

MR. ARTHUR BALFOUR.

By HENRY W. LUCY.

THE conjunction of the admirable portrait of Mr. Arthur Balfour here presented with the reproduction of the historical sketch in *Vanity Fair*, of the Fourth Party on their familiar bench in the House of Commons, marks a long stride in a memorable career. It is little more than ten years since the Fourth Party—like Topsy inasmuch as it was not born but “grewed”—was in the first blush of its young fame, and the plenitude of its unmistakable power. Mr. Balfour was the final recruit, filling orderly minds with a secret sense and satisfaction that the Fourth Party were at last full four in number. But though Mr. Balfour actually took Lord Randolph's shilling, he never was recruited in the sense that Sir Henry Drummond Wolff and the gentleman then known as Mr. Gorst were. Attracted by the brilliancy of the strategy of the little Party, admiring their courage, and sharing their love of fighting, he sat with them, and ranked with them. But he conveyed to the House the idea that he was not sufficiently interested in public affairs or the business of the House to induce him to make the sacrifices indispensable to Parliamentary success.

Lord Randolph Churchill and his two right-hand men gave themselves up, mind and body, to the task they had undertaken of putting a drag upon the wheels of Mr. Gladstone's chariot drawn as it was in the session of 1880 by a magnificent majority fresh from the poll. They scorned delights, lived laborious days, and spent long nights on guard in the Commons. They literally divided the sitting into watches, and there was no hour at which one of the three was not to be found in his place below the gangway. Mr. Balfour lounged in when he had nothing else to do, or when there was promise of fun. It was evidently, according to his disposition at the time, not worth while to spoil an evening in pursuit of political or party purposes. No one looking across the House ten years ago at the languorous figure prone on the bench, the almost girlish face swiftly illumined by a winning smile, could have foreseen that here were the makings of the most resolute and successful Irish Secretary of modern times. It is odd in these days to reflect that at this period Mr. Balfour was regarded as a dilettante youth untroubled by “convictions.”

When on the formation of Lord Salisbury's government, Mr. Balfour was appointed to the post of Scottish Secretary, the nomination attracted scarcely any notice. He was “the nephew of his uncle,” and it was admitted, as disposing of a matter of no consequence, that Lord Salisbury was acting in accordance with usage in bestowing a minor office upon a young relative who was at least agreeable in manner, and not undistinguished at his university. Probably, had events gone forward with Lord Salisbury's government on ordinary lines, Mr. Balfour's opportunity might have been indefinitely deferred. The opening accidentally made for him at the Irish Office proved the pathway of a career which has already reached dizzy heights, and which, given health and average length of days, may be limited only by the Premiership.

The appointment of “young Balfour” to a position that had broken the heart and health of Mr. Forster, had whitened the hair of Sir George Trevelyan, and difficulties connected wherewith had through forty years repeatedly destroyed strong ministries, was received with general astonishment, and even in loyal ministerial circles with some perturbation. It was, truly, a tremendous experiment. But though the House of Commons did not at the time know the true Arthur Balfour, Lord Salisbury did, and all now acknowledge that his prescience has been justified.

Mr. Balfour's entrance upon his new enterprise was fraught with peculiar peril. He had undertaken the most difficult administrative post at a time when the Government were staggering under a blow, struck from within their own ranks, that threatened them with ruin. In the House of Commons Mr. Parnell's party, largely recruited at the General Election, were in aggressive mood. This was aggravated by what they chose to regard as a studied insult on the part of Lord Salisbury in setting up this stripling to wrestle with them. It was the old story over again of David and Goliath. And when the Philistine looked about him and saw David he disdained him, for he was but a youth and of a fair countenance. So Mr. Parnell, Mr. Tim Healy and Mr. William O'Brien, veterans in the Parliamentary lists, curled the lip when they looked across the House and beheld Mr. Balfour

preparing to make answer on behalf of the Lord-Lieutenant. The parallel holds good to the end. Before the session was concluded Mr. Balfour had made his mark upon it, and every one was ready to acknowledge that others had been mistaken as to the measure of capacity of Lord Salisbury's nephew.

Of late the relations between the Irish Members and the Irish Secretary have grown almost amiable, and last session the House heard incorruptible Mr. Tim Healy declare that Mr. Balfour had "greatly improved" since he took office. It has been a terrible school for a man, but it has offered incalculable benefits to one capable of surviving and profiting by its discipline. The constant necessity for interposing in debate ever imposed upon the Chief Secretary has perfected Mr. Balfour's natural gift of lucid, graceful speech. The sense of always being on guard, faced by adroit, resolute foemen, has steeled his nerve and made supple his wrist. No leader of the House of Commons ever



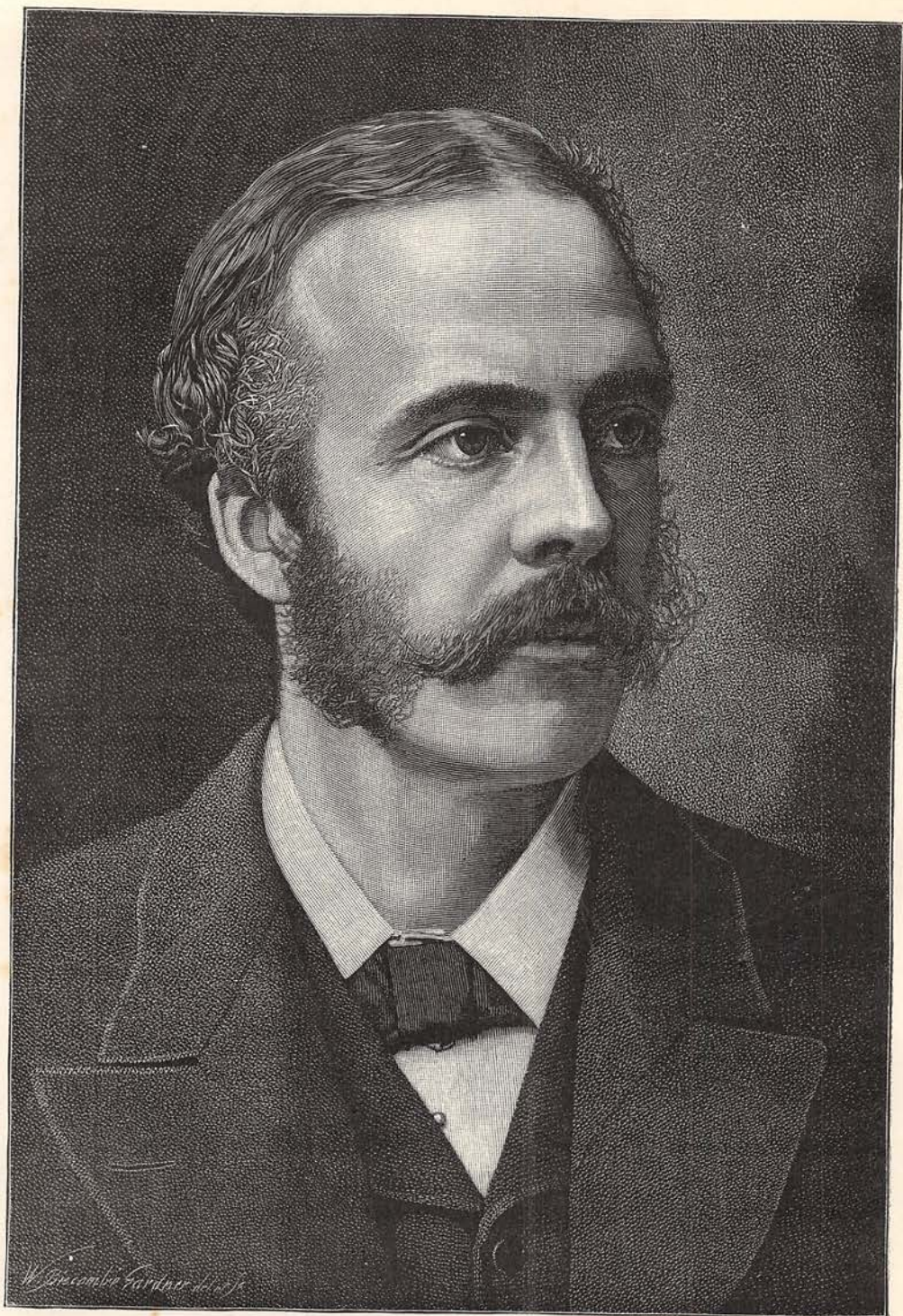
THE FOURTH PARTY. DRAWN BY LESLIE WARD.

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had a better training, and recent development of character, increasingly notable last session, gives promise that Mr. Balfour will, seated in the place of Peel and Palmerston, Disraeli and Gladstone, excel the brilliant success of his Irish Secretaryship.

Mr. Balfour varies in interesting manner the holiday habits of statesmen in private life. Lord Salisbury finds peace and rest in his laboratory at Hatfield, and is understood to be prouder of having planned and directed the works that flood Hatfield House with the electric light, than of his share in preserving the peace of Europe. Mr. Gladstone, as all the world knows, finds a healthful exercise with the woodman's axe. Mr. Balfour plays golf—"very badly," he protests, but that is only his modest way of regarding a position much esteemed on the links at Berwick and elsewhere. An accomplished musician, he is passionately fond of music. At the end of last session, whilst other wearied senators went off to moor or lake or sea to recruit their energies, Mr. Balfour sped across to Bayreuth, and spent a happy week with Wagner.

His early tendencies seemed to run in the direction of literature. Perhaps his best known book is that dealing with *Philosophic Doubt*, which is understood to be the beginning and the end of Mr. Labouchere's studies in this direction. He has several times brought it under the notice of the House of Commons, which may possibly account for the fact that in recent editions of *Do*d Mr. Balfour has withdrawn from the catalogue of his claims to public distinction reference to the authorship of the work. Even amid the growing demands of public life, the First Lord of the Treasury's heart, untrammelled, fondly turns to literature. Within the past year he has found time to write a *Treatise on Golf*, and is now engaged upon a subject of literary biography that will appeal to even a wider circle of readers.



THE RIGHT HON. ARTHUR J. BALFOUR, M.P.,
FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

ENGRAVED BY W. BISCOMBE GARDNER FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY J. RUSSELL AND SONS, 17 BAKER ST.