

HERE is no more interesting figure in the present House of Commons than Mr. George Curzon, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. His post alone would give him importance. His chief,

Lord Salisbury, is in the Lords, and it devolves on Mr. Curzon to satisfy the thousand and one questions which are put by Her Majesty's faithful Commons on all matters relating to our multitudinous foreign interests. Lord Salisbury, in the retirement of the House of Lords, has not this experience to undergo. The Peers do not ask questions unless they are convenient to the minister questioned. In the Commons they have no such scruples, and indeed would on both sides prefer rather to ask their opponents awkward questions than not. Mr. Curzon, in the short time he has faced the Opposition from the Treasury Bench since the present Government came into power, has done his work well. It is not by any means easy, even if it obviously consists in saying what he is told and imparting no knowledge with a vast air of conveying great stores of information.

Mr. Curzon has other relations with the House of Lords than those due to the presence of his chief in the Upper Chamber. His father is a Peer, and in due course he must himself enter the House of Lords. That it may be a long time before he succeeds his father all who know him must sincerely hope. His career lies in the Lower House, and perhaps before long he will have produced those reforms in the Upper House in which he has long been interested, and secured for the eldest sons of Peers a right to choose their fate. His father, Lord Scarsdale, is in Holy Orders, and is Rector of Kedleston, in Derby-

shire—a county in which Mr. Curzon takes the deepest interest, but which refused by a huge majority to return him to Parliament when he contested the division in which his home lies.

Born in 1859, Mr. Curzon went to Eton in 1872, where he stayed until 1878, when he matriculated as a commoner of Balliol College, Oxford. His 'Varsity career lasted from 1878—he wasted no time between school and college as so many other young men do—to 1882. As at Eton so at Oxford he was essentially a reading man. He took a first-class in "Mods" in 1880, was *proxime accessit* for the Chancellor's Latin verse prize in 1882, won the Lothian essay prize and the Arnold essay prize in 1882 and 1883 respectively, took a second in his final school, and in 1883 achieved his crowning Oxford success by his election to a fellowship at no less a college than All Souls. But he was no mere reading man. He led the Conservative party at the Union—of which he became President—and resuscitated the Canning Club, at the dinner of which he annually delivered an address, naturally considered by his friends as superior to that of the Cabinet Minister who made the speech of the evening. Long before leaving Oxford the name of George Curzon had become a household word in London society; but the best of his heart has been given to politics, and to the best sort of politics—that which concerns our vast Imperial domain and is of neither party.

His liking for travel dates from his school-days, and was continued through his vacations at Oxford. He travelled in those brief holidays all over the Continent; but it was a tour round the world after leaving the University which led to most of his later journeys. People have said Mr. Curzon has been lucky: he has gone to places just at the right time and very shortly before public attention has been directed to those very

places. But that is in no way the result of accident. In his journey round the world Mr. Curzon began to perceive that there were great and important regions of the globe, the very places about which complications were likely to arise, which were practically unknown. In a word, he noted the blanks in a great deal of our political geography, and set himself for his own information, but afterwards greatly to the benefit of the public, to fill up these blanks. It is a secret which is open to everyone. Both the Near and Far Eastern questions are at his finger-ends, and his knowledge must be of enormous value to the Marquess of Salisbury in dealing with these matters, which have been and are growing in importance year by year. There is the question of our Indian Empire, and on this Empire Mr. Curzon has very strong and noteworthy views. In his own words: "The true fulcrum of Asiatic dominion seems to

me increasingly to lie in the Empire of Hindustan. The secret of the mastery of the world is, if they only knew it, in the possession of the British people." That is a very striking statement, coming from one who has studied Russia on our Indian frontiers and has no fear of her there; Persia, that once great power; has been over the Pamirs, stayed with the Ameer of Afghanistan, and still corresponds with him; and has made himself master of the problems of the Far East which are involved in the relations between Japan, China, Korea, and Russia. I have mentioned the Indian frontier. Mr. Curzon has done a service to every Englishman engaged on that frontier by calling public attention to the magnificent work they do. Many men have spent their lives in strengthening our borders there, and till Mr. Curzon went to India they had hardly been known at all. There were, of course,



MR. CURZON'S ROOM AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE.

exceptions—wonderful men who had made themselves a name so great on the borders that we actually heard of it in England. But very few of these men have been heard of in this country, though they have done



THE RIGHT HON. GEORGE CURZON, M.P.

(From a photograph by Bassano, Old Bond Street, W.)

so much to preserve for us our great Indian Empire. Kipling speaks of them shepherding the tribes up and down, both officers and men with lives as hard as their saddles, and ready for an expedition at a moment's notice. Doubtless we will find the value of them in our next great war. His second journey was a more notable one. When the Transcaspian Railway was finished to Bokhara and Samarkand, its projectors were uncommonly proud of it, and caused it to be made known that travellers who would write of it would not be unwelcome. Mr. Curzon at once proceeded to make arrangements for the trip. He posted to St. Petersburg, and succeeded in getting permits there which greatly helped him. He had a most interesting journey, which furnished material for one of the best books we have on the subject—which he entitled "Russia in Central Asia." That was in 1888.

That book, and much that he has since written, shows that Mr. Curzon is no Russophobe, but regards the Russian advance towards India as one that is fully guarded against by our frontiers there. He is in accord with those

who think that with Chitral in our possession we have little to fear. Many military men are of opinion that India can only be attacked from the sea. A land attack by Russia would mean such a long chain of bases that, vast as are the resources of Russia, they would not be equal to the task. Following the plan he had laid down for himself of filling up the blanks in our knowledge of the East, he turned his attention to Persia. To his surprise he found that all our knowledge of the internal politics of that country was some thirty years old. He went to Persia, and rode no fewer than 2,000 miles within its borders. His experiences he sent from time to time in the form of a series of letters to the *Times*, and they also furnished another valuable volume, which is the very latest information we have on the territory of "the King of Kings." He has also seen "the roof of the world," the Pamirs, of which we have heard so much and are not unlikely to hear more. There he had the satisfaction of shooting two of those mountain sheep first described by Marco Polo and named after that traveller *ovis poli*. The heads adorn his hall, and are among the most cherished of his possessions—for he is a thorough sportsman. Curious-looking heads they are, with huge ramlike horns curving splendidly over true ovine features, but with the fell of a deer, quite dissimilar to the wool we always associate with sheep. He had to climb 17,000 feet to get them, but they were worth the trouble.

There is this not to be forgotten, that all this time Mr. Curzon was a Member of Parliament. Defeated in his native division of Derbyshire, he was taken up by the Conservatives of Southport—the pretty and lively Lancashire watering-place which should be called Liverpool-cum-Manchester-by-the-Sea—and was returned for that constituency in 1886. The seat he has twice since retained by increased majorities. All his journeys have therefore been made in the recess: he never has had more than six months at his disposal. When this will be published, it will be nearly two years since he was among the hills of our Indian frontier. He went there because he considered that he had still much to learn about it, and that soon public attention would be directed to it. He met there a great many men whose names have since become familiar, such as Captain Younghusband, Dr. Robertson, and others. He tells of travelling, in October, 1894, down to the lower country from among the mountains of Chitral, where he had been spending a few weeks. Riding by his side was the young Mehtar of Chitral, who very shortly afterwards was treacherously murdered.

He makes no secret of the fact that the

opening-up of the Dir route was then discussed, and that he gave five years in which to see the work accomplished. He confessed to a feeling of surprise when he looked back in October, 1895, to October, 1894, and found that within the twelve months so much had happened. The young Mehtar, his comrade of that day, had been murdered, our Resident besieged and relieved—relieved, too, by an expedition which won by its dash and bravery and success the admiration of the best Continental soldiers—a new Mehtar appointed in place of the usurper, and the country a British protectorate. With another mountainous country on our Indian frontier he is thoroughly familiar—that is Afghanistan. He has lived in Cabul for a fortnight on end, and has had interviews with the Ameer every other day during his stay.

Mr. Curzon has always spoken of the Ameer with the greatest regard. I believe they correspond with some regularity, and among the treasures of Kedleston are no doubt some of the gorgeous envelopes in which the Ameer conveys his missives. These covers are of a cloth woven of silver wire and light purple, and are further protected by a netlike material spangled with polished facets of steel. The letters themselves are beautiful. They are on parchment with an illuminated heading, and remind one of a monkish chronicle. The writing below is in the fine flowing native characters, and is the work of a secretary to whom the letter has been dictated. But frequently in a dashing hand in a corner of the missive is a special message from the Ameer himself. No one who knows envies the great Afghan—one of the greatest princes of our time. He is out of his age; he, best of all men, knows that. Had he lived in other days he would have founded a great dynasty; at least, he would have tried. Now he is hemmed in by Russia and British India, a ruler of tribes who are dangerous because they have no one to fight with. Could the ages be rolled back, Abdul Rahmann would find them occupation in plenty.

There is one point of our Indian policy on which Mr. Curzon can, if he will, talk most interestingly. That has regard to the curious way in which, when we have conquered an Indian province, we immediately proceed to make soldiers of our one-time enemies. There are no better soldiers in India than the men of the hill tribes along our borders, and none fight with more success against their own neighbours. A great deal is due to the name we have won for keeping our word. The recruit comes as a free man to join the Queen's service. His pay is certain, and he can save—strange as it seems to say so

—out of the few coins he earns a day. He is well clothed, well fed, and when he passes out of the service in due season his pension makes him a man of mark in his community, where he returns to spend the remainder of his days. Mr. Curzon has not the least doubt that the Chitralese will be serving in the Indian army—some of them almost as soon as the wounds our rifle bullets caused have healed—and loyal to the backbone.

The great and growing importance of the Far Eastern question gives Mr. Curzon an exceptional interest to all who watch events in Japan and China. One can imagine the Marquess of Salisbury as uncommonly grateful that he has in his own department an Under-Secretary whose knowledge of the Far East is extensive and peculiar. Mr. Curzon has been over most of the ground covered by the recent hostilities between Japan and China. He has traversed Korea—the Hermit Kingdom about which nominally the row was, and he has dealt with the whole question lucidly and in vigorous English in his latest book, "Problems of the Far East." He has relegated to the background in this volume the



MRS. CURZON.

(From a photograph by Bassano, Old Bond Street, W.)

merely picturesque; instead, he has preferred to discuss the problems, perhaps less superficially interesting but incomparably more important and vastly more abstruse, which

are suggested by the national character, resources, and organisation of those countries as affected by their intercourse with foreign or western powers. In the case of Japan he confesses to having departed widely from the accepted mode of treatment. He makes no mention of the tea-houses and the like which are the stock subjects of writers on Japan. He has been more interested in the efforts of

an enormous trade with both the late belligerents.

When Mr. Curzon was in Korea—in the days before Japan had overrun it—he visited the president of the Korean Foreign Office. He writes:—"Hearing that I had been a Minister of the Crown in England, he inquired what had been my salary, and added, 'I suppose you found *that* by far the most



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a nation, still in its pupillage, to assume the manners of the full-grown man, in the constitutional struggles through which Japan is passing, in her relations with foreign powers, and in the future that awaits her immense ambitions. That he has no faith in China's resurrection is an open secret; and if anything can be done to improve our relations with Japan, Mr. Curzon is not likely to hang back. He saw well into the heart of China during his last visit there, and he has no doubts that the position of England throughout the East will be more and more influential—if care is taken. For one thing, English is almost wholly the language of the East, and we are doing year by year

agreeable feature of office. But no doubt the perquisites were larger still.' Finally, conscious that in his own country it is not easy for anyone to become a member of the government unless he is related to the family of the king or queen, he said to me: 'I presume you are a near relative of Her Majesty the Queen of England?' 'No; I am not.' But observing the look of disgust that passed over his countenance, I was fain to add: 'I am, however, as yet an unmarried man,' with which unscrupulous suggestion I completely regained the old gentleman's favour."

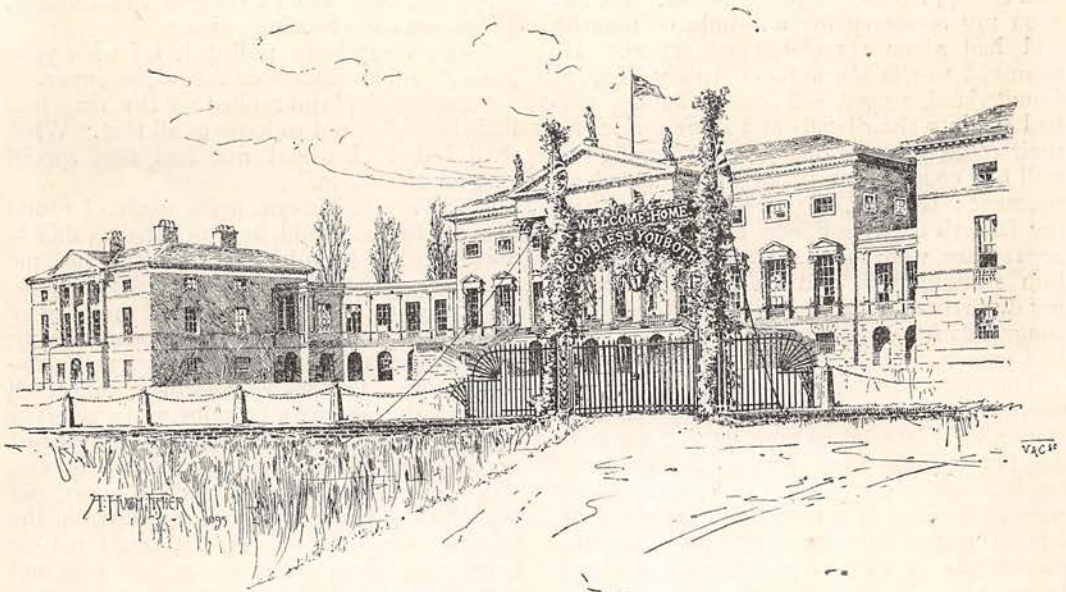
Since he exchanged views with the Korean Foreign Minister, Mr. Curzon has

gained three years, and he can no longer declare himself unmarried. He went for his bride to the United States, marrying Miss Mary Leiter there in 1894. Mrs. Curzon is a charming lady in every respect, and she has found little to learn in our constitutional methods, for she threw herself heartily into the work of assisting her husband to retain his seat at Southport, and won not only the votes but the hearts of the electors of the Lancashire watering-place. Mr. and Mrs. Curzon spent some time after their marriage at Reigate Priory, a handsome, comfortable residence belonging to Lady Henry Somerset. Their town house is in Carlton Gardens. Both are favourites in society, though Mr. Curzon sticks too steadily to his desk to be seen about much.

With his party colour we have here

nothing to do. The understanding is that men on both sides are doing their best for their common country. Mr. Curzon deserves every praise in that he has trained himself to what promises to be his chief vocation—statesmanship. The Empire is before all things, and they have the best chance of advancing its interests who know the Empire itself and the questions which affect it thoroughly. This knowledge Mr. Curzon has tried to acquire, and there is no doubt that on both sides of the House of Commons he is regarded as a coming man. He has a knack, as has been said, of being successful, his energy is boundless, he is eloquent, and has youth on his side—all advantages which may carry the present Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs a long way.

W. E. GREY.



KEDLESTON, WHERE MR. CURZON BROUGHT HOME HIS WIFE.