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JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN---A SPENT FORCE

The Pitiful Decline of One of the Greatest Forces in British Political Life---His Power as an Orator and Some of His Great Achievements.

Liverpool, June 3.—Mr. Joseph Chamberlain has met with a hard fate. Instead of passing away, like Beaconsfield, at the height of his fame, or like Gladstone enjoying an honored rest in his declining years, he has been paralyzed both mentally and physically, and now drags out a wretched existence a burden to his relatives, and a mere object of pity to those who formerly revered and admired, or feared and hated him. For this, neither a cruel destiny nor a harsh Providence can be blamed. It is the natural result of Mr. Chamberlain's lifelong shrinking from physical exercise. It was his boast at sixty-five years of age that, though he had never indulged in any sports, he possessed more than the average alertness. If his destination were less than a mile away he would hire a conveyance. On his voyage home from South Africa, in 1903, when presenting the prizes for the usual matches on board ship, he observed that athletics were not altogether without their uses! Even his famous hobby of orchid-culture has not involved any personal exertion, for he has contented himself with merely superintending the work. It is thus not too much to say that the terrible breakdown might have been anticipated. Charles Dickens, recognizing the danger in his own case, used to tear over the Downs for hours, frequently covering more than twenty miles at a stretch, since he found that the physical exertion relieved the mental strain. Chamberlain's state duties and responsibilities have been quite as exacting as the labors of authorship. Had the unrelaxed strain which he put upon his faculties during nearly half a century of public life not ended in some such catastrophe, it would have been little short of a miracle.

AN ELECTION DODGE

A striking testimony to his past greatness was afforded by the attempts made during the recent election to trade upon his name. Manifestoes were issued from time to time, urging the support of Conservative candidates were read at public meetings and published in the newspapers, all purporting to emanate from him. One or two prominent speakers gave utterances to views with which they professed to have been favoured by Chamberlain in the course of long private conversations. On all these points, keen observers had their doubts. The views expressed were the commonplaces of Conservatism. They revealed no originality and gave no inspiration. The manifestoes were totally different in style from those stirring addresses to the nation which were almost worthy to be compared to Napoleon's immortal appeals to the Old Guard. In other words, the voice was not the voice of Chamberlain!

PITIFUL REAPPEARANCE

These doubts were strongly confirmed by his sensational reappearance in the House of Commons on the 15th of last February. He had almost to be carried by Lord Morpeth and his son was not the voice of Chamberlain. Austen. Not only was he unable to write his name on the membership roll, but he seemed incapable of understanding the words of the oath which were slowly repeated to him, or rather spoken in his ear. Even then, his tongue could scarcely articulate them. As we read the account of this pitiful visit to the scene of his former triumphs, we feel compelled to ask, Did that hand pen, or that tongue dictate, or that mind compose, the letters published in his name less than two months before? The idea is preposterous. As a matter of fact that public reappearance was an egregious tactical blunder. It "gave the snow away." And now was it justified? All was done, we are told, in order that West Birmingham might still be represented. After going through the due formalities, Mr. Chamberlain might be brought down to the House to vote in critical divisions or, better still, be paired with a Liberal member. All I can say is that any Liberal who consented to pair with a man who must be carried to the House to record his vote would be a traitor to his party.

A POWERFUL SPEAKER

It is easy to see why the Conservatives, who possess very few capable men beside Mr. Balfour to oppose the powerful Ministers who compose the present Cabinet, should be anxious to claim the support of Mr. Chamberlain. From June 1876, when he entered Parliament, until his misfortune compelled his retirement, he was beyond question one of the most effective orators in this country. Mr. Morris, in his splendid biography, makes this striking admission, "Had he been an ineffective speaker or an unready debater, it is doubtful if his great gifts of administration and organization would have given him his leading position." Such being the case, we are interested to learn how his speaking abilities were developed.

He scorned ambiguity and never gave anything to do with these clever

evasions which form so large a part of Mr. Balfour's stock-in-trade. In truth, he has paid dearly for his clearness, since the most powerful arguments against his later positions have been drawn from his earlier speeches. Tariff reformers, who follow him today, have no harder task than to cope with his Free Trade utterances of 1885 to 1895. He used few gestures, his left hand holding the paper containing his few notes being usually behind his back.

HIS BITTER SARCASM.

His most powerful weapon was sarcasm, and it was used unsparingly. Many a measure did he damn forever with his pitiless denunciation; many a man became his life-long enemy through cutting phrases. For that reason he could never have managed the House of Commons. Its successful leadership requires that polished persuasiveness and unflinched unbanity, of which Disraeli, Gladstone, Campbell-Bannerman and Balfour have been perfect exponents. But Chamberlain utterly disregarded the time-honored political maxim "to treat enemies as if they might one day become friends, and friends as if they might in future turn enemies." His bitterness has been ascribed to his impatience of opposition to any cause he had at heart. I have heard him at his best and have little hesitation in saying that he took a fiendish delight in crushing an opponent, and would sacrifice a great deal to "bring down the house" with a happy hit. Let me give an illustration. He spoke to an immense audience at Hengler's Circus in Liverpool, soon after the rejection by the Lords of the second Home Rule Bill in 1893. During the debate on that Bill in the Commons, Mr. Chamberlain had caused a free fight on the floor of the House by declaring that the real question at issue was "whether the interests of Great Britain were to be controlled by delegates from Ireland nominated by priests, elected by illiterate, and subsidised by the enemies of England." Not content with that achievement he made this further attack on the Irish party in his speech at Liverpool:—"Last Sunday we had a demonstration against the House of Lords, which was supposed to be representative of the great Metropolis. Now, if I remember rightly, London contains about four and a half million people. Out of that vast number, only 100,000 were found fools enough to go to Hyde Park. And by whom were they addressed? By the leaders of our great political parties? By men of any party, or any note? The speakers ladies and gentlemen, were Dr. Tanner, Tim Healy and Mr. O'Brien." It is quite impossible for me to convey an adequate impression of the scornful incisiveness with which these names were rasped out.

DEBATING SOCIETY TRAINING.

He owed little to education. After attending two private schools between the ages of eight and fourteen, he entered London University College School, where he remained two years. That completed his scholastic career, for at sixteen he joined his father in the leather business. Though he had no university training himself, he did not despise its advantages and has had his son trained at Trinity College, Cambridge. After all, perhaps it is as well that the great statesman did not enter a university. He was above all else a man of business and needed commercial experience rather than scholastic training. The university might have robbed him of his striking individuality by inducing conformity to an accepted standard. It was a lucky day for him when, at the age of eighteen, he joined the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society. At the very first meeting after his election, he spoke against the proposition "That the character and conduct of Oliver Cromwell do not entitle him to the admiration of posterity," and soon became a regular speaker in the society, whose 200 members included many university graduates, doctors, architects, lawyers, manufacturers and tradesmen. Though possessed of abundant confidence, he used to memorize elaborate compositions, until an ignominious failure due to lapse of memory led him to abandon that laborious method. Afterwards he ensured a mastery of facts, but relied for their expression on the inspiration of the moment. He was thus enabled to throw off those brilliant improvisations in which he delighted and was not foiled by interruptions, but turned them to his own advantage.

HIS PLATFORM METHODS.

His voice was clear and powerful, but unemotional. His face was equally impassive, whether his audience applauded or hissed. On paper the sentences in his great orations appear easy and somewhat involved, but their complexity was relieved by the slow deliberation with which they were uttered. He was extremely easy to report, yet never wearisome, even to the commonplace listener, because telling points bristled in every speech. His professed aim was to speak out plainly, simply, fully and forcibly—an

art which he declared to be within the reach of any man of ordinary ability who would take the trouble to acquire it.

HATRED OF THE IRISH

He bitterly attacked the Irish on other occasions. When he was accused in the House of undue partiality to English political organizations, and asked how he could reconcile his support of the Primrose League with his open hostility to the Irish Land League, he retorted, "I will answer that question in true Hibernian fashion by asking another. When did the Primrose dame fire into houses, and when did they mutilate cattle?" During those exciting debates on Irish affairs, he displayed a command of facts and dates which seemed perfectly marvellous; but it is now well known that much of the material was placed at his disposal by private members who felt sure that their bullets could be entrusted to no better marksman. He was at that time the best hated man in Parliament.

HIS INCONSISTENCY.

That Mr. Chamberlain has never been Premier is entirely owing to his inconsistency. No sooner has he come to be recognized as a leader in any party than he has quarrelled with his colleagues and gone over to the opposition. He has been in turn Republican, Radical, moderate Liberal, Liberal Unionist, Conservative, Free Trader and Tariff Reformer. One of "Punch's" famous cartoons, entitled "Scorning the base degrees by which he did ascend" represented a statue of Chamberlain every step in whose lofty pedestal was labelled with a discarded title. One of his biographers has endeavored to justify him by quoting the legal maxim of the late Lord Russell of Killowen, that "if you will only get up all the facts of a case, it is ten to one you need not trouble yourself about the law." This apologist contends that he is independent of any political school. His method has always been to collect all data bearing upon the question of the day and reason it out for himself. He would then adhere to his decision, whether or not it agreed with the policy of the party with which he happened to be nominally associated. He attacked the House of Lords when it resisted the extension of the Franchise, because its opposition was unjust, he praised it for rejecting the Home Rule Bill, because it rendered the nation signal service. He opposed Disraeli's Imperial policy because it relied too much on Turkish self-reform which he distrusted. Under different conditions he has become a great Imperialist himself. He was an ardent Free Trader and recommended that the Colonies should be left to look after themselves until he became convinced that other nations were taking unfair advantage in trade; from that time he advocated Protection, and the binding of the Colonies to the Mother Country by a mutual system of preferential tariffs. These arguments are very ingenious. Let us see if they will stand close examination.

CRITICISM OF THE PEERS

Take the first case of the House of Lords. Mr. Chamberlain's indictment was powerful and unanswerable. In 1868, in reference to the Peers' opposition to the Bill for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, he said in Birmingham Town Hall: "It is scarcely likely that we shall sit tamely by and see our efforts frustrated by the obstinacy or bigotry of one hundred or two hundred persons, however highly placed they may be. The majority in the Commons represents the wishes of 6,000,000 people. The Peers opposed to them represent three things. Some of them represent the oppression of Feudal lords in times gone by, when people were expected to be grateful for being ruled by the aristocracy. In the second place, some of them represent the great wealth acquired by the possession of land in the vicinity of large towns, which land enriched its proprietors without care or labor on their part. And, lastly, they represent, and very imperfectly too, in many cases the brains, intelligence and acquisitions of ancestors long since dead, who unfortunately have been unable to transmit to their descendants the talents by which they rose. It was of such men as these that Lord Bacon related it was customary in his time to say they were like potatoes—the best part was underground." Now, I submit that this description applied with equal force to the House of Lords when it rejected the Home Rule Bill of 1903 and the Budget of 1909. Its constitution has not changed one iota. It no more represents the mass of the people now than it ever did. Chamberlain's decisions regarding it were not based on abstract principles of justice and injustice, but entirely on his own erratic moods. If the Peers echoed the personal opinion they showed their wisdom and served the nation well if they opposed him, no language was too strong to denounce their survival in the Legislature.

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WALL PAPER

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ARDENT FREE TRADER

His Tariff Reform campaign is still less defensible. On Nov. 12, 1885, he related his own business experience in the following words:—"At the time of which I am speaking, the Americans had a duty of about 100 per cent. on screws. That was to protect this poor industry to keep it in the country for the benefit of the working classes. Well, in spite of that duty of 100 per cent. we were able to send screws there, and we did send very large quantities. What happened? The American manufacturers came over here and they said 'We are making 100 per cent. on our capital. If you continue to send screws to America we shall, of course be obliged to reduce our prices. That won't be good for either of us. Now, let us make a bargain. We'll pay you so much a year to sit still and not send a screw to America. Well, they did it, and my firm received a handsome income for years from the American manufacturers, protected as they were by the folly and stupidity of this Protectionist legislation. It is right that you should know these things, and that when these quick remedies are proposed to you, you should understand what is the result of taking them.' To my mind it is almost inconceivable that a man to whom the evils of Protection had been brought home so forcibly through the medium of his own business, should afterwards become a sincere advocate of the pernicious system.

A DESPERATE DIVERSION

As a matter of fact, I do not believe even yet that Mr. Chamberlain is a genuine convert to Tariff Reform. It is significant that his new doctrines were first taught in the speech he delivered at Birmingham on his return from his visit to South Africa after the war. A Royal Commission had exposed wholesale bribery and corruption. Our War Office administration had been proved to be one long series of mistakes and scandals. The public were

shocked by the amazing revelations. Mr. Chamberlain, as Colonial Secretary, had been mainly responsible for the war. Through its gross mismanagement, he was in imminent danger of sacrificing that popularity which was so dear to him, and of losing the high position he had gained by years of devoted service. Public attention must be diverted from the war scandals at all costs! And how could the supreme object be better attained than by attacking the principle on which our trade had depended for fifty years? His colleagues were naturally placed in a very awkward position by his unblinking change of front. Mr. Balfour has done his best to meet the altered situation by repeated re-statements of his position. Many Conservatives have persuaded themselves into a sincere belief in the efficacy of Tariff Reform; others betray a lingering attachment to Free Trade, while others again have gladly used the cry of "Tax the foreigner" to cover their antipathy to Liberal schemes or social reform. But let it never be forgotten that Mr. Chamberlain probably drew this red herring across the path of British politics to save himself!

THE BUSY BOXERS

Joe Gans who is slowly dying of tuberculosis in Phoenix Arl, realizes that his end is near. He figures he is worth between \$60,000 and \$70,000 and he has sent word to a friend in Baltimore to see that his mother is well cared for. He has divided his estate between his mother and wife. "I always thought of my mother when boxing," said the ex-champion, "and it gave me courage. She was my best friend. This is a tough finish for me, but I want to see her taken care of." Harry Mansfield, a prominent English featherweight who defeated Jim Driscoll a few years ago, died in Bristol, Eng., the other night. Matty Baldwin has gone to New Dorp Staten island to rest until the fall.