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# SPEECH

OF THE

RIGHT. HON. B. DISRAELI, M.P.,

TO THE

WORKING MEN'S  
CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

AT

GLASGOW,

*On Saturday, November, 22nd, 1873.*

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Mr. DISRAELI, on rising to address the meeting, was received with the most enthusiastic cheers. He said : Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, —I am not using merely conventional language when I express to you the high honour that I feel in receiving this address from the Conservative Association of Glasgow. The gratification is increased by the chair being filled this day by one who was formerly a colleague of mine in Parliament, and whom, with others around me, I learnt to respect, and more than respect, for he gained the heart of the House of Commons while he sat there.\* Gentlemen, I will not conceal from you, and, indeed, many and most of you know it, that when it was first suggested to me to receive this distinction and to meet you here, after great reflection, I felt it my duty—though with pain—to refuse the honour which was intended for me. I did so because I thought that, upon the whole, as my visit to Glasgow was an academic or neutral visit, it would be better that nothing should occur that might in any way make an exception to that general sentiment of respect which it is my pride and pleasure to say I have received from all classes and all parties in this city. And I must take this opportunity, as it may be the last I shall have, without reference to any political opinions, of expressing to the citizens of Glasgow my lively sense of the kind and considerate manner in which they have received me, and I must say the too great indulgence even of those who do not generally agree with me in political opinion. But, gentlemen, when I had been here some little time it was represented to me by those who spoke for a large body of my fellow countrymen that it seemed very hard upon them who, from their pursuits and other reasons, could take no part in august, academical functions or in the splendour of civic banquets that, feeling deeply as they did on political subjects, one whom, however unworthy he may be of their confidence, they still regard as their chief, should be resident for nearly a week in this great city, in communication, apparently, with all but his humbler friends, who perhaps looked on him with not less confidence and affection ; and I

\* Mr. James Baird of Auchmedden.

confess to you that although it had been my original hope that not a word should have fallen from these lips during my visit to Glasgow which should have been discordant to any individual in the city, I could not resist this appeal. It did appear to me to be so unfair, I would say so unkind and ungenerous, that I assented at once, though after due consideration, to receive this address and meet you as we meet to-day, on terms which will permit me to make some observations to you on the present state of public affairs. And I will here say, that there may be no misunderstanding with reference to some paragraphs I have seen in the public papers, that I never was asked and never assented to meet any separate body particularly styled "Conservative working-men." I have never been myself at all favourable to a system which would induce Conservatives who are working-men to form societies confined merely to their class. In the Church and at the polling-booth all are equal—and all that concerns Conservative working-men and interests them concerns and interests the great body of Conservatives of whom they form a portion. Therefore, it is to the Conservative Association I see before me, of whom a very considerable majority consists of working-men—it is to that Association that I address myself.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I believe I may describe the position of this country as one of very great prosperity. There is no doubt that during the last three years prosperity has been generally acknowledged. There are some who suppose that it may have received a check at the time when I paid my visit to Glasgow. If it has received a check it will increase, I hope, our circumspection, but I must express my own opinion that no substantial diminution in the sources of the prosperity so apparent during the last three years has occurred. I think we may fairly say the state of this country is one of great prosperity, and although I believe and know that it is a prosperity for which we are not indebted either to Whigs or Tories, although I know that it has been occasioned in a considerable degree, under Providence, by fortuitous though felicitous circumstances, I am perfectly ready, speaking to-day, as I hope to speak, in the fairest terms on public affairs, which I believe to be quite consistent with the position of the leader of a party—I am ready to give to her Majesty's Government credit for the prosperity we feel and acknowledge. With regard to her Majesty's Ministers themselves, I will be equally candid, equally fair—I will take them at their own estimate. They have lost few opportunities of informing the country that they are men distinguished for commanding talent, admirable eloquence, and transcendent administrative abilities. I dispute none of these propositions any more

than I do the prosperity of the country. They also tell us that the country being so prosperous, and they having all these personal advantages, they have taken the opportunity during the last few years of passing measures of immense magnitude, only equalled by the benefit they have conferred upon the people. Now, gentlemen, I will not question their own estimate of their ability, or even for a moment their own description of their achievements : but I ask this question,—What is the reason, when the country is so prosperous, when its affairs are administered by so gifted a Government, and when they have succeeded during five years in passing measures of such a vast character and beneficence—what is the reason that Her Majesty's Ministers are going about regretting that they are so unpopular ? Now, gentlemen, I beg you to observe that I did not say Her Majesty's Ministers are unpopular. I stated their own case and their own position ; I say that under the circumstances I have put fairly before you, it is a remarkable circumstance, and the question must be inquired into—why persons in the position of Her Majesty's Government should on every occasion deplore the unpopularity they have incurred. Now my opinion, gentlemen, is that that is not a question of mere curiosity—it is one that, as I think I shall show you, concerns the honour and the interests of the country. If the country is so prosperous—if Her Majesty's Ministers are so gifted—if they have had such an ample opportunity of showing the talents which they possess—if they have done all this good—if they have availed themselves of this signal opportunity to effect such great results, then the only inference we can draw from the unpopularity which they themselves deplore is that the people of this country is a fickle and ungrateful people. Therefore, it is not a question of mere curiosity. It is a question that ought to be answered. If there be those who suppose that the people of this country, as I hold, are not a fickle or ungrateful people—that they are a people who may be mistaken—that they may be misled ; but that they are a people who, on the whole, are steadfast in their convictions, and especially in their political convictions, I cannot myself for a moment doubt. I say, then, that as this question, if left unanswered, would show that Her Majesty's Ministers have placed a slur on the character of the people of this kingdom, it ought to be answered ; and a short time since, some two months ago, I answered it. It appeared to me, at that moment especially, when all those circumstances to which I have referred were clearly before the country, and when Her Majesty's Government, by their ablest and most powerful representatives, were deploring their unpopularity, and asking the reason why, or rather intimating by

inference that it was the fault of the people, not of the Government, that someone should give an answer to that question. I gave it, and in a very brief form—in the most condensed and the most severely accurate form. There is not an expression in that description of the conduct of the Government which was not well weighed; there was not a word for which I had not warranty, for which I could not adduce testimony ample and abounding. There was only one characteristic of that description, which was not noticed at the time, and which I will now confess—it was not original, for six months before in the House of Commons I had used the same expressions and made the same statement—not in a hole or corner, but on the most memorable night of the Session, when there were 600 members of the House of Commons present, when on the debate that took place avowedly the fate of the Ministry depended. It was at midnight that I rose to speak, and made the statement almost similar in expression, though perhaps stronger and more lengthened than the one which has become the cause of recent controversy. The Prime Minister followed me in that debate. The House of Commons knew what was depending upon the verdict about to be taken, and with all that knowledge they came to a division, and by a majority terminated the existence of the Government. Gentlemen, it surprises me, then, that, having made that statement six months after, with the advantage of six months' more experience and observation, it should have so much offended Her Majesty's Government. The Ministers sighed and their newspapers screamed. The question I have to ask, and in this your interests are vitally concerned—the question is, was the statement I made a true and accurate one? You cannot answer statements of this kind by saying, "Oh, fie! how very rude." You must at least adduce arguments in order to prove that the statement which you do not sanction is one that ought not to have been made. And therefore I ask you to-day, in the first place, is it or is it not true that the Irish Church has been despoiled? Is it or is it not true that the gentlemen of Ireland have been severely amerced? Is it or is it not true that a Royal Commission has been issued which has dealt with the ancient endowments of this country in so ruthless a manner that Parliament has frequently been called upon to interfere, and has addressed the Crown to arrest their propositions? Are these facts or are they not? Well, I did then venture to say that they had "harassed trades and worried professions," as reasons why men naturally become unpopular. Was that true or was it not? Because, after all, everything depends on the facts of the statement. I won't enter into a long catalogue of trades, commencing with the

important trade of which we have heard so much, and which has made itself felt at so many elections, down to the humblest trade—the lucifer-match makers—who fell upon their knees in Palace-yard. I suppose there are some Scotch farmers present, or, at least, those who are intimately connected with them. I want to know whether trade was harassed when a proposition was brought before the House of Commons to tax their carts and horses, and all the machinery of their cultivation? I know how the proposition was received in England, and I doubt not the Scotch farmers, like the English, felt extremely harassed by it. I want to know what is the reason why there is this crusade throughout the country against Schedule D of the Income Tax. The Income Tax has been borne for thirty years with great self-sacrifice and with great loyalty by the people of this country. It is at this moment at the lowest pitch it has ever reached; how is it, then, that it is at this moment more unpopular than it was at any time during the long period we endured it at a much higher figure? It is on account of the assessment of the trades of England under that schedule. It is the vexatious and severe assessment that has harassed tradesmen, who like all those who come under that Act are not particularly pleased, when they are paying five quarters of Income Tax in the year, to learn also that they are in arrears. Then, have the professions been worried? Ask the military profession—Is it not true that at this moment a Royal Commission is examining in London into the grievances of six thousand officers? Ask the naval profession whether they have not been worried. During the course of the present Government the whole administrative system of the Admiralty, the council that had always great influence in the management of the navy, and the peculiar office of the Secretary were all swept away; and in spite I may say of the nightly warnings of a right hon. friend who is now lost to us all and his country, the ablest Minister of the Admiralty during the present reign—notwithstanding his nightly warnings that they were so conducting the administration of the navy that they would probably fall into some disaster, his remonstrances were in vain, till soon the most costly vessel of the State was lost, and the perilous voyage of the *Megæra* had been made, when the country would stand it no longer. They rescinded the whole of this worrying arrangement, and appointed a new First Lord to re-establish the old system. Is that worrying a profession, or is it not? Well, gentlemen, I can speak of another profession—a profession the most important in the State—the Civil Service profession. Has it been worried? Is it now in a process of worrying, or is it not? There are many even in this room well acquainted with the

position of the Civil Service in all its departments. I might say the same of the] legal profession, for I have heard lawyers on both sides of the House in the debates of last session agree in imploring the Government not to continue propositions which would infallibly weaken the administration of justice in this country. It is not only these professions and trades who are directly attacked, but it is every one that is harassed, because no one knows whose turn will come next. Well, I did say to the House of Commons—and I afterwards expressed it in another form—I said they had attacked every class and institution from the highest to the lowest in the country. Is that true or is it not? Is it not a fact that her Majesty's Government on every occasion of which they could avail themselves during the last three years attacked the authority of the House of Lords, scoffed at the existence of its high functions, and even defied its decisions, until the result proved that the House of Lords was extremely popular in the country, and her Majesty's Government were obliged to confess that they themselves were exceedingly unpopular? But you must remember this, that the same body who attacked the House of Lords also brought in a Bill which would have attacked the poor inheritance of the widow and the orphan. Now, I think I have shown from the highest to the lowest the same system prevailed. What occurred in the interval? The Churches of England and Scotland have been threatened. It has been publicly said by the highest authority in the House of Commons that he did not believe that the House of Commons would sanction the views of those who wished to pull down the venerable establishments, but he recommended them to agitate out of doors and endeavour to excite public opinion against them. Then, again, I said jobs were perpetrated that outraged public opinion. Is that true, or is it not? Is it not a fact that two years ago the whole country was outraged by persons being appointed to important offices in Church and State in direct violation of the language of Acts of Parliament?—that the Ministry in that respect exercised that dispensing power which forfeited the crown of James II. Was not public indignation roused to the highest degree upon the Collier appointment and a similar one? Were these acts perpetrated, and did they outrage public opinion? Every one knows from his own individual experience that public opinion was outraged. I have said, also, that they stumbled into errors which were always discreditable and sometimes ruinous. That was called violent language. Gentlemen, I never use violent language; violent language is generally weak language; but I hope my language is sometimes strong. Now, let us look at this statement. I said that they stumbled into errors which were always discreditable and sometimes ruinous. Was the Zanzibar contract not an

“error,” and was it not “discreditable?” Was the conduct of the Treasury in allowing a subordinate officer to misappropriate nearly a million of the public money not an “error” and was it not “discreditable?” When the Government had referred the Alabama Claims to the arbitrament of a third State, was not the change of the Law of Nations by the Three Rules an “error?” Was that not “discreditable” and in its consequences was it not “ruinous?”

I have now given an answer to the question why the Government, with transcendent abilities, as they tell us, with magnificent exploits which they are always extolling, and with a country whose prosperity is so palpable—they ask us why they are unpopular, and I tell them why. They have harassed and worried the country, and there was no necessity for any of the acts they have committed. I have put it in condensed and, I am sure, accurate language. There was an illustrious writer, one of the greatest masters of our language, who wrote the history of the last four years of the reign of Queen Anne, which was the duration of an illustrious Ministry. I have written the history of a Ministry that has lasted five years, and I have immortalised the spirit of their policy in five lines. And now, gentlemen, I will tell you what is the unfortunate cause of this political embarrassment, why, with such favourable circumstances as the present Government have encountered; why, with the great ability which no man is more conscious than myself that they possess; why, with the most anxious and earnest desire, for which I give them entire credit, to do their duty to their Sovereign and their fellow-countrymen, the result has been so mortifying. I told it two years ago to the assembled county of Lancaster, when I met not only the greatest proprietors of the soil, but deputations and delegations of the choicest citizens from every town and city of that great county. I told them, speaking with the sense of the deepest responsibility, which, I trust, also animates me now—I told them that the cause was that this Government, unfortunately, in its beginning, had been founded on a principle of violence, and that fatal principle had necessarily vitiated their whole course. And what have we gained by that principle of violence? Let us consider it, here even, with impartiality and perfect candour. I am now referring to the Irish policy of the Ministry. I say it is quite possible for public men, with the view of obtaining some great object advantageous to the country, to devise and pass measures which may utterly fail in accomplishing their purpose, and yet, however mortifying to themselves, however disappointing to the country, there would be no stain upon their reputation. We cannot command, but we must endeavour in public life to deserve, success. If, therefore, it is said that the Government proposed the large measures which they did with respect

to Ireland in order to terminate the grievances of years and the embarrassment to England, which the state of Ireland certainly was, although they may have failed, their position was one which still might be a position of respect. That they have failed in this instance no one can doubt. A great portion of Ireland at this moment is in a state of veiled rebellion. But what I charge upon the Government is this, not that their measures fail—for all measures may fail—not that their measures fail to prevent or to suppress this veiled rebellion in Ireland, but that their measures, which they brought forward to appease and settle, to tranquillise and consolidate Ireland, are the very cause that this veiled rebellion is taking place. For, gentlemen, what was the principle upon which the whole of their policy with respect to Ireland was founded? What was the principle upon which they induced Parliament to confiscate and to despoil Church and private property in Ireland? It was that Ireland must be governed on Irish principles—the administration of Ireland must be carried on with reference to Irish feeling. If that is a sound principle and a sound sentiment in politics, it is a perfect vindication of what is occurring in the city of Dublin at this moment—viz., an assembly of men whose great and avowed object is to dissever the connexion between the two countries. If we are not to legislate for Ireland with reference to Imperial feelings and general and national interests—if we are only to legislate with reference to Irish feelings, it is perfectly evident that if there is a majority of the Irish people who may take any idea in the world into their heads, however ruinous to themselves and however fatal to the Empire, that policy must be recognised by this country. It is, therefore, to that principle, avowedly and ostentatiously brought forward by the Ministry as the basis of their Irish policy, that I trace the dangerous condition in which Ireland is now placed. Well, then, I say this policy of violence for which such sacrifices were made, for which institutions and interests which were, at least, faithful to Britain were sacrificed—this policy of violence has led only to a state of affairs, unfortunately, more unsatisfactory than that which prevailed before.

Now, gentlemen, I observe in the paper that the day is fixed for the re-assembling of Parliament. The time is not yet very near, but when you find her Majesty has appointed the day for our re-assembling, it is an intimation that we must begin to consider the public business a little, and, therefore, it is not altogether inconvenient that we should be talking upon these matters to-day. Now, when we meet Parliament, I apprehend the first business that will be brought before us will be the Ashantee war. Upon that subject my mouth is closed. I will not even make an observation upon the railway which I believe has been returned to England. Whenever this

country is externally involved in a difficulty, whatever I may think of its cause or origin, those with whom I act, and myself, have no other duty to fulfil but to support the existing Government in extricating the country from its difficulties and vindicating the honour and interests of Great Britain. The time will come, gentlemen, no doubt, when we shall know something of the secret history of that mysterious mess of the Ashantee war, but we have now but one duty to fulfil, which is to give every assistance to the Government in order that they may take those steps which the interests of the country require. I should, indeed, myself, from my own individual experience, be most careful not to follow the example which one of the most distinguished members of the present Administration pursued with respect to us when we had to encounter the Abyssinian difficulty. Mr. Lowe thought proper to rise in Parliament when I introduced the necessity of interference in order to escape from difficulties which we had inherited and not created. Mr. Lowe rose in Parliament and violently attacked the Government of the day for the absurdity, the folly, the extreme imprudence of attempting any interference in the affairs of Abyssinia. He laughed at the honour of the country, he laughed at the interests of a few enslaved subjects of the Queen of England being compared, as he said, with the certain destruction and disaster which must attend any interference on our part. He described the horrors of the country and the terrors of the climate. He said there was no possibility by which any success could be obtained, and the people of England must prepare themselves for the most horrible catastrophe. He described not only the fatal influences of the climate, but I remember he described one pink fly alone, which he said would eat up the whole British army. He was as vituperative of the insects of Abyssinia as if they had been British workmen.

Now, gentlemen, there is a most interesting and important subject which concerns us all, and which it is not impossible may be submitted to the consideration of Parliament by Her Majesty's Ministers, because I observe a letter published in a newspaper by the authority of the Prime Minister, which is certainly calculated to arrest public attention. That is a letter respecting the subject of Parliamentary Reform. I think it is not undesirable that at a moment when letters of this kind are circulated, and when there is a good deal of loose talking prevalent in the country on the subject, that I should take this opportunity of calling your attention to some considerations on this subject which may occupy you after my visit to Glasgow has terminated, and may not be, I think, unprofitable. Her Majesty's Government are not pledged, but after the letter of the Prime Minister announcing his own opinion, and the indication of the probability,

of the Government considering the question of further Parliamentary Reform, there are two points which the Government ought to consider when they come to that question. The first is the expediency of having any further Parliamentary Reform. They will have to remember that very wise statesmen have been of opinion that there is no more dangerous and feeble characteristic of a state than perpetually to be dwelling on what is called organic change. The habit, it has been said in politics, of perpetually considering your political constitution can only be compared to that of the individual who is always considering the state of his health and his physical constitution. You know what occurs in such circumstances—he becomes infirm and valetudinarian. In fact, there is a school of politics which looks at the English Constitution as valetudinarian. They are always looking at its tongue and feeling its pulse, and devising means by which they may give it a tonic. The Government will have to consider that very important point, first of all whether it is expedient. I am not giving any opinion upon it—being only a private member of Parliament, that is quite unnecessary—but I am indicating the consideration that would occur to a responsible statesman. They will also have to consider this important point, that whatever Minister embarks in a campaign of Parliamentary Reform must make up his mind that he will necessarily arrest the progress of all other public business in the country. I will show you to what extent that consideration should prevail. Parliamentary Reform, as a new question, was introduced in the House of Commons in 1852 by Lord John Russell, and from 1852 to 1866, or the end of 1865, it was introduced annually; four Prime Ministers had pledged themselves to the expediency of Parliamentary Reform; the subject made no progress in Parliament, but took up a great deal of time; a great portion of the Parliamentary Sessions for these twelve or thirteen years was taken up by discussions on Parliamentary Reform; and the country got very ill-tempered, finding that no reform was ever advanced, and other and more important subjects were neglected. At last it was taken up by men determined to carry it—first by Lord Russell, who did not carry it, and afterwards by others; but, observe, the whole of 1866, 1867, and 1868 were entirely absorbed by the subject of Parliamentary Reform. Therefore, you will observe that when important subjects in legislation are neglected you must be prepared to discourage any further demand for Parliamentary Reform unless you feel an insuperable necessity for it, because if you want Parliamentary Reform you cannot have any of those great measures with regard to local taxation or other subjects in which you are all so much interested. That is the first consideration for the Government of the

present day to determine, whether they shall embark in the question of Parliamentary Reform. Is it necessary? Is the necessity of such a character that it outweighs the immense inconvenience of sacrificing all other public and progressive measures for the advancement of this particular measure? Then there comes another subject of consideration. I dwell upon these subjects because I apprehend that one of the reasons of our meeting this evening is that upon questions which are likely to engage the public attention so far as those whom you honour with your confidence can give you any guidance, it is as well that I should indicate to you briefly my general views of the situation. The next point, therefore, that Government will have to consider if they make up their minds to bring forward a measure of Parliamentary Reform, is the character of the measure, and that will be a most anxious question for them to decide. I think I may say without conceit that the subject of Parliamentary Reform is one that I am entitled to speak upon at least with some degree of authority. I have given to it the consideration of some forty years, and am responsible for the most important measure on the subject that has been carried. I would say this, that it is impossible to go further in the direction of Parliamentary Reform than the Bill of 1867-68 without entirely subverting the whole of the borough representation of this country. I do not mean to say that if there was a place disfranchised to-morrow for corruption, it would not be possible to enfranchise a very good place in its stead; but, speaking generally, you cannot go beyond the Act of 1867 without making up your mind entirely to break up the borough representation of this country. The people of Great Britain ought to be aware that that is the necessary consequence. So far as I am concerned I never could view the matter in a party light. If I were to accustom myself to view it in a party light, I might look with unconcern on this difficulty, for the smaller boroughs of the country are not, on the whole, favourable to our views. I am proud to think our party is supported by the great counties, and now to a great extent by great towns and cities; but I do not consider the smaller boroughs favourable to Conservative views. It is the national sympathies and wide sentiments of those who live in our great cities that are much more calculated to rally round the cause in which we are deeply concerned—the greatness and glory of our country. This ought to be known, that if those who intend to have a further measure of Parliamentary Reform, and have digested that large meal which they had a few years ago, they should remember that there is no borough in England with under 40,000 inhabitants that would have any claim to be represented even by one member. Now that is a very important consideration if, as we are told, the small boroughs of between ten and

fifteen thousand inhabitants are the backbone of the Liberal party. They may be, and I think they are, but I should be very sorry to see them disfranchised, for they are centres of public spirit and intelligence in the country, influencing very much the districts in which they are situated, and affording a various representation of the mind and life of the country. But it is inevitable that that would occur, and I think, therefore, it ought to be well understood by the country when you hear persons without the slightest consideration saying they are prepared to vote for this, or in favour of that, whereas they have not really mastered the question in any degree whatever. So far as I am concerned, any proposition to change the representation of the people brought forward by her Majesty's Government will receive my respectful and candid consideration. But I say at once that I will vote for no measure of that kind, or of that class which is brought forward by some irresponsible individual who, on the eve of a General Election, wants to make a clap-trap career. I think it is perfectly disgusting for individuals to jump up in the House of Commons without the slightest responsibility, official or moral, and make propositions which demand the gravest consideration of prolonged and protracted Cabinets, with all the responsibility attaching to experienced statesmen. Now, gentlemen, although I have rather exceeded the time I had intended, there are one or two more remarks I should like to make on subjects which interest us all. And first, as the only feature in our domestic life that gives me uneasiness, are the relations at present between capital and labour, and between the employers and employed. I must say one word upon that subject. If there are any relations in the world which should be those of sympathy and perfect confidence, they always appear to be the relations which should subsist between employers and employed, and especially in manufacturing life. They are, in fact, much more intimate and more necessary relations than those which subsist between landlords and tenants. It is an extremely painful thing that of late years we so frequently hear of misunderstandings between the employers and the employed—that they look upon each other with suspicion—with mutual suspicion—as if each were rapaciously inclined either to obtain or retain the greater share of the profits of their trade; and those incidents with which you are all acquainted, of a very painful nature, have been the consequence. I am not talking of demands for an increase of wages when men are carrying on what is called a roaring trade—I believe that is the classical epithet taken from the Manchester school. When a roaring trade is going on, I am not at all surprised that working men should ask for an increase of wages. But a trade sometimes ceases to roar, when

wages naturally, on the same principle, assume a form more adapted to the circumstances. No doubt, during the last twenty years there appears to have been, not a passing and temporary cause of disturbance like the incidents of trade being very active or reduced, but some permanent cause disturbing prices, which alike confuses the employer in his calculations as to profits and embarrasses the employed from the greater expenditure which they find it necessary to make. Now, I cannot but feel myself—having given to the subject as much consideration as I could—I cannot help feeling that the large and continuous increase of the precious metals, especially during the last twenty years, has certainly produced no inconsiderable effect—not only in trade, but no inconsiderable effect in prices. I will not, on an occasion like this, enter into anything like an abstruse discussion. I confine myself to giving my opinion and the results which I draw from it; and this moral, which I think is worthy of consideration. If it can be shown accurately and scientifically that there is a cause affecting a prominent class, reducing the average remuneration of the employed, and confusing and confounding the employer in his calculations as to profits—if that can be shown, and if it is proved to be the result of inexorable laws, far beyond the reach of legislation, and of circumstances over which human beings have no control—I think if that could be shown, and employers and employed had sufficient acuteness and knowledge—and I am sure that in Scotland both will have to acknowledge that result—it would very much change those mutual feelings of suspicion and sentiments of a not pleasant character which occasionally prevail when they find that they are both of them the victims, as it were, of some inexorable law of political economy which cannot be resisted. I think, instead of supposing that each wanted to take advantage of the other, they would feel inclined to put their shoulders to the wheel, accurately ascertain whether this be true, and come to some understanding which would very much mitigate the relations which subsist between them, and I have little doubt the effect would be to increase the average rate of wages, with my views as to the effect of the continuous increase of the precious metals. But, at the same time, I have not the slightest doubt the employer would, in the nature of things, find adequate compensation for the new position in which he would find himself. There is one point before I sit down to which I wish to call your attention, because if I am correct in saying that the question of the relations between the employer and employed is the only one that gives me anxiety at home, there is a subject abroad to which, I think, I ought, on an occasion like this, to draw your notice; and that is the contest that is commencing in Europe between the spiritual

and temporal powers. Gentlemen, I look upon it as very grave, as pregnant with circumstances which may greatly embarrass Europe. The religious sentiment is often and generally taken advantage of by political classes who use it as a pretext ; and there is much going on in Europe at the present moment which, it appears to me, may occasion us soon much anxiety in this community. I should myself look upon it as the greatest danger to civilisation if, in the struggle that is going on between faith and free thought, the respective sides should only be represented by the Papacy and the Red Republic ; and here I must say that if we have before us the prospect of struggles—perhaps of wars and anarchy, ultimately—caused by the great question that is now rising in Europe, it will not easily be in the power of England entirely to withhold herself from such circumstances. Our connection with Ireland will then be brought painfully to our consciousness, and I should not be at all surprised if the visor of Home Rule should fall off some day, and you beheld a very different countenance. Now, gentlemen, I think we ought to be prepared for those circumstances. The position of England is one which is indicative of dangers arising from holding a middle course upon those matters. It may be open to England again to take a stand upon the Reformation which 300 years ago was the source of her greatness and her glory, and it may be her proud destiny to guard civilisation alike from the withering blast of atheism and from the simoom of sacerdotal usurpation. These things may be far off, but we live in a rapid age, and my apprehension is that they are nearer than some suppose. If that struggle comes we must look to Scotland to aid us. It was once, and I hope is still, a land of liberty, of patriotism, and of religion. I think the time has come when it really should leave off mumbling the dry bones of political economy and munching the remainder biscuit of an effete Liberalism. We all know that a general election is at hand. I do not ask you to consider on such an occasion the fate of parties or of Ministers. But I ask you to consider this, that it is very probable that the future of Europe depends greatly on the character of the next Parliament of England. I ask you, when the occasion comes, to act as becomes an ancient and famous nation, and give all your energies for the cause of faith and freedom.

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