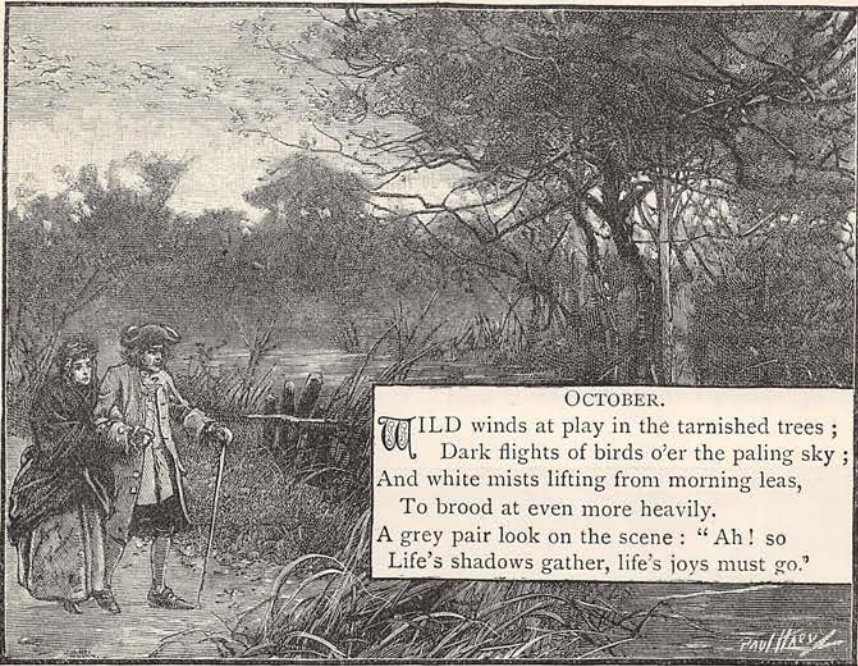


PICTURES OF THE MONTHS.



OCTOBER.

WILD winds at play in the tarnished trees ;
 Dark flights of birds o'er the paling sky ;
 And white mists lifting from morning leas,
 To brood at even more heavily.
 A grey pair look on the scene : " Ah ! so
 Life's shadows gather, life's joys must go."

A PRIME MINISTER'S ENGAGEMENTS.



IN England the Sovereign reigns, but does not govern. The person who governs is the Prime Minister. This constitutional maxim has been freely rendered by Professor A. V. Dicey as follows :—"The Executive of England is, in fact, placed in the hands of a committee, called the Cabinet. If there be any one person in whose single hand the power of the State is placed, that one person is not the Queen, but the Prime Minister." It may be regarded as a still more singular anomaly that the Prime Minister is an unknown being in our Constitution. The Vinerian Professor just quoted designates him as Chairman of the Cabinet. Such a functionary is equally unknown.

The Prime Minister, as such, has been evolved, in a curious manner, out of modern necessities, alike of speech and of thought. There were Prime Ministers before the accession of the House of Hanover, but they were known by other titles, and they had less power. Cardinal Wolsey was Henry VIII.'s "Prime Man of the State," according to Shakespeare, as

Prospero was "The Prime Duke" of Milan ; and Lord Keepers of the Seal and the King's Conscience were Prime Ministers in reality, though not in name. Popular power centred in tax-raising, and the head of the Exchequer Department was made, at the time just mentioned, Lord High Treasurer. The second word was occasionally omitted, and so we find Addison, in his letters, referring to the "Lord Treasurer." The re-organisation of the Treasury under Lords Commissioners marks the next stage of advance towards the Prime Minister. The Lord High Treasurer became the First Lord of the Treasury, and the use of the French term *Premier* originally carried with it the connecting words, "Lord of the Treasury." The change to the older English word Prime, with Minister added, was clearly made to recognise the growth of general power in the hands of the head of a Ministry, and the lessening of financial control with the division of financial work. The old High Treasurer was virtually the Chancellor of the Exchequer ; the new First Lord gradually ceased to be so. It is hardly possible to trace these changes in detail. They may be detected in private letters, speeches, and newspapers, but not in official documents. As late as

1851, we find Mr. Richard Doyle writing to Lady Duff Gordon of Lord John Russell as "First Minister."

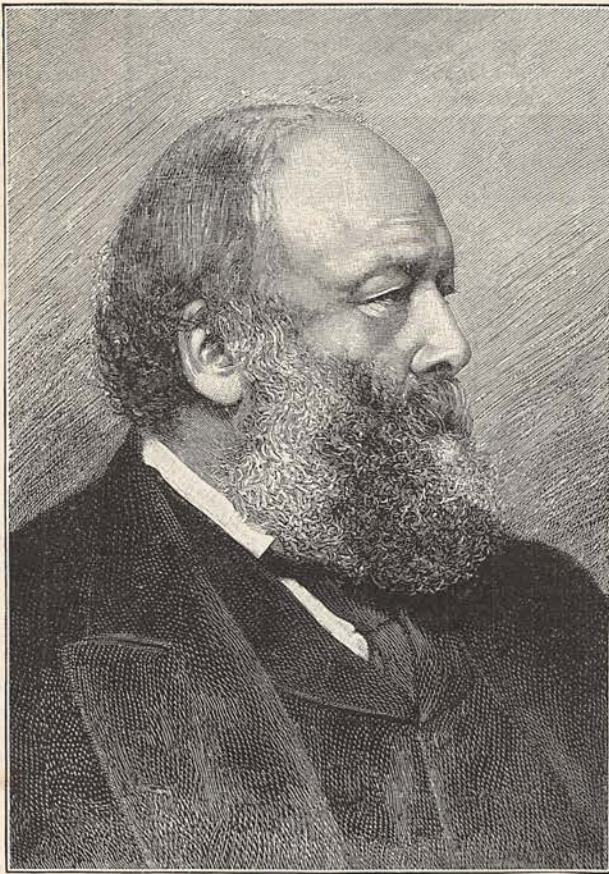
Until 1885 the First Lord of the Treasury had always been Prime Minister, with possibly a temporary break when the late Lord Derby was permitted, on account of his age, to be without a formal office. When Lord John Russell wished to be in Lord Palmerston's Cabinet without any special office, the request was declined as inconvenient, if not unconstitutional. The supposed connection of the Prime Minister with finance lies at the root of the Treasury headship. But it was useful in other ways. With the specialisation introduced into the Treasury of late years, the First Lord has had very little to do. He can easily leave to others many details. He has no daily routine of work, and he is thus free to exercise that control of all his other Ministers which is a part of the Prime Minister's duties. Whether this direct personal and habitual control is as real and as consciously felt by Ministers themselves as it used

to be, is very doubtful. There is good reason for believing that since the late Sir Robert Peel's time, and, to a slighter extent, since Lord Palmerston's day, there has been a greater range of freedom and activity on the part of individual departmental Ministers. It is probably inevitable and wise. Human energy is limited, and national concerns grow in extent and complexity. A Prime Minister cannot control in quite the same sense as he used to do, nor is it desirable that he should attempt to dominate in matters of detail, which would most likely smother him into feeble arm-chair government.

A Prime Minister's engagements may, therefore, be said to have lessened, as far as the general details of administration are concerned, during the last few decades, without in any way lessening the actual power and responsibility of his position. If this were not so, we should not have seen Mr. Gladstone adding to his Premiership the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, or Lord Salisbury assuming the duties of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. When at the Treasury, the Prime Minister is much occupied with the distribution of the patronage at his command. The clerical patronage alone is so considerable that it has to be divided into departments, as the Queen's Division and Peel's Division (named after the great statesman).

It may be mentioned here that when an appointment is recommended a brief document is drawn out, signed by the Prime Minister, if not entirely written by him; a copy is made of it, and then the original is transmitted to the Queen. The Minister in attendance upon her, wherever she may be, presents these recommendations to her, and when she has written upon them "Approved, V.R.," copies are made, retained by Her Majesty, and the originals are sent back to the Prime Minister. The next stage is to forward the originals to the Department of State with which the appointment is administratively connected, where they are preserved amongst the archives. There are cases, however, in which, as in various commissions, the Queen's actual signature and the document it is written upon, with the royal seal attached, pass into the hands of the person appointed, and a copy only is archived. But either the original or the copy is always preserved.

A Prime Minister cannot have any regular office hours, even when he is simply a First Lord of the Treasury. Mr. Gladstone has always lived at the official residence in Downing Street when he has been Prime Minister, and so he has been always accessible and always at work. It was his custom to begin the official duties of the day about ten o'clock, and he remained very closely at work until noon, getting through a large amount of business. He was very



Salisbury

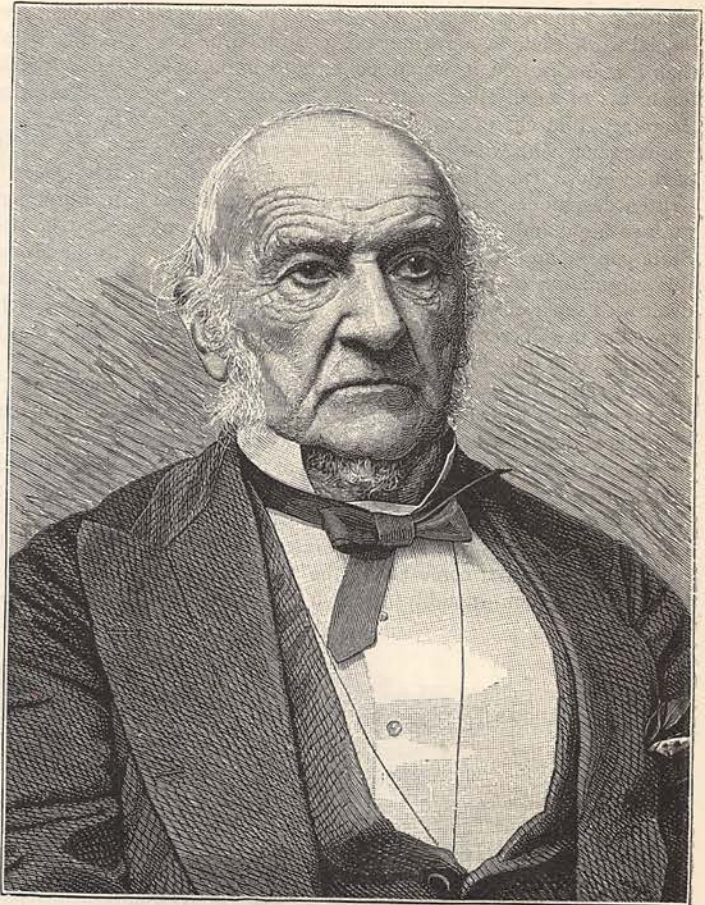
THE PREMIER.

(From a Photograph by Russell & Sons.)

methodical and laborious. Indeed, to have the pleasure of working with him, or of assisting him, was in itself an education in public life and affairs. His secretaries, in whom he always had—and with excellent reason—implicit confidence, had been busy long before that hour, reading important letters, so that they could submit to him their principal points in a few words, summarising such documents as needed treatment in that way, and generally sparing him drudgery and the use of his eyes in mastering the contents and deciphering the caligraphy of all obscure communications. Reports upon important matters from the several departments of State are constantly being received by the Prime Minister, who, in this way, is kept *au courant* with what is going on, and with the progress of business which may have been determined upon in Cabinet Council. With the cessation of minute personal control there has naturally been an increase in the number of official and semi-official communications which claim the attention of a Prime Minister and his private and official assistants. It would not be possible for him to peruse all such documents himself—the time and labour required would be immense—and so the bulk of it is done by trusted persons. Replies are dictated, and copies are taken of everything needful to refer to again. Naturally, there is much that is trivial and merely literary lumber, but it has to be got through, and the transmitter and the first recipient do whatever is possible to save time and trouble.

A Prime Minister, as such, apart from any other office he may hold, is in regular receipt of boxes of communications from foreign parts, some of great interest, and others of a comparatively unimportant nature. Embassy and consulate officials are thus in more or less frequent communication with the head of the British Government; and in their desire to neglect nothing of any importance, they are much more prone to send what may have to be returned as of no value than to make their despatch-boxes light and really interesting.

Lord Salisbury, the present Prime Minister, is also Foreign Secretary; and he does not reside in his official residence, but in his own private house. When in town, he may be frequently seen walking in the corner of the Green Park nearest Arlington Street for a short time before settling down to his morning's work, which usually begins a few minutes after ten o'clock. By that time his secretaries have made something in the nature of a classification of the



W. P. A. Stone

THE EX-PREMIER. (From a Photograph by Barraud.)

official documents which he has to see, or sign, or transmit for the use and information of other Ministers. Letters have been read, and *précis* made of the longer ones. Two or three hours of close work follow, some of which may have no connection with distinctly foreign affairs, and bear upon administrative or Parliamentary concerns. When this is over, the Premier is free to visit the Foreign Office, or to take some little relaxation before his mid-day meal, or he may prefer to plunge into the enormous mass of material which our foreign officials inflict upon their chief.

Foreign Office work differs from Treasury work in involving more routine. It is very heavy indeed. The office itself has many subdivisions, and the apportionment of their work involves much time, and often considerable nice discrimination. Large boxes of despatches periodically arrive, and their examination occupies a large amount of time. Every communication of any importance has attached to it a short and carefully made summary of its argument and

contents. Indeed, without this table of contents official work would be much more of a painful drudgery than it really is, and it would be next to impossible for heads of subdivisions, much less for the Foreign Secretary himself, to maintain anything like a fair acquaintance with what is proceeding in various parts of the world. The reference here is to ordinary fully written despatches, and such official notes as do not rank so high, and yet play their part, occasionally, as State papers, and are printed, as necessity arises, for the information of Parliament. Cipher messages are dealt with separately, and are duly written out for the perusal of the Secretary by the officials of the secret department on duty for that purpose.

The Prime Minister has to make a special minute of the proceedings of every Cabinet Council that is held, and this is duly conveyed to Her Majesty for her information. A copy is kept for the use of the Cabinet, and a second one for the use of the Premier himself. This will explain the Cabinet etiquette which requires the assent of Her Majesty before reference can be made to matters that come before the Prime Minister in session thereon—notably, in such cases as resig-

nations, always involving the most delicate handling, as was seen in the present Lord Derby's case during the San Stefano Treaty negotiations, and in Mr. Chamberlain's case over Land Purchase and Home Rule in 1886.

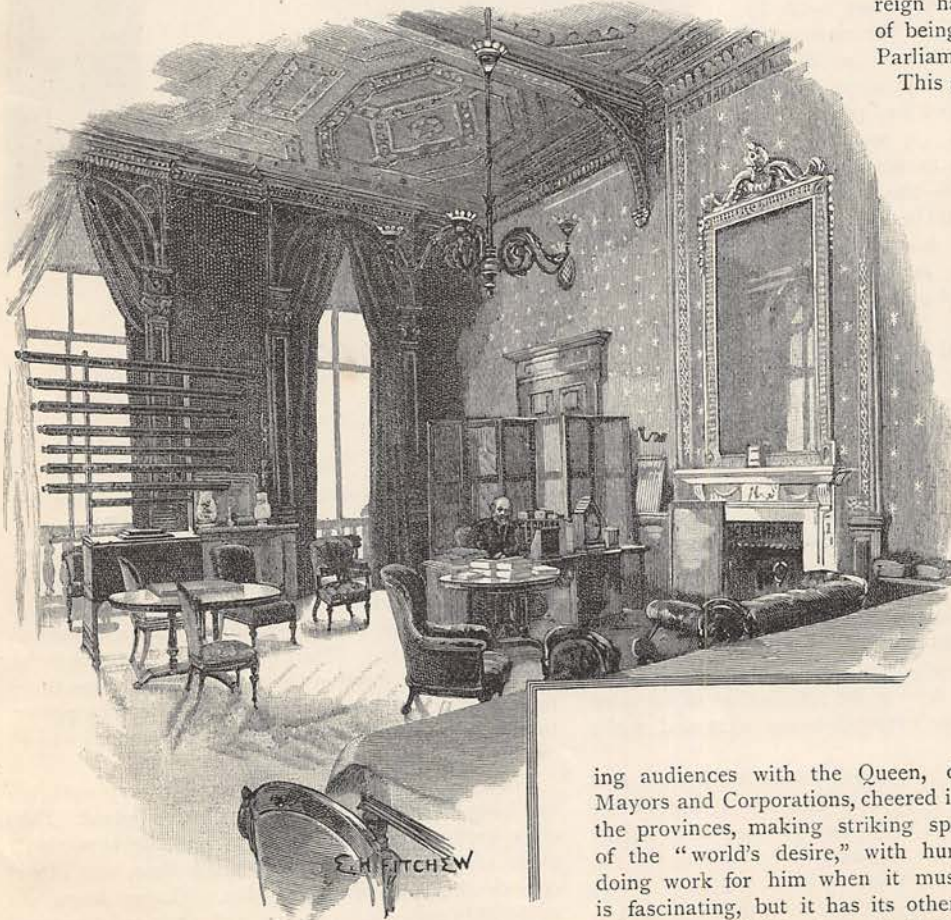
It is also the duty of the Prime Minister to furnish the Queen with a nightly record of the proceedings in Parliament, of which two copies are generally taken. Mr. Gladstone invariably did that duty himself, as far as the House of Commons was concerned, during the time he was Prime Minister. He was to be seen with his despatch-box on his knee, busily engaged upon it during many an exciting debate. Official etiquette requires that the report itself shall be written on quarto sheets, and that each sheet shall have a considerable blank space at the top. At one time, during his connection with the Commons, Lord Beaconsfield furnished similar reports, but when he grew older he was allowed by the Queen to depute the work to Lord Barrington. Reports of the House of Lords are seldom of a very lengthy character, and there is now some relaxation in the former custom of requiring the Prime Minister to report in person. The custom dates from the time when the Sovereign had no other way of being informed about Parliamentary debates.

This sketch of a Prime Minister's engagements—imperfect and slight as it necessarily must be—will destroy some illusions. It will be seen that hard work has to follow high office, and that there is such a thing as the drudgery as well as the glory of government.

The picture drawn in men's minds of an English Premier, governing a mighty Empire with a nod, receiving ambassadors, hold-

ing audiences with the Queen, dining with Lord Mayors and Corporations, cheered in London, fêted in the provinces, making striking speeches, the centre of the "world's desire," with hundreds of officials doing work for him when it must needs be done, is fascinating, but it has its other side. Greatness brings responsibility; love of rule means love of work, and the heart of the patriot statesman must not be far away from the hand of the man of business.

EDWIN GOADBY.



LORD SALISBURY'S ROOM AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE.
(Cabinet Councils are sometimes held round the table
in the foreground.)