

**In memoriam : died July 27, 1892, aged 80 1/2 years, Rt. Hon. Robert Lowe, Viscount Sherbrooke.**

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PRIVATE

Revised, April, 1893.

III. - IN MEMORIAM: contributed in April, 1893  
by Mr. Patchett Martin's Life of the

~~DIED JULY 27, 1892, AGED 80½ YEARS,~~

RT. HON. ROBERT LOWE, VISCOUNT SHERBROOKE,  
who had died, aged 80½ years, on July 27th, 1892.

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I.

OFFICIAL RECOLLECTIONS.

At the period of Lord Sherbrooke's death, and while the newspapers were saying their say about him, I was under such pressure of illness as made me utterly unable to take part in any public discussion. Had not this been the case, I should have sought to appear as a witness in the court where Lord Sherbrooke's merits were being discussed; and I deeply regretted that I could not do so. Whatever else I might have had to submit, I should at least have had special evidence to offer with regard to one particular portion of Lord Sherbrooke's political career; a portion, which so far as I could see, had been curiously forgotten or ignored by the writers who were furnishing obituary memoirs of him. I should have wished to supplement their record by submitting that Lord Sherbrooke, to my knowledge, had at critical times contributed most effectively to develop for this country the branch of political administration which relates to the protection of the Public Health; and that benefits, originally due to his action and influence in that branch of politics, were, at the end of his life, still constituting important features in the sanitary system of the country.

As my tribute of gratitude to Lord Sherbrooke's memory

in respect of what he did for the interests of sanitary progress could not be among the passing obituary notices which followed immediately on his death, it has ever since been a debt I have wished to pay; and accordingly now, when I am invited to contribute that testimony to the purpose of a less ephemeral record of his life and public services, I shall endeavour to set forth the facts in such detail as I hope may best subserve his Biographer's intention.\*

It has to be remembered that, throughout some of the earlier periods of modern English legislation regarding the Public Health, the function of responsibility to Parliament in that branch of government had been joined by statute to the function of responsibility for Public Education. The Act of 1857, which gave a further year's continuance to the then temporarily existing General Board of Health, had provided that the Vice-President of the Education Committee of the Privy Council should *ex-officio* be the President of the Board; and the Public Health Act of 1858, which transferred to the Privy Council the medical responsibilities of the Board of Health, had provided that, of the Lords of the Council administering the Act, the Education Vice-President must always be one. In the sorts of Council Office business for which the vice-presidency had been provided (just as in all the other sorts) the Lord President of the Council was of course the supreme authority, and the Vice-President could never be formally regarded as exercising independent command; but during the years now particularly to be spoken of, when Earl Granville and Mr. Lowe were in the respective offices, it seemed to have been understood between them that Mr. Lowe should take the initiative in all business where he had vice-presidential duties and that, subject to Lord Gran-

\* Fuller information as to the circumstances under which the particular services were rendered may for the most part be found under corresponding titles, at the close of chapter xii, and at various parts of chapter xiii, of my printed volume on *English Sanitary Institutions*.

ville's agreement with him in matters of real political question, he should be the acting authority for all such business. In that almost unqualified sense—for I am not aware of Lord Granville's having ever differed from his vice-president—Mr. Lowe, during the years 1859–64, was Minister for the purposes of the Public Health Act of the period, distinctively the Minister who had to plead in the House of Commons for the health-interests of the public; and the forgetfulness which has been shown towards the important work done by him for our sanitary system during those years may no doubt be explained by the fact that in title he was merely Minister for Education.

In accordance with the general rule of our English system of government, the political administrators of the Public Health Act were in command of a specialist adviser, and it was I who (as Medical Officer of the Privy Council) had the honour of standing in that relation to them. The Medical Officer of the Privy Council was autonomic in his function of reporting; it was his duty to report, as he saw fit, 'on any matter concerning the public health, or any matter referred to him for the purpose,' and all his reports were to be laid before Parliament; but except in this quasi-judicial freedom of speech, he had no independent function; and, in conformity with the common rule of our public service, departmental action could only be taken or authorised by the Minister who would answer for it to Parliament. My years of service under Mr. Lowe made me grateful to that rule in our system of government; for, as specialist officer, I felt it to be political education for myself, while of course it was security for the public good, that whatever I would initiate should have to explain and justify itself to the keen intelligence and highly educated statesmanship of one who so admirably represented the sense and the intentions of Parliament.

It was through Mr. Lowe that in 1859 the Profession of Medicine first came to be permanently recognised in the civil

government of the country. For four years before his vice-presidency, half-promises of some such recognition had been held out by successive Acts of Parliament which enabled the Central Government to have its Medical Officer year by year; but in 1858, when the last of those Acts had authorised for a year the medical officership of the Privy Council, Parliament had clearly shown itself undecided as to the permanence of the appointment; and in the spring of 1859, shortly before the change of ministry which then occurred, there had been doubt whether Government would press for renewal of the appointment, even on the precarious footing of yearly tenure. At this juncture—just when the central medical officership, after four years of humiliating suspense, was notoriously in danger of extinction, Mr. Lowe became Education Vice-President; and his first action in health matters was to lead Parliament to make the medical officership a permanent appointment in the public service. It was manifest to him—just as now, at the distance of a third part of a century, it must be manifest to all who consider the question, that the office would be valueless for public interests unless it were to be exercised in a far more judicial spirit than could be expected to combine with precarious and dependent tenure of appointment; and Mr. Lowe achieved a very great success for the sanitary cause when he prevailed on Parliament to accept his principle. The victory was gained in the face of real difficulties; for (as I have described in detail in my printed volume) there was a strong, though strangely organised, resistance to Mr. Lowe's proposal; but the victory, once gained, was final; and through this legislation Mr. Lowe made it for the first time possible to the Medical Officer of the Privy Council to enter upon a continuous system of departmental work. Thenceforth, subject to departmental estimates annually before the House of Commons, the Medical Officer was enabled to organise those systematic studies of the Distribution of Disease in England, which for many following years gave chief interest to his

annual reports laid before Parliament, and formed the main basis for subsequent extensions and amendments of English sanitary law.

As soon as Mr. Lowe had secured the stability of the office which was to work under him, he proceeded to deal with such exterior problems of reform as were at that early date appearing to be urgent. The evil which first claimed his attention was the then extremely unsatisfactory state of our system of Public Vaccination; an unsatisfactoriness not to have been expected in the country which had taught vaccination to the world; and all the more to be regretted in this country, because, in connection with the requirements of the Compulsory Vaccination Act of 1853, it inflicted grave injustice on the public. Under the Public Health Acts of 1858-9, the Privy Council had been invested with authority to deal with the roots of that scandal; on the one hand, namely, to direct the application of moneys voted by Parliament for maintaining the supply of vaccine lymph, and, on the other hand, to issue regulations (enforceable by the Poor-law Board) for securing the due qualification of persons to be contracted with as public vaccinators, and for securing the efficient performance of all vaccinations under contract. It was a prompt administrative outcome of Mr. Lowe's vice-presidency that, before the end of 1859, the Privy Council, acting to the limit of its powers for the purposes in question, and treating all those purposes as parts of one system, had issued such regulations and recommendations, and had established such collateral machinery, as covered with coherent reforms the entire ground in which reforms were needed, and thus initiated what from then till now has proved a most successful new era in the history of vaccination in England.

A second pressing need of the early time was that Parliament should amend the Nuisances Removal and Diseases Prevention Acts of 1855 (Sir B. Hall's) in respect of certain failures and insufficiencies which had already become manifest

in their working ; and for that object Mr. Lowe, in 1860, introduced a Bill which became law. This Act (the main provisions of which are still operative through subsequent consolidating statutes) made such additions as the Parliament of 1860 was prepared to concede to the sanitary powers of local authorities ; and it provided therewith, as essential improvements on the legislation of 1855, first, that the powers of magistrates under the Nuisances Act should be exercisable on the basis of individual complaints as well as on complaints by the local authorities ; and, secondly, that in rural districts (where hitherto the Nuisances Act of 1855 had been little more than a dead letter) the administrative authority in future should be the Board of Guardians.

It was under Mr. Lowe's sanction throughout his tenure of office, and with the cheer of his warm personal sympathy, that the Medical Department, from 1859 onward, prosecuted largely and systematically those exact studies of the Distribution of Disease in England, to which I have before adverted, and which at the time were necessary preliminaries to further practical progress ; studies which we believed would prove to be of most important concern to the welfare of the masses of the people ; and which soon justified that belief by their bearing on the great strides of sanitary legislation which signalised the years 1864-8. In connection with that work, and *à propos* of the census of 1861, Mr. Lowe, with the consent of the then Registrar-General, moved in the House of Commons for the production of certain specialised Mortuary Statistics for the decennial period 1851-61 ; information which was essential for enabling exact sanitary comparison to be drawn between different parts of the country ; statistics, namely (tabulated to plan) of the average annual proportions of deaths from all causes and from certain specified causes, and with certain specifications of age and sex, in England generally, and in each registration-division and registration-district of England, as well as in certain standard areas, during the

decennium in question. The parliamentary return of 1864, which the General Register Office still knows as *Lowe's Return*, and which furnished facilities, such as the public had never before possessed, for estimating the comparative amount of mortal injury suffered in each district of England from each chief sort of morbid influence, was meant to be, and in effect has been, a precedent for successive decennial compendia of like sort; enabling exact comparison to be drawn between different parts of the country and different periods of time, with regard to the respective proportions of deadly diseases prevailing in them.

When Mr. Lowe, in 1864, under circumstances memorable in his career, retired from office as Vice-President of the Education Committee, his official relations with the Medical Department were *ipso facto* closed; but the interest he had learnt to take in its objects continued to animate him as an unofficial member of Parliament, and made him on several occasions an invaluable ally to his official successors. Thus, for instance, in 1866, when he had readily consented to serve on Mr. Bruce's Select Committee on the Vaccination Bill of that year, he there proposed and carried a clause (afterwards § 5 of the Act of 1867) which powerfully supplemented the conditions already provided in the Privy Council Order of 1859 for securing a high standard of quality in public vaccination: the enactment now added by him being, that a special parliamentary grant, to be awarded on the school-code principle of 'payment for results,' should be applied by the Privy Council to the object of providing for meritorious public vaccinators a better remuneration than they had yet received. At the same time, too, Mr. Lowe was serving as a member (in fact, a very influential member) of the Cattle Plague Commission, and in that capacity was contributing importantly to secure right applications of medical knowledge in a sphere of very large popular interest.

Mr. Lowe's particular steps of advance on behalf of the

Medical Department during the years of Lord Palmerston's administration were but a part of what we owed him in those years. At the early date when he presided over us, not only was the cause of sanitary reform counting for little more than a fad in the political world, but also it had been mismanaged into extreme disrepute among the comparatively few politicians who had heard of it; and it was a striking phenomenon in party politics under those circumstances, that a Minister of Mr. Lowe's power and promise should be ready to identify himself with our cause. We could not but derive encouragement from the spirit which Mr. Lowe displayed in his command over us. To him, with our technical information before him, and with his own intellectual gifts and habits, it of course was no difficult matter to understand (though, indeed, it was far ahead of anything his average political contemporaries had yet learnt) what vast magnitudes of human suffering can be caused, and what great national interests can be wronged, through the want of proper sanitary law and administration; and while in such respects he almost intuitively grasped the case of our department, so too, as he advanced in it, generous indignation on behalf of the 'masses' for which we chiefly had to strive, and most of all on behalf of the poor and weak and ignorant who could not strive for themselves, became a new guiding light to him in his political career, as well as a close bond of union with the pioneering department which was his staff.

Participating in the work of the Medical Department, and brought by it into constant observation of the practice of Preventive Medicine, Mr. Lowe rapidly arrived at a vivid perception, such as he never before had had, of the vast extent to which the welfare of mankind can be promoted by the physical and physiological sciences; and this perception was of lasting influence with him. I have often thought that its growing strength in his mind contributed greatly to explain the new tone (so mysterious to many contemporaries) in which he

thenceforth often spoke of his old familiar friends, the classics of Greek and Roman literature. It was not that he ever for a moment forgot the fascination of those fountain-heads of wisdom and wit and pathos, or depreciated the discipline and delight and adornment which individual minds could derive from access to them; and of course he did not deny that grammar and literary style have their proportionate place as fitting studies for the young; but he had become deeply aware, and he felt it his duty to admit and even to emphasize, that since the days of his own youth new values had come to show themselves in the world of study; that, in these changed times, prowess in Greek and Latin could no longer count for as much as in the day when they yielded him his Oxford laurels; that studies merely linguistic and literary could give no immediate help to the pressing wants of the masses of mankind; that Science, such as he had only of late known to exist, was henceforth to be the chief helper of man.

In later years the Medical Department derived much advantage from Mr. Lowe's intimate knowledge of its history, and from his sympathy with the spirit of its work. Early in his Chancellorship of the Exchequer, when we had become aware that circumstances were rapidly tending to make large demand on us for an extension and systematisation of our inspectorial service, he at once recognised that provision ought to be made for a considerable increase of the departmental staff; and the necessary measures for moving Parliament to grant that provision were cordially and effectually promoted by him. Through him, too, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Medical Department obtained, in 1870, the inestimable privilege of a settled organisation for Laboratory Researches in aid of its practical work; for, under his auspices, Parliament then approved *Auxiliary Scientific Investigations* as a separate item in our departmental estimates, and thenceforth adopted the practice of granting for them annually a subsidy of 2,000*l.* This grant, comparable in principle to those which

the Admiralty had long administered for the promotion of astronomical and meteorological science, was very greatly to be valued; not merely in relation to the immediate uses of the department which received it, but as representing also a British contribution to world-wide scientific interests.

At that time the Local Government Board which now exists had not yet come into being. From the date of Mr. Lowe's initiative, twelve years previously, the Medical Department had been advancing consistently on the lines of development then laid down for it; and it had now attained such ripeness of organisation that only slight addition to its inspectorial staff was wanting to complete its ideal of adequacy for the functions it expected to fulfil. The object had been to fill a previously ascertained important void in the machinery of the central civil service, by the creation of a reporting and administrative department which should have State-Medicine as its specialty, and should be distinctively connected with the Medical Profession by having a member of that profession as its chief officer. Provision for the autonomy of the new department, and for its exercise of new functions in the civil service, had had to be made in a spirit both circumspect and comprehensive. The conception to be realised was that of a Department which, with scientific equipment fully up to the standards of the time, and with freedom from bias as absolute as that which governs the administration of justice in courts of law, should diligently study all matters of concern to the Public Health; should keep itself accurately informed of all material facts regarding disease and causes of disease prevalent in the country, or threatening invasion of the country from abroad; should take direct administrative action in matters of a medical kind wherein Parliament had appointed it to administer; should afford to other departments of the civil service such assistance as they might need in relation to medical questions in their respective spheres of responsibility; and should at appointed times report to Parliament the pro-

ceedings it had taken, the information it had gathered, and the recommendations it would offer, on the matters which Parliament had entrusted to its care. Mr. Lowe was the statesman to whom, almost singly, we were indebted for entertaining that conception of a Central Medical Department in the public service, and for enabling it to be for the most part realised. That in later times leading features of the conception have been sacrificed is the outcome of other intentions than Mr. Lowe's. The Local Government Board Act of 1871, promoted by Mr. Stansfeld, and under which he became first President of the new Board, enabled him to initiate an administrative policy under which, in 1876, the Medical Department of the Privy Council came to an end; leaving only some of its duties to be fulfilled, more or less dependently, by medical functionaries under the Local Government Board. On grounds which I trust I have set in clear light in chapter xv of my printed volume, I am strongly of opinion that the objects for which the public service requires a central medical department are not attained, and are not likely to be attained, under those official conditions which dependence on the Local Government Board has involved, and that the politicians of 1871-6 did ill for this branch of administration when they abandoned the principles on which Mr. Lowe had acted, ^.

~~J. S.~~

~~November, 1892.~~

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## II.

### GENERAL NOTES.

My official relations with Mr. Lowe, beginning in 1859, rapidly led to a friendship and intimate personal association between us, which continued till his death, thirty-three years afterwards; and as this not only caused me to observe with much interest his public actions during the time, but also gave me the advantage of knowing how he himself regarded them, his Biographer, aware of the circumstances, has invited me to supplement my departmental testimony by contributing what I can from this wider basis towards a general appreciation of my late Chief's character and career.

The thought which comes first to me in the matter is to notice a strange myth which misrepresented Mr. Lowe. Twice in his parliamentary life he was the object of angry vituperation: first, at the period when he took his memorable part in defeating Lord Russell's Reform Bill supported by the mass of the Liberal party, and when the leading agitators for that Bill took so savagely personal a tone against him, that he described them as 'denouncing him with the most virulent abuse for the hatred, perhaps the vengeance, of his fellow-countrymen;' secondly, during the period of his Chancellorship of the Exchequer, when it happened from time to time that deputations which had sought to obtain his consent to questionable subsidies from the public purse, and had found him in their opinion too strict a guardian of its resources, returned in anger from their interviews with him, and spoke of him to their constituents and to the public in such terms

as could only have been appropriate if he had been showing himself the miserly and churlish guardian of some private property of his own. On the strength of those two disseminated angers, which proclaimed themselves as 'Mr. Lowe's unpopularity,' there grew up into extensive newspaper currency the particular myth to which I have referred. He was travestied as a man without ordinary human sympathies, cross-grained and morose and cynical, scowling with spite at most of his fellow creatures, essentially a kill-joy in all matters of popular sentiment, and a sort of Satan in the paradise of politics. In those representations of Mr. Lowe, persons who knew the original could not find even the merit of caricature; for not a feature of the real man was suggested in them—not even, as it were, the squint of Wilkes, or the nose of Wellington. The unlikenesses occasionally amused him; and many contemporaries will remember how, when a certain doggerel epitaph from last century was re-animated to serve as lampoon against him, he requited his revilers by laughingly translating into epigrammatic Latin and Greek the different forms in which the rubbish had been reproduced.

Mr. Lowe, in fact, was one of the kindest-hearted and least cantankerous of men; a man quite exceptionally free from any sort of spleen or sourness; a man in whom (as Sydney Smith wrote of Sir James Mackintosh) the anatomist might have failed to find a gall-bladder. Nature had started him with a strikingly wholesome and happy mental constitution; such that, with his vigorous and exertion-loving intellect, he had a temper peculiarly exempt from moods of contrariety or impatience; and from first to last, all who were nearest to him and knew him best (I might almost include the very beasts and birds about the house) bore testimony to his constant good humour and cheerfulness, and to the unfailing amiability and solid kindness of his daily life. It would be hard to believe that, with this as his domestic and social

character, he deserved that his public life should be vituperated as it often was; and the vituperation would probably have been absent if they who started it had been better able to contest the arguments, or evade the questions, with which he had met them on the merits of their cases. Fortunately, there remains permanent record of his conduct and language throughout the Reform campaign which followed Lord Palmerston's death; and for the other matter, persons who were behind the scenes and are still living can bear witness how unreasonably he was accused.\*

Well-marked general ability and adroitness of intellect, with eminent aptitude for quick logical judgment, were certainly among the chief qualities which gave Mr. Lowe his success in life; and his powerful common sense (not to mention the learning which corroborated it) would have struck anyone who had to do with him; but the influence which I think most befriended him in his career was the extraordinary degree in which he had strength of purpose. Nature, which in so many respects had been bounteous to Mr. Lowe, had, at one very important point, left him most sadly behind his fellows; and, in respect of that one congenital defect, he was heavily handicapped for the race of life. Born an albino, and severely afflicted from birth with the intolerance of light and the

\* I well remember that at the Privy Council Office, the late Sir Arthur Helps, who was Clerk of Council from nearly the beginning of Mr. Lowe's time, and who could speak almost as a specialist in questions of courtesy, eulogised to me of his own accord the style in which Mr. Lowe received disputatious deputations; and probably Sir C. Rivers Wilson, who, while Mr. Lowe was Chancellor of the Exchequer, held office as his private secretary, could dispel many a cloud of misrepresentation as to the manner in which Mr. Lowe received and answered there the many applicants for public money whom it was his duty to send empty away. Among such applicants, however, some no doubt would have found, to their confusion, that Mr. Lowe was an expert in the Socratic method of eliciting truth—the method by which the advocates of weak cases are gradually questioned round into full view of absurdities involved in their own first pleadings; and it may be admitted that this method, even when most blandly applied, is peculiarly apt to exasperate those whom it constrains to refute themselves; so much so, indeed, that the Athenian arch-questioner himself had at last to be silenced by hemlock.

imperfections of vision which attend albinism, he could hardly look open-eyed into the face of friend or foe, and, if he had been of weak purpose, might well have excused his early education from the difficulties of reading and writing. The fortitude with which he accepted his misfortune, the uniform buoyancy of heart he maintained in spite of it, and the indomitable pluck and perseverance with which he set himself to work against all such consequences of it as he could hope to conquer, were signs of a very noble mind. Under surgical threats of impending utter blindness, he gained his early distinction as a scholar, and won ground after ground in the subsequent hard struggles of a virtually disinherited manhood. In middle life he possessed such command of languages, ancient and modern, and such wide range of literature, as probably few of his contemporaries could exceed. An omnivorous reader, he yet seemed to remember all but the refuse of what he had read; and the great philosophers, historians and poets, whose teachings had once impressed him with reverence, remained always thenceforth as household gods in his memory. Yet, year by year, he was ever endeavouring to extend or improve his knowledge; and, till the time when his eyesight entirely failed him, he gave it habitual employment in reading what others could not read to him. I remember that soon after I first knew him he was intent on Scandinavian studies, and was reading Icelandic sagas in their original; and I remember as one of his before-breakfast industries during the period when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, that he then refreshed his recollection of Hebrew by reading the Hebrew scriptures twice through. With all this reading, however, he was strikingly not a bit of a bookworm. In talking with graziers, he readily let his talk be of bullocks; and one saw with astonishment that, in struggling against his natural defect, he had become no less strong and self-reliant for outdoor life than ready for works of scholarship and reflection. The evident familiarity of his relation with horses, and the absolutely

fearless skill and tact with which he rode and drove, were as characteristic of him as his love of Aristotle ; and it was a curious illustration of his spirit of enterprise in all self-discipline, that, in the earliest days when bicycling began to be cultivated, he rapidly made himself a thorough master of the art, and was for some years a leading bicyclist in town and country. In an opposite direction, too, desiring to bring himself into touch with portions of contemporary scientific study, he, at intervals, during some of his busiest years in the House of Commons, spent what leisure he could on endeavours to master the use of the microscope and the astronomical telescope ; but here not even the strength of his perseverance could surmount the obstacles which nature had set up against it, and he at length had to recognise that his labour was in vain.

The courage and the love of independence which Mr. Lowe displayed in struggling so resolutely against the physical disadvantage with which he had been born, were qualities which pervaded his whole life, and impressed their strong mark of straightforwardness on all his habits of thought and speech. As he was a truly sincere thinker, never contenting himself with mere words, but always trying to reach the bottom of his matter of thought, and to see it without sophistries and double meanings, so, too, his talk was the frankest possible expression of his thought. His ordinary conversation had the charm of that perfect frankness, and of an unpretentiousness and good humour equally perfect. If the occasion happened to bring forward any of the higher topics of scholarship or philosophy or politics, he of course would enter on them with special interest, and what he said would be specially worth hearing ; but his conversation was not under need of running at high level, in order that its strong individuality should be perceived. At whatever level it chanced to be, it was the presentment of a high-minded, clean-thinking, kind-hearted, genial Englishman ; and equally at all levels the

quite without vanity or any desire for display, but with a strong man's ~~keen~~ appetite for wholesome exercise, he had ~~marked~~ <sup>striking</sup> marked vigour of movement in the conversational use of his mind, and with the spirit of his own ~~own~~ animated all conversation into which he entered.

intellectual characteristics of the man would shine out—the rare rapidity and acuteness of apprehension, and the ever-ready cheerful lights of a wit which had no malice, and a humour which had no coarseness. Where the talk was on matters of feeling, he would, as on other matters, express himself with absolute candour; but, typical Englishman as he was by every influence of nature and education, and deeply under the self-restraints which philosophy teaches, his heart was not on his ‘sleeve for daws to peck at,’ and he knew how to express his feelings without gush. In arguing, he never tended to harangue, or to overbear, or to utter inappropriate sarcasm; of his ‘sarcasms,’ indeed, I believe I may truly say (as Lord Orrery said of Dr. Arbuthnot’s) that they were never more than ‘satirical strokes of good-nature’; but, master as he was of those short cuts of argument which are found in ways of joke and irony, he could easily, in case of need, prick the pompous wind-bags of self-conceit with a word or two of pointed question or quotation.

As a public speaker, he was of course hampered, though immeasurably far from being subdued, by his defect of eyesight; on the one hand, that, never really seeing the audience he addressed, he was disadvantaged as to following their movements of mind; and, on the other hand, that he found it almost impossible to refer to notes or printed matter as he spoke. His public speaking was as unaffected as his private talk; lucid to the highest possible degree, in whatsoever it had to expound or argue, but with singularly little care for oratorical display. He abhorred, as of false pretension to the praise of eloquence, all such digressive flourishes of speech, all such irrelevant garlands and festoons of decoration, as represent no strength of movement towards the speaker’s logical aim; and he no doubt had his standards of eloquence in those grand Attic examples in which exposition and argument keep unbroken course, though revealing from time to time, by more impassioned tones, that logic and feeling are,

as it were, one blended current in the speaker's mind. Until the Reform Bill crisis of 1865-7, the House of Commons perhaps hardly knew how great were Mr. Lowe's resources as a controversial speaker; but in the speeches which he then delivered with signal success, it found masterpieces of which it could well be proud. Their sustained logic rose again and again into eloquence, which was all the stronger for its dignified self-restraint; and they abounded with brilliant illustrations of the penetrating quality which is given to argument when wit and humour help to fashion it.

Mr. Lowe's political career always seemed to me to be of genuine political earnestness. Temperament and education had made him strongly self-reliant and fearless, essentially and immensely superior to all ways of pettiness and pretence, and sure to be of broad independent judgment in every matter where he should have to judge. His nature was to be a man of work, and his taking to politics was in that spirit. To his mind, the practice of politics needed as truly to rest on scientific principles as the practice of surgery or the practice of engineering; and the studies from which politics derive their scientific principles had been chief among the studies of his life. The House of Commons attracted him, not as the dilettante's 'best club in London,' nor as a vantage-ground from which to forward himself in exterior interests, but emphatically as the field of duty for which he had best qualified himself, and in which he would most rejoice to take part. As member of Parliament, he would be ready to accept office, if office on conditions he approved were tendered him; but he would never let his scale of living depend on the contingency of emoluments of office; \* nor would ever accept or retain office under conditions at all conflicting with self-respect; and, whether in office or out of office, he would give

\* He told me, on more than one occasion, that he had never, at any time of being in office, used any part of his official salary as income for his annual expenditure.

to the duties of his membership the very best work of which he was capable. On that footing he served in the House of Commons for some twenty-eight years, and was in office in different capacities for about sixteen of them. Always, whether Minister or not Minister, he was conspicuously a worker among the workers.

Of services rendered to the public by Mr. Lowe as holder of office in other branches of government than that in which I worked with him, I cannot speak with departmental knowledge, and therefore do not attempt to speak in detail. It is only for me to note that both in the years in which he was parliamentary joint secretary to the Indian Board of Control, and in the years in which he was Vice-President of the Board of Trade, very important reforms and extensions of law in those two provinces of government were advocated by him in the House of Commons, and that the period of his Vice-Presidency of the Committee of Council on Education signalled itself as an era of radical revision and reconstruction in the administrative system of the department.\* During Mr. Lowe's Chancellorship of the Exchequer, his views on current questions of national finance were, of course, presented in his successive budget speeches; with which may be classed the important speech which he made in debate, June 2, 1871, insisting on the claims of national duty in relation to the repayment of national debt, and strongly dissenting from proposals to subordinate that duty to the object of largely reducing indirect taxation. Regarding the strictness with which, while at the Exchequer, he watched against the various forms of undue expenditure from the public purse—a strictness by which (as before stated) he no doubt gave rise to a class of

\* Mr. Lowe, when he had retired from office as Vice-President of the Education Committee, did not cease to interest himself in educational questions concerning the public, but, on the contrary, continued to take an active and influential part in discussing them; as particularly in the years 1867-8, with reference to questions of middle-class education, and to the effect of scholastic endowments. See his educational addresses delivered at Edinburgh and Liverpool, and his pamphlet on Endowment or Free Trade in Middle Class Education.

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personal malcontents against himself, it is essential to observe that the vigilance he exercised was but an honest fulfilment of one of the loudest and most constant professions of 'liberal' policy; and that, when he pronounced against particular claims for subvention from the proceeds of taxation, he did so on definite principles, which he was always quite ready to explain. Notably, he was careful not to subsidise with public money any commercial undertaking which he thought should depend for its success on ordinary private competition; and in cases where there was question of promoting non-commercial interests in science or literature or fine art, he was averse from bestowing public money if he believed the applicants could more fitly appeal to the resources of private patronage.\* It deserves notice that, while he was strict towards the world at large in his solicitude for the tax-payers' just interests, he was more than strict towards himself in the same matter: that, for instance, he saved the public considerable cost by waiving his right to the official residence in Downing Street during the years in which he was Chancellor of the Exchequer; and that subsequently, when he was offered an ex-Minister's life-pension of 2,000*l.* a year, he would not avail himself of the offer.

Mr. Lowe's relation to the distinctions of party in Parliament, and his view of the political principles involved in that relation, were substantially unchanged throughout his career. In a party speech made to his Kidderminster constituents in December 1858, he discussed the question of Parliamentary Reform in exactly the same spirit as that subsequently shown by him in the parliamentary debates of 1865-7; and the language he then used on the subject of his party relations was as explicit as could be: 'Ever since I could understand

\* A good illustration of the spirit in which he regarded cases of the latter sort is to be found in his answer to an appeal addressed to him by Earl Stanhope on behalf of the Society of Antiquaries, that a grant of public money should be given for the purpose of examining the tumuli about Troy.

anything, I have been a thoroughgoing Liberal. I have suffered in different ways for my opinions when they were not quite so popular as they are now. . . . The times have come to me instead of my being compelled to go to the times.' It was as Liberal member that Mr. Lowe was returned to Parliament during the twenty-eight years of his membership; it was as Liberal member that, during sixteen of those years, he held office under the successive premierships of Lord Aberdeen, Lord Palmerston, and Mr. Gladstone; and the relation in which he stood to all the most important legal and administrative reforms of his time, as especially to those of the departments in which he held office, is evidence enough, if evidence be wanted, that his liberalism was as 'thoroughgoing' as he professed. He, in truth, was a Liberal of Liberals; and it was distinctively from that basis, and without any touch of paradox, that he declined to promote the democratisation of his country. He pointed out that the arguments which were used in support of the Franchise Bills of 1865-6 were not limitable to the proposals of those particular Bills, but could be construed as favouring proposals indefinitely larger; he urged that the principles fully applied would convert the political constitution of England into a tyranny of mere numbers—a tyranny, wherein of necessity the largely predominant influence would be that of the less educated classes; and he insisted that to accept such principles would be a revolt from the traditions of the liberal party, would endanger the best fruits which the liberalism of past times had won for the civilisation and welfare of the country, and would tend to make future liberal government impossible. 'Because I am a Liberal, and know that by pure and clear intelligence alone can the cause of true progress be promoted, I regard as one of the greatest dangers with which the country can be threatened a proposal to subvert the existing order of things, and to transfer power from the hands of property and intelligence and to place it in the hands of men whose whole

life is necessarily occupied in daily struggles for existence.' (Speech, H. C., May 3, 1865.)

The rightness of Mr. Lowe's contention, that the arguments used in favour of the Bills of 1865-6 might readily be pressed to an indefinitely wider extent in favour of democracy, was afterwards amply demonstrated by the legislation of 1867-8 and 1884-5. Whether he was equally right in predicting that such legislation would be of fatal effect on the interests of good government in England, will be for future history to declare. Meanwhile, however, as regards the spirit of the prediction, be it at any rate remembered that the opinions he expressed against the hasty acceptance of democracy for England were the conclusions of a mind deeply versed in political science and familiar with political administration.\* Unpossessed, too, by any sort of class prejudice or class interest, and individually not at all a man to regard with indifference the fortunes of classes less educated or less well-circumstanced than his own, Mr. Lowe had always accepted, as his first principle in politics, that different forms of government deserve praise or dispraise in proportion as they tend, or do not tend, to the greatest good of the greatest number; but, with regard to democracy for England, he was not prepared to admit that *rule by the greater number* would conduce to *good for the greater number*, or even that the less educated classes as rulers could promote their own welfare as successfully as other classes had till then promoted it.

In the ordinary warfare of party politics, apparently Mr.

\* Part of Mr. Lowe's qualification for excelling in the debates of 1865-6 consisted in his intimate knowledge of the working of democratic constitutions in the British Colonies and in the United States of America. Between the time when he gave up his Oxford tutorship and the time when he first became a member of our House of Commons, he had spent eight years in New South Wales, practising as barrister in Sydney, and taking a very active and influential part in the local politics. The introduction of universal suffrage in the Australian colonies, which took place shortly after his return to England, had been a constitutional experiment immensely interesting to him as an ex-colonist with much local knowledge, and in connection with this interest he had become an habitual close observer of the workings of democracy in general.

Lowe did not give his opponents much opportunity for scoring success against him. On the occasion, in 1864, when a hostile vote in the House of Commons, carried in spite of statements he had made, decided him to resign his Vice-Presidency of the Education Committee of the Privy Council, Lord Palmerston, at his instance, obtained from the House that the accusation implied in the vote should be referred to a select committee for inquiry; and as the report of this committee convinced the House that its former vote had been unjust, the vote was at once rescinded. In extra-parliamentary speeches incidental to the mere skirmishing of parties, Mr. Lowe's outspokenness was always a fair challenge to those who differed from him; for on such occasions (which may have reminded him of old Winchester times) he would dash into the fray, hitting right and left, with an evidently youthful zest for the exercise, and a perhaps too youthful indifference to the blows which might be aimed at him in return; but even on these occasions he spoke with such reserves of real strength that he had little reason to fear reprisals; and, so far as I am aware, only one occasion ever arose on which the challenge by him was taken up to his disadvantage.\*

In the course of the general election of 1874, Mr. Disraeli, wishing to turn into ridicule before one of his Buckinghamshire audiences the opponent who of late years had been specially a thorn in his side in the House of Commons, jeeringly described

\* The one occasion alluded to was in the summer of 1876, when Mr. Lowe, referring at an election meeting at Retford to the history (as he supposed) of the Royal Titles Bill then before Parliament, undoubtedly made a slip; laying himself open to the charge of having spoken with wrong information on a subject on which he had better not have spoken at all; and giving to the leader of the opposite camp a chance he could quickly turn to account in the House of Commons. The opportunity was used to the utmost, but with no more than momentary effect against Mr. Lowe; for he, with characteristic candour, not uttering a word of comment on the party tactics which had been used against him, and not attempting by a word to minimise or explain away the language he was reported to have used, frankly confessed fault in the matter, and expressed regret for it in terms so entirely proper and sufficient that the incident was at once as if it had never been.

Mr. Lowe as a man so unlikely to be the elect of any popular constituency that, except for the franchise given in 1867 to the University of London, he probably would have been without a seat in Parliament. It perhaps did not occur to Mr. Disraeli that his remark implied any disparagement of the constitution he had himself provided for Parliament; but it may be conceded him that the taunt had in it just enough of a certain sort of verisimilitude to make it effective for its purpose. In relation to democratic constituencies of ignoble type, Mr. Lowe, no doubt, by reason of his merits, might often have made but a poor show at the poll; for he would not have eaten dirt in order to succeed, would not have been the puppet of wire-pullers, would not have bribed or flattered or lied, would not have promised each individual voter to rejoice him with the moon of his desire, would not have debased his own better knowledge and better conscience by doing homage to sectarian spites, or by compromising with the exactions of ignorance and greed. Certainly he would rather have swept the pavements at Whitehall than have entered Parliament on conditions like those. Further, too, we can freely admit that Mr. Lowe, like other men, would probably sometimes more or less have shown (as the French express it) *les défauts de ses qualités*. Hating humbug as he did, and personally indisposed to sentimental platitudes of speech, he perhaps would not always have taken sufficient care that, when he had to express unpleasant truths, he tempered them with as much oil or sugar as possible; nor perhaps, with his strict standards of political science, would he always have sufficiently recognised, or seemed to recognise, that sentiment, as well as science, is a power in politics. Defaults in such respects might no doubt have counted somewhat against him with average constituencies; but even among average constituencies, and still more among constituencies of markedly high type, Mr. Lowe's great qualities could never have failed to find appreciation. It would be a superfluous tribute to his memory to follow further that line

of thought; but, for the future of England, be it ardently hoped that courage and integrity like his will ever, more and more, be valued by the people. Democracies, equally with princes, are apt to have their weaknesses turned to account by the parasites who pretend to serve them; and a wise democracy will not choose its representatives from among men who are mere sycophants of the multitude. Whether the welfare and the long-descended honour of England shall be in the future what they have been in the past, will mainly depend on the rightness of popular judgment as to the merits which qualify for statesmanship. Surely it will be essential that one who pretends to represent the people shall not only be the possessor of ripe knowledge, but shall feel, and shall bravely fulfil, the moral responsibilities which knowledge imposes; that he shall, at all hazards, be loyal to what he knows; that no ambition for applause shall make him the false prophet of pleasant things; that no popular craze or outcry, no *civium ardor prava jubentium*, shall daunt him from his allegiance to truth; that in the spirit which distinguished Mr. Lowe's Kidderminster speeches, the spirit in which Edmund Burke had been wont to address the Bristol electors, he shall frankly and fearlessly speak out his best counsels on all which is of public concern, and shall thus, as far as possible, aid his constituents to judge with understanding between right and wrong.

~~JOHN SIMON, K.C.B.~~

~~December, 1892~~

