

## THE BOOKSHELF

By H. S. ROSS.

LIFE OF LORD COURTNEY, by G. P. Gooch; Publishers, The Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., Toronto; Price, \$6.00.

Here is a great book about a great man. Shortly after Lord Courtney's death Mr. Gooch accepted Lady Courtney's request to write his life. He was left a free hand in the selection of material and the expression of opinion. He was given every assistance by Mrs. Oliver, Lord Courtney's sister, and Professor George Unwin who was for eight years his secretary. The London Times permitted the author to reveal Lord Courtney's authorship of many of its leading articles, and Sir J. Thursfield and Dean Wace have answered questions relating to Printing house Square and Lord Fitzmaurice has described the activities of the Radical Club, of which Mill, Fawcett and Dilke were the leading spirits. Mr. John Humphreys has supplied information on the campaign for Proportional Representation and Lord Parmoor on the closing years in the House of Lords.

The author gives in brilliant fashion the study of this great man's life at Penzance, Cambridge, Lincoln's Inn, the House of Commons and on the Treasury Bench. The author also speaks of his marriage and of his resignation.

The principal measure of the session of 1884 was the Franchise Bill. Its chief feature, the concession of the vote of the agricultural labourer, formed part of the Liberal programme at the General Election; but Courtney was more interested in the enfranchisement of women and the representation of minorities. On both issues he came into collision with the Cabinet, and on one of them the difference proved too profound for compromise.

The discussion which was to continue without interruption for over a year opened in the autumn of 1883. "Many meetings and speeches," wrote Mrs. Courtney in her journal, "L. devotes much of his time to Proportional Representation." In answer to Bright, who had spoken disdainfully of "fads," the Minister appealed to the authority of Mill and Cairnes, Dilke and Fawcett, and argued that his scheme alone secured the principle of "One vote, one value," which Liberals demanded. With equal warmth he pleaded that the opportunity should be seized of enfranchising women, thus obtaining a reflection of the mind of every section of the community. He added that as the Franchise Bill would be the crowning achievement of the Parliament and should be quickly followed by a general election, it might well wait for another year.

When he resigned, his speech opened with a friendly tribute to the Prime Minister and then he said: "He appealed to me to remain in tones of kindness which I shall ever remember. Nothing but the strength of my conscientious conviction would have upheld my resolve. Let me tender him my most hearty thanks for the kindness he has ever exhibited, and say that in parting from him I feel my attachment to him increased rather than diminished."

Turning to the cause of his resignation he asked the question, "Why do I so solemnly protest against the creation of these new single-member constituencies?" The answer was threefold. It was a departure from the old lines of the Constitution. It was not truly representative of opinion. It would lower the character of Members of Parliament. After the elucidation of technical details and the citation of American illustrations came the peroration, rendered poignant by a reference to the death of Fawcett. "You would nowhere have people with their power thrown away. You would have a reflection of the national will and the national wisdom. There would be no single artisan or agricultural laborer or man of learning who would not be able to say. There is somebody in the House for whom I voted who represents me. No such promise of freedom can be secured by any other machinery. I can not sufficiently deplore my own want of power to preach this gospel. If the proceedings of this night had occurred one short month ago I should not have been alone in deserting that bench or in advocating this cause. Those who shared his counsel, who knew his thoughts, who accompanied him so many years in his political life, cannot do him more honour than in being faithful to the doctrines he held. I for my part would pray to God to be faithful to this cause."

His attitude on the question of the Sudan is given a chapter. His attitude on the question of the Home Rule is also given a chapter. His attitude on the South African War is also dealt with and his views on Tariff Reform.

From the three concluding paragraphs of this intensely interesting book, one gets a splendid idea of Lord Courtney.

"Of party spirit," testifies Mr. Herbert Paul, "he was incapable. He held fixed principles, by which he tested everything. It might be said of him, as was said of the Marquess of Halifax, that the party he liked the least was the one which he was for the time connected, because it was the party of which he saw the most. This kind of mental disinterestedness is very rare. He appeared to be dogmatic because he argued from general propositions. He indeed had a Socratic love of argument for its own sake, a disinterested pleasure in the pursuit

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of truth, which led him to offend many prejudices but at the same time secured him the confidence of candid inquirers, to whatever school they might belong. No one could fairly accuse him of ignoring any strong point in the case he had to meet. He never troubled about verbal disputes. He made solid contributions to controversy because he concerned himself with what people meant rather than what they said. No man was ever more thoroughly open to conviction. He had a naturally receptive mind. His mathematical training made him intolerant of fallacies, and at the same time opened his intellect to every kind of argument which deserved serious recognition."

Courtney's creed was as simple as it was unchanging. He accepted democracy, not grudgingly like Tocqueville, but, like Mill, with full conviction; and his life-long championship of Woman Suffrage and Proportional Representation was rooted in his determination that Parliament should express nothing less than the whole mind of the country. His ideal was a world of pacific, self-governing communities, closely linked to one another by a network of material interests, and and by the consciousness of a common spiritual inheritance. Though a prophet and a moralist, his feet never left the solid earth. His appeal was to the mind and the conscience of his fellow-men, not to their imagination or emotions. He deprecated excursions into Utopia, and he knew too much history to expect a new world from military victories or a League of Nations. He was equally immune from the rival temptations to despise and exact the common man, whose soul he endeavored to defend against the corroding poison of a flashy Imperialism and the subtler temptations of an enervating socialism. The individual, he taught, must think for himself and decide for himself. He agreed with Robert Lowe that "we must educate our masters," not flatter or pamper them. He was too much of a mid-Victorian to profess ardent enthusiasm for what is loosely described as social reform. In Mr. Massingham's words, he saw the perils more clearly than the opportunities of the modern State.

In his later years Courtney's patriarchal age and lucid intelligence, his wide knowledge and his detachment from party ties, made him a national figure and a national possession. "He illustrates, as perhaps no other man in our public life," wrote the Manchester Guardian on his eightieth birthday, "the splendour and inestimable worth of personality." Reflective men liked to know what he thought of the problems of the day; and, though comparatively few followed his lead in every adventure, students of politics found it well to give due weight to his opinions in the formation of their own. The cross-bench mind, with its unspoken claim to superiority and its tacit rebuke of party shibboleths, annoys the multitude in time of peace and infuriates it in time of war. Yet men who thus stand for reflection, for second thoughts, for self-criticism, are of infinite value in a community governed by opinion. Every one agreed that he would be an ideal member of an ideal Second Chamber. His self-imposed task was to challenge prejudice, to test tradition, to ventilate ideas and above all to hold aloft the moral ideal in moments of national passion and national temptation. It was an onerous and a lofty mission and it is the measure of his greatness that it was not unworthily fulfilled."