



LORD ROSEBERY

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**A**RCHIBALD PHILIP PRIMROSE, P.C., K.G., LL.D., fifth Earl of Rosebery, a distinguished English Liberal statesman, was born at London, May 7, 1847, and was educated at Eton and Christ Church College, Oxford University. He succeeded to the title in 1868 by the death of his grandfather, before he reached his majority, and his first appearance in Parliament was in the House of Lords. His first speech was made in 1871, when he was selected by Mr. Gladstone to second the address in reply to the Queen's speech from the throne. During the next few years he took part occasionally in the debates, always speaking with animation, and with eloquence and force. A Liberal in politics, and a warm admirer of the late Mr. Gladstone, he sat in the latter's cabinet in 1881-83 as under-secretary of home affairs. During the brief Liberal rule of 1885 he was lord privy seal and first commissioner of public works, and in 1886 he was appointed secretary of foreign affairs. While holding this position he conducted the foreign policy on the general lines followed in the preceding Conservative government and endeavored to keep it removed as far as possible from the influence of party strife. He was one of the most ardent supporters in the House of Lords of Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill. In 1888, he became a member of the London county council, and in the last Gladstone administration was again minister of foreign affairs. On the retirement of Mr. Gladstone, in March, 1894, Lord Rosebery succeeded him as Prime Minister, holding office until the return of the Conservative party to power in 1895. Lord Rosebery is a man of wide sympathies, and has manifested much interest in ameliorating the condition of the laboring classes. He was lord rector of Aberdeen University, 1878-81, and of Edinburgh University, 1882-83. He has published a "Life of Pitt" (1891); "Speeches, 1874-96" (1896); "Appreciations and Addresses" (1889); and an interesting study of "Napoleon." Unlike most of the Liberal party, with which he is not always politically in accord, he is a pronounced Imperialist.

### THE TRUE LEVERAGE OF EMPIRE

DELIVERED AT THE SOCIAL SCIENCE CONGRESS, GLASGOW,  
SEPTEMBER 30, 1874

**I**F, in addressing this great meeting, I were to speak out of the fulness of my heart, I should tell of nothing but my own misgivings. But it is too much the practice on these occasions to take up time selfishly in apologies. You asked me kindly and generously to come here to-night. I thought it a clear duty to obey your summons and recipro-

cate your sympathy. But none the less sensible am I of my own deficiencies and of my need of your further large indulgence; none the less do I feel as if I were only placed in this prominent position to serve as a foil to the ripe wisdom of so many in this Congress.

It is impossible for any one at my age to pretend to instruct—few can have adequate knowledge; none sufficient experience. I can offer, then, no fresh contribution to your stock of information. I can only, as it were, set in motion my small share of electric current of sympathy and interest, which is surely not the least valuable of the features of this Congress. But I would before all express my pride and my joy at making this first visit to Glasgow under the auspices of your association. There are probably few places to which an Englishman can point with more pride than to Glasgow; none perhaps which a Scotchman can regard with so much.

I suppose that there are in this city 500,000 inhabitants; that the rental amounts to £2,500,000; that the shipbuilding of the Clyde is supreme in the world. How long has it taken to produce this immense result? What is the origin of this great population? Whence dates this easy predominance in shipping, this vast collection of material wealth?

Two centuries ago Glasgow was officially described as "a neat burgh town, consisting of four streets." At that time she possessed twelve vessels carrying 957 tons. In the year 1718, little more than a century and a half ago, the first Scottish ship that ever crossed the Atlantic—a vessel of sixty tons—was launched in the Clyde, which has since witnessed the building of the Cunard line of steamers. And as for her rental of £2,500,000, it has been computed that the

rental of the whole of Scotland did not a century ago exceed £1,000,000 sterling.

We could not, indeed, have chosen a more suggestive scene for our Congress, or one where social science should be more dear. For here we have a great material result rapidly produced by the exertions of a vast laboring population; and no one surely, in considering the labors of this Congress and its functions, can avoid seeing that the most vital and perpetual question before it is the well-being of our working classes; a vital question, because on the apt solution of it depends the commercial supremacy, the political solidarity, nay, the very existence of our empire. To my mind a body like ours has no more direct or important duties than the attempt to raise the condition of the nation by means which Parliament is unable or disdains to apply.

Here we have an illimitable field of operations. Parliament can give a workman a vote; it cannot give him a comfortable home. Nor can it sift and exhibit the many contrivances which may be placed before him for bettering himself or increasing his capacities and enlarging his enjoyments.

All this lies within our province, and it is work incalculably more important than the great mass of our parliamentary legislation. In this century we are surrounded by a great aggregation of humanity, seething, laboring, begrimed humanity; children of toil who have made Glasgow what she is and can alone raise and maintain her; not mere machines of production, but vehicles of intelligence, mixed in nationality and various in opinion.

You cannot appeal to them by common feelings or uniform interests. They are there, a dark and mighty power, like the Cyclopean inmates of *Ætna*. I must honestly avow my conviction—though to those who see how many there are who

profess to represent and understand the working classes it may seem rash, while to others it may seem a truism—that this vast laboring population of ours has not made itself, its wants, its creeds, and its interests sufficiently intelligible to many of us. How indeed, if it be otherwise, is it that the problems connected with their condition have advanced so little toward solution? How is it, otherwise, that each political party claims with equal certainty and on every point to possess the sympathy and confidence of the workingman? How else is it that, when the working class makes its voice heard on any question, it comes upon us like thunder in a clear sky? I avow myself no exception to the rule, but for that very reason, perhaps, I can conceive no subjects more interesting than those which relate to the welfare of our laboring population.

Perhaps, then, you will allow me to disregard the ordinary precedent upon these occasions. The opening address of this Congress has commonly surveyed the present position of those questions with which your Society is accustomed to deal, or which it watches with interest. But speaking, as I do, in the presence of many who, in the various sections, will discuss such subjects with ripe authority of knowledge and experience, I should feel it presumptuous in me to poise a light sentence or hazard a shallow conjecture where my hearers can for themselves sound the very depth and perhaps approximate solution.

I will, then, if you please, attempt to-night to take stock in some degree of the various means by which it is sought to raise the condition of the working classes; a group of subjects some of which appear under different divisions in your programme, but which are ultimately—I had almost said solemnly—connected together; and I would do so rather

as a sign of humble interest in them than with the slightest pretension of having anything original to advance.

The moment is as suitable as the place for the discussion of these vital and national questions. In times such as these, of high wage, of general peace, of immunity from furious political discord, the well-being of the laboring classes often appears secured and does not always attract the attention of statesmen. It is, however, precisely then that it is possible to take measures which, without exciting jealousy on one hand and suspicion on the other, may secure that well-being in less prosperous times. It is then that even the Greeks may innocently bring gifts.

But should there come a European war such as we weathered successfully at the beginning of the century, but which left us surrounded for the most part with battered wrecks and with stranded hulls, we might possibly find our teeming population, confined within so small an ark, a perilous and disheartening agency.

Moreover, while our numbers increase in a greater proportion daily, it would seem that for a few years our principal outlet for emigration may be partially blocked up. It appears more than probable that for some time, owing to late commercial disasters, and it may be because corn-growing in the West has been somewhat overdone, the United States will not find employment for that million and a quarter of emigrants, more or less, that we are accustomed annually to send to her. This is the most important problem which can occupy statesmen; and at the same time the most difficult for a statesman to face. For Parliament can seldom see its way to interference. Nor is it, indeed, desirable that it should do so.

Legislatures and governments have at various times, by

direct laws, attempted to benefit the working classes; but the most obvious instances of this—the National Workshops of 1848, and the decrees of the Parisian Commune in 1871—have been conspicuous failures.

It is well, then, that in this present time, so peaceful and blessed for us, we can here discuss, however slowly and imperfectly, the pregnant topics which our programmes suggest. And there is so much to be done; our civilization is so little removed from barbarism! At this moment there is a daily column in the newspapers devoted to recording brutal outrages, where human beings have behaved like wild beasts. Every policeman in London is assaulted on an average about once in two years. Within the memory of living men, the workmen at the salt-pans of Joppa, only a mile or two from Edinburgh, were serfs—*adscripti glebæ*—and sold along with the land on which they dwelt. Neither they nor their children could remove from the spot or alter their calling. The late Lord Provost of Edinburgh, who bears the honored name of Chambers, records his having talked to such men.

What a hell, too, was that described to Lord Ashley's Commission of 1842. In the mines were women and children employed as beasts; dragging trucks on all fours, pursuing in fetid tunnels the degraded tasks which no animal could be found to undertake. We know that equal horrors existed in the brickfields two or three years ago, where there were 30,000 children employed, looking like moving masses of the clay they bore, whose ages averaged from three and one-half years to seventeen; and when an average case was thus described:

"I had a child weighed very recently, and though he was somewhat over eight years old he weighed but 52½ pounds, and was employed carrying 43 pounds of clay on his head an

average distance of 15 miles daily, and worked 73 hours a week. This is only an average case of what many poor children are doing in England at the present time; and we need not wonder at their stunted and haggard appearance when we take into account the tender age at which they are sent to their Egyptian tasks."

Then again:

"All goodness and purity seems to become stamped out of these people; and were I to relate [says a witness who has worked himself in the brickfields] what could be related, the whole country would become sickened and horrified."

It would not indeed be difficult, and it would be painfully instructive, to draw out a dismal catalogue of facts to prove how little the splendor of our civilization differs from the worst horrors of barbarism.

And yet, after all, we can only come to the hackneyed conclusion that the sole remedy for this state of things is education, a humanizing education. It is not a particularly brilliant or original thing to say, but severe truth is seldom brilliant and original. There is a noble passage in De Tocqueville, known probably to all and too long to quote here, which points out that knowledge is the arm of democracy; that every intellectual discovery, every development of science, is a new source of strength to the people; that thought and eloquence and imagination, the divine gifts which know no limit of class, even when bestowed on the enemies of the popular cause, yet serve it by exalting the natural grandeur of man; and that literature is the vast armory, open to all indeed, but where the poor, who have hardly any other, may always find their weapons. These, I say, are features of education which all recognize, though some may profess to dread them.

But there is a general expediency besides. Take the case of machinery. The winter nights of 1830 were bright with blazing rick-yards. No farmer in the southern counties felt his stacks safe. There was a time of terror in England, and of retribution.

"In Kent," says Miss Martineau, "there were gibbets erected in Penenden Heath, and bodies swung there in the December winds, bodies of boys about eighteen or nineteen years old, but looking much younger; brothers who had said to each other on arriving at the gallows, 'That looks an awful thing!'"

Again, take the Luddite riots of 1812 and 1816, where cunning and furious mobs nearly stamped out lace manufacture at Nottingham. The broken frames and the burning ricks were ignorant protests against machinery. Well, intelligence has marched a little, and what is the case now? What do the associated masters—no unduly partial authority—affirm? The accuracy of this statement is manifest from the fact that the operatives are now the earnest advocates for improvements in machinery; whereas twenty years ago it was no uncommon thing for them to strike at the factory where they were introduced. Here, it seems to me, we can put our finger on definite and tangible progress, due solely to increased intelligence.

Take another case which shows the need of it. Wages were probably never so high in England as in 1873. Nine years before, an increasing spirit duty paid £9,692,515 to the Excise. In the last financial year the Excise receipts from spirits amounted to £14,639,562.

I am not one of those who are appalled, certainly not surprised, by this expenditure. But see how it strengthens the argument. A man who has but natural instincts to guide

him comes into a fortune, and at once procures himself an increased quantity of what has been in smaller doses an enjoyment and a solace. Has he been educated to find his amusement elsewhere? If one of us should succeed to a large fortune to-morrow, we certainly should not spend our inheritance in drink; but the difference, I venture to say, is solely one of culture.

Well, my contention is that in an educated country, among a nation educated not in Shakespeare and the musical glasses, but so instructed as to be able to find amusement outside the skittle-alley and the public-house, a great increase in wages would not have been followed by so enormous an increase in the consumption of spirits; and an enormous consumption of spirits means an enormous amount of crime and pauperism. . . .

I now come to a large division of the subject where we may thankfully remember that much has been effected during the last session of Parliament.

We have considered some of the means, at any rate, of ameliorating, morally and physically, the great mass of the nation; and as we have discussed how, by education, we can ensure the progressive march of intellect among rising and future generations, so it will not be out of place if I dwell here for a moment on another question which relates to the physical preservation and improvement of our race.

We all know to a certain extent the history of factory legislation, how the sacred tradition of the great work was handed down by the first Sir Robert Peel, whose claims to national gratitude have been so beautifully obscured by the greater claims of his illustrious son: to Oastler and V Adler, and Hobhouse and Ashley, and Mundella. In the last session of Parliament the main principles of Mr. Mundella's