

following day the debate was participated in by Lord Salisbury, and I commend the language of Lord Salisbury as that of one who has always been noted for his conservative tendencies and strong, rugged common sense. This is what he said:

Army Must be Governed by Parliament, Governed by a Minister Responsible to Parliament.

It is said of a certain class of correspondent that the important observation always comes at the end. I think that applies to the speech of the noble and gallant Viscount. He told us, not as one of the main points on which he was insisting, but as something which occurred to him at the end, and which ought to be mentioned before he sat down, what was his solution of any difficulties that might arise if the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State were not of the same mind. I think he puzzled the House. He said we were to take the people into our confidence, and to tell the press what we thought, and then the question at issue was to be discussed openly. How you were to decide which party was to be victorious, I do not know, but the result of the battle royal was to determine the particular decision on which the office was divided. I allude to this because I think it is a matter which is really at the bottom of our difficulty. I do not think the disputants, especially if they are military disputants, have entirely realized that the army is under parliament and that the minister who controls the army does it as one who is responsible to parliament and represents all the authority which parliament possesses. Unless you keep that steadily in mind, no doubt you will see many anomalies in our military system, and its relations to the civil power. But it is no use comparing our army with the army of France or of America, or of Germany or of Russia. They all differ in that one point, that the parliamentary system of governing the army does not exist among them. We must accommodate ourselves to the present state of things. Everybody knows historically how it has grown up, and everybody knows that it is intertwined too closely with all the fibres of our constitution to justify any one who forms his projects and bases his reasoning on the supposition that this relation can be modified. At the end we must have an army governed by parliament, governed by a minister who is responsible to parliament, and in any difference of opinion, whatever it may be, the Commander in Chief must be a subordinate of the Secretary of State.

Some Hon. Members—Hear, hear.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier (reading)—

Military men may not like that, but there it is. It is one of the bed rock circumstances of the situation, something from which you cannot depart; and you must devote your hands to making it work and it has worked in the main hitherto very well.

Yes, I think it has worked very well in England.

And take care that it produces in the future, as it has produced in the past, results which it would have been impossible to produce in any foreign country. I feel that this debate will be lost upon us unless we take care to guide ourselves by that chief and predominant principle. In speech after speech from military men, men who know the language and spirit of the War Office, it is easy to detect a desire that military problems shall only be solved by military men; but any attempt to take the opinion of the expert above the opinion of the politician must, in view of all the circumstances of our constitution, inevitably fail. It must not be supposed that in such contests the expert must win. In all these discussions there is an evident and growing desire to shake free of this necessity. I thought I traced it even in the peroration of the noble Earl, although I am sure he is too good and constitutional a statesman to entertain any idea that the existing system can be radically changed. That is where the shoe pinches—that the men who know, or who ought to know, namely, the experts, are not the men to decide the dispute in question; but the decision, if it accords with their views at all, must be brought about by the concession of the civilian and the politician.

Some Hon. Members—Hear, hear.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier.—If this doctrine had been asserted by me, without saying from whom it came, there would have been a howl from the other side. But this is the true constitutional doctrine. I was told this afternoon that I was a separatist, that my heart was not with British institutions. Sir, I am proud to say once more, as I have said many times that from my boyhood I have been a true adherent of British institutions.