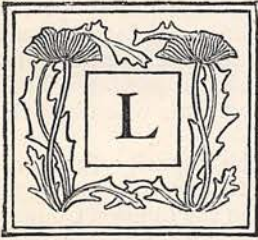


THE EARL OF ROSEBERY.

By HENRY W. LUCY.



ORD ROSEBERY, amongst many qualities that win for him a foremost place in the ranks of public men, is an interesting personality. One may be a supremely great statesman and yet lack the qualities that give the public a personal interest in him. It would be invidious rather than impossible to cite in proof of this illustrations from contemporary times. But there are two modern instances of either class. Sir Robert Peel was a statesman of far higher rank than Lord Palmerston, but in the average British household he was not enshrined a familiar friend as was Lord Palmerston.

Everybody knew the latter, called him "Pam," and told stories about him. No one thought of calling Sir Robert Peel "Bob," and when he fell off his horse on Constitution Hill probably the first feeling was one of surprise that a personage who in the popular mind was a sort of abstraction should do so commonplace a thing as get astride a horse.

Lord Rosebery is a man of wide human sympathies, and is speedily at home with his fellow man whether he meets him in the House of Lords or the London County Council, at the Foreign Office or in front of a public platform. He is reported to nourish some resentment against fortune, which, however unexpectedly, brought him into the peerage. He looks with yearning eyes upon the more exciting and busier battle-field of the Commons. There is no doubt that had Mr. Archibald Philip Primrose taken his seat in the House of Commons as member for Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, or Bradford, he would quickly have advanced to the first place on the Treasury Bench. But though it may possibly be his loss to be handicapped by the weight of a coronet, it is the country's gain. There has been a hitherto unflinching supply of eminent men to maintain the high character of the Commons. It is different in the House of Lords, where the method of recruitment stands upon an entirely different basis. Peers, it is true, are not all born; some of them are made. But these generally reach the hereditary chamber towards the close of a career whose achievements have won them the distinction, and they welcome the surcease from labour. Lord Rosebery entered it in the flush of early manhood, with all his life before him and his career to make.

That, whilst feeling hampered by the conditions of his estate and somewhat stifled by the atmosphere of the place, he should so early and so young have established for himself a claim to the leadership of the Liberal party is a high tribute to his natural gifts and his force of character. He is so much with us now, and fills so large a place in public estimation, that we are apt to forget he is comparatively a new comer. It was the Midlothian campaign that gave him the opportunity he has unobtrusively, but irresistibly, seized. He was Earl of Rosebery before Mr. Gladstone was his guest at Dalmeny, had a seat in the House of Lords, and occasionally took a modest part in public affairs. But the fierce light that beat upon that historic foray across the Border revealed the young Lord of Dalmeny as a man with a cool head and ready wit, capable of presiding over and controlling excited public meetings.

It came to pass that as Midlothian campaign followed campaign Lord Rosebery was forced into a position second only to that of his illustrious guest. The storm of cheering that welcomed Mr. Gladstone's appearance ever broke forth again when Lord Rosebery was caught sight of, and no meeting at which he was present could be induced to disperse till he had supplemented Mr. Gladstone's oration by a few remarks. This honour paid to a prophet in his own country increased on closer acquaintance till it grew somewhat embarrassing. In the later campaigns Lord Rosebery, as far as possible, abstained from accompanying Mr. Gladstone on to the platform, shrinking from a position in which he seemed to

appropriate a share of the popular homage which he held should be exclusively a tribute to his leader.

Lord Rosebery began ministerial life very humbly, accepting the office of Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. In 1885 he was promoted to the congenial office of First Commissioner of Works with a seat in the Cabinet. It was in the following year, during Mr. Gladstone's brief administration after the General Election of 1885, that he reached the post for which he is acknowledged to be heaven-born. His tenure of the Foreign Office was short-lived, but at home and abroad he established a reputation which inevitably marks him out as the Foreign Minister of the next Liberal Administration. He had here full scope for that equable temper, that wide knowledge of affairs, that quickness of insight, and that profound sagacity which distinguish him. It is not often that the foreign policy of a Minister, whether he be Liberal or Conservative, satisfies both political parties. That is a credit won by Lord Rosebery during the exceedingly difficult time when he held the seals of the Foreign Office.

Somebody has said that genius is only another word for the capacity for hard work. If that be so Lord Rosebery's genius must be admitted, for, like the first Napoleon, he toils terribly. It was characteristic of him that when the London County Council was formed he accepted the post of Chairman. It was not for him an alluring one from any point of view. If its duties were to be conscientiously performed it simply meant drudgery, submitted to in unattractive circumstances, in uninspiring company. Lord Rosebery having decided to undertake the task, gave himself up to it with uncompromising assiduity. He laboured early and late and every day. His appearance in the Chair at the ordinary meetings was duly noted in the public prints, but few save those of his own household knew of his constant and regular attendance upon Committee work, or of his habit of taking home portions of tasks which even the long day had not seen completed. Probably no one but Lord Rosebery could have licked into shape the heterogeneous conglomeration that was the first London County Council. Certainly no other statesman of his standing would have undertaken the work. It was a happy thing for the County Council, a great service to municipal interests. Doubtless the severe training was not without compensating effect.

This capacity, even liking, for hard work are the indispensable complement of statesmen in the front rank. One generally begins to make his mark by being a talker; if he is to reach the topmost flight he must also be a worker. Mr. Bright was a great orator, but his occasional terms of administration were not marked by a measure of success equal to that achieved by less famous predecessors or successors. Lord Rosebery shares Mr. Gladstone's dual gift; being a habile speaker and a tireless worker. He does not often speak in the House of Lords, but when he rises he commands an audience which assembles in equal number to pay honour to only two, or at most three, other peers. He resembles the late Lord Granville in his lightness of touch and his felicity of language, whilst he excels him in the brilliancy of his wit. The House of Lords will never forget how, when Lord Brabourne lamented afresh the circumstances under which a coronet had been placed on his brow, Lord Rosebery complimented him upon the complacency and apparent appreciation with which he wore his crown of thorns. The subject was one Lord Brabourne, suddenly abandoning a custom that was growing upon him, never again alluded to.

Lord Rosebery is one of the singularly few peers who seem to find no difficulty in the acoustical defects of the Chamber. Apparently making no special effort he is as distinctly heard there as in an ordinary dining room, wherein he has the advantage of the late Lord Granville, some of whose good things were lost to the world by reason of their not reaching the Press Gallery. Lord Rosebery has a full rich voice that has penetrated to the utmost recesses of the Waverley Corn Market in Edinburgh. His enunciation is slow, unvaried by haste. For one so quick-witted all his movements are unexpectedly leisurely, a peculiarity that is probably the result of unintermitted self-control. He rarely attempts flights of oratory, whether in Parliament or on the platform, and his gestures are so unobtrusive that one cannot remember that he indulges in any. Deeply read in ancient and modern masters, his speeches have a satisfying literary flavour, the seasoning never being overdone.

Lord Brougham confided to Macaulay's father that he composed the peroration of his speech on the trial of Queen Caroline after reading and repeating Demosthenes

for three or four weeks. Twenty times over he re-wrote it before it satisfied his taste. What measure of preparation Lord Rosebery bestows upon his more important speeches is his secret. They are too weighty in matter, too polished in style, to be "knocked off" at a quarter of an hour's notice. But Lord Rosebery has the art to conceal his art, and no one looking and listening whilst he quietly, often without assistance from notes, delivers a speech that charms the audience before him, and is eagerly read by a much larger audience listening at the doors, suspects the study of Demosthenes or the re-writing twenty times of a carelessly dropped yet perfect sentence.

Lord Rosebery has all the natural tastes that the exigent British public demand in their prime favourites. He lives a good deal in the country, hunts, shoots, farms, breeds cattle and horses, sometimes winning races, always, on the turf or in politics, running straight. Latest of all he has entered the field of authorship, astonishing the world with a monograph on Pitt, which throws fresh light on an old familiar face, and unconsciously, by side lights struck in little excursions into shrewd observations, forms a not less interesting study of a statesman who, hitherto missing some of Pitt's advantages, may yet come near to his imperishable renown.

A PAGEANT OF THAMES POETS.

E. J. MILLIKEN.

"When the fit of poetry was upon him, he (Shelley) delighted to glide along in his boat upon the Thames, among the sedges and water-lilies, under the beechen groves of Bisham that overhung the stream."—CHARLES MACKAY in *The Thames and its Tributaries*.

ON Shelley's soul, when, lapped in dreams Elysian,
He drifted slow beneath the beechen stems,
Rose there not ever as in masque-like vision,
A Pageant of the Poets of our Thames?

The Bisham groves are beautiful, low-bending
In bowery eaves above the sliding stream,
And there in happy trance and ease unending,
The poet's spirit undisturbed might dream.

But Thames hath many another winding haunted
By memories of the wandering sons of song,
And many another nook is ground enchanted,
Its wooded slopes and devious shores along.

Chaucer at Donnington! The Kennett sounded
On Geoffrey's ear five hundred years ago,
And there, by Thames's sylvan scenes surrounded,
The cheerful bard forgot the courtier's woe.

And gentle Spenser oftentimes would wander
In his great day "by Thames's lovely side."
None sang its sweetness with effusion fonder,
None limned its beauties with more loving pride?

Picture him, pensive-eyed, with princely bearing,
And pointed beard, in courtly ruff arrayed,
Gliding in gilded barge by crowded Charing,
Or rambling lone in Windsor's leafy shade!



W. Biscombe Gardner del.

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