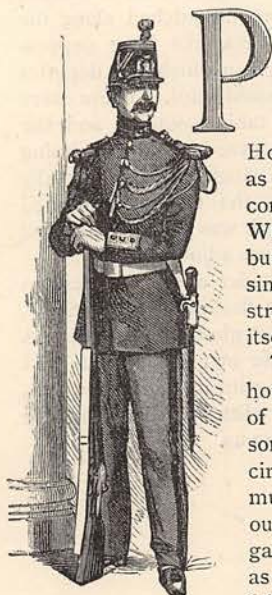


GAMBETTA IN THE TRIBUNE.

See "THE FRENCH HOUSE OF COMMONS" (p. 269).

## THE FRENCH HOUSE OF COMMONS.



PERHAPS no two places designed for the same purpose could be more unlike than the French Chamber of Deputies and our own House of Commons; differing as much in their external decoration as in their interior. Whilst our magnificent pile of buildings dwarfs by contrast the simple yet handsome French structure, the English House itself is disappointingly plain.

The French Chamber is of horse-shoe form, with two rows of galleries, supported by handsome pillars, running round the circular part, thus affording much more accommodation than our "strangers" and "ladies" galleries. There is no cage here as in our own House, where the fairer portion of humanity is

penned off, lest their unscreened charms should prove fatal to the eloquence of the law-givers on the green benches below. The galleries are draped with crimson and decorated with white and gold; and looking upon a full House, when what we may call the boxes are well filled, and relieved by gay toilettes, the scene is very bright and animated. The Tribune, which is placed in the centre of the straight portion of the chamber, resembles somewhat the pulpits of certain chapels. On the highest part sits the President of the Chamber, who corresponds to our Speaker. A little below—reached on either hand by about fifteen steps—is the place from which deputies must address the House, and below sit the clerks. There is no question of catching the Speaker's eye, and the familiar Parliamentary expression of "rising in his place in that House" would be without meaning here. Deputies are generally waiting at the foot of the steps to ascend on the one hand as the late orator descends on the other. We cannot help thinking that this system has advantages over our own, seeing that the President and the occupants of the Ministerial bench, which fronts the Tribune, cannot fail to hear every word, whilst the speaker certainly gains in being able to face his audience. The benches, intersected by many gangways, are upholstered in crimson velvet; before each is a small desk for the convenience of writing and for the holding of ballot cards.

Members began to file into their places as it was close upon two o'clock; two or three clear notes of a bugle were heard, a curtain was swept aside, and the President advanced to his seat on the Tribune, and without any religious service the business of the sitting commenced. The President opened the day's proceedings by a few brief sentences in admirable

taste, touching the death of an able and popular member whose death had been announced in that morning's papers. The first half-hour was occupied in much the same manner as in our own House: by the asking of questions, giving notices of motions, and with final readings of certain bills. The Chamber had by this time filled, and the galleries were crowded. This day had been selected for us (by the Viscount de Calon, by whose favour we were present) as being certain to furnish a full House and a spirited debate; the subject to be brought under discussion being an important one, touching which the minds of men and parties were much exercised. The time of which we speak was in November, 1881, soon after the election of the Gambetta Ministry to their brief tenure of office: and we looked down with great interest on the man who had played such an important part in the service of his country after the fall of the Napoleonic dynasty, and who now, after so many years of comparative quiet, was floated by the tide of events to the head of affairs: a man of decidedly Jewish type, not handsome, but without that exaggerated coarseness with which it pleased certain journals of the day to delineate him—a grave face with resolution and power stamped on its every feature, yet lit up by a genial smile as he greeted some passing friend or detained him by his side.

At that time the Church of Rome in France was more than ever a Church militant; and the newly-formed Government was particularly obnoxious to it, for did it not hold amongst its members a certain M. Paul Bert, whose views were opposed to those of the Church? In an election that had just taken place, the priests of the district had openly preached from the pulpit against the supporter of the Government, whom they had not hesitated to describe as the candidate of the devil, and had even threatened their flock with spiritual pains and penalties in the event of his election. The candidate supported by the clerical party was returned, and the Government now sought to invalidate the election on the ground of the illegal intervention of the clergy.

The case was briefly stated by a supporter of the Government, and responded to, but the interest culminated when the Bishop of Angers, a famous prelate, rose to defend the action of his clergy. With a curious mixture of passion and dignity the tall figure clad in flowing purple robes mounted the Tribune, and with much skill and oratorical power defended the election. The interruptions during his speech were loud and frequent, the applause from the Right, where the bishop sat, being drowned by the tumult from the Left, from which quarter, later in the debate, came some passionate denunciations of the Church, and extravagant laudations of the sentiments which are believed to be popular with M. Paul Bert. The President beat on his desk with his paper-knife in vain, and frequently had recourse to his bell to bring the excited deputies to a sense of order. There

are occasions when our own House, owing to the action of one or two members, resembles a bear-garden rather than a deliberative assembly, but for genuine tumult it pales its ineffectual fires before the French Chamber. To the bishop succeeded M. Lockroy, under whose biting sarcasm and fine irony the unfortunate prelate fairly writhed. M. Lockroy's trump card was the Concordat—an arrangement made between the first Napoleon and the Pope, and subscribed to by all the subsequent Popes and rulers of France, whereby the Government agreed to support the priesthood on the express condition of their abstaining from politics in the Church.

With this Concordat M. Lockroy fairly belaboured the bishop, who sought in vain by a second speech to modify the intemperate warmth of the first, which had been distinguished by zeal rather than discretion. After the debate had been carried on under great excitement on all sides, with frequent and continuous ringing of the President's bell, scarcely heard amid the tumult, there were loud calls for the "clôture," and

the majority of the House being satisfied with the length of the debate, it was closed without a division, and the question of the illegality of the election was then put to the vote. The messengers of the Chamber, in most gorgeous livery, were despatched along the gangways with the ballot boxes, like huge pepper-casters with a slit in the top, into which the deputies dropped their white or coloured card. These were emptied on the President's table, counted, and the numbers called out, which gave an overwhelming majority against the election, which was then formally declared invalid. After this the Chamber emptied rapidly, the remaining business was quickly disposed of, and at five o'clock the House adjourned.

The trees were shivering under a sharp breeze as we went out, the lamps were flashing on the Seine, though the sun's last beams yet glowed in the west. A busy roar of the gay city's life met us as we turned into the Place de la Concorde, with its dancing waters, and saw the long lines of glittering lights in the Champs Elysées shining before us.

## HOW TO FORM A CRICKET OR TENNIS CLUB.

BY A CLUB SECRETARY.



WHEN the short days of winter are over, and signs and sounds of spring greet us everywhere, out-door amusements and out-door exercises become once more a general topic of conversation. For the general mass of young people, winter offers but one out-door game—football—and from its very nature this can only be indulged in by the male sex, and indeed by

only a small section of *them*, namely, those who are sufficiently youthful, active, and strong to bear with its falls and knocks and bruises, and to undergo its severe strain upon the system. But summer brings with it cricket and lawn-tennis, rowing and swimming, archery and croquet, golf and bowls, bicycling and tricycling, and a dozen other sports and games; and many of these are open not only to young people of both sexes, but to men and women of mature age. It is probable, therefore, that at this time of the year a few suggestions for the formation of a cricket or lawn-tennis club, and a few hints for its after-management will be of general interest; more especially when it is borne in mind that most of the suggestions and directions here given apply equally well in the case of any other club—archery, bicycle, or what not.

First, then, let us consider the case of a cricket club as typical of those clubs in which men and boys only

take part, although ladies may be, and often are, most interested onlookers.

Should there be an evident need of a cricket club in any village or district, the initiative must be taken by one or two energetic residents, who will not hesitate to devote considerable time and trouble to the preliminary ventilation of the subject. These promoters should collect the names of all those who are likely to be active playing members; they should endeavour to enlist the sympathies of older and more influential residents, with a view to enrolling them as patrons and honorary members, and obtaining their pecuniary support; they should make all inquiries as to available playing-grounds; and they should be prepared with all necessary information as to probable income and expenditure.

Thus fortified, a preliminary meeting of those who are likely to be strong supporters of the club should be called; and at this meeting a draft code of rules should be drawn up, two or three alternative names for the club should be selected, the question of ground should be fully considered, and the amount of entrance-fee and annual subscription determined upon.

Then all is ready for the first general meeting, to which all who are likely to take an interest in the club should be invited. The notice sent out for this general meeting should state clearly the object of the promoters and it should furthermore mention that the proposed code of rules will be discussed, and that the officers and committee will be elected.

At the general meeting the first business, after the election of a chairman for the evening, should be to