AUTHORISED EDITION.

THE POLITICAL OUTLOOK AT WHITSUNTIDE, 1902.

A SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

THE RIGHT HON.

SIR H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN,

G.C.B., M.P.,

AT THE FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF

THE NORTHERN LIBERAL FEDERATION,

AT DARLINGTON,

ON MAY 24th, 1902.

PUBLISHED BY

THE LIBERAL PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT

(In connection with the National Liberal Federation and the Liberal Central Association).

42, PARLIAMENT STREET, LONDON, S.W.

1902.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

more useful vitriol which he could discharge at the Parliamentary Opposition. It seems that one of the minor uses of a great war is to make political capital for the Minister, and that even in this crisis this fact was not to be forgotten. Still, I think that this is a moment at which he might have held himself somewhat in check. At any rate, I am not going to follow the evil example, even with my far humbler responsibility. I am not going to discuss either the cause or the conduct or the proper ending of the war. If I did I should only have to repeat opinions which I have expressed from time to time, and which, every one of them, have been justified by the event. But this is not the moment for discussion.

The Conduct of the British Soldier.

When, however, the Colonial Secretary commits himself amid his diatribes to the stale and oft-repudiated and contradicted slander, raked up from the war press, that I and my friends have vilified the British soldier and have encouraged the Boer—well, then I must claim to say a word or two. The first thing I will say is this—let him produce a single word of mine in which I have attributed misconduct to the British soldier. I defy him to do so. Nay, I will save him from some trouble, because I have here some of the things that I have said of the British soldier. On December 6th, 1900, I said in the House of Commons :—

"Certain harsh measures have been authorised and taken, the burning of farms, the destruction and carrying away of property, the deportation of women and children, and it cannot be denied that these things have moved the country, and that many a heart revolts against them. I am not going to dwell upon them, still less am I going to criticise them. I decline to express any hostile opinion on the subject ; we have not the information to justify it ; but, knowing the feeling of the country, I call upon the Government for facts. What is the system pursued ? What are the orders given ? What are the intentions of these proceedings ? I shall await that information before even attempting to form a judgment. But when I come to form a judgment, I for my part, and I am sure most of us, will be animated by two sentiments. In the first place, the most perfect confidence in the humanity and generosity of the British soldier and the British officer. We hear the most preposterous attacks made upon them in some places, with which I have not only no sympathy, but which I repudiate with indignation and scorn. As to the imputations of cruelty, why, we know the British soldier, we know that he is the most warm-hearted, the most tender-hearted, the most soft-hearted creature, and if we went no further than the old adage, *Nemo repente fuit turpissimus*—no one turns a scoundrel all at once—we know that the men in the ranks of the British army are not capable of excesses of the kind attributed to them. On the contrary, when put to

this duty, in the case of all alike, whether officers or men, it is sorely against their liking."

These were my words, and, two months later, on February 14th, 1901, I spoke again, and this is what I said :—

"Then began that era of punitive burnings and confiscations which we cannot recall with pleasure, and which, so far as my observation has gone—and I have talked with many men who have been out in South Africa, as well as with many who have remained at home—are now universally regretted as having been a mischievous error in policy. I declared in December, and I repeat the declaration now, that I have never given credence to the stories of wanton cruelty on the part of British soldiers ; but the whole proceedings were cruel, the whole method was cruel, and officers and men whose military duties compelled them to give orders for and to execute those acts, loathed the work they were engaged upon."

That, sir, is my reply to Mr. Chamberlain's slander.

The Case of Mr. Cartwright.

What we attacked was the executive action of Ministers, things done under their authority, things approved by them that had been done. And if we wanted justification we find it in the fact that again and again the objectionable act or practice was modified or abandoned in consequence of emphatic protest. Let me take the most recent case—a case to which I shall only refer in passing. It is the well-known case of Mr. Cartwright brought before the House of Commons by your old friend Mr. John Morley. That case was brought forward, and it was argued that a man who had been convicted and had served his full sentence had purged his offence and ought to be allowed to go where he liked. Yet he was prohibited from coming to this country, and what was the answer given to us? The answer, not evolved in the heat of some debate, but written down in the office and brought to the House of Commons for the purpose of being read, was that there was danger lest this man should, if he came to this country, spread anti-British ideas. Let us not forget the phrase, which marks the expression in a most significant manner of the view which the present Government take of their duty and of the rights and claims of their fellow-citizens. This is introducing into this country an Imperialism which not only affects our foreign affairs but our domestic affairs, which is an abrogation of the liberty which we enjoy. Those who took up the cudgels on behalf of Mr. Cartwright in the House of Commons were told that they were the friends of the enemies of their country. And what has happened? Quite recently Mr. Cartwright has been allowed to go where he likes.

The Alleged Encouragement of the Boers.

But it appears that we not only engaged in the vilification of our soldiers, but we also encouraged the Boers. Again I call on the Colonial Secretary to produce words to substantiate his charge. Observe that there are two assumptions involved in it—one more ridiculous than the other. The first is that the combatant Boer in the rare intervals when he is relieved from his arduous life spends his leisure and finds his solace in studying the speeches delivered in the House of Commons, and the second supposition is that when he does read them he finds in them that which hardens his stubborn heart. For my part I have always from the first outbreak of this unhappy war declared that it could have but one issue, and that their struggle must sooner or later end in failure. All my words have been directed not towards our yielding or submitting to anything, but towards securing that the war should be so conducted and so ended as to leave as few as possible of difficulties and antagonisms behind it. But let me ask you this—let me ask any fair-minded man, whatever his political bias may be—what was likely to be the effect upon this combatant Boer, upon his disposition, if it did come to his knowledge that there was in this country a considerable volume of opinion, not dominant, but, on the other hand, not altogether insignificant, which urged that harshness should be avoided, that generous terms should be indicated or offered, and that future self-government should be granted and should be guaranteed? That was and is the policy of the Liberal party. That was all that the combatant Boer could glean from our utterances. Can anything be imagined better calculated to soften his feelings and induce a desire for settlement?

The Hardening and Stiffening Leaven.

No, sir, the Colonial Secretary—whose the war is, and whose especially the prolongation of it is, for it might have been over a year ago—if he is looking about to find some words which helped to protract the war he will search in vain the records of the Liberal party. If he seeks for words rather than for plain facts to account for the war's duration, I could furnish him with phrases of his own colleagues which have had at least a contributory effect—the phrase, for instance, which denied "any shred of independence" to a proud and brave people; the phrase which relegated self-government to a distance measured by generations. That, indeed, is a morsel of leaven, of hardening and stiffening leaven, which through all these weeks and months must have been working through the whole lump of Boer resistance.

The Heart of Empire.

We are all anxiously and earnestly hoping, as the chairman has said, that hostilities will cease—how we shall rejoice!—and that a secure and permanent settlement in South Africa may be attained; and, whatever our misgivings may be, we profoundly trust that from all the efforts and sacrifices of our countrymen and the outpouring of blood and treasure there will come the result that has been promised—the unity, the solidity, and the strengthening of the Empire. But I am one of those persons who believe—and I would not conceal it from you for a moment—that it is not on the other side of the globe that the political and commercial position of our nation, with its colonies and dependencies, is to be made secure. The vital point in our organism is in no extremity, however important; it is in the centre, it is here within the narrow compass of these islands. And the questions we have to ask ourselves are these: Are we strong at home? Are our people as prosperous and contented and intelligent and instructed as they ought to be, as robust in mind and body as we can make them? Is the line between comparative wealth—what we call easy circumstances—and biting penury kept low? Are the national resources carefully nursed? Is our expenditure kept within the limits of our means? And if I may depart from things directly affecting our English and Scotch interests I would ask another question: Are the political relations between the three kingdoms themselves entirely satisfactory? It is on a favourable answer to these and kindred questions that everything depends; and if the answer is not favourable, no heroic deeds of arms, no brilliant extensions of empire in any part of the world will avail.

Expenditure and Taxation.

Now, let us look at one or two of these questions, although I can do no more than briefly refer to them. I take first the grave question of the public expenditure and its most unpleasant correlative the public taxation. The total cost of the war to the end of the present financial year has been 228 millions—nearly twenty-three times the modest estimate with which it was begun, and yet the leading Minister in the Government—I do not hesitate to give him that designation—the other day comes forward at Birmingham and makes light of this 228 millions sterling. He rather boasts of it. He says we could run up another such bill. What is it, after all? It is only one-sixth of our annual income, it is only one-fifteenth of our realised capital, and I daresay he could go on and say it is only one-thousandth of something else. A more mischievous tone in a responsible Minister,

a tone more likely to work mischief on the public life and public sentiment of the country could not be imagined. How can we wonder, when this is the spirit displayed by those whose duty it is to control the expenditure, that the public charge, apart from the war, has been allowed, under the present Administration, to increase by thirty-one millions a year? It has risen from ninety-four millions in 1895 to 125 millions this year. That is startling enough, but it becomes even more significant when we find that for what may be spoken of as domestic expenditure, for education, law and justice, the establishment of the different departments, for all beneficent administration, there has not been even so great a rise in cost as would have been justified by the addition to our population, and that the great increase has been in naval and military armaments, which have swelled from 35½ millions to 61 millions in three years. And let us not forget one or two items that deserve notice. There are our old friends the doles. What a profligate business that was when we look back upon it—the doles to the landlords and the parsons. I would also point out that, in addition to the contents of the army and navy estimates, there are great items on sundry matters, which are at least semi-military, connected with territorial expansion in different parts of the world, over which there is little evidence of steady control—Nigeria, Uganda, British East Africa, British Central Africa, the Civil Administration of the Transvaal and the Orange River, down to the modest sum of £12,000 for our old friend Wei-Hai-Wei. But what do these amount to—these little unconsidered trifles tucked away in the different parts of the Civil Service Estimates? They amount to £3,220,318.

A Great Waste of Money.

Now, let us consider for a moment this increase of 30 millions in normal expenditure since 1895. What does it mean? It conveys to us no meaning, perhaps, and we are apt to forget that it has a real signification. Well, £30,000,000 a year represents the interest on a capital sum of £1,200,000,000. And what does this mean? Why, if it had not been for this expenditure, if we had not embarked upon this greatly increased expenditure, we should have had this great sum to draw upon to meet any emergency or any occasion of debt without increasing a single one of the taxes of the country. This thirty millions a year, people may say, is a very large and extravagant sum. It means a great waste of money. But it also means that the financial resources and the reserve of this country for an emergency have been to this prodigious extent impaired. Now when a war ends, expenditure

on its account soon ceases, and although in the case of the present war there will be very heavy consequential charges for many years to come, they must reach a limit somewhere. But to current expenditure, when it has received the impetus which eight years of extravagance have given it, there is no limit. I do not ask you to take this from me; I quote the highest authority, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Chancellor of the Exchequer reminds me of a sign-post which points the way you ought not to go, but which does nothing whatever to bar your progress. He said in his speech in introducing the Budget of this year:—

"I ventured last year to impress strongly upon the Committee that the financial difficulty with which we had to deal was not only the war difficulty, but the rapid increase of our ordinary expenditure. I pointed out to them that in six years our ordinary expenditure had increased by no less than £28,000,000, and I think I went so far as to say that, in my judgment, if that rate of increase continued, the country must come within reach of actual financial ruin."

There is the sign-post, for it shows you where the abyss is into which you had better not cycle:—

"I am happy to say that that rate of increase is not continued this year. I am speaking of the ordinary expenditure, and not of the war expenditure."

And then he points out how it is not quite so bad as it was last year:—

"But it is still an increase, and I cannot conceal from myself that looking to the continual augmentation of military and naval armaments, and looking to the other increased demands made upon the Exchequer flowing from our modern civilisation, we must expect some increase in our expenditure in years to come."

Can we Spare the Money?

I have already stated that the expenditure "flowing from our modern civilisation" which denotes a beneficent expenditure in domestic matters such as the charge for education and so on, is not increased in proportion to the population. It is the warlike expenditure that has increased. Now I must warn you also against a specious and fallacious view which is often put forward. You will often meet a man who says, "Oh, yes, the expenditure is great, but this is a rich country, and the people of this country are always ready to pay if they know they will get value for their money." Very true, and very sound so far as it goes. It is very desirable to get value for our money. But we should ask ourselves, "Can we spare the money with which to obtain the value?" That is the question which comes before the other. Therefore, in my opinion, it is supremely incumbent, as soon as

reasonable and sane views are possible, to inquire into this whole question, to relieve the overloaded taxpayer, and ease the springs of industry; and is it too much to ask that we should adjust once more our national outgoings to our national incomings?

The Bread Tax—Harsh and Impolitic.

I dwell upon this. Why? Because it is the cause of the imposition of the tax which is now so much in the public eye—the tax upon bread. This is not a war tax, it is a permanent tax, a part of the normal taxation of the country in order to provide for that remorseless march of expenditure which appears to be a leading feature of the policy of his Majesty's Government. Now to this tax there are two distinct orders of objection, on each of which I shall say a few words. In the first place, we say it is a harsh tax, because it will press hardest upon those who are least able to bear it. It will be paid out of their hunger by the poor and destitute. It will not affect the comfort or convenience of the well-to-do classes. They were threatened with an extra penny on their cheques, and a nice outcry was set up, and the immediate effect was that the proposal was promptly abandoned. But this duty will only hurt those who do not draw cheques—those whose domestic accounts, if they keep them, are reckoned and paid not in notes or sovereigns but in shillings or coppers. It is also an impolitic and unpatriotic tax—and a pretty tax it is for the friends of the Empire to have proposed—for it necessarily tends to raise the cost of the prime necessity of life to those who are under-fed already, and thus to stunt the growth and lower the stamina of large masses of the population.

Who Pays the Tax?

You may have seen that some supporters of the tax, and members of the Government especially, have put forward fine-drawn theories that this duty will never reach the consumer. Nobody, they say, will pay it. In its course from the Custom-house to the bakers' counter by some strange alchemy it will be volatilised and disappear. Now the truth is that precisely the contrary is what will really take place. The sum will gather in bulk as it goes. It is as certain as that water will find its level that this tax will find the consumer, and a great deal more will come from the consumer's pockets than will ever reach the coffers of the Exchequer. The Colonial Secretary—it is astonishing how we always come back to him; he is so voluble, so multifarious, and so outspoken, we get more out of him than out of all the other members of the Government—the Colonial Secretary frankly puts these fantastic theories of his own friends aside. He assumes that, of

course, the consumer will pay. But then it will be only one-eighth of a penny per quartern loaf, which is the equivalent of 5d. per cwt. on flour, and, of course, one-eighth of a penny on the quartern loaf is nothing to the man who thinks that 228 millions are nothing. But his assumption is not large enough. How can half a farthing be paid or charged? It cannot be charged or paid directly, for there is no such coin. But there are more ingenious ways of dealing with it. One of the very commonest and least ingenious is to go up the scale until you find a coin that you can make people pay. Therefore the direct payment made by the poor consumer will in a vast number of cases be a halfpenny. What do you think it is in Birmingham? It is a halfpenny already. Yes, the bakers have had a meeting—the fashionable bakers and the more common bakers—the higher bakers being of the 228 millions party, who are rather opposed to meddling with such trifles; but they have all agreed now that it must be put upon the cheaper class of bread, precisely the class of bread that brings the greatest hardships to the people.

What the Tax costs the Consumer, and what it Benefits the Treasury.

Well, now, let me make my computation. If this halfpenny was universally charged, which won't occur—I don't say for one moment it will occur; but it is a possibility, though not a probability—that is four times the amount of the tax. The tax will amount as originally imposed to £2,600,000 a year. What the consumer in that case would have to pay would be £10,400,000 a year. But that is not all. That is only foreign grain, foreign flour. One-third of the produce is British upon which no tax is put; but the price charged by the baker for British will be just the same as the price charged for the foreign loaves on his shelf; he cannot charge 4½d. for a British loaf and 5d. for a United States loaf standing beside it; they will both be 5d. Therefore you must add one-third, and this brings me—I really hope it will soon stop—this brings me to the total of 14 millions which is possible. Again, I repeat, I do not for a moment say that this will occur, but it is sufficient—when you see these huge figures—it is sufficient to let you understand the proportion between what is put on the consumer and what goes to the benefit of the country. And out of the huge sum which is possible what remains to the Exchequer? £2,600,000 only. The rest, whatever it be, whether it is half the sum I have named or even a quarter of it, rests as a wanton and unnecessary and unavailing burden on the poorest classes among us.

Free Trade.

I turn to another line of argument which is even more appalling. This new tax throws over both the doctrine and the practice of Free Trade. Not only is it an infraction of the principle, but the imposition of a tax upon corn means the removal of the keystone upon which the

edifice is founded, the capitulation of the citadel of our defence against an all-round protective tariff. For when the manufacturer has said, "Why cannot you give me a little protection against the foreigner for my goods?" we have always been able to say, "Nothing would give us greater pleasure than to help you, but you see we cannot tax the bread of the people, and corn is the most obvious thing that must be dealt with first." If there is protection at all it must be all round. In fairness it must be universal, once it is admitted. It is allowed that this tax upon flour will benefit the millers. But we are not all millers. Agriculture is the greatest industry in the country, and what effect will it have on that? Some farmers grow wheat; other farmers fatten cattle and produce beef. The former will be benefited, but the others will not only not receive benefits, but will be punished through maize and other feeding stuffs. Then there will be, I will not say an outcry, but a natural dissatisfaction of the farmer, and protection will be asked for upon meat. I pity you if you propose that just now, with the redoubtable Mr. Seddon on his way to England. How would he like an impediment put in the way of his mutton? And if there was some favour shown to the colonies I doubt if the British farmer would be much better off than he is in the full blaze of colonial competition. Then we have the paper maker who uses flour largely in his manufacture; he will claim that he should not be handicapped by a duty in his fight with foreign rivals. And so on, we shall stumble, year by year amid the din of rival demands for help. What was it that Mr. Cobden said? He held that whether foreign nations maintained their own duties or not our interest is to abolish ours. Let trade take its own natural course, and each nation and individual sell and buy as interest precribes. You do nothing but harm by interfering with the free course of trade. This is the system on which for the last half-century this country has prospered, and with it you all.

A Protective Tax.

We have seen that the members of the Government are not at one as to the nature and incidence of this tax, and they differ also as to its protective effect. The First Lord of the Treasury said: "A protective tax? What is a protective tax? I define a protective tax as being a tax which protects." Yes, but that was begging the question, because we say that it does protect. The President of the Board of Agriculture is delighted with the tax because, he says, it is good for the milling industry. He wished the tax were higher. When I quoted in the House of Commons the report of a meeting of the Canadian Parliament at which Sir Wilfrid Laurier pointed to this tax as probably opening the door to the establishment of a reciprocal arrangement between the mother country and the colonies as to preferential duties, the First Lord, in contemptuous tones, said that the tax and the visit of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Conference of Premiers had no relation to each other. But he counted as usual without the Colonial Secretary. The Colonial Secretary was once

more either more candid or more clear-headed than his friends. He admits that it is protective. He hails it with joy. It gives him a *quid pro quo* in settling preferential tariffs which he desires to arrange with the colonies. The difficulty which those among us who contemplate a preferential arrangement with the colonies have had is this, that when we are asked to arrange our tariff in their favour we have to reply that we have no tariff that we can arrange. For the purpose of a bargain we must have something that we can give.

"Then Raise his Wages."

I remember a story—I dare say you all know it—supposed to be indicative of the characteristics of the three nations amongst us. The story is that of a man who complained to three friends, an Englishman, a Scotsman, and an Irishman, that his servant broke such a lot of china, and he did not know what to do about it. The Englishman, in his straightforward, matter-of-fact way, said, "Dismiss him." But the master said, "No, he is an excellent servant; I don't want to part with him." "Stop it off his wages," said the Scotsman. Some people labour under the delusion that the Scotch are a thrifty and penurious race. "Ah, well," the master said, "that might be well enough, but the fact is his wages would not pay for what he breaks." "Then raise his wages," said the Irishman - the Irishman being supposed to have a rather inconsequential way of looking at things. What is this that Mr. Chamberlain is doing? He is raising the servant's wages in order to stop from them the loss of china. He is creating this tax in order to give it away.

Liberals and the Colonies.

He goes further. Seeing the opportunity for a little flapping of wings, he breaks out in a rhapsody on the subject, and decries the narrow-minded Opposition, and denounces us for our "economic pedantry" and our adherence to "old and antiquated methods," which are his terms for the doctrine of Free Trade. We are every whit as loyal and friendly to our colonies as he is, but as we want them to be masters in their house, so we want to remain masters in ours. We would strengthen the ties of affection and gratitude and mutual interest which exist between us, but we do not wish those ties to become a chain. For myself I would say deliberately that, so far from good and intimate relations between us being strengthened by such a material nexus as he has spoken of, they would be seriously endangered. When we consider the changes which would be constantly suggested in any such arrangement, according as trade and its circumstances and conditions shifted, the claims that would be made and refused, the abundant material for friction, we can come to no other conclusion. And at what price would it be effected? Apart from the fiscal revolution at home, the affront and alienation of the world. How do we stand as to our trade with the outside world and our colonies? Here is what Sir Robert Giffen says on the subject: "It is a supreme interest with us to promote foreign trade, not only

that food may be cheap, but that we may have the necessary raw materials for our industries. There is no prospect in reality that the colonies, from which we import about £110,000,000 annually, and to which we export about £102,000,000 annually, would really for generations take the place in our trade of foreign industries, from which we import £413,000,000 annually, and to which we export £252,000,000 annually. How are the colonies to do it? Even to take the place of foreign countries to a very partial extent would involve a complete revolution in the condition of their industry and an enormous increase in their populations, which is quite incontrivable." I am sure that when the country realises these things it will refuse to embark on this new fantastic policy; but, remember, it is as a prelude to that policy that this tax is proposed.

The Education Bill.

I have left myself with little time, but I have another subject on which I must touch. I must say something of the Education Bill. Education is a high and almost sacred word, under which are sheltered in this Bill proposals which are gravely obnoxious to us. There has been a universal feeling, shared by all classes and sections of opinion amongst us, that we have fallen sadly behind the w[illegible] in this matter of education. We are all agreed upon this, that we do not do justice to ourselves and do not sufficiently equip our workers and those who direct them for the competition that now prevails. The Government have made several partial attempts to deal with this question, but they have been rather half-hearted. But now they promised, and we expected, a great national organisation for the purpose. Let me lay down two axioms which I think will commend themselves to you. They are these. If your system of education is to be a national system it must not be a sectional system, and if it is to be in accordance with the national spirit and national constitution it must be on broad and democratic lines. Now, what have we here presented to us in the House of Commons? A Bill in which it is difficult to find from end to end a single provision for maintaining, raising, or extending education, high or low. What it does is this—and this is its kernel, its chief purpose and design, the centre round which the other provisions are spun—it endows clerical schools with public money, and it leaves them in clerical hands. That is the long and short of it, and that is why we oppose it.

The Ladder of Learning.

Now, don't be misled by inflated language about secondary schools and technical instruction and university teaching. It is only a left-handed help that the Bill gives, if it gives any, to these most useful and necessary objects. Its main effect will be upon the primary schools, and you may advantageously concentrate your attention mainly on that part of the Bill. Primary schools are indeed all-important, for the most excellent secondary schools, the best of technical institution,

the best of university teaching will be of little avail if the elementary groundwork is unsound. The aptitude and the interest of the pupil, the sympathy of his parents, the intelligence evoked in his work, these are what will carry him through these higher branches, and these he can only acquire in the primary school. There is a well-known allusion to what is termed a ladder of learning, enabling the poorest boy to rise to the highest and most accomplished learning in the university. I am strongly in favour of the ladder. It is one of the glories and advantages of my country north of the Tweed, that we have possessed it since the days of John Knox. But I think there is a great deal of shrewdness in an observation made the other day by Mr. Andrew Carnegie, whom I am glad to claim not only as a countryman but as a personal friend, and who would have been a constituent also had he not accepted citizenship of the United States. He, out of his great and wise philanthropy, has done more for education than any man now on the face of the earth. He said the other day: "It is no use shoving a boy up the ladder unless he does some of the climbing himself." He ought to be taught to "do some of the climbing" in the primary schools, and believe me that is the most important element in the whole matter.

The Two Classes of Schools.

How, then, do we stand in this country with regard to our elementary schools? We have two classes of schools—the Board schools and the Voluntary schools, as they are called. The Board school is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, an efficient, active, pushing, and expanding institution, healthy in all respects. The Voluntary school, on the other hand, in a large number of cases is inefficient, destitute of life and expansiveness, and poorly equipped, barely kept going even with a special public aid; it is said to be an "intolerable strain" upon its supporters. The one is increasing in its efficiency and usefulness, whilst the other is backward and inefficient. Now what is the cause of the radical difference between these two classes of schools? What is the cause of the difference in their efficiency? We shall find it if we consider their fundamental difference in constitution and spirit. The one is under a democratic system, and the other is under a system of patronage and proprietorship. I am one who hold, and surely we all do, that things that people do for themselves are always better done than those which other people do for them. What does this Bill propose to do? Why, it proposes to put an end to the wholesome democratic organisation, and to subsidise the Voluntary schools and entrench them in their vantage-ground. This ought to be enough, in my opinion, for you and me. If we cannot have direct election everywhere—and I confess I am not convinced that it would be impracticable—let us at least have everywhere the commanding voice of popular representatives. I have said that this is enough, but there is more. Under this Bill men are to be rated and to have no voice in the disposal and control of the money raised. That is a serious fault, but more

serious still is the religious inequality created by the Bill. There is the exclusion by reason of religious disability of a large section of our countrymen and women from an interesting, useful, and lucrative profession. And above all—let us be frank about it—there is the danger, or fear, of proselytism. We had a most striking speech a few weeks ago from Lord Hugh Cecil, the son of the Prime Minister, who spoke with great eloquence and with great frankness. He said that he would not have one of these schools that had not, so he said, two doors—one bringing in the boy from the street, the other passing him on into the Church. This candid avowal should surely set all friends of religious independence and freedom of conscience on their guard. It ought to be made impossible for any public institution endowed by public funds to be made use of for such a purpose, and, above all, when it is an institution dealing with the tender mind and impressionable sentiment of a child. I do not for a moment believe in anything dishonourable or deliberately unfair. I do not believe in any active inveigling, but steady, passive influence can hardly be avoided. Against any school with the two doors in this sense, which is not a school for one religious belief alone, the honest, liberty-loving people of this country should energetically protest. And what, I wonder, can be said for a measure which, instead of combining our energies for the supremely important purpose of education, will set the community by the ears for many years to come.

Disastrous Measures and Policies.

Now, the third act of the Parliamentary drama of this session is going to open; the curtain will be rung up on Monday. In offering the most determined opposition to these proposals we shall do more for the prosperity of our country and the strength of our Empire than by any other way open to us. I have talked of the pillars of our national strength at home, unity and concord among our people, the securing to them of health, physical, moral and intellectual. What do we do for these great purposes if we have coercion started again in Ireland, if we exasperate religious jealousies in England, if we sacrifice educational efficiency to ecclesiastical interests, if we raise the price of food to those who have not food enough, if we go on year by year swelling our expenditure, and, above all, if, abandoning our traditions, the lessons of our experience, abandoning our enjoyment of the advantages which we possess in our geographical position, we plunge madly into rivalry with our continental neighbours in those military establishments and those inflated tariffs which hamper and crush them. But if these disastrous measures and policies are to be resisted and stopped—and this is my last word to you—it will not be done in Parliament, it will not be done by our debates and divisions—it can only be done by the peremptory voice of a determined people.

Printed by the National Press Agency, Ltd., Whitefriars House, London, E.C.