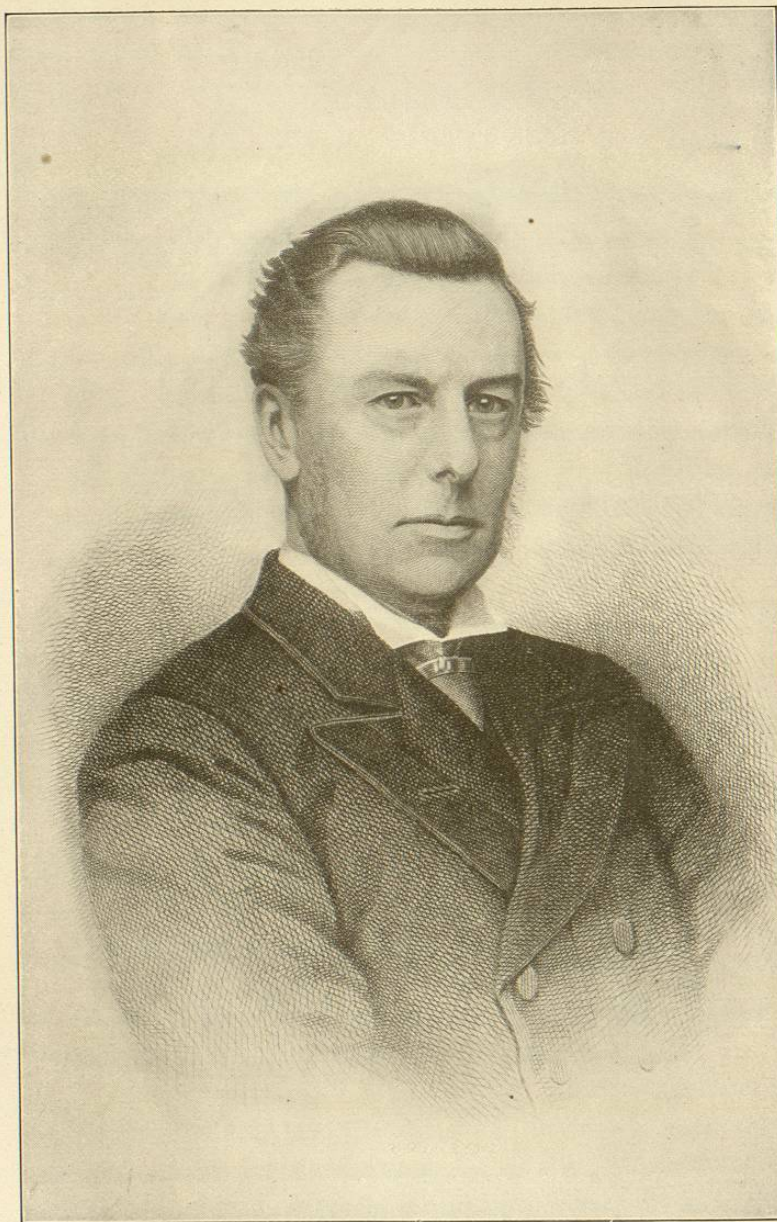


## JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

**R**IGHT HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, P.C., M.P., an eminent English statesman, secretary of state for the colonies of Great Britain, was born in Camberwell, London, July 8, 1836. He was educated privately and later at London University school, but never attended a university. His early years were spent in commerce, but his leisure was devoted to reading, and he early acquired a considerable knowledge of the best English and French literature. At the age of eighteen he removed to Birmingham to represent his father's interests there, and acquired a fortune, largely through his own executive ability in a large screw manufacturing firm, and he retired from business to devote his energies to the practice of politics, at first as an advanced Radical. In his thirty-third year he had been elected chairman of the executive committee of the National Educational League, and this was his advent into politics. In 1869, Mr. Chamberlain was elected to the Birmingham town council, where he took interest in the opening of art galleries on Sunday, the admission of poor children to the grammar school, and other measures then regarded as almost revolutionary. The vigor and ability with which he led the Birmingham agitation against clericalism in the board school won for him his election as mayor of Birmingham in 1873. He was reelected in 1874 and 1875. Mr. Chamberlain's administrations were characterized by a policy of municipal socialism. At this period of his life he was of the opinion that England would eventually become a republic, and in 1874 he had called himself a communist, the word, in his interpretation, meaning "one who fought for the principles of local self-government." In 1874, Mr. Chamberlain stood for Sheffield and was defeated, but two years later he entered Parliament for Birmingham. A ready speaker, concise and to the point, by 1880 his name had become associated with a number of important questions. During the years of his novitiate, Parliament was considering the Eastern question and South Africa, and Mr. Chamberlain was strongly opposed to the Conservative government on both. His political strength had become so great in 1880 that Mr. Gladstone, after offering him the presidency of the Board of Trade, gave him a seat in the Cabinet. He resigned in 1886, because he could not agree with the premier's Irish home-rule policy. He was then returned to Parliament for Birmingham and allied himself with the Conservatives, ultimately becoming not only a Unionist, but an ultra-Conservative and Imperialist. In 1887, Mr. Chamberlain was commissioner from Great Britain to the United States to negotiate a fisheries treaty, and in 1895, as a Liberal-Unionist, he was appointed secretary of state for the colonies in Lord Salisbury's Cabinet, and he has since retained that office; becoming, during the British-Boer War, which began in 1899, a trenchant and aggressive figure in English foreign and domestic politics.

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JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

## ON LIBERAL AIMS

ADDRESS DELIVERED AT BIRMINGHAM, JUNE 3, 1885

**M**R. PAYTON AND GENTLEMEN,—I thank you very much for the cordiality with which you have invited me to be your representative in Parliament, and I take it as an earnest of the spirit and the genuine kindness with which I may hope to be received by the constituency itself. I think you will not be surprised when I say that I come before you to-day with mixed feelings. I am going, I hope, to be your member; but I cannot forget that I am, and that I have been, the representative of the whole of this great constituency, and being and having been member for Birmingham is really a very proud thing to reflect upon.

It is not only that it is, I believe, the largest of the constituencies of the United Kingdom; at the time of the last general election we numbered, I think, something like 65,000 registered electors, and other towns of larger population, like Liverpool and Glasgow, could only muster a few over 60,000. It is not merely the size of the borough which has made it an honor to represent it, it is also the great influence which it has so continuously exercised upon the political life and the legislation of the country; and to represent in the future 10,000 of my fellow townsmen after having represented 65,000, is like living in a cottage after having resided in a palace.

At the same time I hope that the difference is more apparent than real, and that we shall continue to preserve the unity of this great constituency; and that although none of the seven members whom it will now enjoy will be entitled

to speak authoritatively in the name of the whole, yet that as a body we shall speak with the one potent voice of Birmingham, united, as we have been of yore, in the pursuit of every Liberal measure.

Well, I may say that if the separation was to take place, there is no division of the town which it would be personally more gratifying to me to represent than this Western Division. Your Chairman has already alluded to the reasons which make me see a peculiar fitness in the invitation which you have been good enough to address to me.

It is here that I made my first entry into public life. I believe my first political speech was made in a schoolroom in All Saints, under the presidency of my friend the Chairman, and in support of the candidature of Mr. Dixon as one of the members for Birmingham. Afterwards I was connected with many of your leading citizens in establishing that undenominational school, also in All Saints, which gave a practical illustration of the scheme of the National Education League to which Mr. Payton has referred, and which had so large a part in carrying the measure, of the advantages of which he has not said one word too much. As to St. Paul's Ward, I am glad indeed to recollect that it was through the kindness of the electors of St. Paul's Ward that I was introduced to local government and that I gained my experience of local life, which has been to me of the greatest possible value, and which has produced in my mind an enduring conviction of the importance and dignity of our local government, and an anxious desire to extend its functions and to increase the number of those on whom it may be conferred.

Well, then, gentlemen, I may say that I accept with gratitude the invitation which you have addressed to me. If there is to be opposition, I have no doubt that we shall give

a good account of ourselves. And whether there be opposition or not, I have no doubt whatever that, if life is spared to me, somewhere about the end of November I shall be the member for the Western Division of Birmingham.

I thank those who have already addressed you for the kindness with which they have said that from me they ask no profession of faith. Well, it is true that my public and political life has been all before you, and there is probably no subject of the slightest importance on which you do not already know my opinion, and with regard to which you do not know that I will not do all that in me lies to give force to that opinion.

Of course I do not expect that my opinion agrees with yours upon every subject or upon every detail. That would be to presuppose that you yourselves are entirely agreed, which is more, perhaps, than I have a right to expect, even from the constituency which I aspire to represent.

No, gentlemen, but though we may differ sometimes upon details, and sometimes upon methods, I believe that we are agreed upon the main lines of Liberal policy, and that we shall always be found shoulder to shoulder in endeavoring to secure their general acceptance.

Now, this invitation, and the signs of activity which are everywhere around us, are proofs that we have arrived at a stage in our political history. The old order is passing away; the new order is beginning to make itself felt. I am not generally much inclined to indulge in political retrospect—I am more ready to say, "Let the dead past bury its dead; our business is with the present and with the future"; but standing here, as I do, at the turning of the ways, I will venture to assert that when the history of the last five years comes to be written, neither the government of which I have the honor

to be a member, nor the Parliament which was returned to power with such tremendous enthusiasm five years ago, will have any cause to fear its verdict.

When that history comes to be written you know whose will be the central and prominent figure. You know that Mr. Gladstone will stand out before posterity as the greatest man of his time—remarkable not only for his extraordinary eloquence, for his great ability, for his steadfastness of purpose, for his constructive skill, but more, perhaps, than all these, for his personal character, and for the high tone that he has introduced into our politics and public life. I sometimes think that great men are like great mountains, and that we do not appreciate their magnitude while we are close to them. You have to go to a distance to see which peak it is that towers above its fellows; and it may be that we shall have to put between us and Mr. Gladstone a space of time before we shall see how much greater he has been than any of his competitors for fame and power.

I am certain that justice will be done to him in the future, and I am not less certain that there will be a signal condemnation of those men who, moved by motives of party spite in their eagerness for office, have not hesitated to load with insult and indignity the greatest statesman of our time, who had not allowed even his age, which should have commanded their reverence, or his experience, which entitled him to their respect, or his high personal character, or his long service to his Queen and to his country, to shield him from the vulgar affronts and lying accusations of which he has nightly been made the subject in the House of Commons. He, with his great magnanimity, can afford to forget and forgive these things; those whom he has served long it behooves to remember them, to resent them, and to punish them.

Now, I have said, gentlemen, that I do not think that this Parliament will have any cause to fear the verdict of history. Just contrast it for a moment with the Parliament which preceded it. That was a Parliament and a government which came into power under the most exceptionally favorable circumstances. Ireland was contented, there was peace all over the world, the finances were in the most admirable order. Never was there a better opportunity for a great and patriotic statesman to promote measures of urgent domestic importance, and yet I venture to say that during the whole existence of that Parliament, with the exception, perhaps, of the Artisans' Dwellings Act of Sir Richard Cross, which was, unfortunately, an unsuccessful, but which was, I believe, a well-meant attempt to grapple with a great social evil,—with that exception there is not, I believe, one single Act to which the future historian will deem it necessary to make even a passing reference.

But now, when we came into power, everything was changed. There was trouble all over the world. South Africa was in a state of anarchy: there had been war, shortly to be renewed, in Afghanistan; Ireland was dissatisfied, and was on the eve of the greatest agitation which has ever convulsed that country since the Tithe War; the finances were in hopeless confusion; and yet, in spite of all these things, in spite of obstruction carried with the tacit approval of the leaders of the Tory party up to the height of a science, and in spite of the most factious Opposition that I believe this country has ever known, there has not been a single session which has passed without measures of important reform finding their place in the statute-book, without grievances being redressed and wrongs being remedied.

We have abolished flogging in the army, we have suspended

the operation of the odious Acts called the Contagious Diseases Acts, we have amended the game laws, we have reformed the burial laws, we have introduced and carried our Employers' Liability Bill, we have had a Bankruptcy Act, a Patents Act, and a host of secondary measures which, together, would have formed the stock-in-trade of a Tory government for twenty years at least; and yet these are only the fringe, only the outside, of the more important legislation of our time, the chief elements in which have been the Irish Land Bill and the Reform Bill.

The Irish Land Bill alone is a monument of Mr. Gladstone's genius. He probably was the only man who could have successfully dealt with so gigantic, so complicated, and so difficult a subject. But he has passed two great measures dealing with that subject, giving to the Irish tenant full security of tenure, and now, at all events, he enjoys in their entirety all the improvements which he may make in his holding. And sometimes, gentlemen, I cannot but wish that Liberals would have a little more faith in their principles, and a little more trust in the remedial legislation which they have assisted to pass.

If Ireland is pacified at the present moment I do not attribute it to coercion bills; I attribute it to the reform of the land laws and to the removal of the deep-seated agrarian grievance of the Irish peasant. Coercion may be necessary at times. Murder, and outrage, and assassination are things which no government can tolerate, which no honest man will lift a finger to approve; and when these things stalk through the land, then they must be put down at all hazards and at all risk, by every means within the power of the legislature and of the government. But coercion is for an emergency.

It is nonsense to talk of a constitutional system and con-

stitutional government if the constitution is always being suspended. When the emergency is over, then it is the duty of wise statesmen to seek out the causes of discontent and to endeavor to remedy them. Well, I believe that one of the greatest of Irish problems is still before us, and must wait for its solution until the new Parliament, whose advent we anticipate with so much interest and with such expectations.

Mr. Gladstone has removed two of the greatest grievances of Ireland. He has disestablished an alien church and he has reformed the land laws. But there remains a question as important, possibly even more important, than both these two, and that is, to give in Mr. Gladstone's own words, the widest possible self-government to Ireland which is consistent with the maintenance of the integrity of the empire. What we have to do is to conciliate the national sentiment of Ireland. We have to find a safe means between separation on the one hand, which would be disastrous to Ireland and dangerous to England, and that excessive centralization, on the other hand, which throws upon the English Parliament and upon English officials the duty and burden of supervising every petty detail of Irish local affairs, which stifles the national life, which destroys the sense of responsibility, which keeps the people in ignorance of the duties and functions of government, and which produces a perpetual feeling of irritation while it obstructs all necessary legislation. That is the problem, and I do not believe that the resources of statesmanship are exhausted, or that it will be impossible to find a solution.

We are going to have a new Parliament, when for the first time the whole people will be represented. We shall know what is the authoritative expression of the wishes of the majority of the people of Ireland. That is a great thing, and

this authoritative expression of the wishes of the people of Ireland will be submitted to the judgment, not of classes, nor of those who are prejudiced by the existence of privileges or by separate and individual claims and rights, but to the whole people of England and Scotland. And when I think how much importance the English and the Scotch people attach to local government, when I know how we in the towns prize it, when I know how Liberals in the country desire it, when I know how Liberals in the metropolis are asking for it, I do not believe for a moment that they will hesitate before conceding to Ireland all the liberties and all the freedom which they will claim for themselves.

Well, now, gentlemen, I do not think I need dilate upon the circumstances or the manner in which what has been called the greatest reform, the greatest constitutional reform since the Revolution of 1688, has been carried through. The Tories opposed it, as they have opposed every measure of reform, as long as they dared, and until they saw the passions of the people were so aroused that it would be dangerous to resist any longer. They opposed it and attempted to delay it, attempted to minimize it, and now with characteristic effrontery, they are taking the credit for the passing of a measure which, if their power had been equal to their will, we should never have seen upon the statute-book of the land.

But though they have changed their language they have not changed their tactics. We have had a taste of their spirit, even within the last few weeks. What the Tories have not dared to do in the House of Commons, they have put up their confederates in the House of Lords to do for them, and by making medical relief a disqualification for the franchise they have taken away with the one hand what they gave with the other, and they have kept out from the enjoyment of their

electoral rights probably one fourth of those whom we sought to enfranchise.

Well, this is monstrous injustice. It is an intolerable thing that a poor laborer, with his twelve shillings or possibly fourteen shillings a week, should be placed, in time of sickness and trouble in his family, between the alternative of either losing his electoral rights or of leaving his family without the assistance which medical skill could afford. It is an iniquity which, if it be not set right in the present Parliament, it will be the first duty of the new Parliament to correct. In the meantime I do not doubt that the new electors, those of them to whom the Lords in their great mercy have still left their votes, will know how to judge between the two parties in the State, and will know what trust to place in the assurances which the leaders of that party are giving of their confidence in the people.

Well, gentlemen, if I were to stop here, although I think I should have made out a pretty fair case for our domestic policy, I should lay myself open to the remark, "Oh, but you have said nothing about foreign policy; you confess, then, that that, at all events, is a failure, and that there you have broken down."

I am not going to confess anything of the kind; I am not going to make any such admission. I am going to claim your support for the main line of our foreign policy just as earnestly, and with as full a conviction of your assent, as I have claimed your support for our domestic policy.

I do not say that we have not made mistakes. I think it would be a very extraordinary administration indeed which, dealing with such difficult and complicated business as has been placed before us recently, had not made any mistakes; it would be very wonderful if, looking back now with fuller