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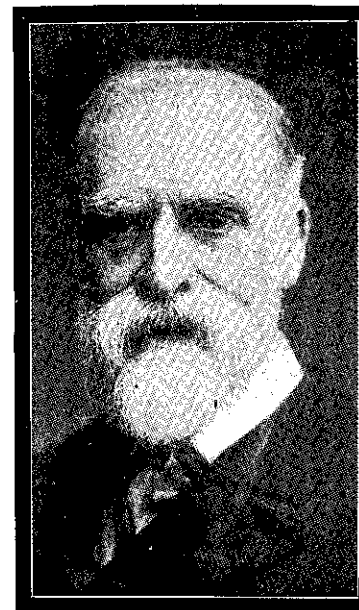
## Some Lessons in Modern Democracy as it is in Switzerland.

BY RIGHT HON. JAMES BRYCE.

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on "Some Lessons in Modern Democracy as it is in Switzerland," Right Hon. James Bryce, British Ambassador to the United States, said: *Mr. President, Your Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, and Gentlemen,*—I thank you for the very cordial welcome you have given me. It is a great pleasure to meet you again after three years, for, if my memory serves me aright, it is three years ago since I was last in this hall, an occasion I remember so well. In those three years Canada has prospered; she has enjoyed an unbroken record of material development, quite as quick as is good and solid and secure for any people. And it is with a feeling of intense satisfaction that one coming back from the Old Country, after an absence, notes the force, energy and aptitude of the young nations, the daughters of the Empire.

I have been asked, instead of talking on some conventional topic, to address to you a few words as citizens of a young democracy. I am glad of the opportunity of so doing. I rejoice in the progress of these Canadian Clubs. They are built on no party foundation; they include men of all parties, yet they are not apart from the public life of the country. You are Canadians above partisans. You reverence country more than party and you are united to advance the higher welfare of your common country. It is a good thing that such bodies exist. They are organs and expressions of enlightened public opinion, which should be the supreme arbitrator and rise above party passions. So I have gladly accepted the course indicated by your President and Secretary, to select a topic which might be of interest to Canadians as citizens of a young democracy.

You young Canadians want your country to be not only materially prosperous, but also to be happy and a model of dignity and purity in its public life. You want it governed by the people and for the people in the highest sense, you want it governed not for the benefit of the private interests of any man, or any sect, or any class, but for the general interests of the whole people. You have in Canada, as in a great num-



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British Ambassador, Washington, D.C.

ber of the British colonies, self-government by the people as complete as could readily be imagined. You have perfect social equality, no bar of privilege exists, and the humblest man can rise to the highest place in the gift of his fellow citizens. You have brilliant examples of this—many of them. You are in complete possession of power by the people. It is absolutely supreme. Whatever you want must be done. You have got the machinery to carry it out. You have the completest democracy you could desire. All that remains is to make your Government as efficient, worthy, pure and dignified as it ought to be, for the measure of the conscience of the nation is taken by these things.

One way to assist towards this desired end is to study other popular Governments, noting the faults to be avoided and the virtues to endeavor to reproduce. Thinking thus, my mind passed to one particular democratic country of which I had recently made a study. Switzerland I believe to be the most successful example of popular government that the world has ever seen. It has escaped most of the faults and secured most of the virtues that any popular Government can hope for. Switzerland is small as compared to Canada in territory, size and population, yet it presents some interesting points of similarity. It is like Canada in that it consists of more than one race. You have two, Switzerland has three. It is composed of three races, speaking three different languages, but all working together in harmonious co-operation. It is, moreover, a country of two religions, the Protestants in the majority, but the Catholics forming a large and important minority. But that does not prevent a common patriotism from rising above sectarian distinction.

You Canadians live close to a large neighbor. Switzerland has also a powerful neighbor speaking the same language as the majority of its citizens, with two other nations speaking the same languages as the other two elements of its population. You would have thought that the attraction of the great nation would tend to disrupt the nation into three sections. Not so. The German Swiss have no desire to become absorbed in Germany, the French Swiss have no desire to be absorbed by France, nor the Italian Swiss by Italy. They are thoroughly patriotic, first, last, and all the time.

Lastly, like you, Switzerland is a federal country. She has a Federal Parliament and 22 cantons for each of the small provinces, each thus having a Government of its own. Is it not, then, an interesting point for you to consider as to the lessons to be learned from the democratic experience of Swit-

zerland? I shall seek in a few words to mention one or two which have struck me.

What are the faults most commonly assigned to a democratic country? First there is violence and intolerance of party spirit, which is a descent from the days of ancient Greece and Rome. Again, what is more conspicuous in modern times is the great power of party machinery, the tendency of a class of men to make themselves the masters rather than the servants of the people, taking upon themselves to prescribe a policy and choose representatives for the people. This evil, I confess, is hard to eradicate. Another evil—and an old one—is the abuse of public office for private gain. The temptation upon those placed in power is great, the prize at issue is large and ordinary human virtue is liable to succumb to it. Public office is a public trust and the public man who would add one shilling or one dollar to his private purse from the public funds is, after all, no better than he who robs the widow and the orphan.

Lastly, there is the fault incident to all Governments, the power of money is so great and makes itself felt in every direction. Money unfortunately can procure many things that money ought not to be allowed to secure.

The people of Switzerland have, to a remarkable degree, escaped these four faults. There is, perhaps, none in the world so free from them as they. Why? It is not that the familiar faults are not present, but that they are present in so small a degree. Original sin is just the same in Switzerland as in London, or in Melbourne, or in Washington, or even in Canada, or in Athens or Rome or the cities of the middle ages. Switzerland is surely familiar with original sin, as its territory includes the home of Calvin in his later years.

Why is it, then, that Switzerland has so well escaped these conspicuous faults? I shall endeavor to give shortly what I believe to be the principal reasons. A foremost reason has been the external pressure of the great powers surrounding the country, the effect of which has been to squeeze the Swiss people together and give them a sense of civic duty and patriotism which is quite uncommon in other countries. They realized that they could only survive by standing together. A second reason is that they have had a very long and a very glorious history, dating from the rather fabulous days of William Tell, a history in which the people have played an increasing part, and a history which has inspired them through all the centuries, and lives in the hearts and the minds of the people. They were not only brave on the battlefield as sol-

diers, but they carried their sense of duty to the ballot-box as citizens.

The third reason I would assign is the very long practice the Swiss have had in local self-government. Every man has been taught to exert himself and take an individual interest in public affairs. Of recent years there has been the introduction of that remarkable institution, the referendum, giving popular effect to legislation which in other countries is simply passed by the Parliament. A statute in Switzerland is accordingly the law of the whole people voting at the polls.

The result of these causes is the creation of the very valuable habit of constant participation in the work of government and a sense of responsibility for the conduct of the Government. Switzerland does not leave so much to the Administration or Legislature, its people are not content with a mere languid perusal of the newspapers over the evening pipes. They take a keen interest in the public service and keep the men they elect up to the mark. The theory of all democracies is practiced in Switzerland.

Switzerland has a last advantage—an advantage which I fear you may not consider an advantage—it is the advantage of comparative poverty. Not that the average man is badly off (he is, in fact, better off than the average man in England, Ireland or Scotland or Italy), but that there are few great fortunes in the modern sense of the word, in the standard of Britain, the United States or Canada. There are only a few of the larger manufacturers who are what the world now terms rich men. The consequence of this is that if a rich man wanted to employ the methods of corruption, if he wanted to corrupt either the Administration or the Legislature he would not be able to offer a sufficient inducement, and, moreover, the interests which the Government controls are not sufficiently large to make it worth while for anyone to offer those inducements. Neither the legislator nor the administrator by abusing his office can become rich. Switzerland carries its economy to the verge of parsimony. The salaries of officials are small and all can live cheaply in comfort.

These are the causes which it is most easy to assign for the absence of many of the temptations which destroy democracies, the activity and civic zeal of the people and the vigilance which the sense of responsibility inspires.

What is the moral which other democracies may learn from Switzerland? Is there an application to the sermon? An old man who had taken care of the Presbyterian kirk in

Scotland for many years (in England they would call him the beadle) was addressed by the clergyman on one occasion:

"Well, Sandy," he said, "I suppose you have listened to so many sermons all these years that you could preach a good one yourself."

The eyes of the old Scot twinkled. "Weal," he replied cautiously, "I winna say I could preach a sermon, but I could draw an inference."

So I am going to try and draw an inference from the experience of Switzerland. Can you Canadians secure the advantages which have enabled the Swiss to make a good popular government? One of these is poverty. Do you want to have that? There are three monastic vows—silence, obedience, poverty. I strongly suspect that Canadians are not more willing to take the vow of poverty than they are to take the vows of silence and obedience. I am afraid you are going to be rich. Nature destined you to be rich when she gave you inexhaustible mineral wealth and an immense area of fertile lands. You have got to be rich, and you have got to take the drawbacks as well as the benefits. The Gospel says that perils beset the rich, and it is just as true of public as of private life. By the exercise of your virtues, then, you will be called upon to resist temptation. Guard against the power of wealth to induce a voter to neglect his duty, the humbler to sell his vote and the richer to buy it. Develop the public interest, watch public men and see that the Government keeps up to a high standard of purity. Republics live by virtue and monarchies live by honor. The only way for a democracy to live is to practice public virtue and keep everyone entrusted with the responsibilities of public life up to the high standard set for it. You are responsible for the forming of habits and traditions in a new country. You may guide the political future of Canada for generations to come. Nations live on traditions. If it were not for the past we would not stand as we do today. It is a great responsibility and a great honor to have earned the great gratitude of posterity to Canadians who established a high standard.

It is a great deal easier to set a high tone than to create one that does not exist, or to reform a low tone. Once the standard is set it should be lived up to. And you in Canada, gentlemen, have two very great advantages for making your country a fine and high type of popular government. You have the advantage of a fine stock, a stock from the best blood that the Old World has ever sent to the new. You have also the advantage of a universally diffused education, of literature

which can come home to everyone, and of examples in the past which the earlier days of our common ancestors in Great Britain have bequeathed to you of what politics may be.

May the blessing of God be with you and enable you to make your democracy worthy of these conditions, worthy of the enormous opportunity which you have before you in this country.

His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor moved a vote of thanks to the speaker. He referred to the fact that Mr. Bryce had represented his native city of Aberdeen in the British Parliament for twenty-three years. His Honor continued: "Any man who can do that is a man of staying qualities. He must be a man who believes 'what I have I will hold,' and I think that is not a bad sentiment to take with him across the line." (Applause.)

"In the most interesting address which we have just listened to His Excellency has referred to one of the conditions which have conspired to consolidate the Swiss republic. He says that one of these conditions is the fact that they have been subject to a little squeezing from the neighbors. (Laughter and applause.) I did not say anything, gentlemen, about our case here. But, like the Scotchman of which we have been told, you can draw an inference." (Applause.)

His Honor concluded by expressing his satisfaction that a man of such eminent qualities as Mr. Bryce had been appointed British Ambassador to the United States. He was sure that His Excellency's visit would enable him to learn the feelings and sentiments of the Canadian people. (Applause.)

Dr. Goldwin Smith, who seconded the resolution, said: "This is an epoch in our history. It was proposed that Canada should have an ambassador of her own at Washington. This would have bred worse confusion. Only a nation can have an ambassador and Canada is not yet a nation.

"His Excellency, in close communication with us, will do his best for us and his best will be the best that can be done. But we must be reasonable in our expectations. The responsibility lies after all on the Imperial country. Not with us are the issues of peace and war. Irresponsibility is apt to make us unreasonable. The British Government has always done the utmost that diplomacy could do for us.

"It did its utmost as I well remember in the case of Maine. It did its utmost I have no doubt in the Alaska case. We had no means of enforcing our claim. If there had been an appeal to force we should have been crushed by irresistible power. The best that diplomacy could do the British Gov-

ernment has always done. To anything more the British people would never consent."

Mr. Bryce in reply said: "I thank you cordially not only for the vote of thanks, but for the attention with which you listened to my address. I must not, both for the sake of time and also because it would not be possible on such an occasion as this, I must not enter into the issues which were raised either by the Lieutenant-Governor or by my old friend, Mr. Goldwin Smith; but this I will say, that I will ask you to suspend your judgment upon all these questions in which it is alleged that British diplomacy has not done its best for you. In these matters you have only heard one side of the case, and I feel it is my duty to my country and to the Government which I represent to tell you this, that I believe you are entirely mistaken if you think that British diplomacy has been indifferent to Canada or has not done the best it could for Canada.

"Having said that, let me say for the future, as I can prove for the past, that there is in every section of the British people the warmest sympathy for Canada and every desire that all we can do shall be done to secure justice for Canada in every respect. (Applause.) And I may venture to say for myself that I do not think anyone will come here as Ambassador—certainly I would not—if I were not persuaded that that is the feeling of the British people, and that it is my duty, in a representative capacity, a duty of paramount importance, to secure justice for Canada." (Applause.)