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Sir Wm. Gilbert

Given a Complimentary Dinner

A COMPLIMENTARY dinner was given to Sir William Gilbert at the Savoy hotel. Lord Onslow presided, and the company included Lord Abinger, Lord Altamont, Lord Lathom, Sir Squire Bancroft, Sir A. Critchett, Sir A. Fletcher Moulton, Sir A. Scott Gatty, Sir John Hare, Sir Charles Jessel, Mr. Alfred Lyttelton, Sir Charles Mathews, Sir Felix Semon, Sir Bruce Seton, Mr. W. Boosey, Mr. Arthur Bourchier, Mr. J. Comyns Carr, Mr. H. F. Dickens, K. C., Mr. R. D'Oyly Carte, Mr. Edward German, Mr. George Grossmith, Mr. Sydney Grundy, Mr. Ivor Guest, Mr. Marshall Hall, K. C., Mr. Anthony Hope Hawkins, Mr. H. Herkomer, Mr. A. de Navarro, Mr. C. E. Perugini, Mr. A. W. Pinero, Mr. J. Forbes Robertson, Mr. M. H. Spielmann, Mr. A. Sutro, Mr. Freeman Thomas, M. P., Mr. Underdown, K. C., Mr. A. B. Walkley, and Mr. Herbert Sullivan and Capt. Robert Marshall (hon. secretaries). Mr. Beerbohm Tree and Sir Francis Burnand telegraphed expressing regret at inability to be present, says the London Times.

After the loyal toasts the chairman proposed "The Guest." He said that Sir William Gilbert had in his time played many parts. He had been a civil servant, a militiamen, and a barrister. He believed that in the latter capacity he did not receive any very great remuneration. He was told that the principal ones were an embrace from a French gentleman whose cause he won and a pair of boots thrown at his head by a lady whose cause he lost. (Laughter.) Now he sat in the honorable and dignified post of a Middlesex magistrate at the quarter sessions of that county. But it was not for those qualifications that they were there to do him honor. It was for the contribution which he had made to the literature and the plays of his native country. He doubted whether any other playwright had such a record. For nearly a quarter of a century his name was never out of the playbills. At 19 different theatres his plays had been produced, and they had run over the whole gamut of art, comedy, drama, burlesque, extravaganza, and even pantomime. After alluding to some of the plays, he said Sir W. Gilbert was a satirist who never wounded, who was never personal in his satire. All that he wrote was taken from the great book of nature, and yet surely it was the most original of anything which any of them could remember. There was no name for it except "Gilbertian." In the most prosaic phraseology he told them truths which were turned into words that stuck in their minds and came unbidden to their lips. Above all things Sir W. Gilbert was English. The proof of it was that throughout the whole of his writings, there was no single word that might not be enjoyed by the most innocent member of society. To use a common expression, he never brought the blush of shame to the cheek of innocence. Whenever he went abroad he rejoiced to think that there were two institutions in this country—one was Punch, which had never had to descend to anything wanting in decency; and [illegible] Sir William Gilbert. Sir William had told members of the house to which he had the honor to belong that

"Noble statesmen should not itch,
To interfere with matters which,
They do not understand."

(Laughter.) Therefore he would only say that when he accepted the invitation to be present and propose that toast, he did so for the purpose of saying to Sir William Gilbert that they desired to pay a heartfelt tribute to the great gifts which he had given to the nation, without awakening that slumbering satire which might descend upon their heads. He alluded to the alliance between Sir W. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan, and said they all deeply regretted the severance which had taken place by that circumstance which none of them could avert—the death of Sir Arthur Sullivan. Their guest had conferred more happiness and more amusement upon the people than perhaps any other man now living. (Cheers.)

Sir William Gilbert, in reply, said there were two tests by which a dramatist might be judged—the success that he achieved and the success that he deserved to achieve. The success that he achieved might be, and often was, independent to a considerable extent of his own personal contribution; for it was unnecessary to remind them that a dramatic author was only one of many contributors to a general result. Every dramatic author was, in some degree, the sport and toy of circumstances, but perhaps none had had less reason to saddle his exponents with the onus of his own shortcomings than the fortunate dramatic author who had the honor to address them. (Cheers.) During their regime at the Savoy his distinguished co-worker and himself invariably exercised the most absolute and undisputed control over the production of their pieces. By arrangement with their excellent impresario, Mr. D'Oyly Carte, they selected their own caste, they directed their rehearsals in every detail. They superintended the modelling of the scenery, the designing of the dresses. Their company was always admirably in hand, the best possible feeling existed between them and themselves; and, speaking for his share of the result, he could truthfully say that the impression conveyed to the audience was, almost invariably, a reflex of his conception. To few authors, indeed, had such absolute control been accorded, and it was to that absolute control that he attributed a large measure of the success that those pieces achieved on their original production. That his share of the operas profited inestimably by Sullivan's magnificent work was a commonplace of stage criticism, and, if his simple muse had succeeded in overtopping the clouds, it had been carried thither on the wings of his mighty Pegasus. Over and over again had he given to him lyrics which, at the time, appeared to him to be obvious, effete, and commonplace, and he had been astounded when it came to rehearsal at the vitality with which his Promethean fire had endowed them. He used to maintain, oddly enough, that there was no such thing as humor in music; but in his humble judgment Sir Arthur Sullivan was himself a musical humorist of the very highest order. To the old stock company of the Savoy—the only stock company in England—their debt was inestimable, for they devoted themselves, one and all, with the keenest zeal and most willing self-effacement to ascertaining their wishes and embodying them to the best of their very considerable ability. He could not accept the magnificent compliment they had paid him without associating with himself those earnest and loyal co-workers—every one of them dear to his heart—to whom he was as deeply indebted for the fact that he, "the idle singer of an idle day," was their honored guest that night. It was delightful to feel, at the close of a long and strenuous career, that there were still so many who wished him well, and who had voluntarily come there to testify to their good will. But it had its saddening side. Five-and-forty years ago he founded a small and obscure coterie of young dramatists, critics, and journalists, who dubbed themselves "The Serious Family." Tom Hood was the head of the family, and he (Sir W. Gilbert) was known as the enfant terrible. They met weekly at his chambers in Gray's inn, and he was absolved from the necessity of paying a two guinea subscription in consideration of his undertaking to supply a rump-steak pie, a joint of cold, boiled beef, a Stilton cheese, whisky and soda, and bottled ale every Saturday night for the term of his natural life. Among its members were Tom Hood, H. J. Byron, Arthur Sketchley, Clement Scott, Tom Robertson, Arthur Cecil, Jeff Prowse, Artemus Ward, Henry Leigh, Paul Gray, and about half a dozen others, nearly all of them more or less known at the time, and all of them careless, light-hearted free-lances of about his own age, with but few memories of the past and fewer forebodings of the future—literary gad-flies who basked in the sunlight of their small successes, and who bore mishaps lightly as matters which were quite in the normal order of things. Of that happy, thoughtless, devil-may-care crew of irresponsible young free-lances, he was the only one alive. In the course of his career he had seen many stage changes. He was old enough to remember the days (it was true he had only entered his fourth year at the time) when the Haymarket Theatre, always the most conservative theatre in London, was still lighted by candles, and when its manager, receiving Royalty in Court dress, walked backwards (and on one occasion fell backwards) (laughter), with a pair of silver candlesticks in each hand; when the author received four double dress-circles, four double upper-boxes, four double-pits, and four double-galleries as his perquisite on the first night of a new piece; when there was no stalls, and the pit came right up to the orchestra; when the manager on a first night announced from the stage that, "with your kind permission, the piece will be repeated every night until further notice"; when authors were paid £50 an act for original comedies; when £20 a week was the highest salary paid to a leading actor (and he seldom got that); when to bring a newspaper into the green-room involved a heavy fine (liquidated damages to be paid in rum punch); when there was half-price at 9 o'clock; and when oysters after the play were 6d. a dozen. His first piece, a burlesque on The Elixir of Love, called Dulcamara, or the Little Duck and the Great Quack, was produced at the St. James's in those cheap and easy days. The piece was written in a week and produced in another week; there had been no time to discuss terms, and a week after its successful production Mr. Emden, Miss Herbert's treasurer, asked him how much he expected to be paid. Blindly ignorant of the value of such things, he modestly suggested 30 guineas. "Oh dear no," said Emden, "we never pay in guineas, you must make it pounds." Accordingly he made it pounds, and Emden said, as he handed him the cheque, "Now take an old stager's advice—never sell as good a piece as this for £30 again." And he never had. With regard to the knighthood with which the King had been graciously pleased to reward his work, coming as it did at the close of a career of earnest endeavor, he was disposed to regard it rather in the light of a commuted old-age pension; and if he might venture to make a suggestion to the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, it was that a knighthood conferred upon all working men of 65 years of age and upwards who were unable or unwilling to earn their own living would afford a cheap, effective, and highly picturesque solution of what promised to be a problem of no little financial difficulty. (Laughter.) In conclusion he had only to say that the loving cup which they had held out to him that night with such generous hands lacked only one ingredient in the perfection of its composition—the sense that he had deserved it. (Cheers)

John McIntyre, K. C., has been chosen president of the Kingston Bar Association.

THE HAGUE CONFERENCE AND NAVAL WAR

RECENTLY at the Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall, the Rev. T. C. Lawrence, LL.D., Admiralty Lecturer on International Law at the War Course College, Portsmouth, read a paper on "The Hague Conference and Naval War," says the London Times. Rear-Admiral A. A. C. Galloway presided, and among those present were Lord Graham, Lord Ellenborough, Colonel Count Gleichen, Major-General Sir T. Fraser, and Captain F. Behr (Russian Naval Attache).

Dr. Lawrence, at the outset of his lecture, said that he proposed to give a summary of the rules adopted at The Hague which had met with almost universal approval, and then to discuss the provisions which were more or less disputable and incomplete. All The Hague conventions were open for signature till June 30 next, and a year longer was allowed for that which created an International Prize Court. Great Britain had at present signed none of them; but there could be little doubt that she would accept the greater number. The rejection of one or two was, however, probable, unless she received, meanwhile, assurances on some important points. He proceeded to deal with those regulations which the civilized world welcomed with practical unanimity—namely, those dealing with the opening of hostilities, enemy merchantmen at the outbreak of hostilities, naval bombardments, and the closely-connected subject of the launching of projectiles from balloons, postal correspondence, fishing boats, merchant sailors, and Red Cross work at sea. With regard to subjects of a more controversial character, he said that the conference of last year laid down a number of excellent rules on the question of the conversion of merchant ships into men-of-war, but so marked a difference arose between Great Britain, on the one hand, and Germany and Russia, on the other, as to whether the conversion should be allowed to take place in the waters of the converting state only or on the high seas as well, that the preamble of the convention had to contain the naive confession that "the question of the place where such conversion is effected remains outside the scope of this agreement." This, he pointed out, was only one sign of many of a tendency on the part of several powers to manipulate the rules of naval warfare in such a way as to deprive Great Britain of the advantages springing from her vast maritime resources and the wide geographical distribution of her possessions. After giving another instance showing this tendency on the part of several powers, he said that the most striking example of what could be done under the influence of the frame of mind they were discussing was to be found in the convention concerning the rights and duties of neutral powers in naval war. The most conspicuous, however, of the cases where the feeling that the laws of naval warfare ought to be used to equalize advantages all round influenced the decisions of the conference to the detriment of Great Britain was the convention on Automatic Submarine Contact Mines. Foreign powers would do well to realize that we were determined to conform in our own actions to higher standards than those of the convention, and so to exact a similar conformity from others where laxness injured us, whether as belligerents or as neutrals. There was no support in reason or justice for the attempt to manipulate rules to our disadvantage. What gave us advantages in some respects was disadvantageous in others, for scattered possessions invited attack, and a commerce that covered every sea could be raided more easily than if it were confined to a few routes. We must be taken as we were, like other powers. Let the laws of war at sea be revised on the principles of respect for justice and tenderness towards neutral interests, and we should be content. But we were determined that they should not be distorted to provide weapons against us. Our great object should be to develop neutral rights, and to see that, while a belligerent was free to strike hard blows at his enemy, he was allowed to injure third parties as little as possible. Owing to the vast increase of commercial and social intercourse between different peoples, belligerent and neutral interests were often inextricably mingled, and where this was so the decision ought to be in favor of neutrals. In order to attain this end a vast quantity of antiquated legal debris should be shot into the sea. We had already expressed our willingness to throw overboard the whole law of contraband—a proposal which seemed to him to savour of the extreme zeal of the neophyte, though he would cheerfully assist to jettison the mass of disputed rules which attempted to give effect to the notion that certain goods were sometimes noxious and sometimes innocent. Other changes should follow. We could not, for instance, hope to maintain much longer against the rest of the world the right to search neutral merchantmen under the convoy of neutral men-of-war. Indeed, the whole law of search needed overhauling badly. If we led the way in these matters, and at the same time insisted that the duties of neutrality should be as real and as far-reaching as its rights, we should rally round us an unexpected amount of support. Commercial interests, all the world over, would back us up; humanitarian sentiment would be on our side; captains and admirals would acclaim the sweet simplicity of a code of naval warfare remodelled according to stricter rules of procedure, and more disposed than the first to recognize the fact that preponderant influence, would doubtless carry in to effect many reforms which were not proposed, or could not win acceptance, in 1907. In conclusion, Dr. Lawrence expressed the hope that Great Britain might find herself able to sign the convention which established an International Prize Court.

Giving her policemen helmets, Spain is also sending them to school for eighteen months.

Fiscal Reform

By Mr. A. Bonar Law

MR. A. BONAR LAW, M. P., was the principal speaker at a Unionist demonstration, held in the music hall, Aberdeen. Lord Leith of Fyvie presided, and the hall was crowded, says the London Times.

Mr. Bonar Law, who was received with cheers, recalled at the outset that the last occasion on which he spoke in Aberdeen was immediately before the general election, and he then referred to a statement made by Mr. Asquith, that fiscal reform was dead, and that it was a subject on which the people of this country had absolutely and finally given their decision. Would Mr. Asquith say that now? There was no one so blind as not to see the great advance which the movement had made, and was making. (Cheers.) It was admitted and deplored by the Radical press of the country. The advance was shown, not only in the increase of courage and enthusiasm among those who supported it, but quite as much by a weakening all along the line among those who were opposed to it. It used to be said that this movement was due entirely to a freak on the part of Mr. Chamberlain, that it had no vitality except what was given to it by his great personality. But Mr. Chamberlain had fallen out of the fighting line—although only for a time, as they all most earnestly trusted—and during his retirement he had had the joy of seeing the movement which he initiated advance far more rapidly than it did even during the wonderful campaign conducted by him in the autumn of 1903. The whole spirit of the Unionist party in regard to this question was changed. It was now the one clear issue at every by-election; it formed the staple of all Unionist speeches, and, whether they liked it or not, it must of necessity form the staple of their opponents' speeches as well. (Cheers.) It was true, as was said by Mr. Balfour in Glasgow the other day, that the Unionist party was resolute in the cause of fiscal reform; but it was true also, although he did not say it, that the whole party was equally resolute in its determination to give him at the earliest possible opportunity the majority which would enable him to carry out the programme, moderate yet clear and unmistakable, which was laid down by him in Birmingham. (Cheers.) On the other hand, the free import citadel was being undermined quite as much by the weakness of its defenders as by the attacks of its assailants. As an illustration of this weakness, he instanced the case of the American steel trade. During the past four years that trade had undergone an expansion which was almost incredible, but the home demand was falling off, and the steel manufacturers were seeking—as everyone who looked an inch beyond his nose knew they would be seeking—for an increase in their sales abroad to make up for the falling off in the demand at home. In pursuance of this policy the American steel manufacturers presented a pistol at the head of the Welsh tinplate makers. They said to these British manufacturers, "We wish to sell to you the steel out of which you make your tinplates, and if you will not buy that steel we will make the tinplates ourselves, and destroy your trade." Within half a dozen years the Americans had captured more than a third of the tinplate trade of Canada. If they could do that when times were good, what would they do now when times were bad? It was obvious that they were in a position to carry out their threat. Mr. Bonar Law proceeded to criticize the utterances of the president of the Board of Trade as the platform orator who talked what he called free trade, and of Mr. Lloyd-George the administrator, who, in spite of, or by the aid of, a free import majority passed through the House of Commons two great and far-reaching measures of tariff reform—the Merchant Shipping Act and the Patents Act. At Cardiff the other day Mr. Lloyd-George said he had been accused by heresy hunters of departing from the eternal verities, but, he added, "I judge each of these questions on its own merits, and that is the only practical way of doing business." That was the whole case for tariff reform. (Cheers.) The fiscal policy of this or any other country was not a question of business; and all that tariff reformers wished was that each question should be judged on its merits and on its merits alone. (Cheers.) In the early stages of this controversy they were told by their opponents, Mr. Asquith among them, over and over again, that preference was of no value. Their opponents did not say that now. At the Colonial conference the value of preference was admitted by Mr. Asquith, grudgingly indeed, but still definitely—and by Mr. Lloyd-George most generously, for he said that it had been of enormous advantage to the trade of this country. (Cheers.) Well, if they thought it was of any value, however small, surely they had no right to decide against it, and to decide against it without any examination; but that was exactly what the Government had done. What was chiefly needed by this country was an outlet abroad for our manufactured goods. If the Colonies were granted a preference it would increase their exports and at the same time it would increase their purchases from us exactly in proportion to that increase in exports. These Colonies were going to be great nations, and were going to do an immense import trade in manufactured goods, and in the very kind of goods we desired to sell. They were going to do this immense trade with some one, and it rested with us now to decide. It would not rest for long, as was shown by that intermediate tariff which Canada had arranged with France and Italy, which had already diminished the value of our preference—an intermediate tariff, which, if it were also arranged with Germany and the United States, would practically take away altogether that preference. It rested with us now, but it would, he believed, rest with us only till the next general election, to decide whether that great and growing trade was to be done without or with our competitors, and whether it was to give employment to British or to foreign workmen. (Cheers.) The "dear loaf" argument was now played out. In his latest speech, Mr. Asquith had been complaining of the use made by the Unionist party in Mid Devon of the rise which had taken place in the price of bread since the present government came into office; and nothing showed more clearly how hardly the government had been hit by that election than the bitterness and, indeed, the venom of Mr. Asquith's speech. (Cheers.) He maintained that the Liberal party were responsible for some part of the rise in the price of bread, because it was the result of a shortage of supply which would have been obviated had this country years ago given a preference to the wheat-growing portions of our empire. This preference would have stimulated and increased the supply and widened the area from which that supply came. (Cheers.)

LORD CROMER AND SOCIALISM

Lord Cromer presided at a meeting convened by the British Constitution Association at Guildford, says the London Times.

He said the object of the association was to uphold personal liberty and personal responsibility, and this, it was rightly held, could be effected by limiting the functions of governing bodies. These objects commanded his entire sympathy. It might, perhaps, seem strange to them that one who had not only been an official all his life, but who had also been for years engaged in administrative work in countries where state action was very pronounced, should plead earnestly against the adoption of a system with which he had been so long associated. It must be borne in mind, however, that soldiers who had seen most of the horrors of war were among the warmest advocates of peace. He had had excellent opportunities of judging the results obtained by the system of State aid and State interference, and the result had been to convince him that moral and material progress could best be secured by bringing into play the invigorating stimulus of competition and personal interest. Excessive reliance on the State tended to sap all independence and virility of character. It was just at present very necessary to bring this aspect of the case home to the public. We were threatened with what was really a gigantic and very costly scheme of outdoor relief under a universal old-age pension scheme established on a non-contributory basis. A large section of the community would rely for their subsistence on the eleemosynary assistance of the State. Then such far-reaching projects as the nationalization of railways and even the State regulation of wages were occasionally advocated. He greatly deprecated the tendency to establish a close analogy between the United Kingdom and other countries. Let them take, for instance, the case of the nationalization of railways. To his mind the fact that such a system might have produced good financial and other results in Germany or elsewhere was no valid argument for applying the same system to this country. It was to be borne in mind that every State must advance along the lines best adapted to the development of its national genius and national character. These were the outcome of climate, geographical position, and past history. Our past history had strongly tended to develop individualism. He asked any practical man whether he thought for one moment that this vigorous and highly undisciplined nation, which more than any other resented interference with individual freedom, could be turned by a succession of Acts of Parliament into a race of automata who would readily bend to bureaucratic control. If the State was to interfere in fields which had heretofore been left to private enterprise, the necessary consequence would almost certainly be the creation of an army of officials to regulate the action of the State. He doubted whether this aspect of the case had been sufficiently considered by those who leant to Socialism. He deprecated any attempt to Germanise our institutions. Although in some cases State interference might be necessary, there was always a presumption against permitting it. (Cheers.)

The announcement that the famous 'Ship,' at Greenwich, has closed its doors possesses a peculiarly fascinating but melancholy interest, as its association with fish, and especially whitebait, dinners has long been historical. Of the fish dinners for which Greenwich was famed for several centuries, those at the 'Ship' gradually attained a pre-eminence of their own. The inn, or tavern, as it was originally known, was one of a trinity of noted houses, the other two being the 'Crown and Sceptre' and the 'Trafalgar.' All were built with weather-board fronts and old-fashioned bay windows, from which the guests might sit and watch the shipping passing to and fro in this lower reach of the River Thames. The original 'Ship' stood in the imediate vicinity of the Royal Naval Hospital, but in about the year 1846 it was pulled down, and the more ambitious building erected on the present site.