

## INTRODUCTION

The series of speeches included in this volume ranges, in point of time, from the earlier months of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Government to the latest phase in the fortunes of Mr. Asquith's succeeding Ministry, and forms an argumentative defence of the basis of policy common to both Administrations. The addresses it contains deal with nearly all the great political topics of the last four years—with Free Trade, Colonial Preferences, the South African settlement, the latest and probably the final charter of trade unionism, the Miners' Bill, the measures for establishing Trade Boards and Labour Exchanges, the schemes of compulsory and voluntary assurance, and the Budget. They possess the further characteristic of describing and commending these proposals as "interdependent" parts of a large and fruitful plan of Liberal statesmanship. Of this scheme the Budget is at once the foundation <sup>[xiv]</sup>and the most powerful and attractive feature. If it prospers, the social policy for which it provides prospers too. If it fails, the policy falls to the ground.

The material of these speeches is therefore of great importance to the future of democracy in this country. Let me say a word as to their authorship. To a friendly critic they appear to present not only rare and highly trained qualities of statement and persuasion, but a unity and sincerity of thought which give them a place above mere party dialectics. Mr. Churchill's distinguished service to Liberalism has not been long in point of years, but it opened with the first speeches he ever delivered in the House of Commons. No competent observers of political activities, and of the characters and temperaments which direct them, can have doubted from the first moment of Mr. Churchill's appearance on the stage where his moral and intellectual sympathies lay and whither they would lead him. It is a true and, indeed, an obvious comment on his career to say that he began where his father left off—as a Democrat and a Free Trader, and that on these inherited instincts and tendencies he has built what both his friends and his enemies expected <sup>[xv]</sup>him to build. Mr. Churchill came to Liberalism from the same fold as Gladstone, and for the same reason—that it presented the one field of work open to a political talent of a high stamp, and to a wide and eager outlook on the future of our social order. Liberalism and Mr. Churchill have both had good reason to congratulate themselves on that choice, and the party which failed to draw him into a disastrous and reactionary change of view has no reason to resent it. Before he became a Liberal Mr. Churchill had taken the broad views of the South African problem that his father's later opinions commended to him, and he was properly chosen to expound to the House of Commons the plan of self-government that embodied them.

If, therefore, the political groundwork of these speeches is sound Liberal principle, their meaning and purpose, taken in connection with the Budget, and the industrial

reforms for which it provides, signify a notable advance into places where the thinkers, the pioneers, the men in the advanced trenches, are accustomed to dwell. Let us acknowledge, with a sense of pleasure and relief, that this is new territory. New, that is to say, for this country; not new <sup>[xvi]</sup>to the best organisations of industrial society that we know of. New as a clearly seen vision and a connected plan of British statesmanship; not new as actual experiment in legislation, and as theory held by progressive thinkers of many schools, including some of the fathers of modern Liberal doctrine, and most of our economists. What is there in these pages repugnant to writers of the type of John Mill, Jevons, and Marshall? How much of them would even be repelled by Cobden? In the main they preach a gospel—that of national "efficiency"—common to all reformers, and accepted by Bismarck, the modern archetype of "Empire-makers," as necessary to the consolidation of the great German nation. An average Australian or Canadian statesman would read them through with almost complete approval of every passage, save only their defence of Free Trade. Nay more; the apology for property which they put forward—that it must be "associated in the minds of the mass of the people with ideas of justice and reason"—is that on which the friends of true conservatism build when they think of the evils of modern civilisation and the great and continuous efforts necessary to repair them. Who does <sup>[xvii]</sup>not conclude, with Mr. Churchill, that "a more scientific, a more elaborate, a more comprehensive social organisation" is indispensable to our country if it is to continue its march to greatness? Back or forward we must go.

Mr. Churchill, indeed, has thought it wise to raise the specific point at which, in the process of seeking a finer use and adaptation of the human material which forms society, the progressive and reforming statesman parts company with the dogmatic Socialist. There is no need to labour a distinction which arises from the nature and the activities of the two forces. British Liberalism is both a mental habit and a method of politics. Through both these characteristics it is bound to criticise a State so long as in any degree it rests on the principles of "Penguin Island"—"respect for the rich and contempt for the poor," and to modify or repeal the rights of property where they clearly conflict with human rights. But its idealism and its practical responsibilities forbid it to accept the elimination of private enterprise and the assumption by the State of all the instruments of production and distribution. Socialism has great power of emotional and <sup>[xviii]</sup>even religious appeal, of which it would be wise for Liberalism to take account, and it is, on the whole, a beneficent force in society. But as pure dogma it fits the spirit of man no more exactly than the Shorter Catechism. As Mr. Churchill well says, both the collectivist and the individualist principles have deep roots in human life, and the statesman can ignore neither.

In the main, therefore, these speeches, with all their fresh brilliancy of colouring and treatment, hold up the good old banner of social progress, which we erect against reactionist and revolutionist alike. The "old Liberal" will find the case for Free Trade,

for peace, for representative government, stated as powerfully and convincingly as he could wish. Their actual newness consists in the fact that not only do they open up to Liberalism what it always wants—a wide domain of congenial thought and energy, but they offer it two propositions which it can reject only at its peril. The first is that there can and must be a deep, sharp abridgment of the sphere of industrial life which has been marked out as hopeless, or as an inevitable part of the social system.

Here the new Liberalism parts with *laissez-faire*, and those who defend it. It assumes [xix]that the State must take in hand the problems of industrial insecurity and unemployment, and must solve them. The issue is vital. Protection has already made its bid. It will assure the workman what is in his mind more than cheap food—namely, secure wages; it affects to give him all his life, or nearly all his life, a market for his labour so wide and so steady that the fear of forced idleness will almost be banished from it. The promise is false. Protection by itself has in no country annulled or seriously qualified unemployment. But the need to which it appeals is absolutely real; for the modern State it is a problem of the Sphinx, neither to be shirked nor wrongly answered. And the alternative remedy offered in these pages has already, as their author abundantly shows, succeeded even in the very partial forms in which it has been applied. The labour market can be steadied and equalised over a great industrial field. Part of its surplus can be provided for. What Mr. Churchill calls "diseased industries" can be cut off from the main body, or restored to some measure of health. The State can set up a minimum standard of health and wage, below which it will not allow its citizens to sink; it can [xx]step in and dispense employment and restorative force under strictly specified conditions, to a small body of more or less "sick" workers; it can supply security for a far greater, less dependent, and more efficient mass of labourers, in recurring crises of accident, sickness, invalidity, and unemployment, and can do so with every hope of enlisting in its service voluntary forces and individual virtues of great value.

This is not a problem of "relief," it is a method of humanity, and its aim is not merely to increase the mechanical force of the State, but to raise the average of character, of *morale*, in its citizens. Nor do these speeches represent only a batch of platform promises. The great scheme of social betterment preached in these pages is already embodied in half a dozen Acts of Parliament, with corresponding organisations in the Board of Trade and elsewhere; and if the Budget passes, the crown can be put upon them next year or the year after by measures of insurance against invalidity and unemployment.

Mr. Churchill's second proposition is the correlative of the first. How shall this imposing fabric of industrial security be reared and made safe? The answer is, by [xxi]modifying, without vitally changing, the basis of taxation. The workman cannot be asked to pay for everything, as under Protection he must pay. In any case, he must pay for something. But if he is asked for too much, the sources of physical efficiency

are drained, and the main purpose of the new Liberalism—the ideal of an educated, hopeful, and vigorous people—is destroyed. Now Liberalism, in ceasing to rely on indirect taxation as its main source of revenue, has opened up for contribution not merely the superfluities of society, the "accumulations of profit," as Mr. Churchill calls them, but those special forms of wealth which are "social" in origin, which depend on some monopoly of material agents, on means not of helping the community but of hindering it, not of enriching its powers and resources, but of depleting them for private advantage. In other words, the State in future will increasingly ask the taxpayer not only "What have you got?" but "How did you get it?" No one contends that such an analysis can be perfect; but, on the other hand, can a community desirous of realising what Goethe calls "practical Christianity," ignore it? And if in this process it enters the sphere of morals, as [xxii]Ruskin long ago urged it to do, as well as the path of economic justice, is the step a wrong one? Has it not already been taken not only in this Budget, but in its predecessor, in which the Prime Minister made the memorable distinction between earned and unearned income? Those who answer these questions in the Liberal sense will find in these speeches a body of vigorous and persuasive reasoning on their side.

It is therefore the main purpose of these speeches to show that Liberalism has a message of the utmost consequence to our times. They link it afresh with the movement of life, which when it overtakes parties condemns and destroys them. They give it an immediate mission and an outlook on the wider moral domain, which belongs to no single generation. This double character is vital to a Party which must not desert the larger ways in which the spirit of man walks, while it quits at its peril the work of practical, everyday service to existing society.

A word as to the literary quality of these addresses, widely varied as they are in subject. The summit of a man's powers—his full capacity of reason, comparison, expression—are not usually reached at so [xxiii]early a point in his career as that which Mr. Churchill has attained. But in directness and clearness of thought, in the power to build up a political theory, and present it as an impressive and convincing argument, in the force of rhetoric and the power of sympathy, readers of these addresses will find few examples of modern English speech-making to compare with them. They revive the almost forgotten art of oratory, and they connect it with ideas born of our age, and springing from its conscience and its practical needs, and, above all, essential to its happiness.

H.W. MASSINGHAM.