

# THE BOOKMAN

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**THE AFTERMATH. 1918-1928** by *Winston S. Churchill* (SCRIBNER'S. \$5.00)

THE four bulky volumes of *The World Crisis* by the Right Honorable Winston Spencer Churchill might better have been entitled "Myself and My Share in History". They owed their value to the fact that they were the work of a British politician who, however erratic, had enjoyed almost incredible opportunities to know the inside story of events. During one of the most eventful periods in world history, he had headed no less than nine departments of His Britannic Majesty's government and had served in four Cabinets under three Prime Ministers. Like Mr. Churchill or dislike him, applaud him or laugh at him, you had no choice but to read his books if you were interested in the history of your own time. He had seen a fair share of contemporary history with his own eyes, and he could report it so vividly that it lived again before eyes less fortunate.

It is this quality in his earlier books which makes *The Aftermath* disappointing. All too frequently Mr. Churchill passes lightly over the story he alone can tell and repeats the stories that other men have told.

Mr. Churchill recapitulates the history of the Peace Conference and the Russian Revolution. In a very few passages—and these are important—he returns to his own story. Thus, Mr. Churchill is at pains to deny the assertions of the German historian, Novak, and of Ray Stannard Baker, that he replaced Lloyd George for a short time at the peace conference to hinder the plans for the League of Nations. On the contrary, says Mr. Churchill: "The only matter which concerned me at the three sessions which I attended of the Supreme Council was the quest for some policy

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in Russia. Absorbed in my own work, I was never even aware of these more spacious issues. I went to Paris on Russian business, and when it was clear no business could be done, I went home".

Again, he gives a lively account of the motives and extent of British aid to the Russian counter-revolutionary armies and describes vividly the tactics by which the British forces at Archangel and Murmansk were able to slip away under the very noses of the Bolsheviks. There are excellent chapters on the settlement in Ireland, the Greek campaigns in Asia Minor and the birth of the New Turkey which, in view of the author's intimate personal knowledge of what happened, will always be of historical importance. As one of the principal advocates of the Dardanelles campaign, he naturally dwells on the fact that that exploit need not have ended in fiasco. If the British had persevered one day longer, Constantinople would probably have fallen. The Turkish defense was very nearly at its last gasp.

Now we know that not only were there no more mines, but that the big guns of the forts, the only ones that could stop armoured ships, had only a few score shells remaining. A night's sweeping by the flotillas, a morning's bombardment must have revealed the bankruptcy of the defence. However, it was otherwise decreed. The Fleet recoils from all idea of forcing the passage of the Dardanelles; the Army, after heroic efforts, fails to capture the key points of the Gallipoli peninsula. So the flank attack is over; it has failed, and we all return heavily to the battle-front in France, where nothing but useless slaughter has in the meantime occurred.

*The Aftermath* seems to have been written with no plan at all. Rambling though it is, no one who wants to understand the world he lives in can afford to miss *The Aftermath*. Would that all contemporary statesmen were one-tenth as willing as Mr. Churchill to tell what they know!

JOHN BAKELESS