

THE BRITISH ELECTION ADDRESS

A NOTABLE FEATURE OF ENGLISH POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

BY
GEORGE L. FOX
New Haven, Conn.

[From the *Yale Review*, February, 1911.]

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AN American, who has had the opportunity to be present in Great Britain during an exciting general parliamentary election, must have noted with keen interest the differences between some of the methods connected with the formal registry of the will of the voters in the ballot box in the mother country and the customs of our own campaigns and elections. The writer, who was present as a close student of the epochal Budget campaign of December, 1909, and January, 1910, from the point of view of a citizen of the United States, found in the English methods some things to condemn and others to admire. Among the latter, the so-called "election address," which each candidate for the House of Commons is expected to issue to his constituents within two months or less of the date of election, should take high rank.

What the origin of this custom was, and for how many years it has been the unwritten law of England for a candidate to issue such an address to his constituents, it is not easy to determine with exactness. The oldest documents, thus far discovered in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, which are unmistakable election addresses go back to 1780. Some other documents, issued in 1749, may constitute an election address, though not in that distinct form. Certain it is that the English of the present day look upon it as a commonplace of politics, almost as firmly

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intrenched in their political life as the principles of the Magna Charta. Few books on English political methods of government, whether by English or American authors, speak of the election address at all, or, if they do, mention it in the most casual way, as if it were something nearly as well known as the Bible. The latest and most exhaustive thesaurus of information on English government, "The Government of England," by A. Lawrence Lowell, president of Harvard University, seems to contain no mention or description of it, even in the chapter on "Candidates and Elections," where he speaks of the candidate's pledges.

The only passage of any importance upon the subject yet discovered is the following paragraph from "The Working Constitution of the United Kingdom," by Lord Courtney, page 164:

Every candidate for the election issues an address to his own constituency containing, with more or less amplification, the grounds on which he makes his appeal; and the addresses of the leaders, who sit in the House of Commons, supply the main subjects of contention, with some indication of the order of their importance. These addresses are issued the moment the time of the General Election is determined, and the addresses of followers reproduce their leading features with the addition of declarations of loyalty to the party chief. Up to a comparatively recent time, the questions at issue were rarely expressed in a definite manner except in these addresses.

It may, therefore, be of interest and profit to American readers to describe, illustrate and discuss this method of influencing public opinion, which every Englishman makes use of when he desires the right to place the coveted initials M.P. after his name.

The election address is in essence the political creed of the aspiring candidate, and the pledge of his future action to his constituents with regard to the burning questions of the hour. In it a candidate is expected to put himself implicitly on record respecting the important questions that confront the nation for settlement, and to state what would be his general position should they come before the House of Commons in the form of a legal proposition on which he must vote. It is usually a four-page pamphlet of quarto or octavo size, printed in plain type. In some cases, the resources of highly colored and ornate lithography are brought into use, as was done in that of the elegant young Tory from the wealthy district of Belgravia in London, who crossed the Thames in the last election but one, to fight the Right Honorable John Burns, in the working-class borough of

Battersea, where the president of the Local Government Board has always lived and which he has represented in Parliament for eighteen years. The pamphlets are mailed or distributed to the voters of the electoral district, and are often accompanied by portraits of the candidate and his wife, printed on better paper. The election address is reprinted in part or whole in the party papers of the locality, and the largest publicity is given it. Apparently no English constituency would tolerate long the custom which occasionally is found in the United States, where a candidate is accustomed to point to the regular party platform and say, "Those are my sentiments." There is expected in England a frank unbosoming of the candidate's convictions upon a wide range of political questions. If he does not in his election address state his belief on any important question, he is likely, when he gets upon the hustings, to be heckled unmercifully until he does declare it. The sphinx-like position of some American politicians, who find the top rail of the fence more alluring and attractive as a resting-place than the ground on either side, would soon be swept away by the fierce blast of an English campaign.

The particular character of the election address varies both in matter and manner, in accordance with the disposition of the candidate and the intensity of the campaign. It may be strictly formal in its character, in campaigns without excitement simply expressing the desire of the candidate for the votes of his constituency. Such was the one given in full by Boswell in his life of Johnson, which his hero and idol had written for Mr. Henry Thrale, in 1780, when this member of Parliament was wooing the electors of Southwark for reëlection. Probably few of that sort appeared in the last election but one, when the excitement was at fever heat. In general it may be said that no candidate of any prominence, who had sat on the front bench of Her Majesty's Ministry or of the Opposition, or even held a minor office under the Government, would issue an election address to his constituents without declaring his position on some of the important questions of the day.

If one studies Mr. Gladstone's series of addresses, covering a period of sixty years, from the time when he appeared as the

Duke of Newcastle's Tory candidate for Newark down to the last triumphant Midlothian campaign, it is most interesting to see how steadily, gradually, and normally, his noble and sympathetic nature rises under the spur of conscience out of the narrow and bigoted prejudices of Toryism, with its indifference to the rights of the many, into the broad, generous, and altruistic spirit of Liberalism.

But the election address is more than simply a political confession of faith. On two or three of the most important questions, which at the time divide parties, it comprises a pithy brief of arguments for the candidate's position and a rebuttal of the arguments and claims of his political opponents. It is the case for either side put in a nutshell. There often results, especially in the case of the leaders, a kind of intellectual duel in print, which makes a good debate so fascinating a form of intellectual enjoyment. The election of November, 1868, is a case in point. Disraeli was Tory Prime Minister, with a following in the House of Commons so weak that the resolutions for the disestablishment of the Irish Church were carried against him, but the House of Lords, which Mr. Chamberlain in 1885 called very properly "the obsequious handmaid of the Tory party," threw out the resolutions and thus brought about a dissolution. Disestablishment for Ireland then was the great question at issue in this election. Mr. Disraeli, in his election address to the Buckinghamshire electors, charged that the Pope was promoting the movement for the disestablishment of the Irish Church in order to promote the selfish interests of the Roman Catholic Church in the following words:

Amid the discordant activity of many factions there moves the supreme purpose of one power. The philosopher may flatter himself he is advancing the cause of enlightened progress; the sectarian may be roused to exertion by anticipations of the downfall of ecclesiastical systems. These are transient efforts, vain and passing aspirations. The ultimate triumph, were our church to fall, would be to that power which would substitute for the authority of our Sovereign the supremacy of a foreign prince.

To this Mr. Gladstone, in his address to the electors of South-West Lancashire, replied in the following powerful fashion:

The Church of Ireland is the church of a minority, insignificant in numbers. True, while insignificant in numbers, that minority is great in property, in education, and power. All this does not mend but aggravate the case; for if a national church be not the church of the nation, it should at least be the church of the poor. Every argument which can now be



used in favor of civil establishments of religion is a satire on the existence of the church in Ireland. But while that establishment is thus negative for good it misapplies the funds meant for the advantage of the nation at large. It remains as the memorial of every past mischief and oppression; it embitters religious controversy by infusing into it the sense of political injustice; and it carries the polemical temper into the sphere of social life and public affairs. Nor need we feel surprise that we find that since the penal laws began to be repealed, the relative number of Protestants in Ireland appears to have declined.

In the removal of this establishment I see the discharge of a debt of civil justice, the disappearance of a national, almost a world-wide reproach, a condition indispensable to the success of every effort to secure the peace and contentment of the country; finally relief to a devoted clergy from a false position, cramped and beset by hopeless prejudice, and the opening of a freer career for the sacred ministry.

One of the most effective examples of rebuttal by Mr. Gladstone on such occasions occurs in his first election address to the electors of Midlothian in March, 1880. For thirty years the Tories of England have been accustomed to plume themselves on being the real patriots, while their Liberal opponents are endeavoring to destroy the nation by disunion. In 1885 they proudly adopted the title of Unionists, because they opposed Home Rule, knowing well how effective with shallow minds a false and misleading epithet is, while they called the supporters of Home Rule, Separatists and Disunionists. These misleading titles they still try to galvanize into some semblance of truth. This keynote Disraeli sounded for them, in the opening of the campaign of 1880, in the veiled and mystical language which that political sphinx enjoyed. He had now entered the House of Lords as Lord Beaconsfield, and his election address, in the form of a letter to the Duke of Marlborough, then lord lieutenant of Ireland, was a general address to the country, and not an address to a particular constituency. In speaking of the Liberals he said:

Having attempted and failed to enfeeble our colonies by their policy of decomposition, they may perhaps now recognise in the disintegration of the United Kingdom a mode which will not only accomplish but precipitate their purpose. . . . Rarely in this century has there been an occasion more critical. The power of England and the peace of Europe will largely depend upon the verdict of the country.

Mr. Gladstone, the leader of the Opposition, struck back straight from the shoulder in the following words of his election address to the Scotch constituency of Midlothian, which includes a part of Edinburgh with outlying suburbs:

In the election address, which the Prime Minister has issued, an attempt is made to work upon your fears by dark allusions to the repeal of the Union and the abandonment of the colonies. Gentlemen, those who



endangered the Union with Ireland were the party that maintained there an alien church, and unjust land law, and franchises inferior to our own; and the true supporters of the Union are those who firmly uphold the supreme authority of Parliament, but exercise that authority to bind the three nations by the indissoluble tie of liberal and equal laws. As to the colonies, Liberal administrations set free their trade with all the world, gave them popular and responsible government, undertook to defend Canada with the whole strength of the empire and organised the great scheme for uniting the several settlements of British North America into one dominion, to which, when we quitted office in 1866, it only remained for our successors to ask the ready assent of Parliament. It is by these measures that the colonies have been bound in affection to the empire, and the authors of them can afford to smile at baseless insinuations. Gentlemen, the true purpose of those terrifying insinuations is to hide from view the acts of the ministry, and their effect upon the character and condition of the country.

Then he drops the defensive attitude, and assuming the aggressive, proceeds to hammer in his conception of what those discreditable acts of the expiring Ministry were:

At home the ministers have neglected legislation, aggravated the public distress by continual shocks to confidence which is the life of enterprise, augmented the public expenditure and taxation for purposes not merely unnecessary but mischievous, and plunged the finances which were handed over to them in a state of singular prosperity into a series of deficits unexampled in modern times. . . . Abroad, they have strained, if they have not endangered, the Prerogative by gross misuse; have weakened the Empire by needless wars, unprofitable extensions, and unwise engagements; and have dishonoured it in the eyes of Europe by filching the island of Cyprus from the Porte under a treaty clandestinely concluded in violation of the Treaty of Paris, which formed part of the international law of Christendom.

While it is customary for the Prime Minister to briefly discuss several burning questions of the day, it sometimes happens, when there is one which he considers of transcendent importance, that he may devote almost the whole of his election address to the discussion of that matter. Such was the case in the Budget campaign and election. Mr. Asquith in January, 1910, in his address to the Scotch borough of East Fife, which he has always represented since he entered Parliament in 1886, dwelt almost entirely on the abolition of the financial veto of the House of Lords and the limitation of its legislative veto as the dominating and crucial question of the campaign.

As further illustrations of the importance and interest of the election address in British politics, there will be presented in part three characteristic election addresses, issued during the Budget campaign of 1909-1910 by prominent members of different parties, which will enable the reader to judge for himself of the character, purpose, and literary form of these documents. These documents will be supplemented by brief biographies of the politi-



cal careers of their authors, a description of the constituencies to which they were addressed, and brief comment upon the matter of the documents.

The first is that of the Right Honorable John Burns, President of the Local Government Board, which was addressed to the electors of the Battersea division of Clapham, one of the London parliamentary boroughs on the Surrey side of the Thames. Mr. Burns is one of the most interesting and able men in English political life. A son of a workman, left fatherless before he was ten, he began a life of toil at twelve years of age. This life he has described in his own words as follows: "I came into the world with a struggle, struggled long, am struggling now, and seem likely to continue it to the end." His education since that time has been due his own untiring efforts, in what Carlyle has called "the university of books." He is by trade a machinist, or engineer, as the trade is called in England. It is said that while practicing his trade on the Delta of the Niger, he picked up a tattered copy of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," and the reading of this powerfully influenced him to devote himself to the agitation of questions of political and social reform. He was a member from Battersea of the London County Council from its organisation in 1889 to 1907, when he had become a member of the British Cabinet, the first workingman in the history of England to reach that high office. He has represented Battersea in the House of Commons since 1902.

His first great achievement was his leadership of the London Dockers' Strike in 1889, in which Mr. Herbert Paul says in his "History of Modern England," "he displayed all the qualities of a statesman in the guidance of this gigantic movement." He is a powerful orator, of a rugged, sledge-hammer style, with a diction that teems with striking metaphor, and is famous for his pithy phrases and epigrams. For the fearlessness with which he utters his own convictions, even when in a small minority, he was long ago called "Honest John Burns." While his reputation as an orator, agitator, and legislator was long ago assured, it was not till December, 1905, when he was appointed president of the Local Government Board, that the test of his mettle as the administrator of a great government department came. On



this point the testimony of Prime Minister Asquith is sufficient. In debate in the House of Commons, in June, 1910, on the motion to make his salary the same as that of the other Secretaries of State, viz. \$25,000, Mr. Asquith said:

My right honourable friend has had to undergo severe criticism, but I do not think that even his severest critics would contend that any man who had ever held that post had devoted to it more assiduity or performed the duties with more single-minded devotion. (Cheers.) The State has no more devoted and admirable servant than Mr. Burns.

In November, 1910, this man who left school at the age of ten, received the degree of LL.D. from Liverpool University in company with Lord Rosebery and Lord Morley.

In illustrating the character of the election address by actual specimens of the documents issued by representative candidates, it would be more just to the candidate to publish the address entire, but the limits of space prevent this. The specimen extracts which are selected for illustration will usually be limited to their discussion of the three most important questions of the campaign, viz., (1) the justice of the new taxes imposed by the Budget of 1909, (2) the right of the House of Lords to reject a budget, duly passed by the House of Commons (which it had not done in nearly three centuries), (3) Free Trade versus Protection.

For the benefit of American readers, it should be said that the land clauses of the Budget, which were the reason for its rejection by the House of Lords, simply applied principles of taxation which in the main have been the statute law of the United States and Canada for a century or more. Until 1910 there had been no general valuation of land in Great Britain since 1696. The Budget provided for such official general valuation of all land at its capital value, and imposed on all land not covered with buildings, except agricultural land not worth more than \$250 an acre, a tax of two mills on the dollar.¹

In the opening paragraphs of his address, Mr. Burns dwells on the achievements of the Liberal Government and the unconstitutional action of the House of Lords in the following words:

I rejoice that Battersea, which at the time of the Boer War voiced the nation's conscience in its demand for justice to the South African colonies,

¹ The Budget was fully described in the *YALE REVIEW* for February, 1910.



should have had its direct reward and helping hand in assisting to secure colonial peace and at the same time should have terminated industrial servitude for the yellow races, who till recently have worked in the mines. The magnanimous concession of free Parliamentary institutions to the two colonies and the granting of the great Act of federal union to a united South Africa are worthy of the best traditions of the British Parliament, and in keeping with the underlying sentiment of a great people and a just democracy.

The navy, costing much more than the German and French navies combined, without boasting or provocative parade, has been strengthened in its vital and essential parts, is efficient and sufficient for its purpose, while the economies that have been effected on obsolete and costly branches of the service have been diverted to and utilized for the purpose of capital, ships, and personnel.

In the region of social reform there has never been so much attempted, so much achieved in so short a time. This persistence in well-doing for the people has given reaction the greatest offence. The failures of the Government are the faults of the Peers. The successes of the Ministry belong to the Government and the Commons alone. But for a vindictive House of Lords, the best parliament of this century would have added to its fruitful record of good and useful acts the crowning triumph of having settled education, licensing, and land valuation on progressive and equitable terms.

By a revival and reckless abuse of their timeworn and obsolete powers the non-elective, hereditary and irresponsible House of Lords have rejected the budget of the elected Commons House of Parliament. Apart from the financial injustice of such an intolerable and unprecedented act, the constitutional relations between the three estates of the realm have been suddenly and without warrant violated. At the end of an exhausting session after the work of the budget had been completed, and the taxes had been levied the Lords did by violence what they could not do by right, and caused the Commons to seek a fresh mandate from the people in a matter wholly within their constitutional rights. It would be impossible that the people could submit to such a political disability, as would be imposed upon their own House of Commons by this invasion of their ancient hard-won rights and privileges. The people who elect, who must pay, and who alone ought to decide how they should be taxed, must not submit to the domination of a House of Lords, representative only of themselves. The submission to this attempt to override and defeat the will of the People's Parliament would transfer from the electors to 600 peers the vital and decisive powers and rights involved in the government, taxation and defence of 45,000,000 people.

The hegemony of Great Britain as the central figure of a federation of English-speaking communities and the solidarity of the Empire ought not to be subjected even to the slightest risk of being disturbed or threatened because the Lords do not like a half-penny in the pound tax on their undeveloped land. The real and only reason for their rejection of the Government's financial proposals is that their estates should secure that immunity from taxation which a uniform and universally applicable system of valuation must yield. The extent to which they dislike the Budget valuation is the measure of their past exemption under the present law. Their dislike of its application to their property is a proof that class, personal, or selfish reasons have biased their judgment or corrupted their sense of duty to the State, and also a proof that they do not bear their fair share of contribution to the State, for burdens that in the old days rested on land, and to which improved land does not to-day contribute according to its value.

I am, as ever, a convinced Free Trader. I am in favor of abundance, not scarcity. I believe that a great industrial people must range the world for all that it requires for the maintenance of its growing and world-wide commerce. Our industrial supremacy rests entirely on our universal choice and supply of products from all parts of the world. You cannot make everybody richer by making everything dearer. To tax the food of the very poor as an excuse for letting the rich escape from their obligations is neither sound



finance nor good social policy. Free Trade has made this island the clearing house for commerce, the turntable of British and European trade. London is the banking, insurance, brokerage, and exchange centre of the world. Tariffs, however small, would diminish this boon. As a London member I must, apart from politics, and as a safeguard for the £200,000,000 of its trade, strenuously resist any attempt to interfere with that freedom of exchange which has made London the emporium of the world.

The veto of the Lords must go.

I am in favor of:

Such legislative independence for Ireland, in Irish affairs, as will enable that country to revive her industries, maintain her population, and stimulate her social and agrarian prosperity in accordance with Irish ideas. The imperial supremacy of the Federal British Parliament in imperial matters affecting all sections of the United Kingdom is to remain inviolate.

I also favor, payment of members of parliament; and of election expenses; adult suffrage for men and women; shorter parliaments, so as to maintain a closer touch with the wishes and sentiments of the electorate, and electoral reform: amendment of the Education Acts in the direction of extending our present system of technical, higher, and secondary schools, and thus restricting the production and perpetuation of the unskilled and unfit: an eight-hours day to secure more regular work for more workers, and to diminish the evils of overtime and casual labour: raising the age of child labour, and a further extension of the Factory Acts; more stringent control of the liquor traffic in the interest of the individual and of the nation.

To one who is familiar with Mr. Burns's former election addresses, when he was a candidate either for Parliament or the London County Council, the two dominant notes of this address are fearlessness and consistency. For the last twenty years he has been an advocate of Home Rule for Ireland, safeguarded by the imperial supremacy of Parliament in national and imperial affairs. When the Liberals were in opposition, his seat was below the gangway on the left of the speaker, next to the famous corner where Mr. John Redmond, the Irish leader, has so skillfully directed the action of the Irish parliamentary party.

A teetotaler himself, he has always been a fierce opponent of the liquor distillers, brewers and retailers, both of their dominance under Tory administrations in Parliament and their debauchery of the working classes of Great Britain through the public house, commonly known as the saloon in the United States. Intemperance is one of the greatest curses of Great Britain to-day, and the liquor traffic, known as The Trade in England, finds its chief support in blocking the progress of reform among the wealthy, titled, and landed classes of the country. Mr. Burns's famous pamphlet, "Labour and Drink," is one of the most powerful arraignments of this national curse that has been issued for many years.



In striking contrast to Mr. Burns, both as to his career and political ideas, is the Englishman from whose election address extracts will now be chosen, viz., the Right Honorable Arthur J. Balfour, formerly Prime Minister, and now the Conservative leader of His Majesty's Opposition. The poverty and lack of opportunity which were the lot of Mr. Burns's boyhood were conspicuously absent in the life of Mr. Balfour. The one got what education he could in the university of books. The other passed the golden hours of youth at the royal school of Eton, passing on to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took his first degree in 1870.

He is a descendant of Lord Burleigh, Secretary of State under Queen Elizabeth, and nephew of the third Marquess of Salisbury, whom he succeeded as Prime Minister in 1902. He was M.P. for Hertford from 1874 to 1885. From that time he represented the East division of Manchester in the House of Commons in five successive Parliaments, until the tidal wave of January, 1906, swept him out of office and out of the House of Commons. A safe seat was soon obtained for him in the City of London through the resignation of one of its members, and he will doubtless represent that constituency until he retires from public life. This constituency comprises the area, one mile square, in the heart of modern London, to which King Henry I granted a charter. Its estimated day population is 300,000, and its night population 40,000. Yet, owing to the antiquated system of plural voting which prevails in England, there are 31,000 registered electors in this constituency entitled to cast a ballot. It is unquestionably the wealthiest constituency in Great Britain, for it is the monetary center of the world, and every man who owns property or rents property at a weekly rent of not less than \$1.00 within a radius of an eighth of a mile from the Bank of England has the rights of a parliamentary elector.

Mr. Balfour is a man of large inherited wealth, and keenly interested in philosophy, literature and music. His charming personality is said to captivate his political opponents, and yet this personality is thought to be a very serious drawback to his success as a political leader in the twentieth century, for the



atmosphere of adulation and admiration of his political followers with which he is surrounded keeps him out of touch with the seething, yeasty movement for social reform that leavens the middle and working classes of England. A keen observer of political affairs in England has said of him that when he became Prime Minister he had the greatest opportunity that had fallen to an English statesman in two generations. The Boer war had left the English people sober and serious, ready to follow a wise leader in the path of reform who would show them how to put their house in order. But he frittered away the opportunity. Listlessness and lack of earnest leadership steadily wore down the large Tory majority, won in the Khaki election of 1906, until Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, then his towering rival in Tory hearts, drove him from office by his Bristol speech November 21, 1905. In advocating the cause of a protective tariff for England Mr. Chamberlain said: "You must not suffer it to be whittled down by the timid or the half-hearted minority of our party. . . . No army was ever successfully led to battle on the principle that the lamest man should govern the march." The election of January, 1906, which followed the assumption of power by the Liberals in December, 1905, resulted in the greatest political reverse ever suffered by a Prime Minister in the annals of English politics. When the new Parliament opened, Mr. Balfour was "left outside the breastworks." He could not for a time lead the small cohort of 150 Conservatives which sparsely filled the benches on the left of the Speaker, except from outside the House of Commons, while the triumphant Liberals faced them with a majority of 354, the largest parliamentary majority known in England since the first Parliament after the Reform Bill.

To some persons, not under the spell of Mr. Balfour's personality, his methods of reasoning and his style of public utterance leave much to be desired. In direct, straightforward reasoning and in positive utterance he is at the opposite pole from Mr. John Burns or Mr. Winston Churchill. The sinuosity of Mr. Balfour's reasoning can well be illustrated by four quotations, uttered in four successive years by him on the rights of the House of Lords with regard to the taxation of the people.

In the House of Commons, June 24, 1907, he said:

We all know that the power of the House of Lords, thus limited . . . in the sphere of legislation and administration, is still further limited by the fact that it cannot touch these money bills, which if it could deal with, no doubt, it could bring the whole executive machinery of the country to a standstill.²

At Dumfries, Scotland, October 6, 1908, he said:

It is the House of Commons, not the House of Lords, which settles uncontrolled our financial system.³

In September, 1909, when the fight over the budget was the fiercest, the Liberal Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, went into the enemy's country and at Bingley Hall, Birmingham, he made a great speech, the burden of which was, "in finance the Commons are supreme." He quoted Mr. Balfour in support of this thesis, and called upon Mr. Balfour to declare whether he confirmed or repudiated his utterance of a twelvemonth before.

Five days later Mr. Balfour spoke in reply in the same hall, and this was the way in which he met the Prime Minister's challenge:

There are those who fill their speeches with constitutional antiquarianism on the subject of the House of Lords, or if they be of a different temperament, fill their speeches with the bluster of the political bully.⁴

One of the reasons why English politics is such a fascinating study is that for any notable utterance every public man is sooner or later brought to bay. Once more Mr. Balfour faced Mr. Asquith on this question, and then he could not dodge. It was in the House of Commons, with his political supporters behind him and his relentless opponents opposite.

On April 7, 1910, in the discussion of the resolutions with regard to the House of Lords, he said:

It never occurred to me (in making the statement in 1907) to suggest that there was anybody so ignorant in the House as to believe that the House of Lords could not throw out a money bill.⁵

He then goes on to give as a fair analogy to this, the example of a person stating that a district is a perfectly level plain, not denying, of course, that the land partakes of the general curvature of the earth's surface.

² Parliamentary Debates, 4th Series, Vol. 176, pp. 929-930.

³ *London Times*, October 7, 1908, p. 12.

⁴ *London Times*, September 23, 1909, p. 7.

⁵ Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series, Vol. 16, pp. 650-651.



The proper reply to this came on the 12th of April from the lips of Mr. Winston Churchill, when he was discussing the inconsistency of Mr. Balfour on other points, in claiming that the proposed changes would at once make the House of Lords a more powerful body, and also bring upon England the danger of a single-chambered government. These were Mr. Churchill's words:

How that can be is utterly beyond my wit to imagine. I think it must be one of those occasions where the doctrine of curvature comes in, that delightful doctrine, which, when you say anything, or make a definite statement, always enables you to count upon finding knowledge and intelligence in your audience, so that they will believe the exact opposite—the doctrine that, when you say that it is the House of Commons and not the House of Lords which settles uncontrolled our financial system, the language is always supposed to recognise the fact that the House of Lords has absolute power to reject any and every budget and money bill, which comes within its purview.*

Some of these characteristics of Mr. Balfour may possibly be confirmed by the following passages from his election address:

It is understood that Parliament will be dissolved early in 1910; and I shall then solicit the renewal of the confidence which you bestowed in such generous measure on me nearly four years ago. The immediate occasion of the dissolution is the resolution of the House of Lords that the country shall be consulted upon the budget proposals of 1909. The budget, therefore, is the subject primarily before the constituencies, and it might have been supposed that the alternative methods of raising the money necessary to meet the obligations of the Treasury would have been the topic most deeply interesting to Government apologists. For motives not difficult to conjecture this does not seem to be the case. It is not the merits of the budget about which they are concerned; it is that those merits should be submitted to the judgment of the people and (bitterest of all) submitted at the instance of the Upper House.

There may be good reasons for their irritation; but assuredly they are not reasons drawn either from the letter or the spirit of the British Constitution, nor are they based on those more general principles of government, common to representative institutions in the best types of modern democracy. The claim of the Government stripped of the bad history and bad law with which it is obscured is simplicity itself. They hold that the House of Commons, no matter how elected or when elected, no matter what its relation to public opinion at the moment, is to be the uncontrolled master of the fortunes of every class in the community, and that to the community itself, no appeal, even in the extremest cases, is to be allowed to lie. The question, be it noted, is not whether the Second Chamber may originate money bills, for that has never been claimed; nor whether they may amend money bills, for that has not been raised; nor whether they could resist the declared wishes of the people, for that has never been suggested. The questions raised are three—(1) May there not be occasions on which an appeal to the people on matters of finance is necessary? (2) Is not this one of them? (3) And if these questions be answered in the affirmative, does any other machinery exist for securing such an appeal, except that which has been set in motion by the House of Lords?

In the United States of America it is a fundamental principle of the Constitution that no kind of property shall be prejudiced by special taxation.

* Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series, Vol. 16, pp. 1129-1130.

That Constitution is not easily changed, and before a measure like the British Budget could be legally attempted, the consent must be obtained of a two-thirds majority in both houses, nor could any such measure become law without a national mandate from a still stronger majority of the country. If we suggest the impossible, and imagine these constitutional safeguards withdrawn, would the American taxpayer even then be reduced to the precarious position of his British brother? Far from it. Special taxation might, indeed, be imposed by the House of Representatives, but it could be rejected by the Senate, it could be vetoed by the President. I do not ask that the British citizen should enjoy the same security for his property as the citizen of the United States. I only ask that if his property be subjected to exceptional taxation, by the caprice of a minister and his majority, he should not be deprived of the only methods known to our Constitution by which an appeal to his fellow countrymen may possibly be secured. . . .

The Government came into office, not to work the Constitution of the country, but to destroy it. They desire what is in effect a single chamber legislature. They desire that for all important purposes the constitution of Britain shall be as definitely a single chamber constitution as the constitution of Guatemala. The powers of the House of Commons are already great powers. In some respects they are, I believe, without example. But they do not satisfy the single chamber conspirators. And why? Because they wish the House of Commons to be independent, not merely of the Peers, but of the people.

Nor would there be grave objection to this if there was any security that the action of the elected embodied on all great and far-reaching issues the deliberate will of the electors. But there is not and cannot be any such security. It is only by a transparent convention that we can, for example, assume that a House of Commons returned on the cry of the Chinese slavery represents the mind of the nation on the question of socialism. . . . In any case the single chamber system is impossible. And it is as impossible in the region of finance as in any other. If finance meant in 1909 what it used to mean in earlier days, the question would be unimportant. But directly the need for money is used by a Government as an excuse for adopting the first installment of a socialistic budget, for treating property not according to its amount, but according to its origin, and for the vindictive attack on political opponents, then the people have a right to be consulted; and that right could never have been exercised, had the peers not used on behalf of the people the powers entrusted to them by the Constitution.

The well-informed reader will note Mr. Balfour's attempt to use a misstatement regarding the constitution of the United States as an argument against the budget, when the main feature of the budget, the taxation of land values, is the common practice throughout the States. Similarly he quotes the constitution of Guatemala as an argument against a single-chamber legislature, although Canada supplies the example of seven provinces which are successfully governed under the unicameral system. The reference to the elections of 1906 and 1909 leads the reader to suppose that the former was fought on the issue of Chinese slavery, the latter on that of socialism. Yet Chinese slavery was only one of the questions involved in 1906 and socialism is certainly not implied in the budget of 1909, unless the fiscal system of the United States can be called socialistic.



The last candidate from whose election address extracts will be printed is the Right Honorable Winston Churchill, at present Home Secretary. He is one of the most striking and picturesque figures in English politics at the present day. A descendant of John Churchill, who became Duke of Marlborough after the victory of Blenheim, and son of Lord Randolph Churchill, he was educated at Harrow School, and Sandhurst, the West Point of England. He was commissioned in the 4th Hussars at the age of twenty, and served first with the Spanish forces in Cuba, then with the Punjab Infantry in India, the 21st Lancers in Egypt, and the South African Light Horse in the Boer War. He charged with the Lancers at Omdurman, was present at the taking of Khartoum, at Spion Kop, and the capture of Pretoria. His parliamentary career began as Tory member for the manufacturing town of Oldham in 1900, when he was twenty-six years old. When Joseph Chamberlain forswore the convictions of a lifetime, and tossed the firebrand of Tariff Reform into the arena of English politics in May, 1903, Mr. Churchill accepted the challenge and has been the untiring champion of free trade ever since. June 8, 1904, he crossed the House and joined the Liberals in opposition. Mr. H. W. Lucy, known as "Toby, M.P." in *Punch*, predicted for him failure to win distinction in the Liberal ranks, but time has completely confuted that prophecy. He joined the new Liberal Government in December, 1905, captured the Tory stronghold of Manchester, North West, in the General Election of 1906, was sworn to the Privy Council in 1907, when he was only thirty-three years old, and made President of the Board of Trade, with membership in the Cabinet, in 1908. According to the English law, he had to go back to his constituents for reëlection, and the Tories, combining their fiercest efforts on the by-election, defeated him. A place was soon made for him in Dundee, a large manufacturing city of Scotland, and from this constituency he has twice been elected by huge majorities. He was appointed Home Secretary in February, 1910, at the age of thirty-six.

He is one of the most powerful debaters in the present House, and a very effective orator upon the stump. He may well be called the stormy petrel of contemporary English politics.



There were few more striking features of the Budget campaign than the series of speeches which he delivered in Lancashire, where the tariff reformers were putting forth every effort to seduce the voters from their free trade allegiance. During this busy life he has written ten books, the best known of which is his biography of his father, which has received high praise. His latest work, "Liberalism and the Social Problem," is a collection of his most brilliant speeches, and it is a very decided addition to the literature of forensic oratory. The man has something to say and he says it in a way that appeals to the intellect, the esthetic sense, and the heart. Wise choice of argument, logical and cogent reasoning, fair statement of his opponent's position, a keen, rapier-like thrust that punctures and confutes fallacies, combined with an admirable literary form make his speeches a model for the public orator to study and follow. Like Disraeli, he has a gift for pungent phrasing and pregnant, striking metaphor. His famous comment on the doctrine of taxing the foreigner, which the English tariff reformer rolls as a sweet morsel under his tongue, is an example:

There are some people who think that we can tax the foreigner, but I am quite sure that you do not expect me to waste your time in dealing with that gospel of quacks and that creed of gulls.

It was thought by some that Mr. Churchill's election address in the election of January, 1910, was the finest from a literary point of view of any that was issued. The following extracts will enable the reader to judge of its qualities:

The time has come to deal with the House of Lords. The absolute veto of a hereditary chamber of titled persons over all legislation passed by the elected representatives of the people in the House of Commons ought not to continue. The wrongful and unconstitutional claims of the nobility to control money matters, and dissolve Parliament, new and unheard of in British history, cannot be tolerated now. Unless the action of the House of Lords in destroying the budget, invading the rights of the Commons, and trenching upon the prerogative of the Crown is decisively repudiated by the electors, that partisan assembly of wealthy magnates will cease to be the tool of the Tory party, only to become the master of the state. No government will be able to maintain itself in power without securing the favour of a majority of peers; and this extraordinary authority will be exercised in permanence by an irremovable order and transmitted by them to their children generation after generation. To submit to such pretensions would be unworthy of free men. Judged by every test, our Constitution would have become less broad and free than that of France or the United States, and far below the level of the responsible and representative systems of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. What have the people done to deserve this restraint? They have led the world in peace and war. They have taught all nations to fight for liberty. They have belted the globe with free institu-

tions. They have supplied the model and the example of representative government. As the years unfold, as civilisation expands, as the electors become more numerous, more educated, more prosperous, they should have more power, not less. They should elect at shorter intervals an increasingly powerful assembly. To fetter and enfeeble the House of Commons, and to exalt the control of the non-elected, hereditary House, is to degrade the franchise and to make every vote worth less than it was before. The plain man's whole political status depends upon his vote. By that vote he can at present choose the chamber that has wielded for hundreds of years the sole and undivided power over the public purse, and can thus choose, correct and change the executive government. If that power be wrested from the House of Commons, the vote may remain, but its virtue will be gone. It will hardly be worth while to ask seven millions of electors to vote for a House of Commons, that may talk as it pleases, but may not legislate or administer except at the pleasure and upon the sufferance of the heads of 600 families.

The House of Commons popularly elected is the only instrument that can, without hampering movement, prevent violent and furious collisions between different classes and interests, and thus assure at once the development and the stability of society. The people can be trusted. They are of age. They can act for themselves. There are many difficult problems ahead of us, and no doubt evil fortune as well as good lies in our path. But the electors of Great Britain have nothing to gain at this time of day from the guidance, governance, restraint, or control of the hereditary House of Lords. There is no hatred of the peers as peers, but as hereditary legislators armed with an arbitrary veto they will become increasingly the objects of public resentment; and it is high time to relieve them from functions and responsibilities which they can only exercise to their own and general detriment. . . .

A choice no whit less grave, and equally clear, awaits you upon finance. How ought the money to be raised which the State must have? Is it to be got from taxes upon bread, meat, and manufactures: or from luxuries, monopolies, and superfluities? Is it to be got on a free trade system or are we to revert to protection? I have often set out, and will again do so when I come among you, the commercial reasons why it is vital to British prosperity that we should keep our hands free to purchase whatever we want, wherever we choose in the markets of the whole world, and the social reasons why we should refuse to tax the staple food of the immense population crowded upon this small island. But it is upon the political dangers of protection (or tariff reform) that your attention should be fixed. Behind the tariff grow the trusts. You know full well, and to your cost, how tremendous is the power of the organized liquor trade. The whole forces of the State are scarcely able to cope with it. We are told that even 21 years' purchase is not sufficient to redeem a monopoly license, which the State has granted "for one year and no longer." What would be the effect upon the government of our country and upon the more or less unorganized mass of its citizens, if instead of one great trust which has extorted favours from the State, we were to be confronted with a score? Yet that will be the swift and certain consequence of a protective tariff. Every great industry will have to organize itself into a combination for political purposes. Every election will turn on tariff favours. Every member of Parliament will be forced to advocate the special trade interests of local industry, rather than the general interests of the commonwealth. The corruption of public life and public men, and the prostration of Parliament before the power of wealth, politically applied, will follow here as in other countries. Once given, tariff favours can hardly ever be recalled. The whole trade becomes dependent on the privilege it has secured. The savings of the nation are invested on the assumption, however unjustified, that such privilege will never be withdrawn. The widow and the orphan stake their mites upon the security artificially created. And the whole vast abuse—from millionaire organisers at the top to the most pitiful investor at the bottom—sits down deliberately to coax, wheedle, bully, and bribe new favours from the political caucus with whom it is allied.



The closest analogy to the British election address in this country is of course the national and state party platform, and the letter of acceptance of the nomination which the candidate may send. The difference between the two methods of appeal to the public results largely from the radical differences between the forms of government in the two countries. Executive officers as such in Great Britain are seldom directly elected. The government of England, both national and local, is simplicity itself, compared with the complex system of the American Federal State, with its additional ramifications of local government. In England the voter seldom has to vote at one time for more than one man, and then seldom more often than once in two or three years. The party caucus and the party convention, with all their demoralizing obliteration and sacrifice of individual convictions, are unknown there. The unit of political action and the size of the political constituency is much more limited, as the electoral area, except in the counties, seldom exceeds ten miles square. All this tends to individualism and individual responsibility in England, while in this country the system makes for collective action of party, subordinating the individual to the party, and lessening the sense of responsibility on his part to his constituency. The British election address typifies and strengthens this sense of responsibility.

The admirable English system by which any man can represent any constituency in Parliament makes the election address necessary and desirable. One not resident in the constituency, when he becomes a candidate, has a customary and direct method of explaining his political beliefs to the men whose votes he desires, and they have a definite standard by which they can test his future political action. The statements of the election address are probably more closely followed and more rigidly respected by candidates in England than is the party platform in this country.

There are many inquiries with regard to the election address which cannot be answered now. When did it begin as a custom, and where? How has it been affected in importance by the wide development of modern journalism, and especially by the growth of the regular periodical literature of the two parties, which has

been so marked in Great Britain during the last twenty years? What similar institution exists in the colonies of Great Britain, and in the countries of continental Europe? Such are some of the interesting questions that await further investigation. In this article the writer has simply endeavored to give a practical, graphic description of the custom as it exists in the Great Britain of to-day. Such a study will convince any careful observer of the truth of the following words of President Lowell, who says:

To the traveller, who cares for history, either of the past, or in the making, there is no place more interesting than the long sombre building with a tower at each end, that borders the Thames just above Westminster Bridge.¹

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¹ The Government of England, Vol. I, p. 248.



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