



The Trades House of Glasgow.

The 321st Anniversary  
13th October, 1926

The Rt. Hon.  
The Earl of Home, D.L.

on

“The Trades House  
and the  
Fourteen Incorporations  
of Glasgow.”

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Annual Dinner, 13th October, 1926.

TOAST

of

The Trades House and the Fourteen Incorporations

THE Right Hon. The Earl of Home, D.L., proposing the toast of "The Trades House and the Fourteen Incorporations" at the Annual Dinner of the Trades House of Glasgow, held on 13th October, 1926, said:—

Deacon-Convener, My Lords and Gentlemen,— I am very grateful for the kind invitation to this interesting dinner and for the honour of proposing the important toast which is in my name. On many occasions in past years this toast has been proposed by distinguished men holding responsible stewardships in the life of the nation, able by their knowledge and experience to foretell, at any rate with a certain amount of accuracy, the outlook for the nation and the world and the prospects for trade and for industry. This year they have been spared

that task, and I am sure they will be grateful for your kindness and consideration, because in the present complicated condition of national and world affairs it would seem impossible for any terrestrial being to foretell what to-morrow may bring forth. And so the task has fallen upon one who is undistinguished and is entirely irresponsible so far as great national affairs are concerned, and one who is without the gift or the power of prophecy. But such a speaker does possess this great advantage, that the members of his audience need not pay the slightest attention to what he says—(laughter)—and, after such an excellent dinner as this, can allow their digestion to work quietly and satisfactorily, and their thoughts to be soothed with the tobacco which they are smoking. But there are very many people like myself who do hold responsible stewardships in life, in so far that the welfare and happiness of others depend upon our conduct, sagacity, and prudence. It is a great help for us to read the life history of great institutions like the Trades House and the Crafts, and to trace and to realise the policies and actions which have brought about their present prosperity—the honoured position which they hold in the community, and which have established a long record of a stewardship nobly borne.

Now, sir, there are many causes for this result, but I can mention only two this evening. I choose these two because, to my mind, they are the most important. The first is the determination on the part of the leaders of the Trades House and the Crafts through all these years to work with others for the common good—(applause)—which, in another word, is comradeship, and their determination to work for others, which means a life of service and of love for their fellow-men and women. (Applause). In reading their history you can trace that determination throughout, and this spirit of comradeship has always been maintained in days of storm as well as of sunshine, and no matter what great changes in national policy were impending and no matter what contentious questions were existing.

In the days of the childhood and youth of the Trades House and the Crafts, disputes were raging in connection with the Crown itself and in connection, of course, as usual with religion. Old systems were changing, amongst which we must remember that the great and powerful lords under the feudal system were being given the first dose of that quietening and weakening medicine which is being given in increased doses to their successors to-day—(laughter)—and, if I may say so, before the powers-that-be who

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are present to-night, with the result, I fear, that the patients may have passed away before the bottle is empty. (Laughter.) But in passing, may I make one remark on that subject? We who are connected with the land are very often apt to grumble at what we consider the very heavy, and some people think the very excessive, burden which we have to bear at the present time. But in my better moments I like to look at it in this way, that if by bearing this burden, heavy and even excessive though it be, we can in any way help to lighten the burden which would otherwise fall on the industries of our country, many of which have been and are to-day in a precarious condition, and upon the prosperity of which the welfare of so many thousands depend, then I think we should rather consider our sacrifices as only a very small repayment of the vast debt which we owe to those who sacrificed everything for us, even life itself, in the great war—(applause)—and regard it as our tribute of respect and gratitude to those who gave them for their country's cause and have suffered so deeply by their loss.

Now, sir, to revert to the days of auld lang syne. In these days the union of Scotland and England was slowly developing, and people were beginning to realise that contrary to their

old ideas, and contrary certainly to the laws of horticulture, there was no fairer sight than to see the thistle and the rose growing and blooming together in harmony and peace in the hearts of the British people. And again there was a growing desire for fuller representation in the government of the country in the hearts of those who then toiled so long in the vineyard with so little encouragement and reward. Now all these great questions must have caused very sharp divisions of opinion among those who lived in the days long syne. There must have been very many people in those days, just as now, who were accused of being over-anxious to pour too much new wine into old bottles, and others who were blamed for thinking that the old wine and the old bottles would last their time, and were therefore averse to the introduction of anything new; and cruel and bitter words then, just as now, must have been hurled by parties and by individuals one against the other. And yet throughout it all, so far as we can read, the Trades House and the Crafts maintained this spirit of comradeship.

Now, sir, is there not here a lesson for us to learn to-day, for us who live in this changing world surrounded by innumerable political parties shouting their respective battle-cries? Cannot we revive again that spirit of comrade-

ship which existed among us only a few years ago? There have been many disappointments in the war, but I believe the bitterest of all to right-thinking people—and remember there are far more right-thinking people in this country than many party politicians and many party newspapers acknowledge—I say the bitterest disappointment of all has been the weakening, and almost the disappearance, of this spirit of comradeship which existed among us. We often ask ourselves why it should be so, and many suggestions have been put forward, but the reason is very hard to find. To-night, if I may, I would tell you a suggestion as it was told to me the other day. It is this—that in our great industrial disputes which have occurred so often since the war and which so utterly destroy this spirit of comradeship, there must be many, and very many of the leaders of both sides, of the masters and of the men, who were not able, owing to age or other reasons, to take their places in the fighting forces of our country, and many of such people have never realised, and do not realise now, and, I believe, never will realise, the strength of the spirit of comradeship, friendship, and love which existed among all ranks of His Majesty's forces. Many of those people are apt to think that comradeship is an ideal which is not practical in this imperfect

world. But, sir, many of us know that it is practical, that it is an ideal which was fulfilled. We felt it, we experienced it. We lived in it and rejoiced in its atmosphere, and we long to live and rejoice in its atmosphere again. (Applause.)

I have told you that suggestion as it was told to me, because there are present here to-night many who are leaders in the industrial life of this great city, and I ask you to consider it, and if you deem it worthy of your consideration, see to it that in future as many as possible of the leaders of the masters and of the men in our great industries, and especially in our great industrial disputes, are those who stood and fought shoulder to shoulder for four years in their country's cause for the purpose of destruction when the devil raised his banner of war upon earth. Many of us are confident that you will find that they would be just as willing to stand and work together shoulder to shoulder again in their country's cause for the purpose of construction under God's banner of peace and goodwill amongst men. (Applause.)

Now, may I claim your indulgence for a few moments more, just to refer to the second reason of the great prosperity of the Trades House and the Crafts and the honoured position they hold in the community. In that connection

I will repeat what I said at one of the Incorporation dinners a fortnight ago, because I cannot explain that reason better than by reading a very short extract:—"Its chief private work is the dispensation of charity. All its revenue is devoted to charitable and educational purposes, as indeed is the revenue of its fourteen constituent craft guilds. The combined funds of these guilds and of the House have reached £1,100,000. Last year £39,000 was spent in charity and technical education. During the war the House and the Incorporations contributed £44,000 to the various war funds. The House also nominates and appoints Governors and Directors on the Boards of over forty of the leading hospitals and charitable and educational institutions." That is splendid, is it not? But listen to this again—a grand story which I was told only the other day, in connection with the Commonweal Fund. That fund was instituted in 1924, the founders being James Harper Matheson, John Dallas, and George Forsyth Paisley. It was for "good and pious uses which may tend to the advancement of the commonweal of the burgh." The capital of the fund amounts to over £17,000, and all this money has been raised by voluntary contributions from the Guild brethren. The revenue is used for making grants for charitable and educational purposes.

These are two of the clauses which I was delighted to read:—The first is that grants shall not be made so as to have the effect of relieving the House or the Incorporations of their customary and usual subscriptions to hospitals, and, second, that "good and pious uses" shall be interpreted in the widest sense, having in view the custom and practice of the House since 1605.

Let all on whom Dame Fortune has smiled, seize this great opportunity of making some permanent benevolent provision for this city. The Commonweal Fund forms a safe receptacle for such gifts and bequests. The Roll of Benefactors is indeed as honourable a roll as any man's name can be inscribed upon.

Is not that a splendid and glorious record of a life of service and love for their fellow-men and women? And think of the field. This is what appeals to me; think of the field in which this wonderful work has been carried on, the seed sown and the harvest reaped year by year. The field is this great city of Glasgow, with its vast population, with its many gates and easy accesses to those, literally speaking, from all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, possessing all characteristics and all temperaments. And when I think of that I cannot resist the temptation of comparing this city with another city, and my mind was taken back to

a military service held on a Sunday morning in 1915, when a wonderful sermon was preached to us shortly before we went abroad by a most human and sympathetic minister of Glasgow, the Rev Mr. Harrowes. He told us that morning of a city which has easy accesses like Glasgow, for we read of it as a city which has on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. I often think that Mr. Harrowes preached to us that sermon because he knew that we were shortly to go abroad to join in that great Armageddon and that for months, and it might be years, we would be within sight or at any rate within very easy reach of that city, and should be wondering whether we could gain admittance and, if so, by what gate we might enter, and, as we know, many of our comrades did enter therein. He told us how all these gates had been purposely put there to be an easy means of entrance for all, no matter what characteristics or temperaments they possessed, according to the different quarters of the globe from which they came. By the eastern gate would enter the simple and the faithful, the dreamy and mysterious, but perhaps those too easily led and lacking self-reliance. Through the northern gates would go the virile, the industrious, the steadfast, but perhaps somewhat reserved, suspicious, difficult

to persuade—what we call dour. Through the southern gates would go the light-hearted, the gay and the genial, the lovers of life with roses, roses all the way, but perhaps rather quick-tempered and slow to forgive; and the western gates would admit the ambitious, the energetic, the up-to-date, those with big brains and big ideas, but perhaps somewhat too optimistic, too impetuous, too impatient of their older and slower neighbours—all at times weak, foolish, and sinful. Such are those who enter that Heavenly city, and such are those who enter this earthly city of Glasgow.

But let us go a step further, for we know the qualifications of those who enter that other city. The essential qualification is that love for their fellow-men and women must be written deep on their hearts, and we maintain it is that qualification which has been written for centuries deep in the hearts of the Trades House and of the Crafts, and I go further and say written deep in the hearts of this great city of Glasgow and all who dwell therein. We know that there are some conditions in this great city which are not worthy of those who are permanent citizens of that other City, although for a while pilgrims on earth. We know that even these pilgrims differ violently on great questions and hurl cruel and bitter words one against another, but when

the thieves of sickness, distress and poverty fall upon any of those pilgrims, then no institution in Glasgow and no individual ever passed by on the other side. With that great example and glorious record before us to-night, with all sincerity and gratitude, we drink to the prosperity of the Trades House and the Crafts, and earnestly hope that good health and happiness may be bestowed upon you, Mr. Chairman, during your time of office, which carries with it great responsibilities. Lastly, I think that the Trades House and the Crafts give this message to-night to those of us who live outside the city walls—a message which I hope will ring in our ears on our homeward way and through our whole life—a message expressed in the most inspiring words ever uttered on earth, but words which we are too often slow to fulfil: “Go and do thou likewise.”