

Pyrites

14 June 115.

## Empires Compared.

The opportunity of hearing Professor H. Darnley Naylor discourse upon such an interesting subject as "Greater Rome and Greater Britain" was taken advantage of by a large number of the members of the Commonwealth Club on Wednesday. The lecture was given at the Adelaide Town Hall at the conclusion of the usual luncheon. The President (Sir John Downer) said the professor needed no introduction, as he was well known to all. He was a man of commanding intellect and character. No one was better qualified to speak on the subject chosen. He (Sir John Downer) extended a hearty and enthusiastic welcome to the professor, with a sense of the members' obligation to him for consenting to give the address. (Applause.)

### —Interesting Contrast.—

Professor Naylor said he had borrowed the title of his remarks from the admirable book by Sir Charles Lucas. In the short time at his disposal he was compelled to draw, in roughest outline, and to make broad statements without qualifications, and he must warn them what was true of one century might be but partially true of another, and might be even untrue altogether of any but a specific time. His purpose was to contrast and compare in several ways the Roman Empire with the British Empire. At the lowest computation the former had lasted over 700 years, at the highest 1,600 years. The British Empire was but a child in comparison. In size the Roman Empire was only half the area of Canada. Against that they must set the fact that a voyage from Rome to Britain would have occupied as many days as the modern voyage by steamer from England to Australia. For the Romans, distances were land distances rather than sea distances. The early Empire had two great advantages over the British Empire. It was one in kind, for in its southernmost limits it hardly reached to the tropic of Cancer. The north of England or the south of Scotland was at its northernmost boundaries. It took in east and west, but only the nearest east, and the west only in Europe and North Africa. The Danube, Switzerland, and the Rhine formed its frontier in Europe. It was one in organization, for all the provinces were governed on a similar system. With that could be contrasted the British Empire spread over every zone, including almost every variety of civilization, and of governmental methods.

### —Roman Citizenship.—

The Roman Empire was one also in revenue matters. All taxes, save local octrois, and municipal rates, went to the Imperial Treasury. It was true that taxation was not uniform, but for diversity of tariffs the Roman provinces would not compare with the British Crown colonies and dominions. It was interesting to note that the British Empire lay almost entirely outside the limits of the Roman Empire. On the other hand, the Roman Empire to-day was split up into separate and independent nations. The members of the great Empire could make the proud boast "civis Romanus sum." Even though the member did not live in Rome, Roman citizenship gave legal protection of personal property. To live a life of security and success one had to be a Roman citizen. Arnold said, "Rome undertook an impossible task, that of ruling an immense Empire without federation, and without a representative system where the sole sources of power were the supreme central Government and the army." And yet Rome pursued successfully that impossible task for more than seven centuries. He would give a rough picture of how the vast machine was worked. First came the Emperor directing and controlling the whole with the army at his back; then came the Senate, originally the advisory body of the King. From the Senate were chosen the Governors of the various provinces. Such Governors performed the duties of the modern British colonial Governors, but they combined also the positions of commander-in-chief of the army, Chief Justice, and State Treasurer. Even Sir Samuel Way would find his powers taxed to the utmost in such a situation. (Laughter.)

#### —Collecting Taxes.—

In the matter of finance they met with another class, the so-called equites, the merchant princes and millionaires of the Empire. When the Government required money it did not collect its taxes directly. It simply called for contracts and accepted the highest. Say, for instance, that a certain province could provide a hundred thousand pounds in taxes. Up jumped Crassus, the millionaire, offered to give the Government that amount, and then set his agents to work to screw £130,000 out of the unhappy inhabitants of the province. Of course he would not go too far, otherwise he might be compelled to grease the palm of the Governor, who could never be trusted not to make things unpleasant for him later. One great merit was that these Governors rarely stayed two or three years in their posts, and provincials always had the comfortable thought that an undesirable Governor was not to be a permanent burden upon them. On the other hand the Governor would see that Crassus was enabled to collect his taxes. The expenses of war were undertaken by contractors, and they recouped themselves from booty obtained in the campaign, and from a monopoly of trading facilities, and various mining concessions.

#### —Municipal Government.—

After the provincial had paid the Imperial taxes he had the pleasure of contributing to the rates of his own municipality, for he had his own local Parliament modelled on the Senate at Rome. To-day the British owed to the Romans municipal government, in the modern sense, for the Romans had created a combination of limited local self-government with the wider Imperial status which at first attached only to the central city—Rome. Under the Empire the army was a professional one. Soldiers were fairly well paid, and at the conclusion of their services there was always the possibility of obtaining grants of land, and of retiring in peace and quiet for the rest of one's life. The Romans were able for 700 years to maintain the obedience of the provinces, and to suppress any attempt at revolt because of their efficient military system. The motive forces of their Empire were State policy and material advantages—tribute for the Government, and for Rome itself. That meant relieving the citizens of Rome from taxes, and it meant also a gain for Roman merchants and financiers who went out, and sent out their representatives into the provinces. There they had a marked contrast to the British Empire, which was not, and never had been, a London Empire.

#### —No Party Politics.—

There was one great disadvantage under which the British Empire laboured—he meant the system of party government. That system, in the opinion of Sir Charles Lucas, had been all for the bad because it had been all against continuity. The Romans, on the contrary, had always had a defined and consistent policy, and established an order of things to which all peoples in their Empire felt that they must conform themselves. But though the Romans had started with the race as the basis of citizenship, in the end they stood out almost beyond all peoples in the extent to which they disregarded race, and in the liberality with which they widened their citizenship.

#### —The Colour Question.—

The Romans were not confronted by the difficulties of colour to any extent. Distance, of course, made the difficulties less. With the British the triumphs of steam had brought the most distant parts of the Empire much nearer than the extreme limits of the Roman Empire. The closer India came to Canada, Australia, and South Africa the more prominent and aggressive became the question of colour. In the Roman Empire differences of race were counteracted by a circumstance which did not exist in the modern world. Society was then divided into slave and freeman. The freemen felt themselves privileged, and the feeling created a strong bond between them, no matter what was their nationality. For all that, the great and vital difference between east and west was recognised, and the east was left to be Greek in civilization rather than Roman. The British Empire was really two Empires in one—the sphere of settlement which almost comprised white men, and the sphere of rule, which comprised of coloured people. That fact tended to make the instinct of race run counter to the bond of citizenship.

#### —Religion and Trade.—

In the British Empire religion far from helped towards Imperial unity. Rome as an Empire had but one religion, the worship of Rome's greatness and power. em-

bodied in the person of the Emperor. But Roman toleration of religion was merely "the toleration of indifference." With Rome trade followed the flag, although alleged ill-treatment of merchants was on occasion a pretext for campaign and annexation. With the British the flag had usually followed trade. Again, with Rome additions to the Empire were purely the work of the State. With the British the State at first played a small part. The Romans annexed spaces already populated thickly, and held them by military stations; the British, on the contrary, had in the sphere of settlement acquired countries not hitherto thickly populated, and had striven to occupy them as a whole, using military force as little as possible. (Applause.) The British colonists had been peaceful civilians; Roman colonists were for the most part soldiers. But the Roman legionaries were both soldiers of the line and Royal Engineers combined, and were often kept in condition by employment on public works.

—Long Life of the Roman Empire.—

Professor Naylor made reference to the use of irrigation by the Romans, and said the British, too, in India, might proudly point to what had been done by the same process. An area half the size of England had been irrigated, and two of the Punjab canals had literally converted desolate, uninhabited plains into thriving countries. Along the Chenab Canal there were fields and villages now inhabited by 1,000,000 people, where 15 years ago a few nomads wandered over a desert of parched earth and camel thorn. From Gibbon onwards it had been the fashion to ask why the Roman Empire declined and fell. It was perhaps more profitable to ask why it lasted so long. Part of the answer was that the Roman Empire for the greater portion of its existence had no competition and was "in the position of a successful monopolist." Secondly, the administrators of the Empire were on the whole honest and upright men, with a high sense of public duty, and with a deep respect for justice and the code of Roman law.

—"Horace Risen from the Dead."—

To-day the Romans were coming to their own again. They interested the British, who were back to the habits and methods of ancient "kultur." Horace had risen from the dead. Who could not now quote "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori." Apropos, Horace ran away from the only battle of which he had experience. (Laughter.) He and his coevals knew the value of Imperial poetry. It was Horace who had given them "Dis te minorem quod geris imperia" ("Thou walkest humbly with thy God, therefore thou holdest empire"), a sentiment which Rudyard Kipling had uttered so well in his "Recessional"—

Beneath whose awful hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine.

—"An Empire's Epitaph."—

But Vergil had expressed the spirit of Roman Imperialism with greater truth than all. He knew that the Romans were nothing as artists or as men of science. He knew that conquered Greece was their conqueror there, and he summed up thus—

Roman, be thine

To sway the world with Empire! These shall be

Thine arts, to govern with the rule of peace,

To spare the weak and subjugate the proud.

The Roman Empire was gone, but those lines were an epitaph of which no Empire, past, present, or future, need be ashamed.

To-day the British reversed the order of Vergil. They too, were subjugating the proud tyrant. The hour might soon come when they would spare the vanquished. Might it be their's then to help in governing the world, not with the mailed fist, but with the rule of peace and goodwill. (Applause.)

The gathering was concluded by the singing of the National Anthem.

*Register June 17/15.*

PROFESSOR HENDERSON'S LECTURES.

The Hon. Treasurer of the Belgian Relief Fund has received from Mr. C. R. Hodge, the Registrar of the Adelaide University, the sum of £123 7/3, being proceeds of the first series of lectures delivered by Professor Henderson at country centres in aid of the fund.

6/6; University of Adelaide, proceeds of lectures on the War, by Professor Henderson (first series) — Hamley Bridge £7, Blumberg £10, Narracoorte £10 1, Penola £7 1, Mount Gambier £10 7/6, Millicent £20, Murray Bridge £14 3, Gawler £11 2, Balaklava £12 11/6, Port Wakefield £9 1/3, Strathalbyn £9 16/6—£123 7/3. Total, £48,972 0/7.