

changing habitation. If one form fails, it fashions another. And the question is, whether the Liberal Party, as distinct from Liberalism, has not reached the end of its capacity for variation; whether having ceased to adapt itself to its environment it is not now destined to perish by a process of natural selection. The task of reorganisation is at best a formidable one. Is it going to prove equal to it?

So far it is too early to say. We have heard a good deal of Liberal revival recently. A Liberal contemporary has even given a prize for a poem celebrating its revival. Daily, ever since the election, enthusiastic "Daily News" correspondents have written from all parts of the country declaring that never was Liberalism so vital, never were Liberals more enthusiastic. But as similar protestations have been forthcoming on the morrow of every Liberal defeat since the Armistice, it would seem to follow that never would Liberalism be more vital, never would Liberals be more enthusiastic than on the day after the party had finally given up the political ghost. A heavy discount should be put on Cadbury *Couéism*.

"No, this is emphatically a case of "by their fruits ye shall know them." And as a matter of fact, the first fruits—whether of repentance or triumph we leave to competitors in the "Daily News" crossword competition to determine—so far from being rare and refreshing, are singularly unpromising. Mr. Lloyd George has been outlining the Liberalism of the future. Naturally he sees a great future for Liberalism. The nation is threatened by the parties of interest. The nation will be saved by the party of the people. Sinister dangers are menacing the people. Two gigantic monopolies are "strangling its life-blood." But they have not been unnoticed by the experienced leaders of the Liberal Party. The great party of the people is arming itself to do desperate battle with those twin monsters . . . landlordism and drink!

Landlordism and drink? There is a grim pathos about this battle-cry. It is as though some long-forgotten favourite were suddenly to display herself, ghastly with paint and enamel but aping the graces of her past, in scenes of her former greatness. Is it really conceivable, we ask ourselves, that so intelligent a man as Mr. Lloyd George should be so utterly incapable of emancipating himself from his former catchwords? Is he, is the whole Liberal Party, passing into a second childhood? Do they really imagine that these hoary old bogies are seriously going to frighten anybody?

If they do, they are labouring under a pathetic delusion. We have no hesitation in saying that, if they can do no better than this, the Liberal Party is dead as a doornail. We are not contending for a minute that everything is perfect in regard to Drink or the Ownership of Land—any more than it is in regard to anything else. On the contrary, we have often urged public-house reform ourselves: and we have no doubt that the conditions of land tenure are sometimes far from ideal. But

that these issues should be the main planks of any political platform—the thing would be comic if it were not so serious. Possibly a few nonconformists, in whom all belief in those principles of individual liberty, which inspired their ancestors, is dead, may be attracted by the idea of depriving others of pleasures they themselves are not inclined to: there may be some life in an anti-drink campaign. But anti-landlordism is not going to attract anybody save a few fanatics who have never seen through the bad economics of Henry George and John Stuart Mill. Fifteen years ago the cry was stale and flat. Do the Liberals really think it rings truer to-day?

We ask it in no carping spirit. For if they do, if this is their much-heralded revival policy, then the question we asked at first needs no further investigation. If landlordism and drink are the be-all and end-all of its policy the Liberal Party will not survive. And we should be genuinely sorry if this were so. The fall of a great party is an event which rouses feelings deeper than those roused by the party conflict—

Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade  
Of that which once was great is passed away.

## X Imperial Consultation X

BY RICHARD JEBB.

IN fullness of time the Conservatives will go out of office, and someone will inquire how far they may have succeeded in their intention of strengthening the political unity of the Empire. The lately issued correspondence with the Dominions (Cmd. 230) concerning the methods of consultation, will furnish the historical record of what the position was when the Conservatives took it over.

Last June the late Prime Minister, Mr. MacDonald, sent a circular dispatch to the Dominion Governments pointing out certain defects of the existing system and proposing a joint committee—technically it would have been a "Subsidiary Conference," as provided for by the capital resolution of the Imperial Conference in 1907—to examine the situation and suggest improvements. In the ensuing correspondence no eagerness was anywhere displayed for the proposed conference, and only the replies from Canada and Australia need now be considered. When the Conservatives came into power the new Colonial Secretary, early in December, sent a dispatch abandoning the proposal, but at the same time intimating a desire to arrange a conference on the question of the Geneva Protocol.

The first defect to which Mr. MacDonald called attention is the difficulty of maintaining consultation in matters of foreign policy, which so often require quick decision, during the long intervals between sessions of the Imperial Conference. He gave no examples; but everyone would remember the not very distant affair of Chanak, and the more recent trouble with Canada over the Lausanne Treaty. His practical suggestion was that it might be worth while to consider how far the resolution of the Imperial Conference in 1923 regarding Negotiation and Treaties "needs to be supplemented and interpreted, and whether principles embodied in it can usefully be extended to other matters affecting foreign relations."

Now, the 1923 Resolution was apparently devised to facilitate separate rather than collective action in regard to treaties. By the Canadian Government, whose influence was manifest in the drafting, the resolution was claimed as a vindication of their much-