

Now my turn of bewilderment came. "Was this man mad?" I asked myself, at the same moment that he probably was putting a like question to himself. He was the first to speak.

"We always believed—and for the life of me I can't see how we could have been mistaken—that you were in love with Ruth—my wife's cousin."

"Ruth—Miss Westlake—your wife's cousin!" I exclaimed.

"Certainly."

I fell to trembling: I had much ado to keep upon my legs.

"This is not a jest?" I said, catching hold of his shoulders: "you are not deceiving me?"

"Why should I? I have no wish to reverse the facts—I couldn't if I would. You have known nothing of my intimate life—nothing of my friends, acquaintances, habits, pursuits, affections. Your habits of seclusion have prevented you even from learning facts that were known to ordinary outside observers. You saw only my father, me, Ruth: these three characters constituted the whole family circle at Armstrong House to your eyes. You must have drawn your conclusions from the thinnest appearance. Possibly the name of Miss Westlake, common to my wife and her cousin, was sufficient to convince you that it was Ruth, and not her cousin, that I had married."

His suggestion was correct.

"Tell me in a word," said he, "that I am right, and the whole riddle is solved."

"It is true," I said.

A man with less feeling than he had would have laughed heartily. He saw only the pathetic side of the mistake.

"I sympathise with you, John," he said, taking my hand; "you must have suffered deeply."

"I am punished for wronging you and her."

"Well," he said, smiling, "you must have given us credit for very little generosity and a good deal of duplicity, to think Ruth and I could marry after what had passed between us and you, without a word to let you know. Come, I exact reparation: you shall come and atone for everything next week."

"She—Ruth—Miss Westlake!" I murmured.

"That is the visitor I spoke of just now, only you didn't seem to take much notice of what I said—the friend who will be not less pleased to see you than I shall be. She is coming to spend Christmas with us."

"Is she—is she married?" I faltered.

"No. Oh, John Ford, you don't know yet how great the prize is for which you have struggled. Ruth married! Why, don't you know—haven't you found out in all these years—that she has loved you as long as you have loved her?"

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I spent Christmas at Armstrong House. Ruth had learnt all before I arrived, and when we met there was no need for words. She was too generous to exact my supplience: she gave herself into my arms with a sigh which seemed to carry away from her heart all the sorrows I had planted there.

THE END.

"MR. CHAIRMAN."



ORD BACON tells us that Queen Elizabeth, happening one day to meet Mr. Speaker Popham, asked him "what had passed in the Lower House." He replied, "If it please your Majesty, seven weeks"—the House having sat

for that time, and done practically nothing.

We are reminded of this anecdote by a meeting that was held not long ago within a hundred miles of the City of London, for the purpose of discussing an important social project. There was a good attendance; but when the hour arrived at which the proceedings had been announced to commence, no chairman was forthcoming. Several minutes having elapsed, one gentleman after another was nominated for the post, but all, for various reasons, declined to officiate. As the event proved, he was, unfortunately, quite unequal to his self-imposed task. He perpetrated numerous blunders, accepted dictation (not guidance) from different quarters, and plunged the audience into such disorder, that it was only with great difficulty the business was transacted. This incident shows, on the one hand, the folly of the promoters of a meeting not

taking the obvious precaution of being provided with an efficient chairman; and, on the other, the necessity of men and women interested in the public life of the period, possessing at least a general acquaintance with the *routine* of conducting a meeting in an intelligent, business-like, and orderly way.

For in these days of committees and societies and meetings of every description, it need not surprise us that men and women are continually being requested to take a prominent part in connection with such organisations. The call of duty, however, while it finds most persons willing enough to honour it, also discloses—as we have seen—a want of knowledge respecting the functions which acceptance of this or that office would involve. Now, we hold that a lively sense of public spirit is not only commendable in itself—provided, of course, it is not allowed to become all-engrossing—but ought to be encouraged and developed in our midst much more generally than is at present the case. When, therefore, paterfamilias is respectfully urged by letter or by deputation to place himself at the head of any meeting, committee, or society of the *raison d'être* of which he personally approves, we think that he ought, if he can possibly see his way to do so, to comply with the wishes of his

petitioners. Accordingly, we propose to explain briefly some of the chief duties which a chairman has to fulfil, and to supply a few practical hints or suggestions that may be serviceable to many who have the will and the time to make themselves useful to their neighbours, or to the community at large, but who are "backward in coming forward" (as the phrase is), because they are not familiar with the technical requirements of the post.

Some people have the notion that the duties of chairman of a committee are more or less—and rather more than less—of a purely ornamental sort. They look upon him as a kind of figure-head. Sir Arthur Otway will not, we may be sure, endorse that opinion; and it is notorious that Sir Lyon Playfair found his tenure of office anything but a bed of roses. However, it is not with the very onerous and responsible duties of Chairman of Committees of the House of Commons that we are concerned here. Few of our readers, we imagine, will be invited to occupy that distinguished position, and probably still fewer will aspire to it. In any case, the functions of a chairman are fully as important as those of any other office-bearer of a committee; for though they may entail but little of the arduous detail that falls to a secretary, they demand considerable administrative capacity. It is, however, worth while noting that the Chairman of Committees of the House of Commons must attend to *all details*—none must escape him.

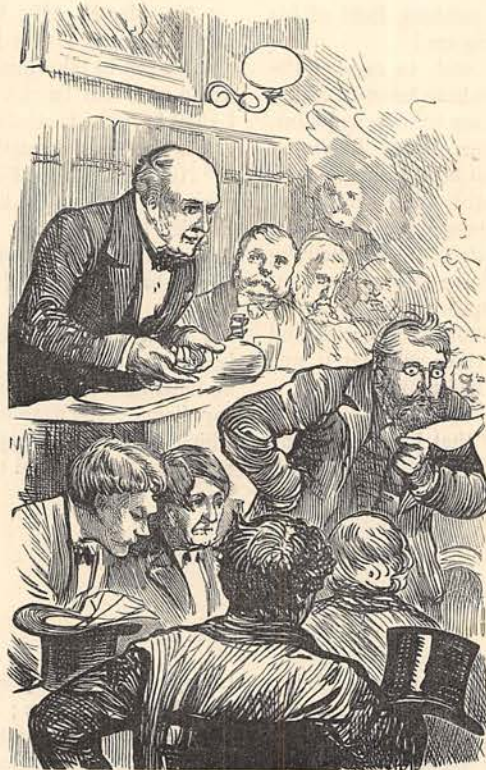
For the ordinary work of committees or societies, it is by no means necessary that the chairman should be a good speaker—perhaps the reverse, on the whole. A chairman who likes to hear the sound of his own voice will very soon ruin the committee or meeting over which he presides, unless steps be taken promptly to remedy the mischief. The model chairman should be able to say his say in a few brief, appropriate sentences when circumstances require it—as, for example, in stating the objects for which a meeting is being held; but usually he has to do more with controlling the speaking of others. He must be a man of tact, judgment, and an even temper—possessing the knack of coming, if need be, to a swift and sound decision upon the spur of the moment. A professional or business man, of good social standing in the locality, ought, as

a rule, to be invited to take the chair. He will at once give an air of substantiality to the committee, stamping it with the sign and seal of worth. Often enough the success of a movement or of a society has been secured forthwith because a certain particular man has consented to head it. And, on the other hand, many a committee has failed to make the slightest headway—though the object for which it exists may be unexceptionable—simply because the co-operation of Mr. So-and-so has not been obtained. Though this may not indicate a very cheerful state of things, it is nevertheless a common experience.

A committee or society having been established, and its chairman appointed, it becomes incumbent upon the latter to attend the meetings with unflinching regularity. For his own comfort and convenience he will do so, since it must be obvious that the moment he "loses touch" with the affairs of the committee, he then and there labours under a distinct disadvantage, and his usefulness, moreover, is diminished. In committee work he will have due regard to punctuality—beginning the proceedings at the selected hour. If he is lax in this respect, he will find the members of the committee soon growing equally remiss—not to the benefit of the business which calls them together. In committees it is customary to permit of a good deal of the conversational style of transacting

affairs, and *within well-defined limits* this is unavoidable. But in a meeting on a larger scale, public or otherwise, the chairman must regulate the business in the strictest possible manner.

Again, Mr. Chairman must take care that his meeting does its work. Let him always have it well in hand. He must not allow any one to speak more than once, or to wander from the subject, or to obtrude himself upon an unwilling audience. The only exception to the first point is made in favour of the speaker who introduces a subject, and who is accorded a right of reply—which, however, is usually not claimed at public meetings. As regards the second point, he will call the errant orator's attention to the irrelevancy of his remarks, and invite him to discuss the matter under consideration, or resume his seat. And in reference to the third, which has not unfrequently proved itself a thorn in the chairman's side, should the speaker persist in addressing people



who are manifestly reluctant to hear him, the chairman will probably be able to put an end to the unseemly scene by requesting the audience to vote as to whether the obstructionist is to be heard or not. In all cases the chairman must see that his ruling is upheld and acted upon. Respect for the chair must be a cardinal principle.

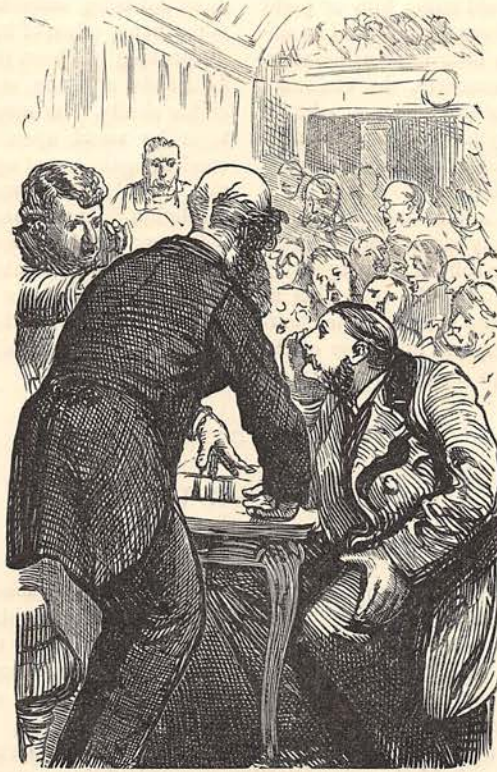
Very often at public meetings an amendment is proposed to a resolution; and when such is the case, the chairman must always *put the amendment first*. To this rule there is no exception. But we have known instances of chairmen who were not aware of the constitutional practice, and thus themselves gave rise, innocently, to much temporary inconvenience and dissatisfaction. Supposing the amendment be lost, the original motion will then be voted upon; but should the former be carried, it becomes itself the substantive resolution, and should (though this is not an invariable practice) be put a second time *as such*; and it will now be competent for another amendment to be proposed to it. In the case of a resolution calling forth several amendments, it will be advisable to consider them singly—getting rid of one before another is permitted to be brought up. Care will, of course, be taken that a proposed amendment is really an amendment. The negative of a proposition is clearly not an amendment; and the chairman will rule it out of order, the proper course of its supporters being to vote “No” to the proposition. Again, an amendment which raises a separate issue from that sought to be amended must not be entertained, since it really partakes of the character of an entirely new substantive proposition. Though this matter of amendments has been a sort of *pons asinorum* to many a chairman, a little reflection will help a man across the bridge.

The time at the disposal of speakers is another matter which the chairman ought to regulate with considerable discretion. When the number of speakers is likely to be large, a definite time-limit—announced by the chairman himself in his opening remarks—will greatly contribute to the success and enjoyableness of a meeting. We have seen a conference on an important and very complicated public question carried through with much *éclat* by a rigorous application of a ten-minutes rule. But, having committed himself

to a time-limit, the chairman must see that he applies it without respect of persons. An audience is quick to detect partiality in its president, and also to appreciate his sense of fairness when it is unflinchingly exhibited.

Need it be said that a good-tempered chairman goes far to help the success of a meeting? Doubtless many things may occur to provoke hasty or angry comment from the chair; but such weakness may do so much harm, that every temptation to give way to it ought to

be steadily resisted. Horace Walpole once succeeded in putting Mr. Speaker Onslow into a great rage, and the spectacle could hardly have been edifying. It seems that the House of Lords had returned a bill with certain amendments, and Walpole took advantage of the opportunity to oppose the measure *de novo*. His uncle and another member, however, insisting that only the Lords’ amendments could be discussed, Mr. Speaker supported this view. Whereupon, Horace stated that he “should submit to his *oracular* decision, though he would not to the complaisant peevishness of anybody else.” The Speaker having complained to the House of this language, Walpole says, “I begged his pardon, but had not thought that submitting to him was the way to offend him.” And so ended this remarkable quarrel. It will be well if Mr. Chairman be careful to



avoid controversy and “words.” He may, as a rule, count upon receiving implicit respect and obedience from gentlemen, and it is not worth his while to endanger the equanimity of a meeting by taking notice of a rude or flippant or insolent remark.

Another highly valuable quality in a chairman is *presence of mind*. He must never lose his grip on a meeting. When he sees it going a little wrong, or getting restive, he may feel assured something is amiss, and must take immediate steps to remedy matters. Though he has a variety of interests to consider, he can easily keep the whole in harmony, if he will only not lose his own head. It is astonishing how readily a shrewd, clear-headed man, who can be firm without being despotic, and conciliatory without being “soft,” rises to the occasion, and pilots a meeting through all the shoals and rocks of threatened discontent and mutiny.

Fortunately, unruly gatherings are of rare occurrence.

Should, however, there be reason to anticipate anything in the nature of disturbance, the chairman's duty is clear. Reminding the audience that the meeting has been called for definite objects by certain persons, who alone have a right to the possession of the premises, all others being there only by permission, which will be withdrawn from disturbers of the peace, he will require all persons creating a disturbance, or incommoding others, to leave the premises, and have them ejected as trespassers on refusal. He will, of course, make this statement in a temperate manner, avoiding the use of threatening language. If he sees any one misconducting himself, he should name him or point him out, and order him to leave; and, should he decline, have him ejected with as little force as possible. In all such unpleasant circumstances, the chairman may count upon the support of the audience, who, as a rule, will seldom tolerate anything like a deliberate attempt on the part of an individual, or of an organised conspiracy, to "upset" a meeting.

It is impossible to lay down a hard-and-fast line of conduct which shall equally apply to all meetings, great or small, upon every conceivable subject; but, speaking generally, the order of procedure will be somewhat as follows:—Having been voted into the chair, the chairman will, in a word or two, express his sense of the honour done him, and then go on to briefly explain

the why and wherefore of holding the meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting, if there have been such, will then be read and confirmed. The chairman will then call upon the secretary to read letters of apology and the like, if any there be. He will then request Mr. or Mrs. or Miss So-and-so to propose the first resolution. This having been duly accomplished, he will require it to be seconded and supported. Should an amendment—which, by-the-by, ought to be sent to him in writing beforehand—be proposed, he ought to intimate the fact after the seconding of the resolution, and at once invite its mover to propose it. An amendment not being seconded falls to the ground, no further notice being taken of it. After the necessary *quantum* of speaking has been performed, the chairman will call for a show of hands, and declare the result to the best of his ability. As already mentioned, an amendment must be voted upon *before* the resolution; and, if carried, again voted upon as the substantive proposition. The same procedure will apply to any further resolution. At the conclusion of the business some one will propose "that the best thanks of this meeting be accorded to Mr. Blank for his conduct in the chair." Certainly, an efficient chairman is entitled to, and will receive, the thanks and sympathy and support of every meeting over which he may be called upon to preside.

J. A. M.

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### MY NEIGHBOUR UPSTAIRS.

ALL day long  
 She singeth a song,  
 My little neighbour, over my head;  
 And half the night  
 I can see her light

On the opposite houses glimmer red.  
 And I marvel much what her thoughts may be  
 Sitting alone in her garret there;  
 Is ever one of them all of me?—  
 Of me, alas! with the grizzled hair—  
 The painter willing and ready to paint  
 The head of an alderman or a saint,  
 Should fate or chance to his luckless door  
 Send one or both with a guinea or more.  
 And some have whispered, and whisper still:  
 "Worse daubs than that fellow's our chambers fill."

A week ago, a glimpse of her face  
 I caught as she passed by my landing-place;  
 And I treasured away the light of her eyes  
 In my heart, and worked it into my skies;  
 And to-day in the head of my old friend Jack  
 Blue eyes I've painted instead of black.  
 An orphan she, this many a year,  
 Come from the green fields far away,  
 To toil in the heart of the city here  
 For a bare subsistence from day to day.  
 Hearken again to that click, click, click;  
 Was ever music so sweet before  
 As the fall of her foot on the trembling floor,

As she plies the treadle, now slow, now  
 quick,  
 Of the fairy machine that wins her bread?  
 Ah, little neighbour over my head!  
 You have your trials, and I have mine—  
 I rough and bearish, and you divine.  
 You have your dreams of the present day,  
 I of the future. Well, who shall say  
 But that in the ages yet to be  
 Shall live some proof of my love for thee?—  
 When folks shall say, "He could paint a  
 girl  
 Better, in sooth, than a duke or earl."

I hear her foot on the creaking stair,  
 Softly she comes: ah, well-a-day!  
 I might have had a daughter as fair,  
 Had Love but triumphed and had his way.  
 I might have found by my lonely hearth  
 Laughter and music, and joy and mirth;  
 I might have had—but enough, enough,  
 Away with the past, and such sorry stuff!  
 Ah! there she trips with her nimble feet  
 Over the gutter and down the street.  
 Yet who, of all the many that pass,  
 Bestows a thought on my little lass?  
 Or the grizzled fogey who watches above,  
 Dreamily murmuring in his love,  
 "Perchance I may find a daughter yet,  
 And you a father, my little pet!"

MATTHIAS BARR.