

Blue Blood and the Three Brass Balls

By J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD

LAST week, there were staged at Westminster, on two successive days, two acts in what was, to all intents and purposes, a single comedy. The actual drama, however, will not be complete in all its features of farce until a third episode is enacted in the dock and witness box of the Old Bailey.

The first act was the great debate on "Honours" in the two Houses of Parliament, which was the feature of the day on Monday and the political theme of the week-end. The second act was the Royal Wedding, across the road at St. Margaret's parish church, and the third act will follow, after the interval, when Gerard Lee Bevan appears for trial in consequence of the irregularities in the finances of the City Equitable Fire Insurance Co., Ltd., and other and allied companies.

These three "Society" events, one political, the other social, and the third financial and legal whilst, on the face of it, they do not appear to concern the masses, since it does not much matter to the workers how their masters share out among themselves the loot which they take from the product of their toil, are remarkably entertaining by reason of the lurid light which they throw upon the manners and customs of the "upper ten."

Bottomley—By the Way

It is just as well for the workers not only to be reminded of the fact that they are set to work and kept in order and contentment solely in the interests of the governing class, but also to see how this same governing class behaves itself.

The idea is carefully conveyed to the workers at church and school, in newspaper and cinema, that the governing class consists of a superior type of human beings, very able, very moral, and very worthy of respect and admiration.

Whenever some particularly dirty job has to be taken in hand, the governing class picks out a man of no consequence to do it. Sometimes they find a Labour Leader to do the trick for his first-class expenses, champagne and the smirks of the ladies of the Court. At other times, when it is very dirty, they employ a Bottomley and having employed him, put him on trial to vindicate the majesty of the law and the purity of our public life.

Bottomley, bad as he was, went down because, so filthy is capitalism and so vile is capitalist politics to-day, the governing class had to make an example of someone in order to vindicate itself and deflect the public attention from its chronic corruption.

Bottomley looked like "the exception that proves the rule." Therefore, he got it in the neck. Also, that repository of State secrets and society scandals has been muzzled for seven years.

"Tricks" and "Honours"

But what about the "Honours" scandal? What is the significance of that? Why has that been released at this juncture?

The reasons are several. One of them is the desire on the part of the elder statesmen, of the persons who were in power before the war, of the landed aristocracy and the established plutocracy, to discredit the "new rich" whose political bell-wether is David Lloyd George. It is all part of the offensive against the Liberals in the Coalition which has been so conspicuous since the collapse of trade weakened immeasurably the economic power of the coal exporters, steel-masters, ship-owners, ship-builders, chemical manufacturers and company promoters, who form the back-bone of the Coalition Liberals. Another reason is the desire to get the whole scandal of buying titles and, still more, of buying permanent votes in Parliament, referred to a Royal Commission under one of the trickiest members that even our tricky governing class has ever evolved, viz., Lord Ullswater, the late Speaker Lowther, whose class bias, reactionary sympathies and financial connections are, or should be,

notorious. The governing gang is going to initiate a bogus "clean up" before the open sewer occasions a political epidemic.

"Labour" Peers?

Again, the gentleman who presided over the Commission that evolved the new Franchise Act of 1918, is being set to devise some reform of the constitutional procedure for making new Peers, so that, "when Labour rules," the King will not be, as to-day, under the virtual necessity of sending upstairs whoever the Government desires, when Clynes, Thomas, Henderson and Macdonald start to overcome the governing class by constitutional means they will find a new snag in the constitution. Why? Because, whilst the Crown is legally absolute, our wily governing class will only, in the very last resort, throw off the disguise and rule by naked force. It is their intention to weary the workers and not to shoot them down. Clever gang, isn't it?

The "Honours" debate then discloses two things. It shows a desire to get ready to pose as a real deliberating body composed of the "best people," who shall act as an effective check on popular advance. It shows, also, that the new monied class has been pressing very hard into the preserves of the older and more mellowed aristocracy, themselves, in their time, ennobled manufacturers, bankers, merchants, and land thieves.

Mountbatten (late Battenberg) Weds the Money - Lender's grand-daughter

The very next day, whilst the newspapers were still winking to their readers and, in so many words, saying that, of course, everyone understood that the new rich were buying their way into the aristocracy and that it was all very disgraceful, these same newspapers were going into ecstasies over the transaction by which "England's richest girl" was buying the entry of the pawn-broking and money-lending crew, of whom, her grandfather, Sir Ernest Cassel, was the most conspicuous, not only into the aristocracy, but even into the Royal Family.

That was the significance of the endless screeds and page upon page of pictures devoted to the amalgamation (pardon, union) of the Royal Family and the cosmopolitan credit, cotton and currency brokers of Western Europe.

Edwina Ashley, as the grand-daughter of Ernest Cassel, and Louis Leopold Mountbatten, as the nephew of the "dear Czarina," cousin of the Queen of Spain and the King of England, were doing a thing without precedent. They were emblazoning the three golden balls across the Royal Standard.

Nothing could be more amusing to the student of capitalism than to read the list of the guests and the donors of the wedding presents.

True, Sir Ernest Cassel was banker to the King of England and Edwina was a favourite God-daughter of Edward the Peace-Maker, but even these facts and the equally indubitable fact that the grandfather was the real ruler of Egypt and the creditor of the Court, only added to the zest of seeing the Sassoons, Mondes, Bischoffsheims, Warburgs, Jessels, Isaacs, Brands, Neumanns, Schiffs and Kahns, late of the Frankfurt Ghetto and the pawnshops of the Rhineland, delightedly celebrating the entry of one of their number into the company of the Romanoffs, Hapsburgs and Windsors. Indeed, in these days of Revolution, the propertied and governing class is showing "the united front!"

Gerard Lee Bevan

The third, and by no means the least interesting event in this sequence is one which, thanks either to the essential and inevitable delays of the law or, as some capitalist organs themselves suggest and every one in the City has, for weeks, been saying, is being perpetually postponed. We refer to the trial at the Central Criminal Court of that distinguished patron of dramatic art—and its artistes—Gerard Lee

Bevan. There is no doubt that the authorities now intend to bring back this individual upon whom the tactless police of Vienna so unfortunately stumbled. What some persons are now alleging is that when he is put on trial there will be good care taken that the witnesses do not blurt out anything spicy.

The City Equitable Company (and its promotions) had a most distinguished board of directors.

Bevan, himself a member of a respected family well-known in banking circles and, traditionally associated with the Trittons, Buxtons, Gurneys, Barclays, Hoares, Gilbey's, and other founders of Barclay's Bank, had gathered about him a team of men who, if they are not quite such capable captains of industry and controllers of commerce as their numerous directorships would lead the common-or-garden investor to imply, have the best connections and the most impressive titles. Two of them were peers of the realm. One, Lord Ribblesdale, was the brother-in-law of that pillar of respectability, "Margot." The other was that very influential member of the fashionable family of the Gordon-Lennoxes, to wit, the Earl of March.

"All the 'Best' People, My dear"

That was a good start. But when unto these was added the name of Brigadier-General Sir Douglas Dawson, Equerry-in-Waiting to H.M. the King, the company's shares became positively irresistible. It must be all right and the very thing, don't you know!

The share list of the City Equitable and its associates reads like a list of guests at a society wedding or a page from the *Court Circular*. The very best people, the nobles and gentry, the pick of Mayfair, were in this group of firms which, "working" with a small capital, were making huge profits—for a time. The capital actually paid up was £75,000. The dividends were:—

Year	Participating Preference. per cent.	Ordinary per cent.
1915	18½	18½
1916	22	79½
1917	22	88
1918	25	100
1919	37½	150
1920	50	200
1921	62½	250

The meaning of it all? Oh, most simple, when you can see the cards! It was a little gamble—most respectable, for was not the King's Equerry in it and signing the balance sheets?—whereby the exclusive set about the Court were seeking to provide themselves with some much-needed cash.

The parties to this little flutter had their money in land, in Government stock, and all kinds of property that paid a fixed rate of interest. The war-profiteers, Lloyd George's new aristocracy of grocers, soap-boilers and munition makers, were jostling them, crowding them out, buying up their estates and, everywhere, coming in to replace them. So they, too, engaged a company promoter and set to work to get rich quick. So they did—for a time and then the crash came and when the Official Receiver started playing "nosey parker"—well, some people were exceedingly glad that Bevan had "done a bunk" and sincerely hoped that he would never be caught.

Who Knows?

There was a bank that lost, it is said by the press that knows, £2,000,000. There was a director, busy with the arrangements for Princess Mary's wedding and still on the staff of the Court, whose evidence under oath is being waited by us all with extreme avidity. There was someone who was not keen on the C.I.D. being diverted from King Street to the City. There was—and is—someone very, very highly-placed who, at this moment is working behind the scenes to prevent any more coming out at the Old Bailey than can be helped. It will be interesting to see who is briefed and who sits on the Bench.

Watch the Bevan ease—as it develops!!