

Character Study of Sir John Simon, England's Youthful Solicitor-General

[By A. G. Gardiner, Editor London Daily News and Leader.]

There was once a conspirator who when he came to the scaffold made a speech in which he said, "I could never believe it right that some men should be born into the world ready booted and spurred to ride, and others ready saddled and bridled to be ridden." And having uttered this protest against the world as he had found it he took his leave and disappeared through the trapdoor. But the words live and these could hardly be a better text for a statesman's career. There is one sense, however, in which, no matter how we adjust society or how nearly we approach the ideal of equality of opportunity, there will always be men who come into the world "ready booted and spurred to ride." These do not point to their ancestors or to their acres for their authority. They bring their letters of credit with them from a far country and we honor them at sight. It is not necessary for them to elbow their way through the crowd or to attract attention by insolence or eccentricity. They appear and the crowd miraculously opens out before them. They prance down a rose-strewn path to a shining goal.

The most conspicuous example of the "booted and spurred" class among the younger public men of the time is Sir John Simon. Macaulay, applying to Byron the fable by which the Duchess of Orleans illustrated the character of her son, the Regent, said that all the fairies save one, had been bidden to his cradle and had brought their several gifts. But the malignant elf which had been uninvited came last, and being unable to reverse what her sisters had done for their favorite, had mixed up a curse with every blessing. It is difficult to associate fairies with Manchester, but fairies there must have been who visited the cradles of the moon about Moss-side forty years ago. And most amiable fairies they were. They crowded round the cradle of John Alcock Simon, and showered their gift upon him. And, best of all, there was no uninvited fairy to turn all the blessings to bitterness—unless, indeed, uninvited Success is a malignant elf in disguise.

His Success.

There is something to be said for that view. Success in such a measure as Sir John has had must rob life of much of its adventurous delight. (I speak here only of his public career; in his private life he has known the bitterest sorrow.) To have the sun perpetually shining on one must make one hungry for a rainy day; to find that Apollon always yields at the first onset must make one yearning for a foe who will not fly. When everything is very easy, life must be very hard, and a little dull. It must be what billiards is to an expert. The day of billiards, like the joy of any other game or business, is in its uncertainty. If you do not know what is going to happen, there is delight in the happening. But to the expert, who goes on making cannons and red winners and jokers almost in his sleep, billiards must be the last expression of boredom.

Now, to pursue the analogy, it is difficult to imagine that Sir John Simon ever found any problem on the billiard table that he was not sure of solving. Whatever he wanted he has got. Whatever he wants, one feels that he will get. The prizes of Oxford, the prizes of the Bar, the prizes of Parliament, have fallen to him with a certain inevitableness that causes no surprise. When at 37 he became Solicitor-General, no one commented adversely on the appointment of so young a man to so great an office. On the contrary, everyone agreed that there was no other appointment which was thinkable. And yet one has to go back a century—to the days when statesmen ripened early and died young, generally of port wine and free living—to find a parallel to his achievement. Charles Yorke, it is true, was Solicitor-General at 32, and grumbled because he had not done better. But Charles Yorke was the son of a Lord Chancellor, and he had a devouring appetite for office which finally led to perhaps the most tragic personal episode in the political life of his time. For when every great and self-respecting lawyer had refused to accept the Lord Chancellorship and become the instrument of George the Third's despotic aims, he took the office, went through an agony of shame and repentance and died within twenty hours under circumstances which are generally skinned over with a kindly hand by the historian.

No Shop Window. It is his freedom from insatiable ambition of this sort which is one of Sir John Simon's chief claims to distinction. His career has been extraordinarily unambitious, almost deliberately humdrum. He is like a tradesman—if such there be in these days—who relies absolutely upon the quality of his goods and refuses to advertise or to lavish his arts upon a showy shop window. Montaigne says that when he was a young man without wealth he made a brave show in his attire in order

to impress the world; but when he came to his estates he allowed his chateaux to speak for him. That is Sir John Simon's way. He leaves his estates to speak for him. He does not advertise. He did not, like his famous contemporary at Wadhurst, burst upon Parliament with a brilliant display of fireworks. He made his entrance with a plain, unpretentious speech on a practical issue. And as he began so he has continued. He aims neither at epigram nor at wit, and displays a chilly scorn of all rhetorical devices. His appeal is never to the passions, but always to the mind. He treats his audience with respect. He does not offer them an entertainment, but an argument, and his hold upon the great constituency of Walthamstow is a result of the intellectual appeal to the democracy when that appeal is based on sound knowledge and just thought. He avoids all exaggeration and over-emphasis. Emotion never breaks through the icy reserve of a temperament naturally under a rigorous discipline, and further restrained by the influence of Oxford, which does not help a man to be expansive. He neither yields to temper nor betrays it, but goes on his way with an imperturbable gravity and a serene persuasiveness that nothing can disarm. Whether with a jury or a political audience, his method is the same. He weaves no magic spells, indulges in no artifices. Most of the famous pleaders rely largely upon histrionic effects. Sir John Simon is entirely free from these. He has a cultivated urbanity of manner which makes his presence and address pleasing; but his aim is to convince his hearers, never to stampede them. His mind is, at once spacious and minute, and it is as extraordinary as luminous. There are no dim recesses and no mysteries. The result is a rare atmosphere of light and air, coupled with a certain lack of surprise and of imaginative stimulus. The result is wide, but it is all revealed, all radiant, all perfectly laid out. You may wander at large without fear of being lost and without the hope of experiencing any adventure or getting any unexpected vision.

To understand his merits and his limitations, we may contrast him with the two most original minds in the House of Commons—those of Mr. Balfour and Mr. Lloyd George. He has none of the speculative curiosity which makes Mr. Balfour so fascinating and suggestive a personality. Mr. Balfour seems like a voyager in space who strays accidentally into the affairs of our curious little planet and takes an amused interest in them. But it is the sort of interest which Gulliver took in the affairs of the Lilliputians. He hears our lamentations, but he hears them as a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong. The drama is amusing enough, but it is a drama of marionettes moved by some power that is not his.

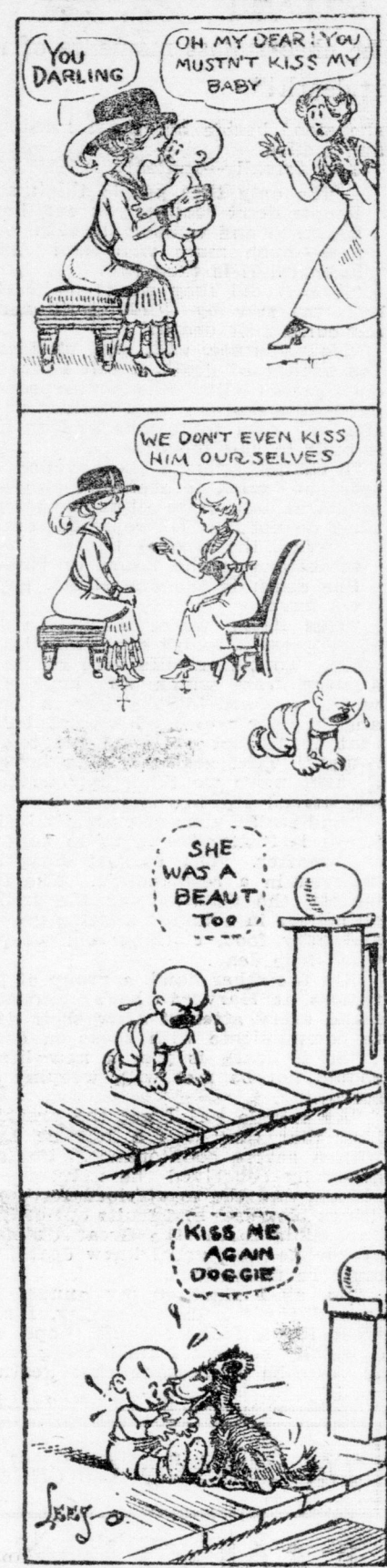
"Turns the handle of this life show." It is the realm of ultimate speculation and inquiry that alone truly engages his interest. He himself admitted that the House of Commons did not "extend his mind." Hence his light contact with facts, his apparent levity in handling theories, his perplexing obscurantism. But hence also the refreshing air he brings with him into the narrow realm of dogma and fact; hence his power of stimulating thought and enlarging the horizon of the mind. Sir John Simon has nothing of this quality, and he has as little in common with the empirical genius of Mr. Lloyd George, whose mind works as if there were no such thing as solemn doctrines to be considered and as if the world were a new problem that had to

be solved according to the perceived facts and without regard to the operation of theories. No one ever called Mr. Lloyd George a philosophic Radical. Sir John Simon is a philosophic Radical. His thought proceeds on strictly academic lines, in the clear realm of his mind cause and effect follow as the night the day, and political doctrine is an exact science which admits of no question. This formal, unadventurous thinking gives stability to politics. His value has never been better illustrated than in the co-operation of Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George—the one giving inspiration and ideas, the other the authority and restraint of a powerful grasp upon first principles. Without Mr. Asquith, it may be said that Mr. Lloyd George could never have achieved his schemes. The ballast in the hold is as essential as the heaving sail.

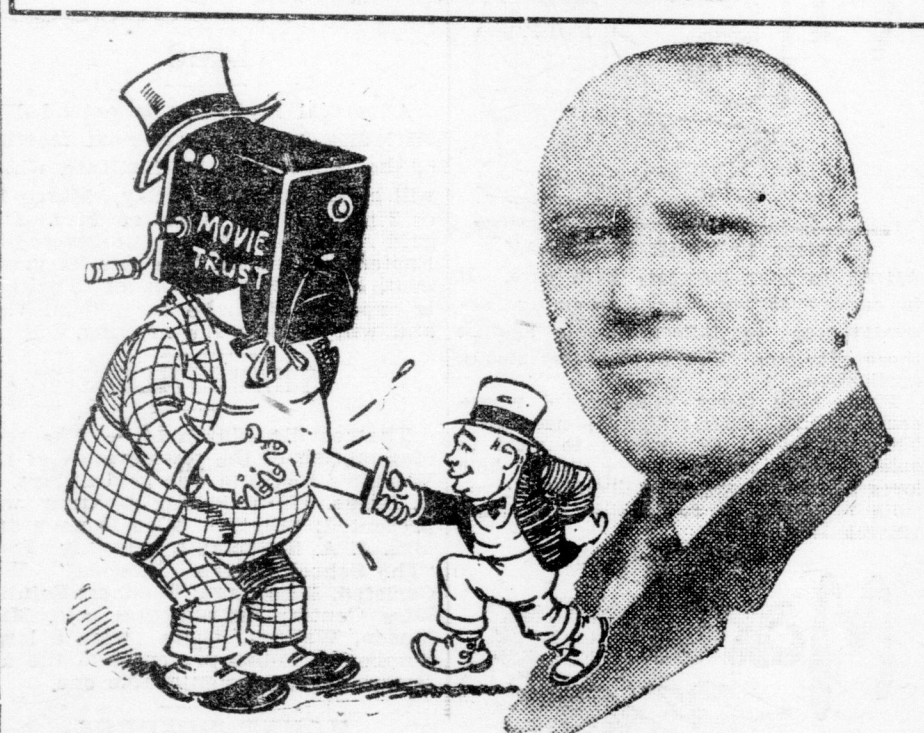
A Parallel.

The admirable clarity of mind of which

BABY AND THE DOG.



IMMIGRANT STARTED AS ERRAND BOY AND ENDED BY LYING THE "FILM TRUST."



CARL LEMMLE.

[The Advertiser's Moving Picture Expert.]

Piling nickels into fortunes is the business of Carl Lemmle, the president of the Universal Film Manufacturing Company, New York. He's a smiling, gentle, kindly, soft-voiced, little man, not over 45 years old, and about 5 feet tall. A few years ago he was a poor German boy without money, friends in a strange country. Today he is one of the most important men in the moving picture business. "Come on into the madhouse," said Joseph Brandt, the hurry-up publicity man, "and maybe I can get you five minutes with the man at the top." By the time I reached the private office of Carl Lemmle, not that day, but 24 hours later and just before closing time, I realized the timeliness of the nickname.

Everybody—and that means scores of clerks, office boys and stenographers, business managers and heads of all kinds of departments—was doing business at a mile-a-minute pace. "There's not so much to tell," he began, sliding back into a two-seater, large, revolving chair, and looking with a fatherly eye on a great, big, imposing desk before him. "I arrived in New York at the age of 17, friendless, unacquainted with the language, and with \$50 that I didn't dare to spend for food. My first few jobs only paid me in experience. Then I got a wonderful \$4-a-week place as errand boy in a drug store right here in New York. But I wanted more nickels than I could get out of \$4 and went west to Chicago. There I worked up at all sorts of jobs, but I couldn't pass the \$18 mark. So I moved again. This time I went to Little Oshkosh, and

that's where I started up the ladder." Carl Lemmle's career in Oshkosh began with a \$15 job as cashier in a clothing store. When he left it, because he still thought he could make more money, he was drawing \$4,000 a year and had saved \$3,000. "I had a notion," he said, "that with that much money I could start a chain of 5-cent stores. I went over to Chicago to see what could be done, and one rainy night I dropped into a little moving picture theatre. I knew right away that was my new business. And I began that night to build it."

Three weeks after that date Carl Lemmle owned his own theatre in Chicago. About two years later he was the owner of a manufactory, a meeting and some more theatre. When he commenced to pay \$2 a week license for the privilege of using certain companies' films, he hated it. "I saw," he told me, "that eventually these companies would put me out of business if they kept on. I had to fight them. It was very hard. First I had to buy films from abroad altogether. Then a few companies in this country got the independent idea and began making films outside the licensed group. Finally other independent companies grew up. We held a little meeting and organized for self-protection and mutual benefit. Now I believe it is safe to say the Universal Film Manufacturing Company is doing 40 per cent. of the business."

The Universal Film Company has eight brands, each representing a different producing company. They are the Imp, Rex, Gem, Victor, Powers, Champion, Nestor and Bison. A western site for moving picture-taking, covering 12,000 acres, has just been leased by the Universal at Hollywood, Cal.

I have spoken expresses itself in speech equally lucid. The most complex argument he will discuss as easily as his garter. He moves through the labyrinth of the law with an easy assurance that communicates itself to the listener. He has that rare gift of making difficult things seem simple and evolved things seem plain. It is the result first of clear thinking and next of clear speaking. He does not cloud his meaning with words, but exercises that economy which the skillful ether employs to ensure the simplicity of his effect. This does not mean that he always speaks briefly. On the contrary, his speech on the telephone arbitration occupied ten days, and is the longest least utterance on record. It means simply that he is never verbose or redundant.

In all this it might be supposed that one was dealing with Mr. Asquith. And in method and habit of mind, clearness of view and statement, severe restraint of manner, and cold, rather unimaginative processes, there is a strong likeness between the two. Sir John Simon's mind works with something of the same mechanical perfection as the Prime Minister's. "It is as though you put a penny in the slot at one end," said a friend of his, "and the verdict of the jury drops out at the other." But there are differences. Intellectually, Sir John Simon is a slighter man than Mr. Asquith. He gives none of that impression of rude, natural force, of elemental power, that his leader conveys, and he will never dominate the House of Commons with the same masculine authority. It would be difficult to explain the wide gap between the two men in the Parliamentary sense. It certainly does not represent an inferiority of conviction in the younger man. There is probably no one on the front bench today the quality of whose liberalism is more universally appreciated than Sir John Simon's. It is at once advanced and instructed. It is the product of a Nonconformist origin and Oxford culture, the fruit of whose co-operation is not always so satisfactory.

His Future.

Sir John Simon's natural foil in the House is Mr. F. E. Smith. The rivalry between these two old foes of the Oxford Union has become the most entertaining problem of personal politics. They are at the poles in temperament and conviction, their methods of speech, and in many ways they pursue their several ambitions in solid gifts, in the enduring qualities of character, in sincerity of opinion, there can be no doubt that Sir John Simon has the advantage. But in brilliant and adventurous insolence Mr. Smith is easily first. He is free also from the air of politeness that afflicts his rival and gives him an appearance of having found us all rather trivial people and of being bored with our follies.

So far as one can foresee, the career of these two men will be largely bound up with the destinies of the country. Each is in the rare position of a philosopher of the two great offices in the state within his ultimate reach. Sir John Simon has gone farthest, although he has striven least, and in the language that Mr. Smith will best appreciate he looks like the better "stayer." But on the other hand, he has more rivals in his own stable for the Premiership than Mr. Smith has. For the Lord Chancellorship he has none.

If this sketch seems dull, the fact must be attributed to his true cause. The lives of successful men are dull. If Sir John Simon is to become interesting he must show us that he can fall, he must be discovered in some of his less industrious moments, he must burst through that panoply of restraint with some flame of passion. Then we shall know that he is not only with us, but of us.

Dickens' lovers will be interested in two facts that illustrate the unabated hold that their favorite author still has on the public. A largely-attended exhibition of Dickens has been held at the Grolier Club, New York city, at which the only considerable section of "Pickwick" manuscript known to exist was to be seen; at the other end of the world, members of the ill-fated Capt. Sturt's expedition are reported to have soiled their weeks of imprisonment in an igloo by reading aloud each day a chapter of "David Copperfield."

"Does your husband ever tell you you have poor taste?" "Frequently." "And what reply do you make to him?" "I think of what I married and say nothing."—Houston Post.

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FREE TO ALL SUFFERERS. Each brandy, each representing a different producing company. They are the Imp, Rex, Gem, Victor, Powers, Champion, Nestor and Bison. A western site for moving picture-taking, covering 12,000 acres, has just been leased by the Universal at Hollywood, Cal.

John Wesley: His Conversion

[By Rev. T. B. Gregory.]

It was 175 years ago that John Wesley received the light which made him a Methodist, and, later on, the founder of the great religious organization which today girdles the earth with its song, prayer and exhortation.

"By Peter Bohler," writes Wesley in his journal, "in the hands of the great God, I was, on March 5, 1738, fully convinced of the want of that faith whereby we are saved."

Little did the Moravian preacher, who was the instrument of Wesley's conversion, little did Wesley himself dream of the tremendous results that were to flow from that day's work.

When fully convinced that "salvation was not a matter of creed or liturgy, but of a living personal faith in Jesus Christ," Wesley left himself loose with all the burning zeal of the old Crusaders. As Minerva sprang full-armed and panoplied from the cleft brow of Jove, so Wesley became at a bound the greatest of evangelists. In the old "Foundry" in Moorfields he began to shake England as England had never been shaken before. Great multitudes came to hear him, and in 1739 the first Methodist Church was organized.

For fifty-three years Wesley kept up his arduous work, preaching on an average eight hundred sermons a year, here, there and everywhere, indoors and out, day and night, winter and summer. He discoursed to more people in the course of his life, perhaps, than any man who ever lived. And yet in 1790, only a few months before he died at the age of 88, he wrote: "I do not remember to have felt loneliness or spirits for a quarter of an hour since I was born."

When Wesley died, in 1791, there were in Great Britain, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, 19 circuits, 227 preachers, and 57,562 members. In Ireland there were 29 circuits, 67 preachers, and 14,006 members. There were also eleven mission circuits in the West Indies and British America, 19 preachers and 5,300 members. The number of members in the United States was 42,255.

Today in the United States alone there are 62,000 Methodist churches, 44,000 preachers and 7,000,000 actual church members, representing a population of not less than 15,000,000. In all the world there are, approximately, 20,000,000 English-speaking Methodist church members, the major portion being in the United States, Canada, the British Isles, South Africa and Australia.

Not a day passes on which a new Methodist church is not erected or the Church who ever lived. And yet the founder is still strong in Methodism, and the evangelism which began in the old Foundry in Moorfields is as busy as ever, not in Moorfields alone, but wherever human beings are found upon the globe.

There is something awe-inspiring to the thought of the meeting between the Church of England clergyman and the Moravian preacher on that fateful day of March, 1738! What a study it is for the psychologist! What an illustration of the power of an idea, the omnipotency of sentiment, of the all-conquering strength of a thoroughly-aroused and enthusiastic personality! Bohler looks into Wesley's eye,

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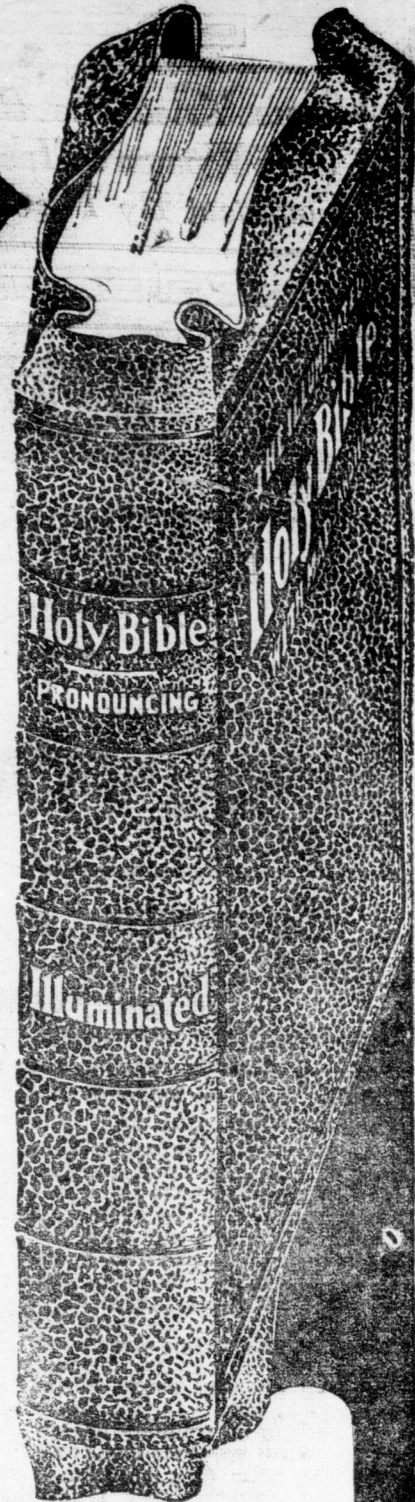
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