

## LORD SALISBURY

**R**OBERT ARTHUR TALBOT GASCOYNE-CECIL, Marquis of Salisbury, distinguished English statesman and premier, was born at Hatfield, Hertfordshire, Feb. 13, 1830, and educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. He entered Parliament for Stamford in 1853 as Lord Robert Cecil, and was soon known as one of the ablest speakers in Parliament on the Conservative side. On the death of his elder brother, in 1865, he assumed the title of Viscount Cranbourne. He was Secretary of State for India, 1866-67, but resigned from the Cabinet on account of his unwillingness to support the Reform Bill. By the death of his father, in 1868, he succeeded to the title of Marquis of Salisbury and took his seat in the House of Lords. In 1869, he was elected chancellor of the University of Oxford, and on the return of Disraeli to the premiership in February, 1874, he again became Secretary of State for India. He was appointed special ambassador to Turkey in 1876, and in 1878 became Minister of Foreign Affairs. Since the death of Lord Beaconsfield (Mr. Disraeli) in 1881, Salisbury has been the recognized leader of the Conservatives. In 1885, he was Prime Minister, and after a brief Liberal administration was again at the helm as premier in 1886, remaining such until 1892, when he gave place to the Liberal (Home Rule) party under Mr. Gladstone. In 1895, Salisbury became premier for the third time, the most important event occurring within his latest administration being the war with the Boer Republics in South Africa. As a parliamentary speaker, he is distinguished by the force and weight of his utterances, as well as by a biting satire. In conducting the foreign affairs of the Empire, he is always vigorous, dexterous, and astute. He possesses high intellectual ability with a penchant for science.

### TAMPERING WITH THE CONSTITUTION

SPEECH DELIVERED IN 1875 TO THE MIDDLESEX (LONDON) CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

**M**Y LORD MAYOR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,  
—I listened to the resolutions which were read one after another from the various deputations which constitute this very remarkable, significant, and representative meeting, and I could not help wondering why it was that the truths which seemed to be so obvious had not made their

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impression upon her Majesty's government. Why, having this great work to do, did they deliberately depart from the practice of all which had gone before them and raise up gratuitous difficulties in their way?

It was not from any ignorance on their part of the importance of redistribution as an integral portion of reform. I need only quote that sentence of Mr. Bright's which has been quoted again and again, but which I should like to see prefixed as a sort of text to every conservative sermon.

“Repudiate without mercy any bill that any government whatever may introduce, whatever its seeming concessions may be, if it does not redistribute the seats that are obtained from the extinction of small boroughs amongst the large towns.”

But their knowledge was not such ancient history as that. Mr. Bright seems to imagine that he has entirely explained away his utterance given publicly in 1859 by reciting a private note which he says he wrote to Lord Beaconsfield in 1867, and he concludes in the most self-satisfied way that he has entirely explained his previous declaration.

But his colleague on the platform was not less conscious of the necessity of a redistribution of seats. Only on Saturday Lord Hartington is reported to have said, “We admit the inconvenience which will arise if a dissolution should take place.”

If a dissolution should take place, as if Mr. Chamberlain and the wire-pullers were not perfectly resolved on that matter!

“We admit the inconvenience which will arise if any dissolution should take place with the extended numbers of the existing constituencies. We know that that will be no fair representation of the people.”

Well, at least Lord Hartington knew perfectly well what he was about. Then, what was the motive which induced them to undertake this eccentric and abnormal plan of reform? Well, we had some difficulty in measuring it at first. We were told that it was the extraordinary block in the House of Commons, as if blocks in the House of Commons had never existed before the year 1884.

But, fortunately, as the controversy went on candor increased. It is one of the advantages of the thorough discussion which I hope this question will receive between this and November that all false pretences and all hollow pretexts will be dissipated, and the cause which logically and constitutionally is in the right will be triumphantly established.

You know that Mr. Gladstone at the Foreign Office told us that it was necessary that some pressure should be applied to the House of Commons, that he could not hope to pass his Redistribution Bill unless it was put before them in such a manner that they were to understand that if they had no Redistribution Bill they should have to go to the existing constituencies with the new franchise.

That speech of Mr. Gladstone's at the Foreign Office has been apologized for and slurred over. People intimate that he was not exactly possessed of his usual presence of mind when he made it, and that indeed must have been the case, or otherwise how could he deliberately impute to me words which I never uttered, and not only impute them, but make them the basis of a long, and elaborate, and most injurious indictment? He could not have made that statement if his memory had been in its usual condition.

But now Lord Hartington comes forward and explains to us that it was not merely some spontaneous exuberance of

Mr. Gladstone's indignation that produced this explanation. It was the deliberate purpose of the government to establish a machine for controlling and coercing the judgment of the House of Commons and of the House of Lords. Lord Hartington on Saturday said,

"We know that the passing of any really rational or fair Redistribution Bill is an impossibility unless Parliament and all shades of political opinion are acting under some pressure and compulsion, and that compulsion to the House of Commons and to the House of Lords was to be applied by the creature of Parliament, the prime minister of the day."

Such a pretension has never before been made in our history. The most encroaching monarchs have never made it. It has never been pretended that any man, however high his pretensions and great his authority, should have the power given to him of applying pressure and compulsion to Parliament in the discharge of its legislative duties. Well, it is a tremendous claim.

Let us look what grounds have we for believing that such a power, so unexampled, so without parallel in English history, will be exercised with equity and with justice. Mr. Gladstone — I do not wish to use any harsh language in the matter, but this lies on the surface of current history — Mr. Gladstone has been pre-eminent among statesmen for the rigor with which he has used a victory when he has obtained it; for the determination with which he has pressed to the utmost limit any advantage he has obtained over those opposed to him.

It is not, therefore, to his hands that we should like to trust ourselves, without condition and without defence. And if we look to his past conduct, to the past conduct of the Liberal party, or to the professions which they now put for-

ward in respect to this very question of redistribution, it does not exalt our confidence.

I should like to remind you of a little incident in the last redistribution that took place — the redistribution of 1868 — which throws a flood of light on Mr. Bright's views of justice in this matter. There is a certain suburb of Birmingham which is named Aston. It runs in the counties of North Warwickshire and East Worcestershire. At the last redistribution the commissioners — impartially selected men — recommended that this, which was a suburb of Birmingham, and was in continuity with it, and was simply part of the town, should be made part of the borough of Birmingham.

The matter came before the House of Commons. The Liberal party, though the Opposition, were in a majority. Distinctly because this suburb of Aston might have the effect of influencing in the direction which he wished the counties of North Warwickshire and East Worcestershire, distinctly because it belonged to a community in which the ideas that he admired prevailed, Mr. Bright insisted that the recommendation of the commissioners should be discarded, and that Aston — though it was really part of Birmingham — should be thrown into North Warwickshire and East Worcestershire, for the purpose of controlling, by a population which he hoped was devoted to him and imbued with his ideas, a population that he had reason to think was adverse to him. He was supported by the Liberal party, and a majority reversed the decision of the commissioners.

Now, we do not often have a case which shows the precise spirit in which the leading statesman of the dominant party will approach a question of that kind; but that particular case of Aston might be multiplied a hundred times. It involves the whole question of the separation of interests in this coun-

try. It involves the whole question of keeping alive those rural communities which have existed from the first beginning of our parliamentary system. It involves, above all, the avoidance of arrangements devised to give exceptional power to populations which are impregnated with the political doctrines of the ministry of the day.

Now, we may be quite sure that if Parliament is to be under compulsion and pressure — that means to say, if they are forced to accept any redistribution scheme which the government offers them — this precedent and model of Aston will be followed in every county in the kingdom.

But we need not go to instances of the past. Let us look to what we know of Mr. Gladstone's own professions upon this question of redistribution. He has not told us much. Most of his assertions of principle are very little better than platitudes. But one thing he has told us, and that is that the communities which are at a distance from London are to be better represented than the communities which are close.

Now at first sight that seemed like one of those fantastic theories which sometimes cross the brain of a man of genius, but when you look a little closer there is method in the madness. Let us first look at the distant counties which are to be enfranchised. I will confine myself to this island. We get into hot water directly we get into Ireland.

But confining ourselves to this island only, there is Cornwall. I suppose that is a distant county. That has been uniformly Liberal since the Reform Bill. Then there are the Highlands of Scotland. I suppose that Scotland is a distant county. Well, in Scotland the increase of Liberalism, especially among the distant counties, has, to our misfortune, been very considerable. Twenty years ago we had

fifteen Scotch county members. Now we have only six out of thirty-two. Wales, again, that is a distant county — one of the counties to be specially favored under this scheme. Well, in Wales twenty years ago we had a majority. Now we have only two out of thirty seats.

So that those places which Mr. Gladstone wished, by special exception from the numerical principle, to give a decided advantage to, were places in which his own particular politics were violently on the increase. Well, the circumference is to be favored, because it is Gladstonian.

Now, let us look at the centre, which is to receive no favor. Twenty and thirty years ago we had not a single Conservative member in the metropolis. In 1874, dealing with the constituencies which existed then for the sake of comparison, we should have had — but for the minority seat which is an artificial arrangement in this city — we should have had half the members for the metropolis. So that you see what the centre is which is to be treated with marked disfavor so far as the Gladstone scheme is concerned.

Do you think that is wholly accidental? I find it difficult to bring myself to such a conclusion. And it seems to me that that is a guiding line, and that that is a principle which will animate the people when they come to consider the ministerial redistribution scheme. I heard my right honorable friend say — and I cannot help stealing the phrase from him — that it would be a redistribution scheme by results. It will be favorable, so far as it can decently be done, to those parts of the country where Liberal principles obtain, and unfavorable to those parts where Conservatism is at present in the ascendant.

And to show you how embarrassing is this problem of redistribution, how strongly it presses on statesmen, how

incomplete any measure of reform is without it, I should like to compare the representation of the communities represented in this room with the representation of that favored county where Mr. Gladstone lives to which I have just referred — the principality of Wales.

Whereas the principality represents some 1,400,000 inhabitants, we in this room represent some 5,000,000. Is it possible with that fact before you, to go forward with a Reform Bill that shall not include redistribution? Is it possible that, knowing that Mr. Gladstone has laid down a principle that will uplift Wales and depress the metropolis, we should feel confidence and allow him to draw up his own Redistribution Bill? And we have heard something of blank checks; but this is not merely a blank check — this is a blank disposal of all that we possess for all time, given into the hands of a man who, by the previous conduct of his party and by his own previous utterances, has given us every reason to mistrust him.

I meet with the statement that it is very unconstitutional for the House of Lords to indicate when her Majesty's government may in their wisdom please to dissolve Parliament. Well, I should have said, as a matter of constitutional law, that the person who dissolves Parliament is her Majesty the Queen, and that that is one of the few cases in which necessarily, by the hypothesis of the minister being in issue, or being supposed to be in issue with the people, it is precisely one of the cases in which the Sovereign cannot abandon her will absolutely to the guidance of her advisers.

But now there is the question, how far it is legitimate for the House of Lords to press for a dissolution. Well, I think that any such claim on the part of the House of Lords simply would not be justified by the constitution. But the House