As touched by some magician's wand,
Or drifting out of fairy-land,
Ships all of silver slowly stand
Across the line of sight.
Then while we bend on them our gaze,
And mark their course with rapt amaze,
They, melting in a glory-haze,
Bid us a long good-night.
Then softly, slowly dip the oar
To a tuneful melodie;
For awhile we quit the shore,
Wanderers o'er the moonlit sea.

Oh! may the Father of all good,
Who robes the land and rules the flood,
Loosing the winds of gentler mood,
Help ever on their way
Those stately ships that now go by,
Beneath this peaceful summer sky,
Till once again they draw anigh
To this our rock-bound bay.
Then softly, slowly dip the oar
To a tuneful melodie,
While we hover near the shore,
Gliding o'er a moonlit sea.

JOHN G. WATTS.

A PARLIAMENTARY PAPER.

BY ONE IN THE GALLERY.

"MIS—TER SPEAK—ER!"

This in a loud resonant voice, from the doorway leading into the Lobby; and honourable members who have been sitting, lolling, and kneeling on the seats, keeping up a buzz of conversation, all rise and stand waiting, as, in the patch of light seen through the doorway, a pleasant-looking, rather bald, and very grey man, in a Court suit of black, with breeches, black silk stockings, black silk tie attached to the collar of his coat, as he wears no queue, and thin rat-tailed Court sword, appears, bearing upon his shoulder the great crown-surmounted gilt mace, with which he marches up the floor of the House, closely followed by Mr. Speaker, but gradually giving way as that dignitary advances towards the Chair, bowing right and left, as if he had never seen the honourable members before, though it is only about ten minutes ago that he left the House in a similar way, preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms bearing the important insignia aforesaid—probably a successor of the one dubbed by a certain Oliver Cromwell, "that bauble!"

Mr. Speaker is a bland, rather slight, close-shaven man, of most gentlemanly deportment. He wears a pleasant smile upon his countenance, and as he comes up the floor of the House in his long silk gown, his calm dignity, and the respect in which he is held, make you forget the absurdity of the long flowing wig.

As Mr. Speaker ascends to the Chair, which stands upon a crimson daïs mounted by three or four steps, and seats himself beneath the carved oak canopy, resembling an old-fashioned bed-tester, the members, and the bewigged and gowned Clerk, with his two assistants, at the table in front of the Speaker's Chair, all take their seats, and business is resumed.

For there was an interruption.

At about a quarter to four the Speaker entered the House, and seated himself in a chair at the table. Members present were few in number—probably not fifty. Then the Chaplain entered, the doors were closed and locked, prayers were said, and afterwards, there being enough members present to "make a House" (that is to say, forty), Mr. Speaker took the Chair—his own, beneath the canopy.

Rising soon after, he is in the process of reading some business upon the official papers in his hands, probably relating to past matters in connection with new branch railways, to which nobody seems to pay any attention, when a loud voice at the Lobby-end of the House—that opposite to the Chair—suddenly shouts:

"Black Rod!"

Doors are flung wide, and directly after, an official—the Yeoman Usher of the Black Rod—comes into sight, in his black Court dress and sword, bearing carefully before him, as if he were rather afraid of it, the insignia of his office, which looks like a thin black sceptre. He advances a few steps up the centre of the floor, and bows low to the Speaker, takes a few more steps and bows again—a few more, another bow—a few more, another bow—and so on, till he reaches the foot of the table, which, with the mace lying across it in a couple of brackets, and a breastwork of Parlia-

mentary tomes, despatch-boxes, and papers, stops his further progress.

Now, amidst profound silence, he delivers the message of which he is the bearer—namely, to command the presence of the Speaker in the Upper House to hear the Royal assent given by commission to certain Bills which now become Acts of Parliament, and law.

The Yeoman Usher is an adept at navigation, for having delivered his message, he, without altering his position, begins to retire, having, in nautical language, well taken his bearings, so that, though he came in stem-forward, he backs out "a-starn."

Not for an inch does he deviate from the straight line, and not once does he glance round to see if he is going right; but backing a few steps, he bows—backs a few more steps, and bows—and so on and on till he backs and bows himself along the floor and through the doorway: so great is the respect paid to the Speaker, to whom and to whose dictum every man in that House morally and physically bows.

As the Yeoman Usher of the Black Rod disappears, the Sergeant-at-Arms comes up to the table, shoulders the mace—a huge sceptre about five feet long—the Speaker and the members rise, and, preceded by the mace-bearer, the right honourable gentleman departs, bowing, to return as has been described, and then announce in a loud voice the Bills to which the Royal assent has been given.

As there are millions of Her Majesty's subjects who have never entered the House of Commons, a short sketch of the interior may not be out of place, so as to give an idea of the building in which these formal proceedings, and such others as are described, take place.

Picture to yourselves, then, an oblong-square hall, or room, of no very great size, whose architect had boiled down in his brain a Gothic cathedral, a Queen Anne church, and a handsome oak-panelled dining-room, giving the result to the nation as the House of Commons. For, to a certain height, it is lined with very handsome carved oak panelling; the windows are Gothic, with stained glass representing the floral heraldic insignia of Great Britain; the ceiling is flat, and divided into panels, each of which in the centre is of ground glass, with the conventional English rose for ornament. There are wide galleries on all sides; and right and left of the Speaker, extending from end to end of the building, are parallel rows of well-stuffed, well-backed benches, descending from the wall under the gallery in a slope to the floor of the House—an open space several yards wide reaching from the Speaker's Chair to the Lobby door. At that end there are also a few transverse seats, which are appropriated to visitors of distinction; but, except on particular nights, they are not very much occupied.

The seats right and left of the Speaker are separated in the centre of the House by a gangway; so that, literally, the members' part may be said to be divided into four: the seats on his right are appropriated by the party in power; those on the left by the Opposition, each party being divided again by the gangway—those who favour and support Ministerial or ex-Cabinet action sitting at the end of the House nearest the Speaker; while those members, Conservative or Liberal, who prefer freedom of speech and action, take their places right and left below the gangway.

It is worthy of note that each member appropriates a seat to himself, and by courtesy keeps to it during the time he is in Parliament; though this is not a hard-and-fast rule, and on the nights of great debates the House is crowded so that members often sit on the steps of the gangways, and even stand in a crowd below the bar.

This bar is a line drawn from the end of the seats across the House, and, technically, when a member is below this line he is not in the House, and cannot address the Speaker. It is below this line that members stand about: within it they must at once bow to the Speaker, walk up the floor, take their seats, which they mostly supplement by putting on their hats; and no man is allowed to stand save when he uncovers and rises to address the Speaker. It is also below this bar that the Sergeant-at-Arms and his deputy sit, and beyond it no messenger may pass. When one brings in a letter or card for an honourable member, he can come within the doors of the House, after which he has to wait for the good offices of some member who will carry it within the sacred precincts to its destination.

On the night when we are present, a pretty good debate is expected, and the seats fill up rather quickly. It is interesting to notice where the various members sit.

Beginning on the right, the first bench is appropriated to the Ministers, and behind them sit their immediate supporters. On the front bench will be seen Sir Stafford Northcote, a quiet, fair-bearded, greyish man; Mr. Secretary Cross, who wears light clothes and a broadish-brimmed hat; the towering, stalwart form of Mr. Ward Hunt; pleasant-faced Mr. Hardy; youthful-looking Lord George Hamilton; and, at the extreme end, Lord Barrington, in light grey morning coat and beflowered button-hole. Behind will probably be seated Mr. Henley, the father of the House—a venerable member, listened to with the greatest respect; Mr. Spencer Walpole, now growing old and feeble of speech, but a tower still on University matters; Lord John Hay, Mr. Chaplin, Mr. Wheelhouse, and others.

On the left, the front bench will show Mr. Gladstone, sitting close to the great petition-bag; the handsome grey head of Mr. Bright; Lord Hartington's tall angular figure; and, beyond him, Mr. Forster, looking as unkempt as Mr. Stansfeld looks smooth and brushed, with a careful parting from the centre of his forehead to the nape of his neck, as rigid in its accurate division of his head into two parts as the floor of the House from the Speaker's Chair to the Lobby door. In the second and third rows will be sitting Dr. Kenealy, Mr. Muntz, and a good-looking gentlemanly little man, with his dark grey head low down on his rather high shoulders—a gentleman whose rising is often the signal for derisive cheers and interruptions, especially when the word "Jesuit" escapes his lips—in short, it is Mr. Whalley.

A few words respecting the seats below the gangway. On the Conservative front seat, Mr. Beresford Hope; Lord Eslington, who is always going to put on his spectacles, but rarely does; and behind, dotted here and there, are Mr. Newdegate, Mr. MacIver, and sometimes Sir Robert Peel. On the Liberal side, the front bench will show Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. Goldsmid, Captain Nolan, and behind him, at the extreme end, a little phalanx of notable Home Rulers, including Messrs. Biggar, Parnell, and Meldon; while towering above them sits, huge and massive, Major O'Gorman, the biggest man in the House.

But we must mount to the galleries—those right and left of the Speaker being reserved for members who prefer to listen to the debates without taking part in them. These are seated like the bottom of the House, and are respectively supposed to appertain to each party, but on busy nights are occupied indifferently by political opponents. These galleries are shallow, and, like that over the Speaker's head, only two seats deep.

The end gallery, facing the Chair, is the most extensive; for here, in the front row, right and left of the clock, are the seats apportioned to the Peers from the Upper House, and distinguished visitors — the special seat over the clock being occupied by the Prince of Wales, probably, if he visited the House. Behind these two rows of front seats, and right across, is the Speaker's Gallery, for visitors; and behind that again, the ordinary gallery, for seats in which the public ballot; while still behind this, and higher up, are several lattice-covered Gothic windows, through which indistinctly can be seen female figures. These are ladies admitted by order of the Speaker; the regular Ladies' Gallery is behind a corresponding row of lattice windows at the opposite end, above the Speaker and the gallery appropriated to the Press. Here there are two rows of seats: the front row is divided into tiny pews with doors, each pew barely holding one man, and each of those men is one of the earnest-eyed, careful, methodical reporters, whose pencils are rapidly making dots, spiders' legs, half-circles, and hooks, as they take down the speeches in short-hand writing, for only a few minutes in a great debate, before they are relieved by fresh members of the Parliamentary staff of the newspaper they represent. The back row, in front of which is a kind of desk about six inches wide, is occupied by the leader-writers, who sit writing as a debate goes on, previous to writing those essays which appear the next morning at nearly every breakfast-table in the kingdom, and have so much to do with the political bias of our little world.

Descending to the floor of the House, business is going on. It is only a few minutes past four; and all over the benches the members keep popping up, taking off their hats, saying a few words, and popping down again, as if playing a child's game of Jack-in-the-box. On the contrary, this sometimes proves very serious work, for these gentlemen are giving Notices of Motion; that is to say, they announce that on certain days they will bring in a Bill for some especial purpose. It may be Mr. Plimsoll—to amend the laws relating to our merchant seamen; or, again, as took place last session, Mr. Forster may rise to give notice that on some Government night he will ask the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs a question as to the truth of certain reports of sundry massacres said to have been perpetrated in Bulgaria. For everything is done methodically here; every speech is addressed to "Mr. Speaker, sir," and not to opposite members, nor is any member addressed by name. For instance, in a debate on the Merchant Shipping Bill, were some member to inadvertently say, "Mr. Plimsoll stated," he would be reminded of his mistake by cries of "Order! order!" and amend his words by saying, "The honourable member for Derby;" for by the name of the borough or county he represents is a member known.

These Notices of Motion are to give ample warning, and so enable the Ministry to prepare their answers to the often very intricate questions they are asked.

The Notices ended, the questions of which notice has been given are asked, generally of the various Ministers; and they vary from one to the Prime Minister from Mr. Gladstone, as to the war-policy of the Government, down to one from Mr. Peter Taylor, asked of Mr. Secretary Cross, as to whether he read the report in a local paper of an old woman being sent by the country magistrates to gaol for six weeks for stealing firewood; or, again, from Mr. Whalley, of the same gentleman, as to the treatment of the Claimant in Dartmoor Prison.

These questions are, perhaps, disposed of in half an hour, but a conversation may ensue which brings up the great gladiators of the political arena, and it may last for a long time. No member, however, must ask questions of which he has not given notice, as he is out of order; but sometimes, so as to give an opportunity for discussing some point, a member will rise and move the adjournment of the House, withdrawing his motion afterwards when the point has been gained.

The questions being ended, there arises, perhaps, a burst of cheering from one or the other side of the House. A new member has been elected somewhere, and he is ushered up the House by a couple of members of his party, advancing bowing to the table, where the newly-fledged Parliamentary bird takes his oaths and his seat—the cheering being because one has been added to the voting-strength of the party's number.

And now the debate of the evening begins. It is growing dusk, and suddenly the sharp "ting" of a bell is heard, followed by a soft mellow glow of light, which is shed through the ground-glass panels of the ceiling. It is a calm, pensive kind of light, like creamy dawn, and just illumines the House sufficiently, without being glaring to the eyes or giving heat, that being regulated by draughts of properly modified air, that steal unfelt into the House, which is generally, unless crowded, of such a temperature that it is unnoticed by its occupiers.

The debate may finish early, and another and another follow; though, as in the case of Mr. Gladstone's Resolutions, the same debate may be adjourned from day to day, lasting over several. But woe betide if towards midnight any Irish subject is taken; then the obstructive policy of the Home Rulers comes into force; and, to conclude this paper, let me try to describe a division.

A division may be on a great question, like Mr. Gladstone's Resolutions, or simply on a question of putting off a debate. Government, say, wishes to carry a Bill through its second reading, but the Irish members wish to discuss it further, or object to it, or think the hour of the night late; so Mr. Parnell rises, catches the Speaker's eye, though several other members have failed, and he moves the adjournment of the debate.

"Division" is called loudly by the officials, bells are heard ringing all over the building, and members are brought in from library, tea, or smoking-room to vote. The Speaker announces that the motion has been made, and asks those opposed to the motion to say "No."

There is a thunder of "Noes;" and then he asks those members who are in favour of the motion to say "Aye."

One or two voices say "Aye," and the Speaker says—"The Noes have it."

This is challenged by the opposing member, who cries, "The Ayes have it!" and if he repeats this, a division takes place; that is to say, every member is obliged to leave the House—certain doors of which are locked during the division—and vote in one or the other Lobby, where the members are counted by four "tellers," chosen from each party, and then slowly filter back.

This takes from ten minutes to a quarter of an hour, and then the tellers advance, four abreast, bowing, to the table; and the principal teller on the successful side—generally one of the Government whips, as he is called from his whipping-in the members, and getting them together to vote—announces the numbers.

Generally the obstructive party is out-numbered; sometimes, even, the numbers are twenty to one; but nevertheless they are not beaten. One member has moved the adjournment of the *debate*, and failed; another now rises, and moves the adjournment of the *House*.

They then divide on that, and fail; when the adjournment of the debate can be again moved and divided upon, and then, once more, the adjournment of the House; and so on, see-saw, till in sheer disgust the Government consent to the adjournment; a few more matters are touched upon, and the weary House does adjourn. But I have known this system of dividing kept up hour after hour, till past three o'clock on a summer's morning, when the soft pearly dawn has been sending arrows of light between the crimson velvet curtains, so carefully drawn over the windows at eight o'clock the previous night, and the light has found this scribe utterly worn out, and—regardless of division-bells, banging and rattling doors, and the sudden silence of the House—fast asleep. For this latter business is such that no paper cares to give more than the very skeleton of a report.

BY THE SEA-COAST.

COME, wander with me down this lane to the sea,
Where the calm and the bright,
At sunset in summer, in beauty unite;
Over coppice and field, through upland and weald,
There's a hush and a thrill,
And sunshine lies down in repose on the hill.

The trees are at rest, a mild breeze from the west
Hardly stirs the green leaves
Where the elm with the beech overhead interweaves;
The rooks slowly come to their freehold at home,
And their boist'rous applause
Re-echoes in welcome confusion of caws.

See the cliff which enshrouds its crest in the clouds,
And the sea-fowl afloat,
Poised high in the air, and motionless, note;
While the mountainous crown slopes to marshland, and down,
Till you suddenly reach
The broad open sea, and beautiful beach.

O wonderful sea! calm, silent, and free,
As still as a lake,
And slumbering as though it never would wake,
So placidly bright in a dream of delight,
Unruffled for miles,
Or rippled with soft ineffable smiles.

Can it be—can it be, O wonderful sea!
Quiescent and smooth,
With a whisper of love to charm and to soothe—
Can it be that the storm in terrible form
Is asleep on thy breast?
Can hurricanes follow such slumber and rest?

To sunshine outspread o'er the sea, follows shade,
And the plover's shrill cry
Joins the scream of the oxbirds, as they rapidly fly;
But the sweet evening star is twinkling afar,
And a waft of perfume,
With the song of a thrush, comes from hawthorns in bloom.

BENJAMIN GOUGH.