in experience and history, I have generally found that it was very full-blooded and warm-hearted people who had that gift of clear and connected thought. Charles Fox was like that; Danton was like that; and Cecil Chesterton was certainly like that. He had all that I have described as the Chesterton simplicity and steadiness in his personal relations; his affections were particularly fixed and tranquil; but in battle he had a sort of bull-necked pugnacity and intolerance. He did not seem to wish to live and leave a fallacy alive; he certainly could not leave a fallacy alone. The development of his political ideas was for a time decidedly divergent from my own. When I went to work with the Pro-Boers of *The Daily News*, and generally upheld the Liberal cause, though rather more romantically than many Liberals, he gravitated to a sort of practical Tory Democracy, which was more and more permeated by the Socialism of Sidney Webb and Bernard Shaw. He eventually became an active and effective member of the Fabian Executive. But what was much more important, he had within him a living and most menacing sort of intolerance; a hatred of the real corruptions and hypocrisies of modern politics, and an extraordinary idea of telling the truth.

I have already indicated that I myself, though I believed in Liberalism, was finding it dimly difficult to believe in Liberals. It would be truer, perhaps, to say that I was finding it difficult to believe in politics;

because the reality seemed almost unreal, as compared with the reputation or the report. I could give twenty instances to indicate what I mean; but they would be no more than indications, because the doubt itself was doubtful. I remember going to a great Liberal club, and walking about in a large crowded room, somewhere at the end of which a bald gentleman with a beard was reading something from a manuscript in a low voice. It was hardly unreasonable that we did not listen to him, because we could not in any case have heard; but I think a very large number of us did not even see him. We shifted and shunted about and collided with each other; I met various friends of mine and exchanged a few words; Bentley and Belloc and Hammond and the rest. We talked in an ordinary fashion; it is possible, though not certain, that one or other of us asked carelessly what was supposed to be happening in the other corner of the large hall. Then we drifted away together, talking about important things, or things which seemed to us important.

Next morning I saw across the front of my Liberal paper in gigantic headlines the phrase; "Lord Spencer Unfurls the Banner". Under this were other remarks, also in large letters, about how he had blown the trumpet for Free Trade and how the blast would ring through England and rally all the Free Traders. It did appear, on careful examination, that the inaudible remarks which the old gentleman had read from the manuscript were concerned with economic arguments for Free Trade; and very excellent arguments too, for all I know. But the contrast between what that orator was to the people who heard him, and what he was to the thousands of newspaper-readers who did not hear

him, was so huge a hiatus and disproportion that I do not think I ever quite got over it. I knew henceforward what was meant, or what might be meant, by a Scene in the House or a Challenge from the Platform or any of those sensational events which take place in the newspapers and nowhere else.

This sense of unreality in the party struggle, which was gradually growing upon me, grew much more swiftly on my brother and my friend Belloc; because they were by temperament of a more rapid and resolute sort. They entered into a kind of partnership for the study of the question; and the outcome of that partnership was a book which had a considerable effect; though at that time, of course, it was mostly an effect of irritation or incredulity. They collaborated in a work called *The Party System*; of which the general thesis was that there were really no Parties, though there certainly was a system. The system, according to this view, was essentially one of rotation; but of rotation revolving on a central group, which really consisted of the leading politicians on both sides; or, as they were called for convenience in the book, "The Front Benches". An unreal conflict was kept up for the benefit of the public, and to a certain extent with the innocent assistance of the rank and file; but the Leader of the House was more truly in partnership with the Leader of the Opposition than either of them was with his own followers, let alone his own constituents. This was the thesis maintained in the book; and for the moment its immediate importance in this narrative is not so much concerned with its truth or falsehood as with the personal results arising from the alliance of its two authors. For the point of

view attracted sufficient attention to lead a few supporters to launch a weekly paper; of which Belloc was the editor and Cecil Chesterton the sub-editor; and to which I contributed first an occasional and eventually a weekly article.

There had never been anything like *The Eye-Witness* in England before; certainly not within the memory of the oldest men then living. Nor indeed has there ever been anything like it in England since. But its novelty and originality cannot be measured by those who can only compare it with what has happened in England since. It is a paradox palpably true that an original thing cannot at once be successful and still seem original. We can never appreciate how startling it might sound to be told that the earth was round, if we had really and invariably thought it was flat. By this time, so to speak, its roundness has become more flat than its flatness. It has become a dull platitude and only the denial of it would disturb us. So it is with political revolutions; and so it was with the considerable revolution introduced by *The Eye-Witness* in English journalism. Nobody can measure the change who was not brought up, as I was, in the ordinary newspaper-reading middle class of the Victorian Age. We need not argue here about all that may be said for and against the idealism, or the optimism, or the sentimentalism, or the hypocrisy or the virtue of the Victorian Age. It is enough to say that it rested solidly on some social convictions, that were not only conventions. One of them was the belief that English politics were not only free from political corruption, but almost entirely free from personal motives about money. It was a point of patriotic pride

that set a limit to the fiercest movements of party anger. I can remember that old Tories like my grandfather would actually pause in the full sweep of their denunciations of the demoniac conduct of Mr. Gladstone, to wave away the faintest suggestion that there could be any fiends rending the souls of our statesmen less erected, as Milton says, than the fiends of ambition or jealousy; "Heaven forbid that I should suggest that any English Prime Minister. . . ." No; Frenchmen might have discovered the negotiable value of coins of the realm; Italians and Austrians might think it well worth while to double their income; the statesmen of Bulgaria or Bolivia might have some notion of the meaning of money; but English politicians passed their lives in an absent-minded trance, like that of Mr. Skimpole, kept their eyes fixed on the fixed stars, never enquired whether politics had made them richer or poorer; and received their salaries with a start of surprise.

Well, for good or evil, that is all dead. And what killed it was primarily the journalistic explosion called *The Eye-Witness*; and especially its dealings with the Marconi Case and the question of the Sale of Peerages. In one sense indeed, as I shall suggest in a moment, the world fell far short of following up the lead of those particular leaders; and there has been nothing since recalling their pointed and personal denunciations. But the general tone has entirely altered. Everybody is familiar with jeers against politicians, jokes about political payments, journalistic allusions to the sale of honors or the Secret Party Fund; above all nobody is now shocked by them. Perhaps it would be better if they were shocked, or in other words shamed

by them. If they were ashamed of them, they might possibly make some attempt to alter them. For that is the weak side of the ultimate result of the revelations. The object of *The Eye-Witness* was to make the English public know and care about the peril of political corruption. It is now certain that the public does know. It is not so certain that the public does care. And we may well warn the more cynical and realistic generation around us not to be too confident in its superiority to the hoodwinked and humbug-ridden nineteenth century. I know that my Victorian uncles did not know how England is really governed. But I have a strong suspicion that if my Victorian uncles had known, they would have been horrified and not amused; and they would have put a stop to it somehow. Nobody is trying to put a stop to it now.

It is the fashion to divide recent history into pre-War and post-War conditions. I believe it is almost as essential to divide them into the pre-Marconi and post-Marconi days. It was during the agitations upon that affair that the ordinary English citizen lost his invincible ignorance; or, in ordinary language, his innocence. And as I happened to play a part, secondary indeed but definite, in the quarrel about this affair, and as in any case anything that my brother did was of considerable importance to me and my affairs, it will be well to pause for a moment upon this peculiar business; which was at the time, of course, systematically misrepresented and which is still very widely misunderstood. I think it probable that centuries will pass before it is seen clearly and in its right perspective; and that then it will be seen as one of the turning-points in the history of England and the world.

There are various legends about it. One is, for instance, the legend that we denounced certain Cabinet Ministers because they gambled on the Stock Exchange. It is likely enough that we did make fun of a man like Mr. Lloyd George, who made himself the mouthpiece of the Nonconformist Conscience and called on all the chapels to show forth the old fighting Puritan spirit, when he appeared in a transaction uncommonly like a gamble; just as we should denounce a politician who drank champagne and tried to start a campaign of Prohibition. But we should not denounce him for drinking champagne but for prohibiting champagne. Similarly, we should not denounce a Puritan politician for gambling, so much as for talking as if nobody could ever gamble. My brother, I need not say, was not likely to be shocked at anybody indulging in a bet or a wager; though he might possibly have recommended him to do a flutter on the Derby or the Oaks rather than on the Stock Exchange. But, as a fact, the whole notion that the question was one of merely doing a flutter is a fiction. It is a fiction, which was put up by the politicians at the time, as a mask for the fact. The charge against the Marconi Ministers was that they received a tip, or were "let in on the ground floor", as the financial phrase goes, by a Government contractor whose contract was at the time being considered or accepted by the Government. In fact, on the face of it at any rate, there were all the conditions that go to make up what is commonly called "a secret commission". Whether the acceptance of the tip did or did not affect the acceptance of the contract might be argued; but the question at issue was one of a contract and a tip, and

not of an ordinary little flutter in stocks and shares. The pivotal fact of the position, of course, was that the Government contractor was the brother of one of these members of the Government. The very extraordinary monopoly which the Government then granted to the Marconi Company was in fact granted to its managing director, Mr. Godfrey Isaacs, the brother of Sir Rufus Isaacs, then the Attorney General. These facts alone justified at least inquiry; and the first efforts of all the politicians were directed to preventing any inquiry at all.

Until the editor of *The Eye-Witness* forced the politicians to reveal something, the politicians had begun by protesting that there was nothing whatever to reveal. Mr. Lloyd George spoke of mere rumors, by implication of baseless rumors, "Passing from one foul lip to another". The particular Samuel who happened to be doing a Ministerial job at the moment got up and gratuitously asserted that none of his colleagues had ever had any financial connection with this company; alluding in a distant manner to the Marconi Company. Sir Rufus Isaacs made the same distant denial in almost the same words; in fact he drew quite a quaint picture of the far-off, the almost frigid relations between himself and Mr. Godfrey Isaacs; and spoke of having once met his brother "at a family function" and heard for the first time of the success of his Government contract. Meanwhile my brother, who had succeeded to the full editorship of the paper and renamed it *The New Witness*, continued a confessedly violent, not to say abusive, attack on the Isaacses, but latterly and largely on the previous career of Mr. Godfrey Isaacs as a promoter of

ephemeral companies. Eventually, Mr. Godfrey Isaacs prosecuted my brother for the personal libel on himself; much to my brother's delight. It is a rather remarkable fact that on the very day that my brother's reply was received, announcing that he intended to justify or prove his statement, the politicians took the first step towards telling some of the truth. The step may at first sight seem odd. It consisted of prosecuting for libel a French paper called *Le Matin*.

It seems odd; because there were some very conspicuous English papers to be prosecuted. There was *The New Witness*, roaring aloud week after week to be prosecuted. There was *The Morning Post*, which said many things nearly as strong; there was Mr. Maxse, in *The National Review*, who said things quite as strong. I was myself so much amused with the inconsequence of this foreign diversion that I published some verses in *The New Witness* beginning:

*I am so swift to seize affronts,
 My spirit is so high,
 Who ever has insulted me
 Some foreigner must die.
 I made a claim for damage
 (For The Times had called me "thief")
 Against a paper in Alsace,
 A paper called "Le Juif".
 And when The Morning Post unearthed
 Some murders I'd devised,
 A Polish organ of finance
 At once apologized.
 . . . I know it sounds confusing
 But, as Mr. Lammle said,
 The anger of a gentleman
 Is boiling in my head.*

The actual method of course is by this time familiar enough. Some fool who has got the facts wrong is always prosecuted, instead of the serious critics who have got the facts right. And, in the case of *Le Matin*, the occasion was merely used as an opportunity for the Ministers involved to give their own version of the real facts before it was too late. To the profound astonishment and distress of many, they admitted that, in spite of the reassuring remarks in Parliament, they had in fact received a large number of shares from the American branch of the Marconi Company. Most of the loyal Liberals who followed them were rather flabbergasted; but in the ordinary Party press the matter was duly whitewashed. Of course the ordinary Tory press would have done exactly the same with an ordinary Tory scandal, of which there were quite as many. But I should like to name and record here, *honoris causa* and for the credit of himself and the true Radical creed, the name of the late H. W. Massingham, the editor of *The Nation*, who alone in such a crisis spoke and acted like a man. He was as devoted to the Party of Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform as any of the others; but his devotion took the form of an instant appreciation of its moral danger. He came home from hearing the *Matin* explanation, shaken and horror-stricken, and he printed in his paper the words, "Political corruption is the Achilles heel of Liberalism".

Attempts were made afterwards to justify all this inconsistency and contradiction, by explaining that the shares had been taken in the American branch of the enterprise, and that the Parliamentary explanations had only referred to "this Company". I must confess

that I should feel very much more charity towards the fiction, if it were not for the explanation. I might easily forget and forgive, after all these years, if the politicians said they had lied as schoolboys lie, out of loyalty to their own class or club; and under certain conventions of Parliamentary self-defense; I might even think that this conventional fidelity was not so much merely dishonorable as a perverted form of honor. But if they say that a statement of that sort was not fiction, because the word "American" was suppressed, then (I grieve to say) I could only conclude that they did not know the meaning of truth. The test is perfectly simple. Suppose they had got up and told the whole simple truth saying, "These Ministers have shares in American but not in English Marconis", the result would have been a shock; which they meant to avoid and did avoid. In other words, on their own theory of their own action, they meant to deceive and did deceive. That they deceived by a verbal equivocation of the double sense of "this Company" does not make it better, but worse. However, all their moral ideas were in such confusion that we need not necessarily even believe their explanation of their explanation. Their real reason may even have been better than their false excuse; and their lie may have been more loyal than they had the courage to confess.

Another legend about the Marconi Case, floating about like a cloud and obscuring its true outline, is the notion that my brother being convicted and fined the rather nominal sum of £100 was a legal answer to the attack on the Marconi Ministers. This is, as the lawyers say, a question of law as well as fact; and in both it is quite false. Mr. Justice Phillimore, who was op-

posed to our case in a degree rather beyond the limits of the judicial, was nevertheless a very lucid and precise lawyer; and he left no doubt on this point whatever. In his summing up, he said most emphatically that the jury had nothing whatever to do with the question of whether the politicians had improperly dabbled in Marconis; that their verdict was not to answer that political question one way or the other; that they were concerned solely with whether the individual Godfrey Isaacs, in his career as a company-promoter previous to the Marconi Case, had been unfairly described by the individual Cecil Chesterton. The jury were strongly instructed to find, and did find, that the description of the company-promoter was wrong. But the jury did not find, and were expressly told that they were not competent to find, that the conduct of the Marconi Ministers was right.

Whatever Godfrey Isaacs was really like, he is dead now; and I certainly am not going back to dig up the poor fellow's defunct companies. There are perhaps only two things to be added to that personal part of the story; and I think they are both worth adding. One is that it is supremely characteristic of my brother that, while he undoubtedly used all the violent vocabulary of Cobbett in attacking Godfrey Isaacs and the rest, he had not in fact the faintest grain of malice, or even irritation. He always spoke of the brothers Isaacs and their set, in private conversation, with perfect good humor and charity; allowing for their Jewish virtues of family loyalty and the rest, and even finding excuses for the other politicians; though it is extremely typical of the real attitude of our group, which was accused of fanatical Anti-Semitism, that he

was always more ready to excuse the Jews than the Gentiles. That is another of the legends about the Marconi Case; that it was an attack on Jews. As Mr. Belloc said, in giving evidence, anybody less like a Jew than Mr. Lloyd George it would be difficult to imagine. And there is to be added to this a curious and ironic conclusion of the matter; when, many years after, my brother received the Last Sacraments and died in a hospital in France, his old enemy, Godfrey Isaacs, died very shortly after, having been converted to the same universal Catholic Church. No one would have rejoiced more than my brother; or with less bitterness or with more simplicity. It is the only reconciliation: and it can reconcile anybody. *Requiescant in Pace.*

Finally, it may be worth noting that the last and least worthy of the legends about the Marconi Case was a notion, which I found floating about at one time, that my brother and Mr. Belloc had parted company on the matter, because Mr. Belloc in his evidence had referred the examiners to him, as responsible editor of the later issues of the paper. As one who was inside all the counsels, and was naturally prejudiced if anything on my brother's side, I may testify that there was never a word of truth in this supposed division or desertion. The policy of my brother, claiming to answer all questions himself, may have been wise or unwise; I myself had my doubts about its wisdom. But such as it was, it was adopted by him in consultation with Mr. Belloc, as a part of their common policy; and on my suggestion, my brother afterwards inserted a note in the paper explaining this simple fact. The result was simple and

significant. The Commission never dared to call him at all.

For the rest, the political scandal was treated like all other political scandals. A Parliamentary Commission was appointed and reported that everything was very nice; a Minority Report was issued which reported that some things were not quite so nice; and political life (if you can call it life) went on as before. But what makes me laugh is the thought of the poor puzzled, honest and indignant Tories, who read *The Morning Post* and imagined that a Tory chivalry was storming the fortress of corrupt Radicalism, when they read the Parliamentary Debates on the subject; and especially the passage in which Arthur Balfour said that they must judge men like Lloyd George (whom they knew so well and loved so much) more leniently than they would judge a common outsider. The poor Primrose League must have been horribly mystified by the problem of this mildness on the Front Benches. They would have found the answer to the problem in a book called *The Party System*.

Soon after the affair had concluded, as such affairs always conclude in modern England, with a formal verdict and a white-washing committee, all our politics and practical life were turned upside down by the external earthquake of the Great War. There was not so complete a disconnection as some suppose; for Prussia was partly encouraged to attack by a gross exaggeration of the seriousness, I will not say of the Orangeman, but certainly of the seriousness with which the Englishman really regards the Orangeman. And that threat of civil war from Northern Ireland was very largely lashed into extravagance as an ex-

pedient for proving that the Party System did mean something after all. For a very long time past, the Irish Question has been the only life in the English Parliament. It was alive because it was concerned with religion, or with two religions; and when the Irish question was withdrawn, the English Parliamentary Party System visibly fell to pieces. But there were other ways in which the issue of corruption continued to affect the country in wartime; not least in the Dope Scandal and in the fact that firms did brazenly continue to trade with the enemy. But in truth, the evil connection went back further than that. As a fact, it goes back to the very beginning of the War, though few people even began to understand it until long afterwards.

If I were asked who produced or precipitated the Great War (in the instant sense that he prevented it being prevented), I should give an answer that would surprise nearly all sections of opinion, and almost certainly surprise the man himself. I should not say the Kaiser; for that simplification was only one of the series of British bogeys like Kruger before or Mussolini afterwards; though I am quite certain the evil originally arose with the power of Prussia. Still less should I say the Czar of Russia or some Slavonic fanatic who committed a crime at Sarajevo. Long after the acts and attitudes of all these people were recognized, it would have been perfectly possible to avoid the War; and nearly everybody wanted to avoid it. I should say that the fire-eater, who precipitated it when others might have prevented it, was some sort of worthy Quaker of the type of old Mr. Cadbury, whom I knew and served in my youth.

And it all arose out of the existence of the Party System; or rather, in a sense, out of the non-existence of the Party System. When the public theory of a thing is different from the practical reality of that thing, there is always a convention of silence that cannot be broken; there are things that must not be said in public. The fact concealed in this case exactly illustrated the thesis of the book called *The Party System*; that there were not two real parties ruling alternately, but one real group, "the Front Benches", ruling all the time. The fact here was that the foreign policy of Asquith and Grey did not vitally differ from that which would have been pursued by Balfour and Bonar Law. All were patriots upon this point; all were, in my personal opinion, right; but anyhow, all thought that England would have to intervene if Germany threatened France. They all thought so; and if they had all said so, and said so months before, Germany would never have challenged the power of such an alliance. My brother and many millions more would be walking about alive.

The Liberal leaders could not say so; not even for fear of the Liberal Party, let alone the people; but for fear of the particular and powerful forces which supported the Liberal Party; and therefore supported the Party System. And under the conditions of our party politics, a party is supported not so much by fighting as by funds. They are called, heaven knows why, in a most extraordinary metaphor, "the sinews of war". They are provided by the sale of peerages to rich men and all sorts of ignominious methods; but there is no questions of such methods here. Many such party supporters, and certainly Mr. Cadbury, were in com-

plete good faith, especially about supporting Peace. But very many of them were Quakers, simply because the Quakers happened to possess a minority of millionaires, a group much smaller but much richer than the Liberal Party as a whole. And the very constitution of modern party politics is such that a government had to placate such supporters, and profess to represent their ideals or prejudices, or whatever we happen to think them. In short, the whole thing was and is a plutocracy; but it was not specially in this case the fault of this group of plutocrats.

That increasing number of intellectuals, who are content to say that Democracy has been a failure, miss the point of the far more disastrous calamity that Plutocracy has been a success. I mean it has been the only sort of success it could be; for Plutocracy has no philosophy or morals or even meaning; it can only be a material success, that is, a base success; Plutocracy can only mean the success of plutocrats in being plutocrats. But this they enjoyed until a short time ago, when an economic judgment shook them like an earthquake. With Democracy the case is exactly the reverse. We may say, with some truth, that Democracy has failed; but we shall only mean that Democracy has failed to exist. It is nonsense to say that the complicated but centralized Capitalist States of the last hundred years have suffered from an extravagant sense of the equality of men or the simplicity of manhood. At most we might say that the civic theory has provided a sort of legal fiction, behind which a rich man could rule a civilization where he could once rule a city; or a usurer throw his net over six nations, where he once threw it over one village. But there is

no stronger proof of the fact that it emphatically is plutocracy, and most emphatically is not democracy, that has caused popular institutions to become unpopular, than this example of the pull of the Pacifists upon the Liberal Government just before the Great War. It is only necessary to ask exactly how much such extreme Pacifists counted in the Party Fund, and how much they counted in the Party.

For no electioneering agent, however active and anxious, would have got into an abnormal panic about the *votes* of the Quakers. He would have given them the normal attention that he would give to the votes of the Plymouth Brethren or the Peculiar People, who would very probably have the habit of voting Liberal. But there are not enough individual Quakers to create a landslide of votes at a General Election. By the nature of modern politics, and nobody's fault in particular, the whole point and pivot of the situation was not the large proportion of men who were Quakers, but the large proportion of Quakers who were millionaires. And since this situation is bad at its best, as with Quakers who were sincere in their Pacifism, we can hardly think too badly of so bad a situation at its worst. At its worst it meant that the worst sort of traitors could and did trade with the enemy throughout the War, that the worst sort of profiteers could and did blackmail their own country for bloodsucking profits in the worst hour of her peril, that the worst sort of politicians could play any game they liked with the honor of England and the happiness of Europe, if they were backed and boomed by some vulgar monopolist millionaire; and all these insolent interests nearly brought us to a crash in the supreme

crisis of our history; because Parliament had come to mean only a secret government by the rich.

So ended the last considerable attempt to purge Parliament, or the ancient institution of the English. Some years before a similar attempt had been made in France, inspired by the chivalry of Déroulède, who acted much in the military and Christian spirit of Belloc and my brother. That also had failed; and Parliaments continued to prosper; that is, they continued to rot. We have lived to see the last phase; when the revolt against that rot in representative institutions broke out further south, in the very gates of Rome; and it did not fail. But it has brought with it changes not wholly comforting to one who loves liberty and the ancient English conception of a Free Parliament. I am proud to have been among those who tried to save it, even if it was too late.

The Agrarian System of Mexico

HUNTINGTON ADAMS

THE agrarian problem in Mexico is entirely different from anything in our own experience; for in the United States as a whole there has always been not only a sufficiency of good farming land from which to supply the population, but enough to enable us to be the largest exporter of agricultural produce in the world. In Mexico there has always been a deficiency of serviceable agricultural land for the population.

The northern half, which borders on the United States, has a deficient rainfall and semi-desert conditions except where the few rivers flowing from high mountains (where there is some rainfall) can be utilized for irrigation. The southern half of the country, where more than half of the 18,500,000 people of the country live, throughout extensive regions has a rainfall which would be adequate if it were distributed throughout the year. However, with the exception of the mountain slopes facing the Gulf of Mexico, the rain all falls within the space of some five months between May and October; and then it falls in torrential downpours which tend to run off the land. During the rest of the year the land becomes desiccated by drought and pasture lands are almost valueless.

Mexico has an area of 760,294 square miles. This is roughly one-quarter of the area of the United States. It is also approximately equal to the area of the Moun-