

The Origin and Objects of The Primrose League :

A SPEECH BY

SIR ALGERNON BORTHWICK,

At the opening of the Northumberland Habitation, at Norfolk House,

St. James's Square, on Tuesday Evening, October 27th, 1885,

His Grace the Duke of Norfolk in the Chair.

SIR ALGERNON BORTHWICK, who was received with cheers, said :—

My duty is to address you on the subject of The Primrose League itself, as one of the originators of that League (cheers), to make to you what I may frankly call a confession by narrating some of the original objects, purposes, and aims of the League.

It is just two years ago that ten friends assembled together began the formation of the first Habitation of The Primrose League. To-day we have tens of thousands of members throughout the length and breadth of the land. When we began our task, we did so in confidence that we were appealing to the right sense of the English people. We were jeered at and scoffed at, but we went steadily to work. We did not go to the chiefs of the party, or to the great political associations. We simply appealed to the people themselves. The countenance of the heads of the party came afterwards, when it was seen that we were not inventing some new-fangled Association, with strange names, for the purpose of interference with the Constitutional Associations all over the country, but that to the direct aid of the constituted authorities we were bringing forward a great army of volunteers, who are especially needed now because the law has altered the conditions of elections.

The origin of the League was in the brain of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. (Cheers.) It was taken up by the members of the Fourth Party, who have now been absorbed by the Government of the country. (Cheers.) Those gentlemen foresaw what was coming. They foresaw the great political crisis and the troublous times upon which we are now embarked. They knew that, throughout the country, the Tory party was not strongly united. In such simple things as mere party emblems, in one town the party colour would be blue, and the Radical yellow ; in the self-same county, the Tory colour would be yellow and the Radical blue. They felt that an