

LORD BALDWIN

Thirteen years or more ago Lord Baldwin, who had been Prime Minister and was at the moment, by right of his familiarity with the classics, the president of the Classical Association of England, made an address under the title "Ultimi Britanni." Those who heard him or read his address on Wednesday night will know with what strength and guidance he has in his day carried the torch on high in that great "relay of heroes," fighting in preparation for the new age, "talking to the people about democracy" and exemplifying the democratic spirit, which refuses to underrate the ordinary man.

T. F. O'Connor, back in 1923, told of reading in Hansards the speeches made by Mr. Baldwin in his earliest Ministerial days, usually late at night and to a "thin audience," and of being struck by the neat "turn of the diction," its "points and lucidity," and, above all, by the frequent happy and good-humored phrases, comports with the best tradition of the House of Commons. When the day of his ordeal came, and he had to enter the "fiery furnace" by rising to answer questions as Leader of the House, he passed through in triumph and "smelt not of burning" on his garments. It was this same historical figure that Mr. Baldwin himself used in speaking to the friends of the classics of his passing through the ordeal of elections with the assistance of literature that prevented him from bowing to the idols of the market place. He was kept from sin of speech or oratorical idolatry by the wonderful clarity and conciseness of the ancient languages in which he had been disciplined in youth.

There had been fears at times since the World War when, as he said, "fears gripped us by the throat * * * taking grisly shapes in the twilight"—fears that there might not be enough left of the "best breed" to carry on. But, as he has since said, in these later years, no one doubts that though their task is hard enough it will be accomplished. Our common task is greater "because our [common] ideals are far higher." A phrase of Homer or the end of a chorus in Euripides does "pluck at our heart-strings," as the Premier has said, but they give a glory that is beyond all other guerdon to the human spirit. This great statesman, who spoke in his early Prime Ministry with a yearning sigh for his farms, who declines to take himself tragically, and who has at great inconvenience come to speak to and of democracy in the world, has won the enduring gratitude of a new generation as well as of his own.