

# Thousands Won And Lost on Paisley Vote

Momentous Effect of Election of Asquith to Commons—Lady Astor's Maiden Speech—Questions of the Hour in England—Death of Lord Russell, Noted Newspaper Man.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)  
London, Feb. 26.—The Paisley election result aroused more interest, and in some ways is likely to be more important, than anyone can remember. Mr. Asquith's return was expected by most of the students of the contest, but not by a majority totalling towards 8,000 votes. Labor was absolutely at sea in its calculations. The Labor Party were quite convinced their man would be in. Their great miscalculation arose through over-estimating the poll made by the Unionists, whom they expected to carry off about a thousand or two of votes otherwise likely to be cast for the premier. They also think now that the question of personality exercised more influence with the women voters than they anticipated. Never has so much money changed hands on a by-election. I should be within the mark in stating that thousands of pounds were staked by politicians in the House of Commons. The M. P. who acted as Mr. Asquith's election agent wagered a one hundred pound bet with another M. P. on the premier's return. There were other bigger bets than this.

**Effect on Political Situation.**  
The effect of the ex-premier's return will be momentous. Even the Labor party may well hail his presence on the opposition bench. There will be real weight and direction behind the opposition in the House of Commons now for the first time for years, and one may expect a very dramatic and exciting clash of personality and morale between the ex-premier and the prime minister. Up on the issue of this inevitable struggle for supremacy must depend largely the progress of the movement towards party fusion.

Had Mr. Asquith been defeated at Paisley, I believe the coalition would within a short time have made its existence fixed and permanent. The triumphant return of Mr. Asquith will certainly retard and such maneuvering. The plain issue will now be raised whether the wo old historic political parties shall amalgamate or retain their old aloofness. The outlook is incredible, but those entitled to be heard with respect tell me that the probabilities now seem to them against fusion.

The excellent work done at Paisley for her father by Lady Bonham Carter has brought her seven invitations to stand for constituencies at the next general election. She will probably accept one or other of these, and will prove a strong candidate. Mr. Asquith may yet achieve the unique record of having his daughter in the House of Commons as his parliamentary secretary. And then Lady Astor's star turn would be somewhat eclipsed.

**A Real "Maiden" Speech.**  
Apart from the return of Mr. Asquith for Paisley the most interesting event this week in parliament was the maiden speech of Lady Astor, our first lady M. P. The occasion was a temporary debate inaugurated by Sir John Rees, who started life in the Indian Civil Service and was at one time well-known in Madras. Sir John knew Lady Astor was to follow him, and anticipating her speech, he said to a friend: "I shall be in pickle for him, but not only would he accept chastisement with resignation, but he would be ready to kiss the rod. Not to be outdone, the lady member said she thought him more than courteous, but if she could convert him she was prepared to consider his offer."

The constant gears of laughter and exchange of verbal swordplay, however, are no indications of Lady Astor's speech. There was some good solid thinking, and the House appreciated this aspect of the debate as much as the delicious fooling initiated by Sir John Rees. She said that the country was not yet ripe for prohibition, expressed the

belief that some day England would go dry, and in the meantime called for drastic drinking reform.

A crowded House gathered to listen to her. Standing at her corner below the gangway facing the coalition benches, simply but artistically clad as on the day of her admission to the House, and in white-gloved hand pointing with insistent gesture at the members opposite as she made her argument, Lady Astor held the attention of all on-lookers. She was surprisingly appreciated by the House. The maid received no shock of incongruity at the sight of her, although her occasionally high-pitched voice rang strained in that masculine assembly. Altogether the first lady member acquitted herself wisely and effectively in what must have been a most trying ordeal.

**The Supreme Question.**  
There are signs that at last the politicians generally, and the ministry in particular, are awakening to realities. While parliament has been dealing with all sorts of doubtless important and perhaps essential topics, the country has for many months had only one obsession. The cost of living is the only subject in the political domain in which the public as a whole now takes the slightest interest. It is the one topic discussed always and by everybody everywhere. And I believe Lloyd George and his colleagues are, at last, seriously alive to the fact. Unfortunately, it is a subject where popular ignorance runs riot, and public feeling is perilously inflammable. The Labor party has long since realized that it is the one election-winning topic, and those who remember the 1908 debacle, on the big and little lost controversy, appreciate its potentialities. Indeed, some of the shrewdest judges are inclined to believe that if a general election came under present conditions and without a better show on the government's part of dealing with them, history might repeat itself.

**Rival Schemes.**  
The difficulty is how to grapple with the situation. The proffering act, any possible amendment, is frankly useless. The public now realizes, if the politicians do not, that the evil will not be cured by discussing the paltry profits of retailers, or by sending small traders to jail in obedience to London levelling "stunts." Among the proposals now under consideration by the cabinet is a levy on war fortunes and a graduated tax on profits. The chancellor of the exchequer professes an open hostility to all levies on war fortunes, but I understand that the leaning of the treasury officials, whose expert guidance has made to do in the opening and shutting of the minds of chancellors of the exchequer, is towards the graduated tax.

There is a great demand, generally advanced by the Consumers' Council, for the re-establishment of state control over necessities. But, on the other hand, this proposal is quite honestly opposed by sound economists, who contend that control inevitably tends to diminish supply and automatically to inflate prices. The theory is that normally period of high prices in any commodity is always followed by a period of cheapness, because floating capital is instantly transferred in whatever direction high prices offer. The result is increased production and decreased prices. Where control is established and profits are limited, the tendency is towards a dropping production.

**The Question of Trusts.**  
Just at the moment public indignation is violently aroused against trusts. About the pernicious potentialities of such huge commercial combines there is no controversy. But in fairness it must be admitted that the public indignation against the trusts at the present moment is not always justified. It seems to be clearly proved that in the case of the big tobacco trusts the efficiency and the mag-

nitude of their operations have in the present juncture hitherto been exercised incidentally in the interest of the consumers. But for the existence of the trusts, in some cases we might have had to pay higher prices for the commodity concerned even than we have paid. So much appears to be established by independent and unprejudiced inquiry. One great authority on economic questions tells me that, in his opinion, we are suffering just now from a bad mixture of competition and control—imperfect individualism and half-baked Socialism. He asserts that by some means we must achieve one of the two objectives—either we must absolutely restore untrammelled free competition, or we must adopt for essential commodities some system of nationalization.

**Lenine's Plans.**  
This week two London newspapers publish what appear to be the authentic views of Lenine, the remarkable Soviet czar of Russia, on the relations of the Allies with his country and the prospects of the negotiation of his later. Presumably this is the first fruit of our new relations with the Bolshevik regime. It is significant that an influential memorial in favor of friendly relations with the Russian "Terro" has been presented to the British government by former officials connected with the Petrograd embassy.

Lenine adopts the view that the Bolshevik regime never desired to be other than at peace with the rest of the world, that its stability and utility in the regeneration of Russia will be immensely helped by the cessation of hostilities, and that the Bolshevik government is a project on which the Bolshevik government is seriously and ambitiously embarking of electrifying the whole of Russia. Apparently the attempt will be made to new Russia a great industrial and commercial factor in the world, and if it really succeeded it might do something to help Europe to recover its economic equilibrium.

**A Great Newspaper Man.**  
The news was received in London with real regret that the late Liverpool Daily Post, one of the most distinguished figures in newspaper life has ever known in this country, had died in Liverpool at the age of eighty-five. Mr. Russell started his career as a sub-editor on the Post, came back to do distinguished work on John Bright's evening paper in London, and was later appointed editor to the Liverpool Post. He made the reputation of that great provincial journal by his genius, which consisted in an impressive combination of intellectual sagacity, literary charm, and high personal and public ideals. Of late years he had not done much active newspaper work, but his advice was frequently consulted by statesmen of the highest rank. He was a consistent Liberal, singularly devoid of cranks, with a great bent for the theatre. Among other achievements he was a close friend of the man who "discovered" Sir Henry Irving. His most important literary work, and most popular also, is "What Remains Me." He was a close friend in his day of Gladstone, and a very genial personality.

**Returning to Harms.**  
The present abnormal rewards held out to successful pugilists are having one remarkable effect. The old champions of the heavy-weight ring are getting right back into harness in order to share in the rich spoils for which, in their slowly waning days, they are competing. One old gladiator who is coming back is Tommy Burns, a Canadian prizefighter, who fought for the British heavyweight prize years ago, and, after carrying all before him, chiefly by reason of his great intelligence and ring craft, for he was never very formidable physically, was finally knocked out in Australia by Jack Johnson. Burns is believed to have made about 20,000 in the game in seven or eight years, and to have harvested his reward carefully. But he is now at the age of about thirty to perform a feat that is almost a miracle. He is now at the age of about thirty to perform a feat that is almost a miracle. He is now at the age of about thirty to perform a feat that is almost a miracle.

**Little Jack Horner.**  
Having a magic nowadays at one of the multiple tea-houses is apt to be something of an adventure. Sometimes the buns conceal the strangest things, and to bite them has often the effect of rubbing the magic lamp of Fairyland. About week ago a young friend of mine bit on something harder than even a stale bun should be, and discovered a splinter of glass nearly an inch long. Luckily he did not cut himself, but he walked about all day feeling as though he had swallowed the Crystal Palace. On Saturday a Chamberlain typist had better luck. She bit on a bun, found it harder than usual, and discovered nestled inside a perfectly good sapphire. It may be remembered that a few years ago a well-known solicitor tried to recover damages for a broken tooth caused by a public in a bun. It was then held that he failed to make out his plea of negligence.

**The Chairman's Signs of Spring.**  
One thing in London, and so far as I know one thing only, has not "gone up." They still charge you only one penny



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