

## LORD BUCKMASTER ON THE PLATFORM.

Lord Buckmaster made a fine impression on his audiences both in Canada and the United States during his recent visit. His broad culture and philosophic outlook upon the present period of human history which seems so perplexing and so frivolous to most men who, like him, have lived in the Victorian age, served to refresh the taste and raise the spirits of every one who heard him. In the current number of the *American Bar Journal*, Lord Buckmaster's address to the American Bar Association at Detroit on 'The Romance of the Law' is characterized as "One of the most unique and eloquent speeches which the Association has ever been privileged to hear." We published last month his address at the tenth annual meeting of the Canadian Bar Association held at Winnipeg in August last, and how he impressed his audience there was admirably told by Mr. T. R. Robertson in the columns of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, under the caption which we use above. Mr. Robertson's appreciation of the personal qualities of the speaker as well as the subject-matter of his address is infused with so much delicacy and judgment that we are pleased to comply with a request to reprint it here, having obtained the necessary permission therefor:—

"Lord Buckmaster spoke to the Canadian Bar Association on Wednesday night. Lord Buckmaster is an ex-Lord Chancellor of England. The Lord Chancellorship of England is a great office. Men who have held it are linked in a long chain of connection that winds its way deep into the recesses of English history, taking you back to the times of Queen Elizabeth, to the days of Edward III., to the time of Henry II., who reigned in the twelfth century, and farther back still than that to the times of the Saxons. As Lord Buckmaster stood on the platform in the dining-room of the Royal Alexandra he had a great and storied past behind him, the whole stormy epic of the English people.

That was behind him. As he spoke he had Sir James on his right flank, and Chief Justice Anglin on his left; confronting him were the assembled lawyers of Winnipeg, their ladies, and the visitors, and the distinguished visitors. The heavy chandeliers hung down from the bronzed panels of the heavily beamed roof shining in soft golden light on the blue crepe dresses, and the white silk dresses, and the dresses made of silk lace net, and on the ermine furs, and the green mists of tulle, and the spangles, and the pearls, and fans, and ribands

and roses, and on the acres of white shirt bosoms, and black coats and gleaming slippers, and correct white ties. All this refinement and elegance turned so interestedly towards the platform upon which, flanked by the Chief Justice of Canada and the lieutenant-governor of Manitoba, Lord Buckmaster of England was standing making his address.

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He is a man of medium height; and lean. He has a lean face; high cheek bones, hollow cheeks, an aquiline nose, deep-set blue eyes, and an earnestness of manner that reaches the quality of solemnity. As he begins to speak he twists a gold ring on his left hand, he twists it rapidly, eagerly; it is the sole indication of nervousness he displays. He speaks with an admirable, clear, and easily heard voice, which never falters, which speaks admirable, choicely-arranged, finely-inflected language. His evening clothes and white vest and ribbon tie are no appropriate garments for this visage and this utterance. You look at him through half-closed eyes in the hazy light of the big room and you see him, dimly, in scarlet robes, seated on his woolsack, in his Chancellor's chair, the wings of his grey wig framing the falcon face, intensifying the solemnity of his look and investing it with terror. The law; the majesty of the law; the stern, wise, incorruptible arbiter; there it all is; you are beginning to listen; you have been merely looking at him, but now phrases begin to come—"the superb and final destiny of Canada;" "nature never forgives weakness or mistakes;" "without the influence of the law can you make a group of sheds into a great city;" there is force, precision, care, in each syllable; not a slip, not a tremor, not a hesitancy; he finishes his preliminary opening, puts on a pair of heavy-rimmed, thick-stemmed spectacles, and moves into the main section of his address.

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He begins by quoting William Hazlitt. He reads from a small red book. He puts the book down, and with animation proceeds to demolish Hazlitt and the moribund Georgians, who thought "that everything had been done, that the world was grown old, that no hope remained of doing anything better than it had been done then"—a hundred years ago.

He moves forward to the demolition of Hazlitt's doctrine through a series of illustrative examples—In past time the courts were seats of corruption; crazy sinecure appointments filled the whole of the chancery division. He refers to the Duke of St. Alban's; he remembers that James II., of pious memory, vested in Eleanor Gwyn the revenues of St. Alban's, and that one of Nelly's sons took the title; Nell as the

Senior Registrar of Chancery—"a most august if rather dry position") brings a glow of animation into the sombre eyes. While manifest absurdities were rampant some of the very greatest of the English judges were on the bench and saw no need for reform. Now, why was that? Lord Buckmaster has become very animated, he thrusts out strongly with his hand: "now, why was it they couldn't see the need for reform?—It was because you cannot see what lies at your feet—the past and the future you can look at clearly—but not at the present—" *there is a haze of dust that lies at the flying feet of the years.*" The beautiful phrase rings out with the music of a well rung golden coin.

His speech is woven of such language—"hopes, anxiety, suspense, hazard"—of the litigant who seeks the remedy of law; there is a "sound of rising waters and rushing of mighty winds," from the new forces which are vibrating under our established old foundations. The world is not old; he throws away the foolish suggestion and brings to his aid the language of inspiration—"the world is as new to-day as it was when the sons of the morning sang together for joy." All this and much more is having the most powerful effect on the beautiful blue and white silk gowns, on the snowy shirt fronts, on our local jurists and judiciary. Lawyers the guardians of liberty—pioneers of truth; *imperium et libertas*; empire and liberty; freedom and power: nobler and better system and edifice of law will be handed on to our successors—"when we are only portions of its forgotten dust." And the perfectly first-class audience surges to its feet—silks, plumes, fans, broadcloth, linen, patent leather, everything, and gives three loud and rousing cheers; and a tiger. The address is done.

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We would not have missed Lord Buckmaster's magnificent speech for a great deal; and we would not have missed seeing him at all."

Winnipeg.

T. B. R.

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