

THE PROBLEMS AND GLORIES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

Lord Rosebery's Remarkable Address to the Students of Glasgow University—Need of National Stocktaking and Preparation for the Coming Century.

The Responsibilities of the Empire—"Is All This There Is Nothing of War? Not the Best of a Drum Nor the Singing of a Bugle."

GENERAL when a statesman is elected Lord Rector of a Scottish University he prefers to leave behind him the title of "Rector" as the subject of his Rectorial address something in literature or history. Perhaps it is characteristic of Lord Rosebery's position in public life that when he was installed as Rector of Glasgow University, on November 16th last, he delivered an address entirely political in character. There was nothing new in this—nothing which Lord Rosebery has not said before, but several opinions which he has expressed in different speeches were brought together in a way which lent vivacity to them.

Lord Rosebery is a man who belittles no occasion. He has imagination and sense enough to know the value which attaches to all that a former leader and Premier may say. In addition, he has the nervousness of the great speaker, the anxiety and confusion which precede any public utterance. When he appeared he was evidently disturbed, and even the most stolid nature would readily grant him the right to be so. It is seldom that St. Andrew's hall is so full, and it is not often that a Lord Rector speaks under such interesting circumstances. There was a great welcome, the kind of greeting which is given to a very loud, but without anything in it. It was noticeable too, that the galleries where the public sat were silent.

A Remarkable Figure.

A few minutes were spent on formalities, and then Lord Rosebery was face to face with his audience. There is no figure in public life which fascinates to such an extent both the common and the imaginative man. There is a strange mingling of elements in it—an aloofness from the crowd of interests of life, an unworldly loneliness, and almost in opposition to that, a passionate interest in the public business of the nation. One saw these things in the striking figure standing at the desk. Sometimes there was a smile, and then the gleam of humor which lights up a melancholy mind, and at other times there were long shadows on the face, the signs of a nature convinced of the fatality of human things. Perhaps it would be correct to say that Lord Rosebery has lost some of the distinction he once possessed. The face is heavier and less capable of expressing the motions of the speaker. It is not so perfect a mirror of the mind as it was. Perhaps the voice, too, is not so fine an instrument as it was, but then the voice is the most perishable of all human possessions.

The problem which the careful listener set himself was how to pierce behind the words and voice to the core of personality, that central spring of emotion which fixes the plan of any man in life. Time and again there came the self-revealing of the great speaker. Once, when the students cheered a reference to the close of the century, as if they were glad to be done with it, the mingled humor and sadness of the man appeared. He smiled like one who regretted the levity of young minds unconscious of the sadness of things. And then, in a rebuke so full of honor and regret that one could almost see right into the heart of the man, he made the students laugh at their own lightness. Another time he spoke of the careless habit of England of public life, and inclination to be in a hurry, and the year that it may some time bring a great calamity upon the nation, sent an almost doomed look into his eye.

A Man of Sympathies.

If any one doubted where Lord Rosebery's deepest sympathies lay, the address would have scattered his doubts. The great interest which made him the leader of London democracy are still the central things in his creed. The only change that has come over them is that they have been woven into his new dream of Empire. For the most part he spoke calmly, but when he referred to the housing of the poor the depths in him seemed to rise. There was a world of tears in his eyes. No one will forget how his face moved, and his utterance broke, when he spoke of the darkest spots in the slums of Glasgow and the crooked, crooked in the Hebrides are both a matter of Imperial interest. But the note which filled one of the most delightful was the earnestness with which he spoke of the idea that Empire means war. In all this there is nothing of war; not the beat of a drum nor the singing of a bugle. These words were spoken with the force with which he raised his arm; then he laid his hand down, and he declared that not less vital to the Empire than the defence and the readiness to fight is the unceasing leaven of a high ideal. There was a great thrill in the speaker which leapt into the audience, and the cheer which followed was one of the most sincere of the day.

The speech, as a whole, appealed more to the brain than to the heart. At times it was somewhat arid, and often the speaker which leapt into the audience, but the close brought it alongside of the greatest Rectorials of the past. It was the crowning revelation of the speaker. The build of the closing sentences sounded one of the peroration of his own speech on Burns. There was the same consciousness of the mingling of good and evil in human life, and the same willingness to recognize the divine working through them both.

To the last Lord Rosebery on the matter of himself. There was no sudden yielding of some divine force of speech, but there was a solemnity as of a soul making its public confession. It was an almost sacramental occasion, and the great change as he set down his head that he had struck a very deep chord in the audience.

The Empire Outside Parity.

Having thanked his hearers for electing him to the Lord Rectorship, and having referred to previous Rectorial addresses, Lord Rosebery continued: "I have thought that I would best serve you, my young constituents, by speaking to you of a subject which affects us all, and with which I have had something,

though not much, to do—a concrete contemporary subject, which fills all minds at times, which will increasingly fill yours. I wish to say something to you of the British Empire—(cheers)—of which we are the tenants in fee of which we inherit the responsibility and the glory. It is so vast a topic that I can only touch a fringe. I can deal only with considerations which directly affect ourselves. It is in the strict sense a political subject, but it is outside party politics, and can and should be treated without affecting the most sensitive apprehension. But even here I must make a single exception, for there are some to whom the very word is a slur, to whom, at any rate, that word is under suspicion. It bears to them some taint of disagreeable association. They affect to see in it danger of bragadocio or aggression. Personally, I do not share their suspicion. (Hear, hear.) Still, it is not the word, but the thing that I value. I admit that the term has been prostituted in Britain as well as elsewhere. And yet we cannot discard it, for there is no convenient synonym. If any other word can be invented which as adequately expresses a number of States of vast size under a single sovereign, I would gladly consider it. But at present there is none.

Much to Overhaul.

"You have received from your forefathers this strange appanage. No one outside an asylum wishes to be rid of it. The question, then, at this time is simply how to do the best with it. That is a tremendous problem, so tremendous that you and I and all of us have to take our share of it. And all of us in this hall, rich or poor, young or old, clever or dull, can do something, each in his line of life, like bees in their cells, to make the Empire surer, better and happier, even if only by being honest, industrious citizens ourselves. (Cheers.) Moreover, the Empire never needed such loyal service so much as now. Never did it so urgently require the strenuous and united support of its subjects. (Hear, hear.) For, in the present state of the world, an active vigilance is more than ever required. We have to make sure of our equipment. This we are apt to neglect. On the contrary, I maintain that there is much to overhaul, to examine, and to reconsider; that what would have kept the Empire together in days when we had an unenvied monopoly of colonies, and when armaments were both less vast and less numerous, will not suffice now, that there is a disposition to challenge both our naval and commercial position which requires our utmost vigilance; that we may have to test our training, our habits, our character, our capacity for work by severer standards than have hitherto been applied; that we must be called upon for effort and sacrifice if we wish to maintain our position; that we must be prepared, in a word, to set our house in order and to consider whether what has sufficed in the past will suffice in the future. (Hear, hear.)

What Might Have Been.

"What is this Empire? The last calculation seems to be this: That its area is between eleven and twelve millions of square miles, and that its subjects number between four and five hundred millions. The details in so spacious a summary matter little. It is already beyond comprehension. And yet one cannot but pause for a moment to reflect that but for a small accident—the very ordinary circumstance of the acceptance of a peerage—this Empire might have been incalculably greater. Had the elder Pitt, when he became First Minister, not left the House of Commons, he would probably have retained his sanity and his authority. He would have prevented, or suppressed, the reckless budget of Charles Townshend, had induced George III. to listen to reason, have introduced representative government into the Imperial Parliament, and preserved the thirteen American colonies to the British Crown. It is fanciful to dwell for a moment on what might have happened? The Reform Bill, which was passed in 1832 would probably have been passed much earlier; the new blood of America would have burst the old vessels of the Constitution. It would have provided for some self-adjusting system of representation, such as now prevails in the United States, by which increasing population is proportionately represented. And as last, when the Americans became the majority, the seat of Empire would perhaps have been moved to the Atlantic group, and in Britain would have become the historical shrine and the European outpost of the world empire. What an extraordinary revolution it would have been had it been accomplished! The greatest kingdom without bloodshed; the most sublime transference of power in the history of mankind. Our conceptions can scarcely picture the procession across the Atlantic, the greatest sovereign in the greatest fleet in the universe, Ministers, government, parliament, departing solemnly for the other hemisphere, not as in the case of the Portuguese sovereigns emigrating to Brazil, under the spur of necessity, but under the vigorous embrace of the younger world. It is well to bridle the imagination, lest it become fantastic and extravagant.

If America Had Remained.

"Moreover, it is a result to which we can scarcely accustom ourselves, even in idea. But the other effects might have been scarcely less remarkable. America would have hung on the skirts of Britain and pulled her back out of European complications. She would have profoundly affected the foreign policy of the Mother Country in the direction of peace. Her influence in our domestic policy would have been scarcely less potent. It might probably have appeared and even contented Ireland. The ancient constitution of Great Britain would have been rendered more comprehensive and more elastic. On the other hand, the American, yearning for liberty, would have taken a different form; it would have blended with other traditions and

flowed into other moulds. And, above all, had there been no separation, there would have been no War of Independence, no war of 1812, with all the bitter memories that these have left on American soil. To secure that priceless boon I could have been anxious to see the British Federal Parliament sitting in Columbia Territory. It is difficult, indeed, to dam the flow of ideas in dealing with so pregnant a possibility. But I restrain myself because I know that I am dealing with a subject which is outside party politics, and can and should be treated without affecting the most sensitive apprehension. But even here I must make a single exception, for there are some to whom the very word is a slur, to whom, at any rate, that word is under suspicion. It bears to them some taint of disagreeable association. They affect to see in it danger of bragadocio or aggression. Personally, I do not share their suspicion. (Hear, hear.) Still, it is not the word, but the thing that I value. I admit that the term has been prostituted in Britain as well as elsewhere. And yet we cannot discard it, for there is no convenient synonym. If any other word can be invented which as adequately expresses a number of States of vast size under a single sovereign, I would gladly consider it. But at present there is none.

"A Conquering and Imperial Race." Now, for my purpose, it is not important to consider whether this Empire is greater or less than others, for it is impossible to compare States. Mere area, mere population, do not necessarily imply power; still less does they imply the capacity and contentment of the inhabitants. Our Empire is so vast, so splendid, so pregnant, that we have to ask ourselves, are we adequate to it? Can we discharge our responsibility to God and to the position of our industries, of our education, of our naval and military systems. The general result would probably be satisfactory, but it may be predicted with much more certainty that it would be so much on our Governments as to make it impossible to exaggerate the courage and character of our nation. The brave boys at the front, the silent endurance at home—I cannot think of these without emotion, as well as with admiration and pride. (Cheers.)

Cannot Bask in History.

But our boasts, even if they be true, do not contain the whole truth. It would be well enough if we could lie on a bank of glory, basking in our history, our glory, and our past. That, however, is not possible. Never was it less possible than now. Fifty years ago we had to fight a little more. The armies of Europe were relatively small, and not wholly disproportionate to ours. The United States had no army. Ten or twelve years later a terrible convulsion shook the great Republic, and for a moment her hosts were numbered by the million. Twenty years later a national war arose between France and Germany, which produced a potent German Empire, a world that was comparatively new. Europe was concerned in Europe, and we have entered on a new era of better or for worse. It is, of course, only an imaginary division of time, though it seems solemn enough, for we are in a pinnacle of the world's temple where we can look down on the history of the world, and see how the past is passing. What will be its distinctive note? Of the nineteenth we may say generally that it has been an era of emancipation, considerable though not complete. Nations, as a rule, have been sorted into boundaries more consonant with their aspirations and traditions than was formerly the case. The tyranny of sects in Britain, at any rate, has partially abated. The undue pressure of government has diminished. Slavery has disappeared. All over the world there have been great strides towards freedom, and though inadequate, they have been so considerable as to produce for a moment an sympathy. But the twentieth century, what does it bear in its awful womb? Of one thing only can we be certain—that it will be a period of keen, intelligent, almost fierce, international competition, more probably in the arts of war, even than in the arts of peace. How, then, should we prepare for such an epoch and such a conflict?

The Waking of the World.

There is a further and perhaps a mightier change in the conditions of the world during the past half century. Fifty years ago the world looked lazily on while we discovered, developed, and annexed the waste or savage territories of the world. All that is now changed. The colonial microbe has penetrated almost every empire except that of Charles V. which has outlived it, and even here I must except his Netherlands provinces. France, in the last ten or fifteen years, has annexed a quarter of Africa, and has made a considerable incursion into Asia. Germany has shown no less a desire to become a colonizing nation. Russia pursues her secular path of unceasing absorption, constantly attracting fresh bodies into her prodigious orbit. Italy has been bitten by the same desire for expansion. The United States finds itself sitting like a startled hen on a brood of unnumbered islands in the Philippine group, and in Asia and Africa, and it changes our relation to the world. Every mile of unmapped country, every naked tribe of savages, is wrangled over as if it were situated in the centre of Europe. The world has shrunk into a continent of ascertained boundaries. The illimitable and the unknown, the happy field of dreams have disappeared. That is a blow to imagination, but it is not a fact of substantial importance to us, who do not desire to increase our territories. Indirectly, however, it raises a number of delicate and disputable points. Moreover, a colonial passion apt to cause an ill-feeling, composed of envy, jealousy, and other hostile tendencies towards the ancient colonial empire. This again does not signify, provided we realize it, and do not deserve it, and are ready to deal with it. Then there is again the question of trade. Foreign countries used to sneer at trade. It was considered below the dignity of warlike races. We were described as a nation of shopkeepers. Now every nation wishes to be a nation of shopkeepers. This new object is pursued with the intelligent purpose which was once applied to the balance of power. That is a great change. We once had a sort of monopoly; we now have to fight for existence.

National Stocktaking Needed.

Have our State machinery and methods been examined and remodelled in view of these changes? If not, no time should be lost. (Cheers.) A business in these days can live but a short time on its past reputation; and what is true of

a business is true of an Empire. It is found out to be a sham. Its aims, its government, its diplomacy, are seen to be out of date by the actual events. An excuse is found for a quarrel and such excuses are easy, the Empire is tested and fails and succumbs. As in a business, too, a periodical stock-taking is necessary in a State. The ordinary British thinks it needless, he says comfortably that we have won Waterloo and Blenheim and Trafalgar, and have produced Nelson and Wellington and Roberts—(cheers)—we have plenty of trade and plenty of money; how can anything be so better? And this fatal complacency is so ingrained that some despair of a remedy until we are awakened by a national disaster. For an Empire, like a business, if neglected, may become obsolete. (Hear, hear.)

The first question, then, as I have said, which we must ask to ourselves, and which we cannot put off more momentously, is: Are we worthy of this prodigious inheritance? Is the race which holds it capable of maintaining and developing it? (Cheers.) Are we, like the Romans, not merely brave but also a persistent businesslike, alert, governing people? And if we can answer this affirmatively, as I hope we can, we have these further considerations to ask ourselves: Are we equal to the position of our industries, of our education, of our naval and military systems. The general result would probably be satisfactory, but it may be predicted with much more certainty that it would be so much on our Governments as to make it impossible to exaggerate the courage and character of our nation. The brave boys at the front, the silent endurance at home—I cannot think of these without emotion, as well as with admiration and pride. (Cheers.)

Moreover, the admittance to it is by brain work alone. Now brains, though necessary and desirable, are not everything, for administration under varying things and circumstances you want much more. You want for this purpose force of character, quick decision, physical activity, and endurance of all kinds, besides, if possible, the indefinable qualities which sway mankind. You want men who will go anywhere at a moment's notice, and do anything. These qualities cannot be tested by Civil Service examinations. And yet we have a good deal of dare-devil adaptable raw material on hand. Some of the young generals who have come through the arduous experience of this war will be fit for almost anything that they may be called upon to do. But these have been seasoned by the severest training, we cannot afford such an education. (Hear, hear.) This dearth of men, as I have said, concerns you directly, for you are part of the next generation, and I hope that there may be among my constituents some of these necessary men. This, at any rate, is clear, that it is the function of our Universities to produce such men.

Live, Not Dead, Languages. And this leads me to another question. Are we getting ourselves sufficiently to train such men? I doubt it. The most illustrious of our public schools has no modern side. Oxford and Cambridge still exact their dose of Latin and Greek. I cannot believe from the Imperial point of view, having regard to the changed conditions of the world, that this is necessary or adequate or wise. (Hear, hear.) I concede Latin as a training instrument and a universal language. But how about Greek? To learned men it is a necessity. But must it be part of the necessary equipment of the ordinary youth of the nineteenth century, who has so much to learn in order to be equal to his age? I think that when our national ignorance of foreign languages has become not merely a byword but almost a commercial disaster, we might reconsider part of our educational apparatus. For the purposes of the present age, especially for the merchant and the politician, there is required a more modern education, more especially as regards language.

But that is only a small part of the question of race. In reality we do not depend so much on our Governments as we would seem to be the case. The people yield their own destinies; they walk their own paths. An Empire such as ours requires as its first condition an imperial race—a race vigorous and industrious and enterprising. (Cheers.) Are we rearing such a race? In the rural districts, I trust that we are. But in the great cities, in the rookeries and slums which still survive, an Imperial race cannot be reared. You can scarcely produce in these foul nests of crime and disease but a progeny doomed from its birth to misery and ignominy. There is a rift in the corner-stone of your commonwealth. Health of mind and body exact a nation in the competition of the universe. The survival of the fittest is doing it so they necessarily deaden their spirit, it is their business to do it, and so they pass on. The shadow of the future is as vain as all other shadows. Prosperity, while it endures, is the drug, the hashish, which blinds the patient to all but golden visions. And yet we are in an epoch of no common kind, short indeed in the lives of nations, but longer than the life of man, when we may well pause to take stock. Within six weeks we shall have closed the nineteenth century, and have entered on a new era of better or for worse. It is, of course, only an imaginary division of time, though it seems solemn enough, for we are in a pinnacle of the world's temple where we can look down on the history of the world, and see how the past is passing. What will be its distinctive note? Of the nineteenth we may say generally that it has been an era of emancipation, considerable though not complete. Nations, as a rule, have been sorted into boundaries more consonant with their aspirations and traditions than was formerly the case. The tyranny of sects in Britain, at any rate, has partially abated. The undue pressure of government has diminished. Slavery has disappeared. All over the world there have been great strides towards freedom, and though inadequate, they have been so considerable as to produce for a moment an sympathy. But the twentieth century, what does it bear in its awful womb? Of one thing only can we be certain—that it will be a period of keen, intelligent, almost fierce, international competition, more probably in the arts of war, even than in the arts of peace. How, then, should we prepare for such an epoch and such a conflict?

Men Wanted.

The first need of our country is a want of men. We want men for all sorts of high positions—first-rate men if possible; if not, as nearly first-rate as may be. The supply of such men is never excessive, but as the Empire is larger and larger, the demand is increasing, and the supply seems to be much less elastic. In other words, the development and expansion of the Empire have produced a corresponding demand for first-rate men, but the supply has remained at best stationary. Of course, we do not employ all those that we have, for, by the balance of our Constitution, while one half of our capable statesmen is in full work the other half is, by that fact, standing idle in the market-place with no one to hire them. This used to be on a large scale, but all this is now altered. Anyhow, it is a terrible waste. But, putting that incident apart, even among the fixed eternal stars of the public service, there is not a sufficient supply of men for the purpose of government.

I am not gloomy about all this. I believe that the men, or something of the kind, are there. The difficulty is to find them. The processes of discovery and selection are apt to lead to jobbery. So we employ the slow ladder of a fixed service and of promotion by seniority. Now a senior is a very good thing, but I am sure I shall have the unanimous approval of my constituents in saying that a junior is a better—wherever, at any rate, physical strength and activity are required. Our Civil Service is a noble one—perhaps matchless, certainly unsurpassed. But it does not give us what we want for the elastic needs of the Empire. (Cheers.) A business in these days can live but a short time on its past reputation; and what is true of

must daily become more and more the training for action, for practical purpose. Are there not thousands of lads to-day, plodding away, or supposed to be plodding away, at the ancient classics who will never make anything of these classics, and who at the first possible moment will cast them into space never to reopen them? If you consider, as you will have to consider in the stress of competition, that the time and energy of her citizens is part of the capital of the commonwealth, all those wasted years represent a dead loss to the Empire.

Maintenance and Predominance. "On the training of man, under Providence, depends the future, and the immediate future, of the race; and what is Empire but the predominance of Empire? How is that predominance to be secured? Remember the conditions—nations all becoming more dense and numerous, and therefore more hungry and more difficult to satisfy. It is with intelligence that we have to struggle and to vie. This comes then, have no reason to fear if we choose to arouse ourselves. (Cheers.) We have, I believe, the best natural material in the world. But I do not think we are sufficiently alive to the exigencies of the situation. Nations desire to survive they must constantly sharpen their intelligence and equipment. They need the constant co-operation of the government with the governed; of science and violence with commerce; of the teachers with the taught. Planting a flag here or there or demarcating regions with a red line on a map are vain diversions if they do not imply an unceasing purpose to develop and to maintain. But maintenance requires that we shall be alive to all modern methods.

Individual Responsibilities. I urge you, then, to realize in your own persons and studies the responsibility which rests on yourselves. You are, after all, members of that company of adventurers (used in the Elizabethan and not the modern sense) which is embarked in the business of carrying the British Empire through the twentieth century. Each of you has his share in that glorious heritage, and each of you is answerable for that share. Be, then, practical patriots, intelligent partners, industrious partners, and so you will be in the best sense practical, intelligent, industrious Imperialists. Be inspired in your various callings with the thought of the service that you can do to your country in faithfully following your profession, so that in doing private you are doing public duty too. The Church, the Law, and Medicine, those chaste and venerable sisters, will, I suppose, claim most of you, and in the service of each you have ample opportunities of rendering service to the commonwealth. The Law is the ladder to parliament; and the tribunal of appeal, and I hope will increasingly be, a constitutional body of the Empire. The missions of the churches, and the churches themselves, apart from their sacred functions and home labors, which directly serve the State so far as they raise their flocks, have lucidly aided in the expansion, consolidation, and civilization of the Empire. And Medicine should lead and raise the race, on which all depends. For, from my point of view, there is not a closer in the darkest quarters of Glasgow, or a Crofter's cabin in the Hebrides, which is not a matter of Imperial consequence, quite as truly, in its proportion and degree, as those more glowing to which the adjective is too often limited. And mark this, in all that I have said there is no word of war, not even the beat of a drum, or the distant singing of a bugle. To some the Empire is little else, and that makes many hate the word. That is not my view. Our Empire is not founded on the precedents associated with that name. It is not the realm of conquest which that name has been used to imply. It has often used the sword, it could not exist without the sword, but it does not live by the sword. Defence and readiness to fight are vital enough in their way, but not less vital is the civil and domestic side; the commerce, the education, the intelligence, the unceasing leaven of a high and the sound decadence of a low ideal. War and conquest can fill the lives of but a part of the nation; a sane and simple duty to the Empire may well inspire the whole.

Blessing and Responsibility. And when we work in that spirit we should receive grace from the idea from that glorious vision transformed into fact—the British Empire. Remember how incomparably Shakespeare described it: "This royal throne of kings this scepter'd isle, This earthy palace, this seat of Mars, This other Eden, demi-paradise, This fortress built by Nature for herself Against infection and the hand of war, This happy breed of men—this little world, This precious stone set in the silver sea, This blessed spot, this earth, this realm, this England."

And yet that was only the source and centre of what we now behold, which has soared so far beyond whatever Shakespeare can have conceived. How marvellous it is! Built not by saints and angels, but by the work of men's hands; cemented with men's honest blood and with a world of tears, welded by the best brains of centuries past, not without the taint and reproach incident to all human work, but constructed on the whole with pure and splendid purpose. Human, and yet not wholly human, for the most heedless and the most cynical must see the finger of the Divine. Growing as trees grow, while others slept; fed by the fancies of others as well as by the character of our fathers, reaching with the ripple of a realistic tide over tracts and islands and continents, until our little British woke up to find herself the foster-mother of nations and the source of United Empires. Do we not find in this loss the energy and fortune of a race that the supreme direction of the Almighty? Shall we not, while we adore the blessing, acknowledge the responsibility. And while we see, far away in the rich horizons, growing generations fulfilling the promise, do we not own with resolution implicit with awe the honorable duty incumbent on ourselves? Shall we then, falter or fail? The answer is no doubtful. We will rather pray that strength may be given us adequate and abundant, to shrink from no sacrifice in the fulfilment of our mission; that we may be true to the high tradition of our fathers; and that we may transcend their bequest to our children, and please God, to their remote descendants, enriched and undiminished, this blessed and splendid dominion.

Another meeting of the Marine Engineers' Association was held in the F. S. Slaters' block on Saturday evening, when organization was completed. At a meeting next Saturday evening officers will be elected.