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Joseph Chamberlain, The Radical

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JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, THE RADICAL

The approaching retirement of Joseph Chamberlain from the House of Commons awakens a sympathetic interest throughout the world. It is pathetic indeed to see the oft-victorious warrior stricken down and borne from the field at the very moment of the triumph of his political foes. Time has turned against the venerable statesman. The principles for which he so stoutly fought are apparently going down to defeat. The Home Rule question, which he had hoped was buried, has risen again to haunt his declining days. The policy of preferential trade, to which he owes his imperial reputation, has been practically set aside by his own colleagues. He has lost the ear of the public. A younger set of political leaders has appealed to the imagination of the nation. New social and economic questions have largely superseded the old political issues. For some time past he has been a helpless and disappointed spectator of passing events.

The life of Mr. Chamberlain naturally divides into two distinct parts, the earlier years of his radicalism and the halcyon days of his imperialism. Unfortunately, the significance of his early democracy has been largely obscured by the dramatic interest and far-reaching constitutional effect of his later imperialism. With the latter we are all familiar, though it is too early as yet to pass final judgment on the statesmanship of the first great Secretary of State for the Colonies. The battle between the principles of colonial nationalism and imperial federation is still going on, and until that long drawn-out contest is ended it will be impossible to determine Mr. Chamberlain's place in imperial history.

But we are just beginning to appreciate the full significance of Mr. Chamberlain's radicalism. The liberal victories of the last six years necessarily carry us back to the struggles of the early eighties, when he was the idol of the Radical party. Mr. Chamberlain has always been a keen politician, but he has been more than a mere party man. He has been an intellectual leader of his age. In his career perhaps more than in that of any other man of his day, we may see clearly revealed the political pragmatism of the end of the nineteenth century. But he has been also a dreamer, not of a golden age in some remote past or in the distant future, but of an earthly kingdom to be built up for the people of England and their children's children in Great Britain and beyond the seas. And in that dream we shall see the end of an era, the ushering in of a new political gospel, the transition from the philosophy of the Manchester School to the experimental socialism and democratic imperialism of to-day.

The boyhood of the future statesman was very similar to that of any other English boy of the so-called middle class, save in so far as he was much more studious than the majority of his companions and unfortunately quite indifferent to sports. After completing a satisfactory, though by no means a brilliant course in a secondary private school, he was drafted into the firm of one of his relatives and immediately settled down to master the details of the business.

It is somewhat singular that Chamberlain never seems to have regretted the early interruption of his studies, notwithstanding the fact that he subsequently felt himself handicapped in his social and political relations by reason of the lack of college traditions and associations. To this circumstance is doubtless due in part his narrowness of intellectual sympathy and his inability at times to work out clearly the consequences of his own political principles.

But Mr. Chamberlain, nevertheless, was keenly interested in educational matters. Early in his political career he became a member of the National Education League, the object of which was to establish a system of free, compulsory, non-sectarian instruction in all the schools of England. His energy and ability soon made him one of the recognized leaders of this movement. And notwithstanding the subsequent modification of his views on his acceptance of office in a Conservative government, he never gave up his strong convictions as to the superior advant-

ages of a public-school system over any kind of ecclesiastical training.

He was almost equally interested in higher education. He was closely identified with the establishment of the University of Birmingham, and for a time acted as chancellor of that institution. His views on higher education were essentially those of a successful self-made business man, perchance a banker or a railroad magnate. He was a utilitarian, but not a materialist. The age demanded a system of vocational education which would ally the universities in a practical way with the business life out of doors. And such an education it was the duty of the universities to provide. He recognized, however, that the universities owed an equally important service to the state. They should train men for the public service. To this end he was particularly interested in promoting the study of the new humanities at Birmingham. He looked forward to the day when that university would be strongly represented in the halls at Westminster and in positions of honour and profit throughout the empire.

Although strongly in favour of bringing higher education within the reach of the public, he did not think that the progress of a nation depended so much upon the democracy of education as upon the quality of the intellectual leaders which it produced. "What is it," he asked, "that makes a country? Of course, you may say, the general qualities, their resolution, their intelligence, their pertinacity, and many other good qualities. Yes, but that is not all, and it is not the main feature of a great nation. The greatness of a nation is made by its greatest men. It is those we want to educate."

In truth, Mr. Chamberlain was too independent in his conceptions to be a good social democrat. He was a radical, not a communist. He was opposed to an "ochlocracy" or any form of organization which denied superiority of capacities and of values in social, political, or industrial life. He had no sympathy with the spurious democracy which levels all men down to a common lot. He had no sentimental faith in the infinite wisdom of the people, and he was too honest-minded to profess any special affection or consideration for them. He abhorred demagogism. He believed in democracy, but a democracy with standards, in a government of the people and for the people, but by the *élite* of the people.

It was, in his opinion, the glory of such a democracy that it

produced its own aristocracy by a process of natural selection. With an equality of political opportunity the strong and able men from among the people almost necessarily came to the front. An aristocracy of intellect and energy was substituted for an aristocracy of birth and special privilege; and such an aristocracy, sprung from and responsible to the people, would, he believed, govern the nation with justice, honour, and dignity.

Mr. Chamberlain's philosophy, it will be observed, like that of most of us, was the outcome of his own personal experience. But it was more than that. It reflected the spirit of the Victorian age. It presented the noblest side of the industrial revolution. It was the self-satisfied but benevolent philosophy of early English radicalism of the Manchester School; and to-day it is the sublimated gospel of the *bourgeoisie* of England, France, and America.

But we must return to the career of Mr. Chamberlain. With his business life we need not long concern ourselves. Suffice it to say that he showed exceptional business capacity and soon became the head of one of the largest establishments in England. He belonged to the best type of employers. He was just and considerate in his dealings with his employees. With many of his men his relations were cordial and sympathetic. But his methods were essentially those of the world around him. He belonged to the capitalistic class and he claimed the rewards which capital exacts at the expense of the employee, competitor, and community alike.

But Mr. Chamberlain was no son of Mammon. He was more than a business man. He was a citizen. He took no pride in the amassing of riches or in the despoiling of his rivals. He had a broader conception of his purpose in life. Amid the pressure of business he found time to take part in the affairs of the city and the nation. And in so doing, he was not actuated by a selfish spirit, or by a desire to promote his own business interests. Only once throughout his career was he charged with seeking to capitalize his citizenship; and he had little difficulty in showing the falsity of that charge. Early in life he faced the old Aristotelean question which is still troubling our economists and theologians: Are the good man and the good citizen one and the same? And he came to the conclusion that the primary service of life was that of citizenship.

For some time he had been closely associated with a small

group of advanced Radicals. These men, largely under the influence of two Unitarian clergymen, set themselves the task of improving the social and economic conditions of their poorer fellow-citizens. As little could be accomplished by individual effort, they resolved to capture the city hall and convert its resources to public purposes. Mr. Chamberlain was urged to lead the fight, and he consented to do so. After a vigorous struggle he was elected to the council and from the very outset was one of the dominating spirits in that body. From 1873 to 1875 he was mayor of the city, and never did a chief magistrate exercise more dictatorial but beneficial powers. He was, as one of his opponents aptly said, "not only mayor but town council also."

As mayor he proceeded to carry out a comprehensive scheme of social reform. Birmingham at that time was a wretched, dreary manufacturing city, such as has been so brilliantly described by Mr. Wells in *The New Machiavelli*. Although no worse than any of the other great cities of England, it was, as Mr. Chamberlain said, "A town in which scarcely anything had been done either for the instruction or for the health or for the recreation or for the comfort or for the convenience of the artisan population." When he laid down his office, the city had been largely reconstructed. The slums had been demolished; new streets opened up and old ones paved; drainage and sanitary inspection introduced; baths, hospitals, and public libraries established; and, perhaps, most important of all from the political standpoint, the gas and waterworks had been municipalized. A new earth if not a new heaven had been created for a large part of the working-men of the city.

The municipal ideals of Mr. Chamberlain are well set forth in the following public utterance: "We want," he declared, "to make these people healthier and better; I want to make them happier also. Let us consider for a moment the forlorn and desolate life the best of these people must live amid such filthy and immoral surroundings." He flung back with scorn the self-righteous assumption of many of his more fortunate countrymen that the misery of the poor was the result of their own shortcomings.

"Yes," he continued, "it is legally their fault and when they steal, we send them to jail and when they commit murder we hang them. But if the mem-

bers of this council had been placed under similar conditions, if from infancy we had grown up the same way, does any one of us believe that we would have run no risk of the jailer or the hangman? For my part, I have not such confidence in my own inherent goodness to believe anything can make headway against such frightful conditions as I have described. The fact is that it is no more the fault of these people that they are vicious and intemperate than that they are stunted, deformed, debilitated, and debased. The one is due to physical atmosphere—the moral atmosphere as necessarily and as surely produces the other."

To-day this language seems trite and commonplace, but forty years ago he was a bold man indeed who would voice such revolutionary utterances. The calm self-complacency of the well-to-do Englishman was seriously disturbed. Had he not been brought up to believe in the rule of law and order? Had not the Church lent its sanction to the existing organization of society, and did not the well-established principles of political economy confirm the tenets of the Church?

The individualistic philosophy of the Manchester School had indeed brought great comfort to the hearts of the merchants and manufacturers of England. They had gladly accepted a social creed which promised them such substantial financial advantages. According to the doctrines of this school the salvation of men could best be worked out under a régime of unrestricted competition between man and man and between nation and nation. By releasing man from the bondage of feudalism, by granting to him the freest and fullest opportunity of self-development, a new moral order would be created. To a powerful doctrinaire like Cobden, free trade was an "international law of the Almighty." Man was indeed honoured according to the tenets of this school, but the works of man were glorified. Competition became a law of the natural world. Industry was raised to the dignity of religion. To live was the right of the individual, to let live the duty of the state. The government was expressly precluded from interfering with the production and distribution of wealth. The Poor Law represented the extreme obligation of the state to its unfortunate citizens. In a word, the industrial revolution was not only sanctioned but sanctified by economic and political philosophy alike.

The municipal socialism of Mr. Chamberlain represented a departure from the doctrines of the Manchester School. The principles of *laissez-faire* were repudiated in the very heart of radical England, and repudiated by its friends. Chamberlain

was no doctrinaire. He had not a scientific or speculative mind. He was a practical man. He merely accepted the political philosophy of the day in as far as it appeared advantageous. He rejected it when he found it to work injustice to the great body of his fellow-citizens. And so it was with his municipal socialism. He was an experimental and not a theoretical socialist. He sympathized with the French communists, but he distinctly repudiated their ideals and their works. He never allowed his sentiment to run away with his sound common sense. He never seems to have worked out any definite theories as to the proper function of the municipality or of the state. He merely laid down a rule that the municipality should limit itself to those functions only which the community could perform to better advantage than the individual; but that, after all, was a matter of opinion, not of principle. He was, however, much more favourable toward municipal than state socialism, inasmuch as the administration of municipal utilities could be brought more immediately under the supervision of the general body of citizens and could be made more directly serviceable to their interests than could the governmental ownership and operation of national utilities. Although inclined to construe most liberally the powers of local municipalities and even to extend their rights of self-government, he firmly adhered to the principle of national control over all agencies of local administration. He was conscious of the danger which might attend the exercise of large powers of autonomy by bodies in no way responsible to national public opinion. Municipal ownership and national supervision of public utilities, ought, in his judgment, to go hand in hand. These two principles were complementary and not inconsistent the one with the other, as many of our municipal reformers in America would lead us to believe.

The splendid public service of Mr. Chamberlain well illustrates a striking principle of English political life, the principle of social leadership. The small group of which he was the recognized head, placed their best powers at the service of the city. Theoretically, they were the servants of the people; actually, they were the masters of public opinion. They made great personal sacrifices of time and money and made them gladly. In short, they carried into the public service the best traditions of the old feudal system with its fiduciary relations of landlord to tenant. They democratized these ideals for a commercial age.

True, they cast aside the economic principles of the Manchester School, but they exemplified in practice those qualities of intelligent high-mindedness which were at the very foundation of the political philosophy of that school. They were the wise and unselfish directors of industry who identified their own private interests with the public good. They were the men who lent moral dignity to business. But unfortunately, there were not enough such men to save the nation from the horrors of the industrial revolution. It is possible, though most improbable, that if there had been enough Joseph Chamberlains in England, the principles of John Stuart Mill might have held the field against the new socialistic philosophy.

But it is not only in the adoption of municipal socialism that the civic career of Mr. Chamberlain has left a deep impression upon the politics of England. Even more significant was the establishment of the party caucus during his service in the city council. His name will always be associated with the development of the political machinery of the nation.

The creation of distinct party organizations is an inevitable result of the extension of the franchise. The democracy of the country is far from exemplifying that high degree of intelligence and independence of judgment with which it is usually credited by prospective members of the legislature. A large proportion of the voters are notoriously ignorant or indifferent. Life is altogether too complex and distracting for them to pay much attention to matters of state. They require to be roused into action, to be drilled into the exercise of their rights of citizenship. The political machine is the most effective instrument for disciplining the unthinking, half-hearted supporters of the party. The instrument may be faulty and even dangerous at times, but it is none the less useful. It saves democracy from its own inertia. It keeps alive the habit of political discussions; it transforms the mob into a well-drilled army.

In its origin the Birmingham caucus was a protest against the undemocratic minority clause of the Reform Act of 1867. By one of the provisions of that act Disraeli sought to assure the return of at least one Conservative candidate from each of the large industrial cities of England. To the Conservative electors the provision in question appeared to be a just measure of minority representation; but to the Birmingham Radicals it was a dangerous attack upon the principles of popular sovereignty; and

they immediately set to work to defeat its operation. Thanks to the inspiration of Chamberlain and the organizing genius of Mr. Schnadhorst, the democracy of the city was welded together into a powerful political association at the head of which stood the six hundred. The strength of the new organization was signally displayed in the general election of 1868. The Radicals swept the city.

The constitution of the caucus represented an entirely new departure in English politics. For the first time in its history the Liberal Association of the city was organized on a democratic basis. In view of the new conditions in politics Mr. Chamberlain declared: "It has become necessary as indeed it was always desirable, that the people at large should be taken into the counsels of the party and that they should have a share in its control and management." Every Liberal of the city, *ipso facto*, was made a member of the Association and was given an equal voice in the selection of its officers. In theory at least, if not in fact, the policy of the party was entrusted to the hands of the voters themselves. The dream of the Chartists was at last coming true. A new democracy was called into being and the working-men of Birmingham were eager to respond to the call.

Mr. Chamberlain was quick to follow up this advantage. The executive of the Association was devoted to his service and he at once proceeded to turn the whole energy of the caucus toward gaining complete control over the administration of the city. Party politics was introduced into municipal affairs. The elections of the city were run on strictly party lines. The caucus entered on a policy of political terrorism toward its opponents. Conservatives were not only driven out of the city council but they were unceremoniously ousted from every official position in the municipality, whether political in character or not. They were politically ostracized. They were treated as outlanders to whom all rights of citizenship were denied. They protested, but in vain. They had neither part nor lot with their fellow-citizens save as taxpayers. So pitiful, indeed, was their position that for years they did not venture to hold open public meetings. In short, the administration of the city was taken over entirely by a Radical junta. No American boss could have exercised more despotic sway than did Mr. Chamberlain when mayor of the city.

But how different were the results from those which might

have been anticipated from American experience under similar conditions. The autocracy of the caucus was a blessing and not a curse. Birmingham had never enjoyed so able and noteworthy an administration as during the Chamberlain régime, and the traditions of that administration have continued unto this day. The city is still administered by the friends and associates of Mr. Chamberlain. The caucus is as unfriendly as ever to his political opponents. But from that day unto the present the city of Birmingham has enjoyed an honest, capable, and efficient administration. The caucus has been more than a partisan cabal. It has been a powerful educational agency. It has systematically promoted the discussion of political questions. It has organized, but it has also trained its members for public life. It has been the source of genuine social service. It is to this fact, in truth, that we must attribute the strong hold which the caucus has had upon the citizens of Birmingham.

We, in America, are prone to lay all our political evils upon the defects of our system of government. The boss, the machine, the caucus—in short, the whole party system has fallen under the special condemnation of our reformers. And yet the experience of Birmingham and many another English city bears testimony to the fact that no one of these institutions is bad in itself. It is not machinery but men that count in politics. The difference between Birmingham and New York is not fundamentally a difference in the form of municipal government but the difference between a Chamberlain and a Murphy. The machine and the caucus are merely the instruments through which the administration works. In the hands of a statesman they may be, and often are the true servants of the people. In the hands of corrupt politicians they become the servile tools of spoilsmen and special interests.

But the Birmingham caucus has a special significance to the student of political philosophy. It marks a break in the ideals and methods of the old school of Radicals and the new. John Bright and the older generation of Radicals were individualists in practice as well as in theory. They appealed directly to the minds and consciences of men. They were profoundly interested in the formation but not in the organization of public opinion. They were thinkers rather than men of action. The faithful followers of Bentham and John Stuart Mill found it exceedingly difficult to submit to the discipline of the new political order set

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up at Birmingham. They protested against the decisions of the caucus. They denied the authority of the party leaders to restrict their freedom of judgment in respect to either men or measures. But the voice of the individual protestant was lost amid the chorus of organized democracy. The day for action had arrived. A practical leader had arisen who knew how to win victory and attain results. The caucus and the programme were something more than the mere application of efficiency methods to party politics. They were rather an expression of the new spirit of Radicalism, the spirit of Pragmatism. Democracy had ceased to be a theory or a dream, it had become a party and a force.

Equally significant from the philosophic standpoint is the influence of Chamberlain and his party organization upon the political principles of John Stuart Mill. The writings of Mill were the text-book, one might almost say the Bible of the Manchester School. Bentham may well be considered the father of modern English Radicalism, but John Stuart Mill was the greatest exponent of its political principles. He popularized the abstract theories of his worthy predecessor and gave to them a higher moral and social significance. From the principle of utility he derived the theories of individualism and democracy. But having set up democracy as the best form of government, inasmuch as it developed the highest moral and intellectual qualities in the general community, he drew back in alarm at the danger of entrusting individual rights to the will of numerical majorities. His political experience had served to correct his philosophic assumptions of the high moral quality of human nature, of the identity of the interests of the individual with those of society, and of the sweet reasonableness and harmony which would characterize the social and economic relations of men. "The power of the majority," he declared, "is salutary so far as it is used defensively, not offensively, as its exertion is tempered by respect for the personality of the individual and deference to superiority of cultivated intelligence."

But the question immediately arose, how was the power of the majority to be tempered so as to secure the much-desired protection of the minority? Mill was in a tight position, for as has been pointed out by Mr. Ostrogorski, "He repudiated the sovereignty of right in politics just as he had rejected that of duty in the moral sphere. As only material forces remained to be brought

into play, there was nothing whatever to interfere between the individual interest and the multiplied interest of numbers unless some new dynamic combination could be devised to enable the weak to hold its own against the strong." This combination Mill believed he had found in the principle of proportional representation. By this happy mechanical device the opinions of every considerable group of electors could and would be directly represented in all public matters. A genuine democracy would be set up in place of a spurious representative system.

But the Birmingham caucus, as we have seen, utterly rejected the principle of minority representation. Mr. Chamberlain and his followers were thorough-going democrats. They believed in the rule of the majority without qualification or restriction. They were, to use a recent phrase, "whole hoggers." Democracy was either right or wrong; and if it was right in principle, it could not, they concluded, be wrong in practice. Mr. Chamberlain was too shrewd a politician to be fooled by the theorem that the evils of democracy could be cured by a mathematical formula. He did not deny that the majority might and would misuse their powers, but he had faith to believe that they would be quick to make amends when they became aware of the true facts of the matter. In any case, the remedy for these abuses would not be found in curtailing the power of democracy; it ought rather to be sought in the political education of the public.

The caucus is likewise interesting from a constitutional standpoint, in that it endeavoured to introduce a new constitutional doctrine into English politics, the doctrine of the popular mandate. Among the powers which were claimed by the caucus was that of dictating the views of local representatives upon questions of the day. But this pretension ran counter, not only to the individualistic tenets of the older Radicals, but also to the principles of the Constitution. According to the theory of English law a member of the House of Commons is a national and not a local representative. From the moment of his election he takes on a truly national character and is expected to legislate for the interests of the country as a whole rather than for those of his own immediate constituency. But the caucus did not spare even the Constitution. It demanded an immediate compliance with its demands on penalty of the defeat of the candidate for nomination and election. The caucus, however, had gone too far. Several prominent men of the party refused to sur-

render their independence of judgment to a political cabal. They declined to assist in the restoration of what was in effect the old system of nomination burroughs, now masquerading under the guise of democracy. The struggle became so acute that Mr. Chamberlain found it necessary to check the zeal of his Radical friends. The principle of the mandate, Mr. Schnadhorst explained, was of the "very greatest value," but one "which should be applied with moderation and discretion and with due regard to circumstances and persons." This qualification has fortunately saved the independence of Parliament and preserved to the public the services of some of the noblest sons of England.

Mr. Chamberlain had already become a national figure. He was now ready to enter Parliament. The opportunity soon presented itself, and in 1876 he was elected by acclamation for one of the Birmingham seats. He entered Parliament as an advanced Radical of well-known independent views. He belonged to the newer type of politician. He had no aristocratic connections or associations with the landed interests. Nor did he regard himself, like many of his fellow-members from the metropolitan cities, as a representative of respectable middle-class Liberalism. He came from an industrial district, and without in any way professing to be a labour member claimed, and with a fair measure of justice, to represent the views of the working-man and to speak in their behalf. He was, moreover, one of the first public men to recognize the fact that municipal service afforded the best apprenticeship for national politics, and in so doing, established a precedent which has redounded to the municipal and national advantage of the nation. In short, his business training and municipal experience particularly fitted him for the responsible duties of parliamentary life. As an administrator he proved pre-eminent. Order, efficiency, and intelligent co-operation characterized the management of his department, whatever it might be. Administration with him was a business proposition, to be conducted according to business principles.

But in other respects his previous experience proved a handicap in Parliament. His close association with his home city exposed him to Lord Salisbury's taunt of "having a mayoralty mind"; and it must be confessed that Mr. Chamberlain was never able entirely to free himself from local influences. He was always the member for West Birmingham. Even at the height of his fame, as Secretary of State for the Colonies, he was prone to regard the

affairs of the empire from the standpoint of the interests of his constituents. How different, indeed, might have been the course of imperial politics if Mr. Chamberlain, like so many British statesmen, had been obliged to seek a seat in some other than his home bailiwick.

An even more serious handicap was his connection with the caucus. In England politics, like cricket, has been a game for gentlemen. It is a sport, a means of recreation, not, as too often in America, a calling or a means of livelihood. A clear and fundamental distinction has been drawn between the amateur and the professional politician. The House of Commons has been and is intensely jealous of its reputation as the best gentlemen's club in Europe. The members of the House have closely identified their political activities with the social life of the community. In many cases a parliamentary career has expressed a historic succession of public service. The political game has always been keenly contested, but it has been played by gentlemen according to the well-understood rules of parliamentary courtesy.

But Mr. Chamberlain was essentially a professional politician and, like all professionals, brought a somewhat different spirit into the game. Politics with him was a master passion. There were few social cross currents and no intellectual back eddies to stay the onward rush of the stream of politics. He wanted the social amenities which lent courtesy and dignity to parliamentary life. A dinner at Mr. Asquith's or Mr. Balfour's was a gathering of the intellectual *élite* of England. At Mr. Chamberlain's it was a party caucus. In truth, Mr. Chamberlain always remained more or less a stranger to many of the members of the House of Commons. He belonged to a genus apart. He did not enter into their social lives. His thoughts were not their thoughts, nor were his interests their interests. They knew him only as a politician; they would have liked to know him as a man. His abilities commanded the admiration of the whole House, but he was never able to win his way into the hearts of a majority of the members.

This concentration of interest lent a special intensity to his relations with his fellow-members. He could attract or repel, but benevolent neutrality was foreign to his nature. He played the political game all the time and he always played to win. He was more concerned about the end in view than the means by

which the end was attained. His political methods, it must be admitted, were not always over-scrupulous, and on more than one occasion, particularly during the Boer war, he was guilty of violating the best traditions of English political sportsmanship.

The political advent of Mr. Chamberlain likewise marked the growing influence of the commercial world in affairs of state. The Reform Act of 1832 transferred the balance of power from the landed aristocracy to the industrial and financial interests of the country. Nevertheless, thanks to her political traditions, England still continued to be ruled by her country gentlemen. There were many representatives of the commercial class in the House of Commons, but few indeed from among them were to be found in the councils of the government. But the day of the ascendancy of the landed aristocracy was at an end. The field of municipal politics was training a body of legislators immeasurably superior in knowledge and capacity to the honest but old-fashioned gentry of England. A new ruling class was emerging with a distinct political philosophy of its own. The commercial world was demanding a new type of politician; the idea of efficiency was taking possession of politics as it already had done in business. The day of the expert had come. Mr. Chamberlain entered the House not as a Radical only, but as an outstanding representative of the new school of political specialists.

What, then, was the sort of man who had just entered Parliament? In appearance he was tall, slightly made, and almost boyish-looking, despite his forty years. In dress he was fastidious. The quiet, self-possessed gentleman in conventional frock coat, with a fashionable waistcoat and a carefully adjusted monocle, was the most unlikely person in the House to be taken for a dangerous radical. In manner he was dignified and reserved almost to the point of coolness; in speech, calm, logical, and convincing, a skilled debater but without the slightest pretence of oratory; in judgment, shrewd almost to the point of canniness; in sentiment, a loyal friend, a stout opponent, a man of strong convictions; in habit of thought and political methods, an American rather than an English politician.

Mr. Chamberlain entered the House at a crucial moment in the history of the Liberal party. The old feud between the Whig and Radical wings of the party had broken out again. Their differences were too fundamental to be reconciled; they concerned the very nature of the English Constitution, they affected the

whole temper of English politics. To the Whigs the principles of the English Constitution were sacred and inviolable. They believed in a limited constitution. In the careful balancing of the various organs of government they saw a "salutary check to all precipitate resolutions." These "salutary checks and balances," in the language of Edmund Burke, "render deliberation a matter not of choice, but of necessity. They make all change a subject of compromise which naturally begets moderation. They produce temperaments preventing the sore evil of harsh, unqualified reformations, and rendering all the headlong exertion of arbitrary power in the few or in the many, forever impracticable." To the Radicals these principles were anathema. In place of the theory of the separation of powers they set up the doctrine of popular sovereignty and to that doctrine they demanded absolute and unqualified submission. There was no room in their inexorable creed for the social amenities, legal privileges, judicious compromises, and easy latitudinarianism so dear to the hearts of their Whig friends.

The struggle between the two factions was rendered more acute by the passage of the second reform act. The majority of the Whigs were convinced that the extension of the franchise had gone far enough, if not too far. But the Radicals regarded that act as but a half-way measure and demanded the complete enfranchisement of the democracy of the country. With them, however, the ballot was only a means to social reform. The real differences between the factions were social and economic rather than political. The social stratification of parties was under way. The Whigs were representative of the large commercial interests and of the old landed aristocracy who still clung to the principles of 1688. The Radicals, on the other hand, appealed primarily to the so-called lower middle class. And between these two classes there was a great gulf fixed. Both in social relations and in economic interests the old Whig families were more closely identified with their Tory opponents than with their Radical allies. But so long as they retained control over the party's policy, there was little likelihood that they would desert the Liberal party. The Radicals, however, had been greatly strengthened by the recent elections and were eager to challenge the ascendancy of their rivals in the House.

Mr. Chamberlain had already won the enmity of some of the Whig leaders by his outspoken condemnation of the half-hearted

attempts of the government to deal with questions of social reform and of the general neglect of the interests of the non-conformists and the working-class. His opponents had hoped that the dignified atmosphere of Westminster would dampen the ardour of his democratic sympathies. They had even prophesied that he would play but a pigmy part among the intellectual giants of the House. But these false hopes were quickly dispelled. Mr. Chamberlain immediately commanded the attention of the whole House, and in a short time was recognized as the chief spokesman of the Radical group.

On the defeat of the Conservative party in 1880, Mr. Gladstone offered Mr. Chamberlain a seat in the cabinet as a representative of the Radical wing of the party. For a time he maintained an attitude of friendly co-operation with his Whig colleagues; but as the franchise agitation waxed warmer and warmer, his moderation gave way and he came out boldly with an unauthorized programme of social and constitutional reform. The Whigs joined with the Tories in holding him up to scorn and ridicule; but he did not flinch. He returned the attack of his critics blow for blow. Lord Goschen was not the least of his censors who had cause to remember his biting invective.

“To scent out difficulties in the way of every reform, that,” said Mr. Chamberlain, “is the congenial task of the man of the world who coldly recognizes the evils from which he does not suffer himself and reserves his chief enthusiasm for the critical examination of every proposal for their redress and for the scathing denunciation of the poor enthusiast who will not let well alone, and who cannot preserve the severe equanimity of superior persons.”

These internal struggles rent the cabinet in twain. Even the genius of Mr. Gladstone could not save the tottering government from defeat.

The resignation of the government in 1885 left Mr. Chamberlain free to carry on his campaign against the Whigs. The radical programme which he soon after issued, startled the country by its progressivism. It was intended to be a direct challenge to the moderate Liberals. “The stage for agitation has passed,” he declared, “and the time for action has come.” The Whigs were thoroughly alarmed. The Birmingham caucus had captured the party organization of the country and now Mr. Chamberlain threatened to drive them out of the party unless they would

accept his democratic principles. Some of the Whig leaders had already stepped out of the party and others were only waiting for a favourable opportunity to do so gracefully. That opportunity soon presented itself in the struggle over Irish Home Rule. On an amendment to the address eighteen moderate Liberals, including Hartington, Goschen, and Lubbock, walked into the Conservative lobby. The government, however, was defeated by the combined vote of the Liberal and Nationalist parties. In Mr. Gladstone's new cabinet the names of the old Whig leaders were missing. Their places had been filled from the ranks of the Radicals. Mr. Chamberlain had won a splendid victory. The days of Whig ascendancy were ended. The Liberal party had been purged of the standpatters. It had at last become a truly progressive party.

We must now turn to a more critical examination of Mr. Chamberlain's political principles. His political theories, so far as he may be said to have had any, were a peculiar combination of the philosophy of the French Revolution, the benevolent utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill, and the economic principles of the Manchester School, with a small admixture of practical socialism. From the first he derived the conception of the rights of man; from the second, individualistic ideas; from the third, the tenets of peace and free trade; and from the last, a liberal creed as to the functions of the state. It was useless for his opponents to point out that some of these theories were discredited and that they were all mutually contradictory. Mr. Chamberlain made no attempt to unify them. He simply used them, one and all, as occasion demanded, in order to support or defend some practical policy he had in mind. He would as readily have accepted any other theories which promised to serve his purpose. His political theories, as Mr. Jayes has well said, "have been determined quite as much by sentiment—by sympathy—by indignation, and by personal affection or resentment as by reason or calculation." In fact, he rather prided himself on sticking close to the facts and letting the theories shift for themselves.

Theoretically, he was a Republican, as were most of the advanced Radicals of his day, but he deliberately refrained from advocating such principles publicly. His views in respect to the matter were clearly expressed at a dinner at Birmingham in 1872. In proposing the toast to "the Queen" he declared:

"I have been taxed with professing republicanism. I hold, and very few intelligent men do not now hold, that the best form of government for a free and enlightened people, is that of a republic, and that is the form of government to which the nations of Europe are surely and not very slowly tending. But, at the same time, I am not at all prepared to enter into an agitation in order to upset the existing state of things, to destroy monarchy and to change the name of the titular ruler of this country. I do not consider that name a matter of the slightest importance. What is of real importance is the spread of a real republican spirit among the people. The idea to my mind that underlies republicanism, is this; that in all cases merit should have a fair chance, that it should not be handicapped in the race by any accident of birth or privilege, that all men should have equal rights before the law, equal chances of serving their country."

But the Radicals of England, he thought, had sufficient problems to engage their immediate attention without wasting time on remote speculations. On his several visits to the United States he made a careful study of American institutions, for which he conceived a high but discriminating admiration. He was particularly appreciative of our educational system and religious freedom, and above all, as his marriage proved, of our American women. On the other hand, he was severely critical of the corruption and flagrant abuses of the spoils system which disgraced so much of our state and municipal politics. In recent years his faith in republicanism seems to have somewhat abated; or perhaps it might be better to say that political experience had led him to believe that the constitutional monarchy of England afforded all the practical advantages of a republican form of government, and at the same time, avoided some of the worst abuses of a commercialized democracy.

His practical social program at this time included, among other subjects, the three F's—Free Labour, Free Land, and Free Schools,—temperance reform, extension of the franchise, and the general improvement of the economic conditions of society. "England," he declared, "was said to be the paradise of the rich. Let it not become the purgatory of the poor." The workingmen of the country were justified in demanding a larger share of the fruits of their industry. They were entitled to better social conditions, and to something more than a living wage. Some years later as a Liberal Unionist, he still further developed his programme of reform. Chief among the measures he advocated were statutory control of the hours of labor in mining or other dangerous callings; local regulation of the hours of employment

in shops; the establishment of arbitration tribunals for trade disputes; workman's compensation; old-age pensions for the deserving poor; restriction upon the immigration of foreign paupers; extension of the power of the local authorities to carry on improvements and to provide for the better housing of the poor, either by the erection of municipal dwellings or by the advancement of money to working-men who desired to purchase their own homes.

In the subject of old-age pensions he was particularly interested and for many years was the leading advocate of some such measure in the House. He was too staunch an individualist, however, to support any general scheme for giving weekly pensions to all aged persons. He protested against the recognition of a universal claim on the part of the general public. Such a recognition, he believed, would revive all the evils of the old Poor Law. It would discourage thrift and encourage idleness and crime. Only those should be helped who had proved themselves worthy of help. An old-age pension should be a premium on industry and not a relief for indigence. But in this, as in so many more of his plans for social betterment, Mr. Chamberlain had the misfortune of seeing his favourite measures carried out by his political opponents.

He favoured the settlement of industrial disputes by arbitration. For this purpose he suggested that a special tribunal, consisting of a judge and assessors, should be set up in every district for the hearing of all such cases. The decisions of the court, however, should be purely voluntary in operation and not compulsory, as in some of the British colonies. Public opinion, he believed, would be more effective than law as a preventive and a determinant of strikes. His objection to general coercive legislation was likewise reflected in his opposition to a compulsory eight-hour day in all employments. A limitation of the hours of labour might, in his judgment, be advantageously employed in dangerous or unsanitary callings, but the adoption of all such restrictive legislation ought properly to be reserved for local determination. He was, however, distinctly friendly to the enactment of a comprehensive scheme for workman's compensation and some years later, as a member of the Conservative government, had the satisfaction of assisting in the passage of the first important act on this subject.

His views in respect to land reform were even more striking.

Upon this matter he broke completely with his friends of the Manchester School. He questioned the doctrine of the sacredness of private property. Property, he maintained, had obligations as well as rights and he was prepared to enforce these obligations even at the expense of prescriptive rights.

"What," he asked, in his celebrated Ransom speech, "is to be the nature of the democratic legislation of the future? I cannot help thinking that it will be more directed to what are called social subjects than has hitherto been the case. How to promote the greater happiness of the masses of the people, how to increase their enjoyment of life, that is the problem of the future; and just as there are politicians who would occupy all the world and leave nothing for the ambition of anybody else, so we have their counterpart at home in the men who, having already annexed everything that is worth having, expect everybody else to be content with the crumbs that fall from their table. If you will go back to the early history of our social system, you will find that when our social arrangements first began to shape themselves, every man was born into the world with Natural Rights, with a right to a share in the great inheritance of the community, with a right to a part of the land of his birth. But all those rights have passed away. The common rights of ownership have disappeared. Some of them have been sold; some of them have been given away by people who had no right to dispose of them; some of them have been lost through apathy and ignorance; some have been destroyed by fraud; and some have been acquired by violence. Private ownership has taken the place of these communal rights, and this system has become so interwoven with our habits and usages, it has been so sanctioned by law and protected by custom, that it might be very difficult and perhaps impossible to reverse it. But then, I ask, what ransom will Property pay for the security which it enjoys? What substitute will it find for the Natural Rights which have ceased to be recognized? Society is banded together in order to protect itself against the instincts of those of its members who would make very short work of private ownerships if they were left alone. That is all very well, but I maintain that society owes to these men something more than mere toleration in return for the restrictions which it places upon their liberty of action.

"There is a doctrine in many men's mouths, and in few men's practice, that Property has obligations as well as rights. I think in the future we shall hear a great deal more about the obligations of Property, and we shall not hear quite so much about its rights."

These words sound strangely familiar to us. The mind immediately reverts to a recent exciting campaign in America in which an ex-president of the United States took a leading part. But lo! instead of commanding the armies of the Lord at the battle of Armageddon, we find that our picturesque representative of strenuous democracy has been fighting a belated battle some fifty years in the rear of the vanguard of English Radicals.

Among the specific remedies he proposed for the settlement of the land question were the registration of titles with a view to the simplification and cheapening of the process of transfer, the abrogation of settlements and entails and the custom of primogeniture in case of intestacy, and the application of the principles of the Irish Land Act to England and Scotland. To the agricultural labourer he held out the prospect of the construction of decent cottages and the grant of small allotments on equitable terms. If the landlords failed to make proper provision for their workmen, the local authorities should be empowered to acquire the necessary land and let it out in allotments and small holdings. For this part of his programme, Mr. Chamberlain was undoubtedly indebted in part to his friend Mr. Jesse Collins of "three acres and a cow" fame.

Even more radical was his policy in respect to those unprofitable landlords who used their estates for pleasure rather than cultivation. He would give short shrift indeed to the Scotch nobility who drove the crofters off their estates in order to make way for deer and pheasants. All such estates, he maintained, should be restored to production on penalty of expropriation; sporting and uncultivated land should be taxed at its full productive value. Public lands or commons which had been illegally or unjustly enclosed and endowments which had been diverted to improper uses should be re-claimed by the state. It is little wonder that the Tory squires regarded him with horror as a modern Jack Cade and that many of the old-time Whigs thought it necessary to repudiate such revolutionary attacks upon the sacred right of property. He was "denounced by Mr. Salisbury, lectured by Mr. Goschen, scolded by the Duke of Argyle and preached at by the *Spectator*." Every respectable interest felt itself justified in rebuking this unregenerate disciple of Tom Paine.

First and foremost among the constitutional changes which he demanded were the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England and the re-organization of the House of Lords. As a nonconformist, he had suffered from the superior privileges of the Anglican Church in matters of religion and education, but he bore the Church no personal enmity. He did not desire its destruction; "although it has been a cruel stepmother to some of us, it is," he acknowledged, "a venerable institution and it has done and is doing good work." He demanded, however,

the complete separation of Church and State, the entire abolition of the special legal privileges of the Established Church, and the complete secularization of the system of Church schools. In short, he would have put the Church on a purely voluntary basis similar to that of other denominations and would have restricted its functions to what he regarded as purely religious ministrations. But in disestablishing the Church, he would have preserved those temporalities to which the Church was legally entitled and which were necessary to the successful prosecution of her work.

Mr. Chamberlain was by no means as considerate of that other venerable institution, the House of Lords. He would gladly have wiped out the hereditary principle as a baneful feudal anacronism.

"Are the lords," he indignantly asked, "to dictate to us, the people of England? Are the lords to dictate to us the laws which we shall make and the way in which we shall bring them in? Are you going to be governed by yourselves, or will you submit to an oligarchy which is a mere accident of birth? Your ancestors resisted kings and abated the pride of monarchs and it is inconceivable that we should be so careless of your great heritage as to submit your liberties to this miserable minority of individuals who rest their claims upon privilege and upon accident. . . . Why should I have any spite against the House of Lords? I have always thought that it was a very picturesque institution, attractive from its connection with the history of our country. I have no desire to see dull uniformity in social life and I am rather thankful than otherwise to gentlemen who take the trouble of wearing robes and coronets and who will keep up a certain state and splendour which is very pleasing to look upon. They are ancient monuments and I for one should be very sorry to deface them. But, gentlemen, I do not admit that we can build upon these interesting ruins the foundations of our government. I cannot allow that these antiquities should control the destinies of a free empire; and when they press their claims without discretion and without moderation, when they press them to an extreme which their predecessors never contemplated, I say they provoke inquiry and controversy which cannot but end in their humiliation. I have read somewhere the saying of a certain Rumbold who was a Puritan soldier in the time of the Stuarts, to the effect that he would believe in hereditary legislators when he found that men were born into the world, some of them with saddles on their backs, and others with bits and spurs ready to ride them. That is a condition which has not yet been fulfilled, and I do not think that the men who desire to preserve the authority of the Peers are wise if they push that authority so far as to set people thinking what grounds we have for giving them any authority at all, and how they have used the authority they at present possess."

In fiscal matters, Mr. Chamberlain was a strong free trader, not so much from conviction as by reason of experience and

public from the consideration of more important social questions at home. Too often it was but a patriotic cloak which was falsely used to cover some unjustifiable act of territorial spoliation. The empire ought, in his judgment, to be based upon the same liberal constitutional principles as prevailed in England. It should be an instrument of freedom and not of conquest or tyranny.

The splendid liberality of Mr. Chamberlain's early imperialism finds its best expression in his vigorous defence of the Pretoria Convention, by which the Transvaal was virtually re-ceded to the Boers.

"When the terms of peace were arranged," he said, "when the Boers accepted our offer, as we had originally made it, we rejoiced in the prospect of a settlement without further effusion of blood, whether of Englishmen or Dutchmen; and we did not think the English people would feel themselves to be humiliated because their government had refused knowingly to persist in a course of oppression and wrong-doing, and we had accepted, without a victory, terms which were the best we could reasonably expect that even the greatest victory would give to us. We are a great and powerful nation. What is the use of being great and powerful, if we are afraid to admit an error when we are conscious of it? Shame is not in the confession of a mistake. Shame lies only in persistency in wilful wrong-doing."

This speech marks the zenith of Mr. Chamberlain's Liberalism. He had indeed wrought great works on behalf of the Radical party. He had shown the way to municipal reform. He had revolutionized the party organization. He had overthrown the arid individualism of the Manchester School. He had democratized the principles of the party, and most important of all, he had set up a high ideal of social and international justice. It almost seemed for the moment as though the mantle of John Bright had fallen upon him, and that with a more liberal creed than that noble statesman, he would stand forth as the great apostle of civic righteousness and as the champion of the weak and oppressed of all nations.

But Mr. Chamberlain's principles were about to be put to the severest test. The Home Rule question had become the dominant issue in politics. For some time past Mr. Chamberlain and John Morley had been striving to gain the ear of Mr. Gladstone. The two men had been closely associated in the struggle for social and electoral reforms. They both belonged to the advanced wing of the Liberal party. But they were strikingly different in tempera-

ment and in political ideals and methods. Mr. Chamberlain was pre-eminently a politician, Mr. Morley a scholar. The one was a Radical utilitarian, the other a philosophic Liberal. To the former liberty was a means to individual advancement and national strength, to the latter it was the supreme end of government. The Irish question brought the matter to an issue. Mr. Chamberlain was not prepared to apply to Ireland the same liberal principles as to the Transvaal. In this case, in his judgment, national sovereignty was to be preferred to local self-government. Considerations of expediency more than outweighed mere technical principles. The Irish had always proved themselves a wicked and perverse people. They were a constant thorn in the flesh of Great Britain. They could not safely be entrusted with practical independence. But to Mr. Morley, on the other hand, the very disloyalty of the Irish strengthened their claims for complete autonomy. Ireland was entitled to freedom, whatever the consequences might be to England.

The Liberal party was called upon to make a choice between the two conflicting ideals, liberty or strength—a free but possibly independent Ireland, or a powerful and united kingdom. The choice was difficult to make, for it rent the party in twain. But the councils of the idealist prevailed; and true to their best traditions, the rank and file of the party determined to follow the lead of the man of vision rather than that of the practical statesman; and in that decision, the future of the Liberal party was assured.

Mr. Chamberlain sorrowfully withdrew from his old associates. He had led the Radical forces to the border of the promised land. He was now to turn back. His splendid efforts had failed. They had failed because he had not the liberal sympathies and prophetic vision of his philosophic rival, because he estimated the greatness of the nation in terms of power rather than in terms of freedom. He had not an abiding faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness. He was an idealist, but his idealism was qualified by an alloy of national materialism. Freedom was a reward, not a boon. It was something to be merited, not something to be freely bestowed on the undeserving. There was in his radicalism a strain of political Calvinism which sometimes harshened his judgments of men and nations. In a word, his Radicalism was lacking in the saving virtue of Liberalism.

But even in his defeat he stands out as one of the greatest Radicals in English history. He represented the stage of political equality in English Radicalism. He was the connecting link between John Stuart Mill and David Lloyd George, between the principles of philosophic liberty and the doctrines of social democracy. He transformed Liberalism from a philosophic principle into a political force. He found his countrymen given over to Benthamite formulas and to Tory imperialism. He rescued the Liberal party from the former and struck a heavy blow at the ascendancy of the latter. He led the fight for the democratization of the institutions of England. He showed how the English Constitution might be transformed from an ancient and venerable institution of government into the most progressive of modern political organizations. In short, he Americanized the politics, socialized the conceptions, and democratized the institutions of his country. He was the precursor of Lloyd George. He prepared the way for social and economic reforms. He laid down the principles and set forth the methods of political action. It has been left to the little Welsh solicitor to work out the experiments which have made of England the political laboratory of the world. And the Liberal party of to-day has entered into his labours.

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association. The manufacturing interests had prospered under free trade; the lot of the working-man had improved; and like many of his countrymen, he ascribed these benefits to the liberal fiscal policy of his country. As president of the Board of Trade, he condemned the proposal to retaliate against the beet-sugar bounties of the French government.

"He could conceive it just possible that under the sting of great suffering, strange remedies might be tried and sometime or other people might be found foolish enough to tax the food of the country. If that were done, the recurrence of depression would be the signal for such a state of things as we had never seen since the repeal of the corn laws. . . . The tax on food would mean a decline in the value of wages, certainly in their proportionate value—wages would purchase less. It would mean an increase in the price of every article produced in this country and the loss of our foreign trade which was so valuable."

In fact, it was not until the Colonial Conference of 1897 that he appears to have seriously considered the advisability of modifying the fiscal policy of the country.

In matters of foreign policy he was an orthodox Manchester School man. No member of the House was more scornful than he of Mr. Disraeli's spectacular attempts to play the leading part in the councils of Europe. He desired to avoid all entangling alliances and to keep his country out of the maelstrom of international politics. He was a man of peace. He took no delight in wars of conquest or in the slaughter of his fellow-men. He thought of the expense and suffering which these wars would entail rather than of the military prestige to be derived therefrom. He joined in the bitter denunciation of the pro-Turkish policy of the Conservative government, but he did not permit his sympathies with the oppressed races of Europe to go beyond the range of benevolent interest or friendly diplomacy. Non-intervention was the well-established policy of the Radical party, and in that policy he fully shared.

He was equally critical of the music-hall imperialism of the Conservative leader. Although not an avowed Little Englander, he was nevertheless somewhat tainted with the narrow political philosophy of that school. He experienced no joy in the process of painting the map red. The empire, he believed, was already sufficiently large without attempting to assume new burdens and responsibilities. Tory imperialism appeared to him very much in the light of an *ignis fatuus* to divert the attention of the