

MR. BELLOC ON THE JEWS

BY the time that these lines are in print Mr. Belloc's latest book will have been reviewed in many papers; and I cannot but fear that, if it is taken as gravely as it deserves, it will provoke impatient comment from both English and Jewish readers. For it has been written deliberately to raise the Jewish question, to make it a conscious issue, and to insist that only by the frank acceptance of this issue on both sides can an impending calamity be forestalled. At the moment, for reasons which Mr. Belloc explains, there is only one section of the community alertly conscious of the Jewish problem, and anxious to raise it, namely the Anti-Semites, who are eager to take the first opportunity of attacking the Jews. The rest of us, including the Jews themselves, do not want the question raised at all, and even deny its existence. They severally declare, or wish it be assumed, that the Jews are not an alien nation, but fellow nationals only differentiated by a religion peculiar to themselves. It would not be surprising therefore if the first effect of the book were to excite an irrational Jewish protest, scepticism and annoyance in the general mass, and among the Anti-Semites embittered disappointment that one as alive to the issue as themselves should yet deliberately dissociate himself from their antagonistic policy. For in matters liable to acute controversy the disinterested seeker after truth and consideration is rarely welcomed.

Mr. Belloc is not an Anti-Semite. He has been called one before now because, when he was attacking parliamentary corruption, the sale of honours, and the secrecy of the party funds, he attacked by name certain financiers and politicians who, or most of whom, happened to be Jews. All who recall these

The Jews. By Hilaire Belloc. (Constable and Co. 9s.).

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philippics, and the vigorous verse of some of his lampoons will also recall the cry of Anti-Semite. But to some of us it seemed that the subject of his satire was not a race but a practice. The proof of this is his latest historical essay, though an impartial person may anticipate the repetition of the charge against anyone who raises the Jewish question at all.

The Jewish question is that of the presence among the nations of an alien race, the character of which is international and unabsorbable with the chameleon quality of readily assuming, and discarding, a superficial likeness to those with whom, at any particular moment, it may happen to reside; a race aiming, perhaps unconsciously, at domination and monopoly, without regard and often hostile to the interests and traditions of its hosts. Consequently whenever the power of this race is felt, as it has always been in time, it arouses anger and suspicion, because it is both covert and international. Hitherto, Mr. Belloc reminds us, the Jews have everywhere in turn found asylum, and then welcome, until their threatened domination has produced reaction and persecution, when the same cycle has been repeated in another country. We are, he believes, at the end of the second and on the verge of the disastrous third phase here. The British Empire became an international force in the nineteenth century; capitalism is confessedly so; and the Jews were encouraged by this trend to support and be supported by this country. But the war, which gave a shock to international relations and international finance, was further complicated by the Russian revolution, which was the work of a group of Jews, the Bolshevist leaders. These revenged themselves for the former persecution of their race in Russia, and also made an attack, abhorrent to European ideals, upon the ethic of private property. The result is that the Jews are now identified with inter-

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national financial interests opposed to European national ideals on the one hand, and identified with social revolution upon the other. The Anti-Semites in this country, conscious of Jewish power at home and opposed to the revolutionary experiment in Russia, have collected a mass of documentary evidence which they are eager to use at the first opportunity.

If, therefore, the clash recurrent in history is not to be repeated, the Jewish problem must be confronted frankly and openly in the interests of both sides. Since the two old methods of solution, forcible extension and segregation, have always alike failed, we must try the only alternative, namely frank mutual recognition of each other's racial differences, and the personal and legal relations which such a recognition imposes. Zionism is no solution because it leaves undecided the nationality of the majority of Jews who will remain dispersed among the nations. Indeed it may make a solution more difficult, for Zionism is fatal to the pretence of non-Jewish nationality, and a dual nationality for the dispersed Jews will only emphasise the incongruity of any additional European nationality that they may assume. Mr. Belloc therefore advocates the frank recognition by the Jews and ourselves of Jewish nationality. The simple fact that the Jew is a Jew, as the Irishman is an Irishman, or the Frenchman French, should not be obscured or disguised, in name or conversation or relationship; and this frank recognition should precede legislation and begin by the extension of all purely Jewish bodies. Happily there are already Jewish guardians, Jewish hospitals, Jewish newspapers. Why should the Jews not ask for Jewish tribunals for inter-Jewish suits, and mixed tribunals for cases involving both nations? We should meet each other half-way, and not force on our side or disguise on theirs the need for legal

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forms of differential recognition. Thus, again, if the Jew as a foreigner is excluded from certain public offices and powers, he should also escape certain public obligations, such as conscription in time of war. That crudely summarised is Mr. Belloc's thesis and his remedy. Because the purpose of the author is to bring a dissembled question into the front of discussion, to review such a book is to raise its chief point. Having done this, however, the reader may fairly ask what is to be the legal test of Jewish nationality. What is to be the nationality of children of mixed marriages, and the solution of the numerous other practical difficulties which recognition would entail. Answers to such obvious questions are not given, probably to place the main contention in a stronger light.

The volume makes, of course, delightful reading. It possesses the lucid style, the vigorous reasoning, above all the historical perspective of which Mr. Belloc is a master. He has a genius for tracing the historic currents of the past. He makes us feel the stream beneath the surface of the present. His dynamic sense disturbs the static complacency which we inherit from the Victorian era. What the man was to the historic sense of Carlyle, the sweep, the tendency, the movement is to Mr. Belloc; and in consequence the present, shrinking to its due proportion, is humbled only to be vivified. He writes as he speaks. The living word throbs in the style, so that the words stimulate our feelings as the argument does our understanding. He fears that events may precipitate a crisis which, incidentally, may shortly make his essay irrelevant, out of date, unreal. But that is not the literary fate of the born man of letters who makes a smouldering question into a literary theme. Swift's *Drapier's Letters* are as alive to-day as they were when Wood's forgotten ha'pence first occasioned them. But it is true that in a free Press this book

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on *The Jews* would have appeared first as a series of articles. But the Press has taught us now not to look to it for information or for instruction. For these we go to the book; and whatever we lose thereby in the confusion of our attention, we can at least find our author when we want him, and have him always conveniently at call upon our grateful shelves.

OSBERT BURDETT.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

Sir,

Since Mr. Alec Waugh says that *The Loom of Youth* was not written while he was still at school, but six months after, I apologise to him for my inaccuracy in stating the reverse. My statement was based on information given me by someone who in 1916 claimed to be an intimate friend of his. To the other points I would reply:—

(1) That perhaps the *Morning Post* correspondence was more sporadic than my words implied.

(2) That, as Mr. Waugh admits, it is true to say as I did that the *Nation* defended him when it found he was attacked.

(3) That *The Bending of a Twig* is not a skit on *The Hill* but a reply to it, yet couched in the same conventional form of school-story as *The Hill*—which is what I claimed.

(4) That *The Harrovians*, despite its unpleasantness, is to my mind a 'romantic' school-story in a way in which *The Loom of Youth* is certainly not.

—Yours faithfully,

BEDE JARRETT, O.P.