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THE FUTURE OF THE EMPIRE.

LESSONS FROM ROME'S DOWNFALL.

There was a distinguished gathering at the Elder Hall, University, on Tuesday evening to hear a lecture by Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, F.R.S., on "The Fall of the Roman Empire and its Lessons for us." Among those present were his Excellency the Governor and Lady Bosanquet, the Chancellor of the University (Sir S. J. Way), and the Attorney-General (Hon. S. J. Mitchell).

Dr. Hodgkin said among the chief causes of the ruin of Rome were the facts that the Imperial diadem was in the gift of the soldiery, and that the Empire was founded on slavery; the distribution of cheap corn to the citizens of Rome; the financial oppression of the middle classes; and the incursions of the barbarians. All those causes lessened Rome's resisting power, and, moreover, the "human harvest" was bad. Unlike Rome, the British Empire had not a dwindling population, but in some parts of it the population was not increasing as it should do. It was too large in the British Isles, and too small in the colonies. The surplus population of the mother country—men and women who would go on the land and develop it—should be encouraged to go to the magnificent countries of Canada and Australia, whose untouched resources would furnish sustenance and support to increasing numbers for centuries to come. They were not as yet suffering from that pauperising legislation which provided outdoor relief for the whole population of Rome and Constantinople, but he would not say that in the very kindness of their hearts some of their social reformers were not in danger of following that dangerous example. Though no Parliament had granted free music-hall tickets for its constituents there was something in the intense devotion of their people to games, and in the abnormal share of attention given to horse-racing, cricket, and football, which did not altogether conduce to the building up of a strong and noble nation. The factory system, that great source of the national wealth of England, needed to be carefully watched to prevent its degenerating into something very like practical slavery. In their beautiful Australian cities they had not the slum which was the tubercle of the body politic, easy to engender and almost impossible to eradicate. Another mighty difference was that they had the spirit of Christianity, which was undeniably the greatest altruistic force the world had yet seen. After all the most precious asset in the national balance-sheet was character. These were symptoms on which their critics both at home and abroad loved to dwell, which seemed to point to national decadence, but might they not venture to say that no nation need lose its fibre; that the will to live, if it were accompanied by the necessary self-denial and reliance on the Unseen Ruler of the world, meant the power to live. It depended on every one of them individually, on Australians as much as, perhaps, more than, on Englishmen, whether Britain kept in the forefront of the nations, Courage, purity, faith, and all-mastering love of country; if they could but keep hold of those qualities inherited from their forefathers, he was persuaded that the world would never witness the downfall of the British Empire. (Applause.)

Professor Henderson, in proposing a vote of thanks to the Governor and to the lecturer, said Dr. Hodgkin had won an enviable position in the front rank of modern historians, and the students, teachers, and professors connected with the University of Adelaide deeply appreciated the privilege of hearing his lecture.

In responding Dr. Hodgkin said he was convinced, as a result of his enquiries that the Universities of Australasia would exercise an extremely important influence on the literary, social, and political future of this great country.

DR. THOMAS HODGKIN.

HISTORIAN AND LECTURER.

AN INTERESTING INTERVIEW.

[By our Special Reporter.]

To hear Dr. Thomas Hodgkin lecture is to admire his intellectuality and broadmindedness. To converse with him is to cordially esteem him, for he has a delightful personality which appeals with increasing power the longer one is in his cheering presence. A splendid type of the cultured English gentleman, he is just what he appears to be—a literary banker. Of medium height, he possesses a noble head, set on fine square shoulders. His face is charming and full of expression, and his manner courteous and winning. There is no such thing as feeling ill at ease in his company. With quite grace he invites one to be seated, and, smiling kindly and encouragingly, asks what he may do. If all subjects were as genial and thoughtful, the task of the interviewer would indeed be pleasant. Dr. Hodgkin was born at Tottenham, London, on July 29, 1831, and is therefore in his seventy-ninth year. He does not look nearly that age, however, and if such a course were necessary would have no difficulty in passing as a man 20 years younger. In his humorous eyes, which twinkle merrily, there is the strong fire of comparative youth, and the whole make-up of the figure suggests a vast store of latent energy and vigour. For a long period Dr. Hodgkin was a partner in the banking firm of Hodgkin, Barnett, & Co., Newcastle-on-Tyne (now amalgamated with Lloyd's Bank), from which he retired about 15 years ago.

His Hobby.

In pursuance of his belief that every man should have a hobby apart from his profession or business, he devoted himself to the study of history, which had deeply interested him as a child. With the passage of the years its fascination for him developed, and on Wednesday morning he assured a reporter that "as a hobby" he had found it most satisfactory. Since Dr. Hodgkin began to write history nearly 40 years ago, he has produced several extremely valuable works, the most important of which is "Italy and her Invaders," in eight volumes. This is regarded as a monumental addition to the historical records of the world, although the author does not say so. He is far too modest for that. Italy has always attracted Dr. Hodgkin, consequently he found the task of collecting and preparing the necessary data for his work perfectly congenial. When he started he thought of writing a history of Italy from the Fall of the Roman Empire, but he discovered that he could not do more than cover five centuries—from the fourth to the ninth—in less than the eight volumes. Determined that the "history" should be as accurate and true as was humanly possible, Dr. Hodgkin went to the original sources for his information, and travelled extensively throughout the country. To enable him to carry out his undertaking successfully he had to form a library dealing with the history of Italy, and that which he now possesses is about as complete as a private individual could wish. Naturally, in view of the immense amount of labour which he put into the work, the author regards "Italy and her Invaders" as his best production—his "great life work," and he has reason to be proud of it.

Other Works.

Subsequently Dr. Hodgkin was requested to write the first volume of the "New History of England," which Longmans are bringing out, and he has contributed "The Political History of England"—a comprehensive review, admirably prepared, and remarkably complete. In addition Dr. Hodgkin has written "The Letters of Cassiodorus," "The Dynasty of Theodosius," "Life of Theodoric," "Life of George Fox" (founder of the Society of Friends), and "Life of Charles the Great," besides numerous smaller works. "The Dynasty of Theodosius" is a popularization of the two first volumes of "Italy and Her Invaders." As might be expected, Dr. Hodgkin is an ardent lover of poetry, and the poets of the early part of the nineteenth century particularly have furnished him with much food for reflection. As a boy he learned the first two books of "Paradise Lost," and ever since has had a warm spot in his heart for Milton. Shelley's poetry he regards as exceedingly fine, and Tennyson and Browning have both been a source of inspiration. Concerning Tennyson he says "he showed a wonderful foresight and anticipation of what was coming." The interviewer reminded Dr. Hodgkin of those glorious lines in "In Memoriam"—

I hold it truth with him who sings
To one clear harp in diverse tones,
That men may rise on sleeping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

"Yes," commented Dr. Hodgkin, "In Memoriam" is indeed a beautiful work." Another favourite pursuit of Dr. Hodgkin is archaeology. He has closely followed the progress of the excavations on the remains of the Roman walls, especially in Northumberland; and himself has engaged in the work at different times. At present his son-in-law (Professor Bosanquet) is making excavations in Wales, and his discoveries will probably throw considerable light upon the history of the Romans in England.

The Friends.

Referring to the members of the Society of Friends, of which he is one, Dr. Hodgkin remarked:—"They are only a small body in Australia, probably not more than 600 altogether, composed chiefly of persons who have come out in the hope of finding a wider field here than at home, and in the main they have been successful. They are not a wealthy body; at the same time, neither they nor their children have reason to regret that they left England. In every way they are true Australian patriots. The government of the Society of Friends is democratic, and the supreme power rests in the General Assembly of all the members. We have no distinction between laity and clergy. Although total abstinence is a condition of membership, nine-tenths of the members are abstainers, both in England and in the colonies. You will often find that Quakers are the backbone of temperance parties. War, of course, we are absolutely and uncompromisingly opposed to, and nobody can be a soldier and a member of the Society of Friends."

Study History.

Dr. Hodgkin arrived in Melbourne in March last, and he has visited New Zealand, Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. After he has spent some time in South Australia he will proceed to Western Australia, and thence return to England. On the whole, he has found the climate delightful, and the Queensland winter he considers is simply lovely. Two things which have struck him during his peregrinations through Australia are the absence of the squalid poverty which exists in England, and the general feeling of comfort, well-doing, and wellbeing which prevails. "From what I have seen," he said, "I think the people devote rather too much time to the amusements of life, such as horseracing, football, and other pastimes. I should like to see a little more earnest attention given to literature. The English literature is a glorious one. I am afraid, however, that it is not being studied so much as it should be, and that it does not occupy such an important place in the thoughts of the people as it is to be desired. I want to see history well studied, and I hope that the universities will take this subject up. If they do not they should be encouraged to do so, because Australians ought to feel that our historical past is as much theirs as it is ours. A nation which does not study history is like those unfortunate men sometimes found in the street who, having lost their memories, are unable to say who they are or whence they came. I am glad that Australian history is receiving consideration in this sunny land of yours. Some capital collections are being made, and there are men at work securing materials for a full history of the country. It is so important to begin such collections early."

It is Grand.

Asked what he thought of the proposal to erect statues of Capt. Sturt, the late George Fife Angas, and others who took an active part in the founding of South Australia, Dr. Hodgkin said he heartily agreed with it. "I think it is grand to have lifelike memorials of such noble men, for they must serve as an inspiring object lesson to the generations to come. I was surprised when in Melbourne recently, however, to notice apparently on the monument erected to the memory of Burke and Wills that there is nothing to indicate who the men were."