

THE FOURTH ESTATE IN LONDON.

BY ALFRED F. ROBBINS.



ALTHOUGH constitutional historians of the most unimpeachable dulness and accuracy dispute as to precisely what are the Three Estates of the Realm, it is only the most arid of pedants who would argue as to what is

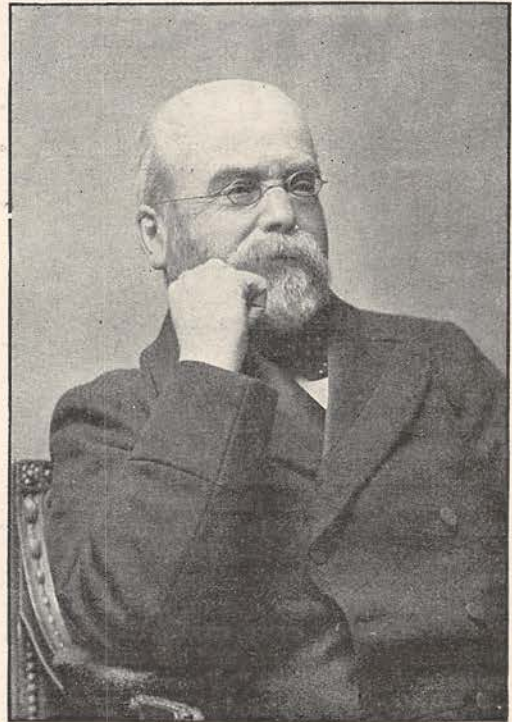
embraced within the Fourth. Blackstone, it is true, ignored its existence; De Lolme was sublimely unaware of its growing power; Hallam was not concerned to trace its progress; and Stubbs has failed, in Saxon deeds or Norman charters, to find its origin. But, though the term was probably earliest applied in irony, it is said to have been adopted by no less an authority than Burke, while it was certainly used by Macaulay; and there is no doubting that in these realms and in these days the Press is the Fourth Estate. Some knowledge, therefore, of those who manipulate the representative parts of that mighty machine can scarcely be unacceptable to the community which profits by their labours.

We live far removed from the day when Dr. Johnson, not long himself emerged from Grub Street, could calmly record the opinion that "a newspaper writer is a man without virtue, who writes lies at home for his own profit. For these compositions is required neither genius nor knowledge, neither industry nor sprightliness; but contempt of shame and indifference of truth are absolutely necessary." The Great Cham of Literature afterwards modified this view, but it was the one which long continued to prevail.

Charles Abbot, before he became Speaker of the House of Commons, early in the present century, summarised his impression of journalists by comprehensively describing them as "blackguard news-writers"; and the Duke of Wellington once told Sir Robert Peel—"I hate the whole tribe of news-writers, and I prefer to suffer from their falsehoods to dirtying my fingers with communications with them." There was little, indeed, that "the Duke" more detested on the part of public men than the practice of "newspapering," as he called that of appealing to the public prints. But that prejudice long since died away, and no man did more to destroy it than Benjamin Disraeli, who, though once expressing to Lady Blessington his horror of journalising of all descriptions, proudly told the House of Commons—"I am myself a

'gentleman of the Press,' and bear no other 'escutcheon.'

To-day, when not only was the House of Commons led but recently by one who was known to the thinking world as "Historicus" of the *Times* long before a Sir William Harcourt was dreamed of, but the chief of the Conservative party is he who, as Lord Robert Cecil, was a constant and caustic contributor to the *Saturday Review* in its palmiest weeks, there is no need to labour the point that journalism affects all departments of the State. As little necessity exists to insist upon its intimate connection with literature. That connection will be told in regard to various newspapers which have to be considered; but



SIR JOHN ROBINSON.

(From a photograph by Walery, Ltd., Regent Street, W.)

it is one which the nineteenth century has in marked degree developed.

It is for a daily journal which for forty years or more has passed into oblivion that there can be claimed such a succession of writers as Coleridge and Lamb, Thomas Campbell and Hazlitt, Sir James Mackintosh and John



MR. H. W. LUCY.

(From a photograph by Russell & Sons, Baker Street, W.)

Payne Collier, Charles Dickens and Albany Fonblanque. But though the *Morning Chronicle*, which Mr. Gladstone always regarded as a model Opposition paper, has long vanished into the silences, there are newspapers to-day with a literary, as well as a political, record of which they have great good reason to be proud.

The first name that naturally rises to the mind when this is said is the world-famous organ of Printing-House Square, the *Times*. More true to-day even than when Thackeray wrote them are the words Warrington used to Arthur Pendennis:—"There she is, the great engine; she never sleeps. She has her ambassadors in every quarter of the world, her couriers upon every road. Her officers march along with armies, and her envoys walk into statesmen's cabinets." For over a hundred years, and from the period of John Walter I.—for the *Times*, like many a lesser power, has its dynasty—this newspaper has put forth a sustained strength never equalled in the history of the Press; and to-day, after what seemed a temporary eclipse, its reputation for fearless expression of opinion and early publication of important news is as high as ever.

Some of the greatest personalities in politics have been glad to help the *Times*. Under the editorship of Thomas Barnes, Brougham

communicated the secrets of the Cabinet and Disraeli contributed his "Runnymede Letters." Under that of John Thaddeus Delane—Cobden's pet aversion and Bright's "Gentleman in the Mask"—Lord Aberdeen intimated Peel's intention to repeal the Corn Laws, Mr. Vernon Harcourt discoursed upon international law as "Historicus," and Mr. Leonard Courtney, through the medium of leading articles, sought to prove the existence of political economy.

There was a breach in the continuity of great things during the brief period that the chair, by some strange freak of choice, was filled by Thomas Chenery, who, as Professor of Arabic at Oxford, was best known for his edition of Jehudah Ben Shelomo Alkharizi's "Machberoth Ithiel." But when "Tiglath-Pileser," as the Society journals unkindly nicknamed him, was succeeded by the present editor, Mr. George Earle Buckle, the *Times* began to revive its older glories. It was to Printing-House Square alone that the late Lord Randolph Churchill drove on that memorable night in December, 1886, when he had determined to resign the Chancellorship of the Exchequer; it was the *Times* only among London newspapers that was able but a short while since to announce the impending withdrawal of the present Viscount Peel from the Speakership of the House of Commons.

Chosen editor when only thirty (though even then six years older than was Delane at his appointment), Mr. Buckle has infused fresh energy into every branch of the literary side of the paper; but it speaks much for the absolutely anonymous character which continues to attach to English journalism that not one in a hundred thousand of the readers of the *Times* has ever heard the names of Mr. Capper and Mr. Money Penny, who are its editor's chief assistants. The same, however, cannot be said of Mr. Moberley Bell, who, succeeding to the managership at probably the most critical period in the recent history of "the Thunderer," has, in remarkable degree, aided its reinstatement in its former uniquely proud position.

Although Fleet Street is the thoroughfare traditionally associated with the production of all the leading newspapers, it is to Bouverie Street and the *Daily News* that we pass from Printing-House Square and the *Times*, and it will be to Shoe Lane and the *Standard* that next our steps will be bent. The light-hearted fashion in which Dickens, in 1846, became the *Daily News*' first editor, and the equally light-hearted fashion in which, after only seventeen days in the chair, he left it in the lurch, are among the commonplaces and yet the curiosities of journalistic history. The

commencement, intended to be specially propitious, was thus unpromising; but the *Daily News*, under the original managership of Charles Wentworth Dilke, first baronet of the name, and the successive editorships of John Forster and Eyre Evans Crowe, Frederick Knight Hunt and William Weir, Thomas Walker and Frank Hill, Henry William Lucy and Sir John Robinson, has secured for itself the position it has long claimed for the Irish tenant—that of not merely being able to live but to thrive. It has had upon its staff men of high and varied distinction. Only recently it has lost the services of the late Mr. Edward Smyth Pigott, for many years Examiner of Plays, whose fine literary sense was never deadened even by the appalling duty of reading “problem dramas,” three-act farces, and “go-as-you-please” comedies, and, by dint of assiduous use of the blue pencil, making them fit for reception by ears polite. The accustomed client of the Liberal organ of Bouverie Street needs never to be told which article has proceeded from the pen of Mr. Justin McCarthy or Mr. Andrew Lang: a reference to some utterly unknown novel by the one, or to a recently-discovered New Zealand myth by the other, tells him all as to the authorship. In similar fashion, there is no secret as to the fact that Mr. Herbert Paul is held responsible by “the man in the street” for such leading articles as deal with the House of Commons’ proceedings of the previous night; that Mr. Lucy is the “H. W. L.” who contributes the Parliamentary sketch; and that Mr. Moy Thomas is the author of some of the sanest, the most felicitous, and the best-informed dramatic criticism that London journalism knows. There was a time when the expert could detect which were the contributions that flowed from the ready pen of Harriet Martineau; while such literary artists as Mr. William Black and Mr. George Saintsbury are credited with many an article for the *Daily News*. And yet, among them all, no name will be more associated with the success of this journal than that of Mr. Archibald Forbes, who, during the Franco-German War, placed it in the same pre-eminent position, because of its correspondence from the battle-front, as Sir William Howard Russell had the *Times* during the Crimean War some sixteen years before.

The *Standard*, with the sober appearance that befits Shoe Lane, does not suggest to its readers any association with romantic history, and yet its career has been one of vicissitude touched by fancy. Established as an evening paper, and close upon seventy years ago, its first editor, according to tradition,

received, because of an article against the Roman Catholic claims, a present of £1,200 “in notes”—a touch which gives, as Mr. Gilbert would say, an air of verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative—from that Duke of Newcastle who was the earliest political “patron” of Mr. Gladstone. Such a gift was enough to sour every drop of the milk of human kindness possessed by the other London editors. One of them, indeed, was sufficiently rude to say of the *Standard*, then only a year old: “It is a journal which has lately crawled into existence, and is fast hastening towards dissolution.” The prophet, which happened to be the *Morning Chronicle*, has long disappeared; the *Standard* remains, and even thus early it always gave its opponents as good as was brought. Those who bewail what they are pleased to consider the degeneracy of the modern newspaper, would scarcely contend that the prophecy just quoted was “good form,” but it was only “pretty Fanny’s way” in the Thirties. No paper of the position of the *Standard* would to-day describe the *Times* as a “‘brick-bat and bludgeon’ journal, the filthy libeller of the late and present Kings, the apologist for rebellion, the adviser of assassination.” Similarly, the *Times* nowadays would not



MR. A. J. WILSON.

refer to "the scoundrel Whig-Radical Press," or to a rival as "Grandmamma's Journal." It is occasionally worth while, indeed, to read specimens of the older journalism in order to truly appreciate the new.

In the development from the old to the new the *Standard* has played a noteworthy part. For a long time after it became a morning organ it was in troubled seas, emergence from which is mainly due to the tact, the energy, and the quiet resolve of Mr. William Henry Mudford, who has long been its editor. For one in that position it is better to have been cradled near a waste-paper basket than born in the purple, and Mr. Mudford, as son of the editor of the now defunct *Courier*, had the advantage described. Though the leading organ of the Conservative party, the *Standard*, under its present editor, has displayed a marked independence, which has more than once exposed it to misapprehension and even threats; but neither the one nor the other could cause it to swerve.

Mr. Mudford, like all the best editors, recognises that newspaper readers do not live for politics alone; and he has surrounded himself with a staff of special excellence, at the head of which is Mr. George Byrom Curtis, who has long been the editor's right-hand man. It has sometimes been unkindly said that the *Standard*, like the *Daily Telegraph* and the proprietors of a famous blacking, keeps a poet on the premises, the fine Roman hand of Mr. Alfred Austin being as distinguishable among the sons of Shoe Lane as that of Sir Edwin Arnold among the young lions of Peterborough Court. But, though Mr. Austin may roar as gently as any sucking-dove, the *Standard* can furnish those who cause the welkin to ring with more strenuous purpose. Mr. A. J. Wilson, who loves to make the timid financier's flesh creep in

the *Investors' Review*, acts as its City editor, which is equivalent to saying that he is held in awe rather than affection by the "guinea pig" and the prospectus-monger; and the traditions of Cameron and Henty as war correspondents are worthily sustained whenever special work in this direction is demanded.

The *Times*, the *Daily News*, and the *Standard* are types of the London morning press, every organ of which would deserve an article to itself if detailed description were to be attempted; and the same may be said in regard to the metropolitan evening press, of which the *Globe* and the *Echo*, in their diverse phases, are representative, the former as the oldest of all those existing and the latter as the earliest of the half-penny papers, the successive production of which has almost revolutionised that department of journalism.

The *Globe*, which commenced its career almost contemporaneously with the century, was so decidedly Whig for more years than it has been as decidedly Tory that it was long, but erroneously, thought to number Lord Palmerston among its contributors. Lovers of literature will more appreciate the remembrance that "Father Prout" was its Paris correspondent; while those who regard an evening paper simply as a convenient aid to killing time after the daily work is done have reason to be grateful to Sir George Armstrong, the late editor of the *Globe* (whose present successor in the chair is his son, an ex-naval officer, not yet thirty), for the consistently high level of the many original contributions to its columns, and especially of the well-known "turn-over," or front-page article, on some social topic, which is the brightest "feature" of the paper.

The *Echo*, earliest of all successful evening journals, came upon the scene just as house-



SIR GEORGE ARMSTRONG, BART.

(From a photograph by Elliott & Fry, Baker Street, W.)

hold suffrage had been given to the inhabitants of our towns; and Messrs. Cassell, Petter & Galpin, to whom the inception of the idea was due, thus seized the psychological moment to launch it. Under the editorship of Sir Arthur Arnold (now Chairman of the London County Council), it became a political power: in the proprietorship of Mr. John Passmore Edwards it probably wields more of a social influence. Rivals to it have sprung up in many a direction since. Of some of them, as attached to the Fourth Estate, one is inclined to use the words of Shakespeare, "The estate is green and yet ungoverned"; but the *Echo* has held its way successful among them all, and its circulation to-day may be believed to be little affected even by the white heat of competition to which it is subjected.

If public influence were in exact proportion to circulation, the evening papers would wield a far greater power than the weekly journals, but probably not even their editors would claim to do so. The dominant fact is that, while the former are scanned, the latter are studied; for it is not possible to conceive the man who would attempt to assimilate the contents of the *Spectator*, the *Saturday Review*, or the *Speaker* by hurried glances under a flickering lamp in a London railway carriage, or by furtive peeps on the top of an omnibus. Such weeklies as those named have an influence, indeed, of a specially far-reaching kind, for they affect those who affect others; and many a man who knows nothing directly concerning them is thus led to imbibe their ideas.

The *Spectator* is the *doyen* of these; and from the later days of the Fourth George, when it started upon a philosophical Radical career, until these closing years of the century, when it is the leading Liberal Unionist weekly, it has had a constituency of its own. Under its present editor, Mr. Richard Holt Hutton, it has developed into a system the super-subtle, half-theological, semi-mystical style of criticising men and manners, which is the delight of those who are always in a state of wonder at their own and other people's mental processes. It has ministered to the emotions by giving space to the most astonishing stories of fidelity and other virtues as displayed by animals; and, although the irreverent have scoffed at some of these and have demanded stronger journalistic meat, the *Spectator* pursues the even tenor of its philosophic way; and, having long survived John Bright's criticism that it was "conceited," it remains a standing monument of all that the true Briton considers respectable.

The reader must possess a singularly varied taste if he can honestly say that he equally

enjoys the *Spectator* and the *Saturday Review*. The latter, it is true, is not what it once was—the *Saturday Reviler*, which, with bitter expression of uncompromising Toryism, stung its opponents into fury. But, even when it was most noted for its adherence to the Johnsonian tenet, never to let "the Whig dogs get the best of it," its purely literary columns were open to all comers. Sir William Harcourt, Mr. John Morley, the late Sir James Stephen, and the late Mr. Freeman have been numbered among a brilliant band of contributors, which has included also the Marquis of Salisbury, when, as Lord Robert Cecil, he was for years a knight of the pen. Since the death of Mr. Beresford-Hope, whose "Batavian grace" was immortalised by Lord Beaconsfield, the *Saturday* has seen many changes. Mr. Walter Herries Pollock, swordsman and dramatist, is no longer its editor. Mr. George Saintsbury, critic and essayist, who seemed likely to be his successor, is not seated in the chair. The position is now filled by Mr. Frank Harris, once of the *Evening News*, and next of the *Fortnightly Review*; and, under his régime, the tradition of a Toryism which is nothing if not independent is evidently to be maintained.

When the *Spectator* ranked itself as an opponent of Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy impossible of conversion, the Liberals had to



SIR WEMYSS REID.

create a mouthpiece in the weekly press; and this task, necessarily one of delicacy and difficulty, was undertaken by Sir Wemyss Reid. The amount of success that has attended the *Speaker* has been owing in eminent degree to the editorial faculties of its founder, who has gathered around him a staff which includes some of the brightest among the younger journalists of our time. Measured by years, the life of the *Speaker* has been short: measured by careers, it might be considered long. Into the secrets of the editorial room no outsider can presume to penetrate; but, even if the writers of the leading articles are to remain veiled in judicious anonymity, no one is likely to doubt that he who, under the modest pseudonym, "A Mere Outsider," contributes the week's gossip is Sir Wemyss Reid himself; while that the "A. B." who furnishes an occasional and the "A. T. Q. C." a frequent literary *causerie* are Mr. Augustine Birrell, of "Obiter Dicta" fame, and Mr. A. T. Quiller-Couch, of "Troy Town,"

is as open a secret as that the "A. B. W." of the dramatic criticisms is Mr. A. B. Walkley. And these far from exhaust the eminent contributors to the *Speaker*, the identity of one of whom—he who writes from Constantinople—might even become an international question if it could be discovered by the Sultan, who recently prohibited for all time the entrance of this journal into his empire because of its outspokenness on the subject of the Armenian atrocities.

But here one must take pause. It is not London alone that furnishes splendid specimens of all that is best in the Fourth Estate. In the regions without—"the provinces," as they are collectively called—there are newspapers to be considered which wield much power. Even as far as the metropolis is concerned, the subject cannot be fully indicated, and far less exhausted, in so brief a space; but another paper of at least equal length is needed for the barest comprehension of the varied forces of British journalism.



THE PROFESSOR'S EXPERIMENT.

BY G. B. BURGIN, AUTHOR OF "HIS LORDSHIP," ETC.



"HAT a good thing it is that there *are* snakes in England," said the professor meditatively. "Imagine, Sybil, if we had been condemned to pass our lives in Ireland, how much innocent recreation and scientific research would have been unavailable! If you look at the matter altogether from a scientific point of view, the statement, unsupported by evidence, that St. Patrick or any other Irish gentleman could get rid of all the Irish snakes in a few hours, is utterly untenable. Now, the English adder—"

Sybil looked up from a somewhat thick piece of bread and butter. "Do you allude to that blunt-headed and blunt-tailed thing—that loathsome death-dealer in yonder little basket, papa?"

The professor looked pained. "Don't insult the poor thing, Sybil. Its poison fangs are only a means of self-protection. The true English viper seldom wantonly injures anyone, although it is very vindictive and never forgets an enemy. If someone trod on you, wouldn't you bite?"

The girl gave a little shiver.

"But think of it, daddy!" (She had left her place at the tea-table and was tenderly ruffling the professor's hair, greatly to his annoyance, for he did not bear fondling very well.) "To be full of the joy of life one moment, and then a prick—a cry—and life fades away. Everything turns grey; a film comes over one's eyes, and—death!"

"Death," said the professor philosophically, "is a price often paid by men of eminence for the good of others. I have met with several accidents myself at various periods of my scientific career. You observed this morning that I provoked the adder to strike a piece of meat, although the wretched thing seemed to prefer hurling itself at the stick, which must have hurt it a good deal more than if it had attacked something soft."

"I wondered why you were stirring it up with the stick," said Sybil.

"Don't speak of a viper as if it were a pudding," said the professor testily. "I was exciting it to get rid of its poison. George Borrow and other authorities do not say how often the viper renews its poison. I am trying to discover this glorious fact for the last chapter of my great work on British snakes."

The professor was becoming excited, and rose from the tea-table, his long, iron-grey