

Lloyd-George in the House of Lords

Coming to Grips With the Lords—Courageous Budget Foreshadowed—An Analysis of British Trade and Commerce—Replies to Mr. Wyndham—Defense of British Fiscal Policy—Britain's Great Wealth—The Course for Liberals to Pursue.

Mr. Lloyd-George spoke in the Sun Hall, Liverpool, on the night of Dec. 21, to a meeting arranged by the National Reform Union. No women were admitted to the building, and when Mr. Lloyd-George said on the basis of his first word, "Gentlemen," and the great audience laughed, he added, "It is through no fault of mine that I am not able to start my speech with the usual formula. Women's voices were heard for all inside. In the streets that made the 'side' of the Sun Hall there are some cottages. The militant suffragists had hired a room in one of these, and as soon as Mr. Lloyd-George began to speak they raised their voices, made strident and far-reaching by a megaphone outside. The street is a cul-de-sac. The police barred the entrance of the general public, and the suffragists had practically no audience to listen to them. But they were not discouraged by that, and Mr. Lloyd-George must have heard many times while he was speaking the stentorian cry "Votes for Women." It did not in the smallest degree interfere with the comfort of those in the hall, but people who did not know about the megaphone wondered greatly at the lasting and penetrating qualities of that persistent voice. Sometimes at the front of the building and sometimes in the streets, a considerable crowd of people, kept in a fluid state by the activities of the police, filled the street, and the cheering arose when they gave merry congratulations to carriage-loads of suffragists who moved toward the front, waving banners and raising their usual shouts.

The possibility of the meeting being interrupted by men had been much advertised, but expectations in this direction were not realized. One man only made discordant notes. The meeting showed a readiness to eject him at once, but Mr. Lloyd-George made an appeal that he should not be turned out. "I'm quite sick of turnings-out," he said. The man would not be silenced. He continued to irritate his neighbors, and at last, on an interjection that was perfectly reasonable, they took drastic action. Thereafter Mr. Lloyd-George had a perfectly sympathetic hearing. In his speech he reviewed the very serious political situation brought about by the rejection of Liberal measures in the House of Lords. He showed how intolerable is "legislation by sufferance of Lord Lansdowne," and he foreshadowed the introduction of a budget which is likely to bring to a head the conflict between the Liberal party and the House of Lords. Mr. Wyndham, as "the expounder of reform," policy, his recent speech in the Sun Hall made the topic appropriate—was subjected to raking criticism, and Mr. Lloyd-George drew an effective contrast between the lines upon which Liberalism is to take its stand and the lines upon which, if Mr. Wyndham and his friends have their way, the forces of reaction will take their course. All through a pertinent

explanation of the advantages of free trade, Mr. Lloyd-George was cheered frequently, and his illustration at the close of the benefits gained through the free importation of corn roused the audience to enthusiasm. The meeting was presided over by Lord Weardale, the president of the National Reform Union. Mr. Lloyd-George said: Gentlemen, it is through no fault of my own that I am not able to start my speech with the usual formula. I am glad to see that the party in Liverpool is in good heart—full of enthusiasm, full of ardor, full of fight. There is really no need for me to say that we have had three years of Liberal Government; we have had good times; we have had bad times. I know our opponents are drawing conclusions from certain by-elections which are detrimental to the future of Liberalism. I would remind them that two out of the three years we steadily won elections, and if this Parliament ran its ordinary course we would have three more years—or, in golfing language, we are "one up and three to play." (Laughter.) It is just possible that Parliament may not run its normal course. (A voice: "Why?") The end may be precipitated. (Let us hope so.) I have had during this last session two great measures of Liberal reform destroyed by an absolutely irresponsible assembly. What are they? The first, although it only applied to Scotland, involved a principle which would have been extended to England. I am referring to the Land Valuation Bill for Scotland. Perfectly fair, perfectly just. Here you have property which is increasing in value year by year through the exertions of the community without any effort on the part of its owner. It is just possible that it bears an equal burden with any other property. We brought in a bill which involved taking the preliminary steps for that purpose; but the bill was rejected by the House of Lords. Then there was another, the Licensing Bill. (Cheer.) I do not want to say anything in any statement I make about the Licensing Bill.

RISKS REFORMERS HAVE TO FACE. There is a kind of work which every good Government that has the interests of the people at heart has to do which involves the risk of popularity—excellent work, work which will have the effect of improving the condition of the people to remove the evil for the moment which may appear to the appetites of a very considerable population, and absolutely essential in the interests of good government. No party, no government, would undertake to reform the licensing laws of this country with the view of winning popularity for them. It is a work that appeals to the better instincts of the people—the highest instincts of the best people in the land—the men who have specifically the moral and spiritual interests of the people at heart, and they were all

federated for the purpose of helping them. (Cheer.) It is an excellent class of work that you would expect an impartial assembly to rouse the best popular passions of the hour upon. It is exactly the class of work that you would expect them not merely to go in but to take the lead. (Cheer.) What have they done? It was absolutely their opportunity. They said, "Here is our chance; this will destroy the Liberal party." They did not say: "Is this the best thing in the interests of sobriety?" No; they said: "They have made a blunder, they have stumbled, they have roused the base appetites of a section of the people; let us take advantage of it; let us sell them to the Egyptians." (Laughter and cheer.) I do not believe there has ever been a bill which tested the House of Lords as the superior assembly, which it claims to be, like this bill, and there has never been a bill that demonstrated so clearly how utterly baseless that claim is. (Hoar.) They have shown that they are a purely partisan assembly. Two and a half years ago I said on this platform at a meeting of the National Liberal Federation in my judgment, as far as I could foresee, Liberalism at a very early moment would have to come to close grips with the House of Lords unless it was to fall altogether in legislation. (Hear, hear.) At this moment there is a disturbance in one of the galleries, and voices called "Turn him out." Mr. Lloyd-George clapped his hands to secure attention, and called, "Don't turn anybody out, an sick of turning out." (Laughter.) Keep him there; it may do him good." (Cheer and laughter.)

"AN AGGREGATION OF TORY LEADERS." Well, now, why? I knew perfectly well that it was purely a Tory assembly. You have got something in Liverpool which is called "Tory democracy" (Laughter), probably more Tory than democracy. (Hear, hear.) But in the House of Lords it is Tory and no democracy, and crusted old Tory. (Laughter.) And when a Liberal Government comes in you have got this old Toryism dug out of the cellars of the House of Lords—stuff like that. Dark Ages, (Laughter and cheer), covered with cobwebs, dusty, muddy, sour. (Laughter.) That is the stuff, all brought out of the dark cellars of the House of Lords whenever Liberalism comes in. (Cheer.) They are not matter how harmless they are, but if they are Liberal they are instantly labelled "poison." (Laughter.) If the bottle is not smashed, well, you get some ingredients like arsenic, and you mix them with the medicine innocuous and ineffective. We have had enough of that. (Hear, hear.) They are incapable of giving unbiased consideration to any Liberal measure. Why? It is simply an aggregation of Tory leaders.

You might as well expect a Tory bill to get far play at a committee elected by the National Liberal Federation. (Laughter.) The National Reform Union, and delegates from the Free Church Council. (Laughter.) These men are the men who organize Toryism in every county. You go to any county in England, Scotland, Ireland or Wales—wherever you get a Tory meeting, you find these men there. I am talking of the Tory majority that dominates the House of Lords. They are engaged in Tory work there—they are active agents of Toryism. They try to return Tory candidates, having

There is waste of water, waste of gas, and things of that kind. If you would wish your children to be thrifty I would wish you to impress upon them the criminality of waste. But let me take you to a larger sphere of thrift, after which I will return to the main point which I wish to insist today. All great empires that were meant to continue to abide were thrifty. Take the Roman Empire, which lay like the iron stamp upon the face of the world. It was founded on thrift. When it came to be thrifty it degenerated and came to an end. Thrift began with a little, narrow-mindedness and it grew to a great end. It was nurtured by the thrift of Frederick the Great's father. Take the case of France, the security of land? I do not think any man would invest in Irish land if he had a stocking available in which he could put his spare cash. (Laughter.) There you get an objection of the effect upon prop-

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DETERMINATION OF WELSHMEN. I will take you to my own little country. For forty years at ten successive elections we have sent to Parliament by preponderant majorities representatives to demand religious equality. Constitutionally—

Interruption from a man in the gallery, and cries of "Put him out." No, no; leave him alone. A voice: "Leave him alone; he's drunk," and laughter. Mr. Lloyd-George: Constitutionally—and the same person again interrupted Mr. Lloyd-George, and there were renewed cries of "Out with him," and a voice "It's brewers' ale."

"Leave him alone," Mr. Lloyd-George said, "if he promises to be have." (Laughter.) Mr. Lloyd-George proceeded: "Constitutionally, quietly, keeping within the law, we have steadily presented our demand to the Imperial Parliament in a matter which purely concerns ourselves—a matter of our own religious affairs. If that does not concern a man himself and his own conscience, what does? And yet, we are always refused, always denied. (Cheer.) How long do you think it will continue? If that is sent to the House of Lords—as it will be—(loud cheer)—sent up by an overwhelming majority of the representatives of the people—(cheer, cheer)—what will ensue? I am told it will be flung out—so I am told. (Renewed laughter.) I have no authority as to the intentions of the House of Lords. It depends entirely on what will be said at Lansdowne House. (Laughter.) Are the opinions of the overwhelming majority of the people about their religious affairs—are they to be settled in the drawing-room of Lansdowne House? (No.) It will be flung out. Does England imagine that Wales is a Nonconformist country? (No.) Do you think they will go on with their religious affairs where Nonconformity is treated as if it were a disqualification for decency in a hundred parishes in a Nonconformist country?

WHEN THE POPULAR WILL IS THWARTED. But the action of the House of Lords means this—that Liberalism, involving advance, progress, and an onward march, is ousted out by a veto of the constitution. What is the alternative? I ask men of property with a stake in the security of the land? I do not think any man would invest in Irish land if he had a stocking available in which he could put his spare cash. (Laughter.) There you get an objection of the effect upon prop-

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LORD ROSEBERY ON THRIFT

A WITTY SPEECH BY THE PREMIER AT EDINBURGH—THE VIRTUES OF THRIFT—THE EVIL OF WASTE.

Lord Rosebery was present on Dec. 21 in the Edinburgh council chambers at the annual meeting of the Edinburgh Savings Bank. Lord Provost Gibson presided.

Lord Rosebery, in moving the adoption of the report, said: The chairman has expressed a doubt as to whether the new provisions for old-age pensions are likely to promote thrift in the community. I am not going to follow you on that burning and hazardous ground, which approaches too near party politics for an occasion of this kind. But, after all, some of the anomalies of those provisions might almost point to the fact that the encouragement of thrift in the sense of accumulation is one of the objects of the old-age pension scheme. The cause when it is seen that those who have saved £800 or even £1,000 are rewarded by receiving an old-age pension of £5 a week no one could feel that the whole scope of the scheme is a discouragement of thrift. (Laughter.) Some people call it, according to their party, a wasteful experiment, and others a wise and far-seeing experiment. I shall not take either side, but shall content myself with saying that it is experimental in its nature, and that we shall have to wait some little time before we can pronounce confidently on its operation.

A DEFINITION OF THRIFT.

On these occasions the mover of the report is expected to say a few words upon thrift. Thrift is one of the virtues—and there are perhaps more of them than we think—which is much easier to preach in the words of Shakespeare, who comprehended after all the whole truth of the matter, that thrift is blessed not merely because of accumulation of substance, but because of the foundation and strengthening of character. (Cheers.) From the financial point of view, my definition of thrift shall be this—getting full value for your money and looking ahead. Of

course, the historical definition which has given so much comfort and encouragement to thousands is that of Mr. Micawber: "Annual income, £20; annual expenditure, £19 19s 6d—result, happiness; annual income, £20; annual expenditure, £20, as 6d—result, misery." (Laughter.) I suppose that is practically true. It means, in reality, that a man who is beforehand with of winning a large sum of money occupies a very different position relatively to the rest of the world from the man who is behindhand with it to however small an extent. Of course, from the financial point of view, we know very well that thrift is a degradation of all opulence, all prosperity, and even of those colossal fortunes we hear of in America but never realize in this country. There is, however, a particular distinction between thrift and avarice. Avarice is the desire, as it seems to me, excludes avarice, because the accumulation of sixpence would certainly not satisfy any dream of avarice. Avarice is not generous, and, after all, it is thrifty people who are generous. All the great philanthropists and all the great financial benefactors of their species of whom we have record have been thrifty men.

CAN THE POOR BE THRIFTY.

But I pass from the financial value of thrift to that which results in the formation of character. Many people when they read speeches about thrift, say: How can the poor be thrifty, seeing that they have nothing to be thrifty upon? But the exact reverse of the case is the truth, strangely enough, in your report there is a proof of this. From the experience of Edinburgh and Glasgow and Manchester it has been found that periods of stress and not periods of prosperity, are the most favorable to thrift, as shown by the deposits in the savings banks. The eighteenth century was perhaps the time of Scotland's direst poverty, and at any rate as compared with other countries in the world was the period of her greatest thrift. One hundred and twenty years ago there were probably no more than two or three hundred thousand pounds of current coin in the whole of Scotland, and when you compare that with fourteen millions of deposits in the two savings banks of Edinburgh and Glasgow you may arrive at some computation of what the difference of prosperity is between Scotland today and Scotland of that day. In those days we read that the one great object of a Scottish

peasant was thrift, not so much for the sake of a livelihood as for the sake of amassing enough money to obtain a decent burial. These patient, self