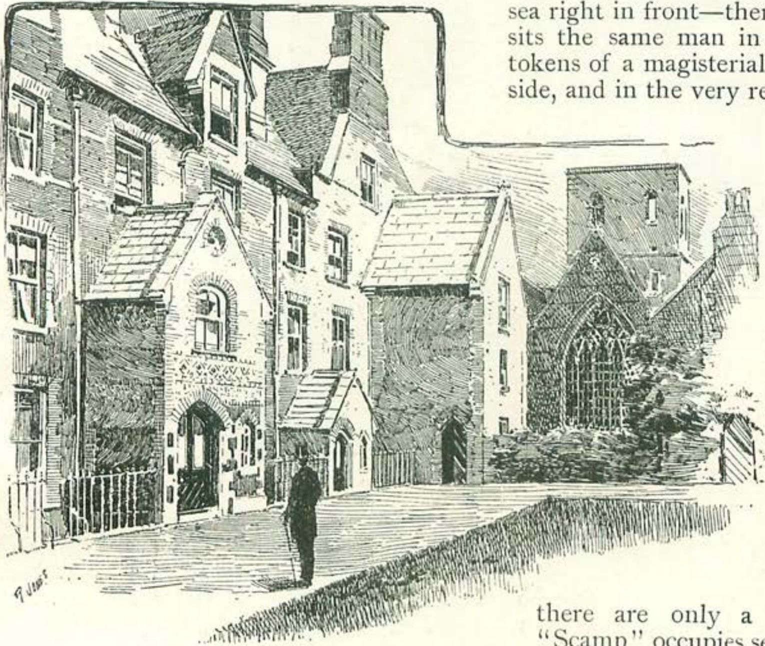
Illustrated Interviews.

No. V.—MR. MONTAGU WILLIAMS, Q.C.

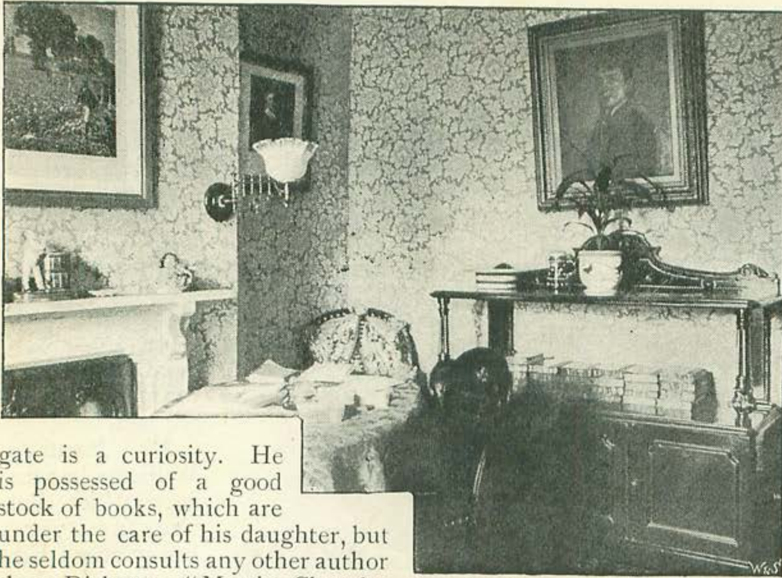


"ELLERAY."

TO start the day with breakfast with Montagu Williams, and afterwards to pass every hour intervening between meals in listening to delightful anecdotes is, to say the least of it, distinctly agreeable. Such has been my recent experience. On the West Cliffs of Ramsgate stands "Elleray," the house to which probably the most popular magistrate in London is wont to run down from Saturday to Monday, after passing a busy week in the police-court. "Elleray" is situated in a far more exhilarating corner than is the armchair of Justice. In the latter, day by day, sits a frock-coated gentleman— a man who can "see through" case by case with wonderful acuteness, yet with marked kindness to those brought before him. At "Elleray"—with its great green lawn edged with countless evergreens, its blue china boxes brimming over with golden-feather, red geraniums, and tiny bluebells, with a grand bit of sea right in front—there, on a garden-seat, sits the same man in a light suit, with all tokens of a magisterial manner cast on one side, and in the very reverse frame of mind to that of "sentencing" or "fining" the individual who, with note-book in hand, occupies the other part of the seat.

Mr. Montagu Williams has his peculiarities, but they are very happy ones. For instance, he has two dogs—of the silver Skye breed. "Roy" is his favourite, and necessarily — as there are only a couple of them—"Scamp" occupies second place in favour. Roy is Scamp's uncle. Scamp's father was a beautiful creature named Tag. Poor old Tag! He was run over in Hyde Park and killed. He was buried at Richmond. It is Roy's duty to remain at Ramsgate during the week while his master is away, whilst Scamp has to do the journey to town every Monday morning, returning on the Saturday. Mr. Williams declares with emphasis that he could not live without a dog—he loves them, and they return his affection. His library at Rams-

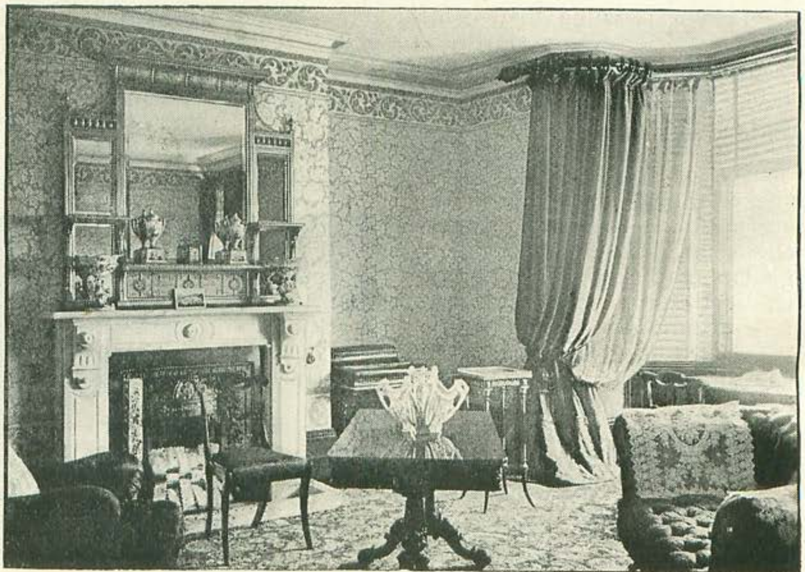
From a Photo. by] "ROY." [*Elliott & Fry.*



From a Photo. by] THE LIBRARY. [Elliott & Fry.

gate is a curiosity. He is possessed of a good stock of books, which are under the care of his daughter, but he seldom consults any other author than Dickens. "Martin Chuzzlewit" is his particular fancy. Hence the library at "Elleray" consists of a complete set of the great novelist's creations, and that only. In this apartment, over "the library" shelf, is an oil painting of his wife, who died in 1877. Over the mantelpiece is an etching, Stuart Wortley's "Partridge Shooting," exhibited in the Royal Academy. It was painted under a group of trees seen in the picture, and the great turnip field is that rented from Lady Fortescue at Burnham Beeches, by Mr. Williams. In a niche is an engraving of F. Newenham's picture of John Milton at the age of twelve, a portrait group of the Harcourt Cricket Club, of which the master of "Elleray" is president, a water colour drawing of Mrs. Keeley—whose daughter Mr. Williams married—and an engraving of Cardinal Manning. Although a Protestant, Mr. Williams attended all his Eminence's receptions of thirty years ago, and was so impressed by the Cardinal's character—although the subject of religion had never been broached between them—that one day the brilliant barrister observed to the Cardinal, "Although I am not a Romanist, if the time should come when I should be in need of spiritual advice, I would send for you."

Mr. Williams is fond of racing, and when in Newmarket is a welcome visitor at Prince Soltykoff's. Hence the hat-stand in the hall takes the shape of a horse-shoe, studded with nails in the shape of brass pegs. His drawing-room has a magnificent view of the sea from the windows. The suite is upholstered in yellow satin, as are also the curtains at the windows, and the carpet on the floor harmonises. There is some grand Dresden china, and exquisite inlaid cabinets.



From a Photo. by] THE DRAWING-ROOM. [Elliott & Fry.

A curiosity in the way of cushions rests on the sofa. It is of black satin, with the leaves of a Virginia creeper crewelled into it—the handiwork of Mrs. Keeley. She borrowed the real leaves from Mr. Burnand's daughter, who lives near by, and during a month's visit she completed the task—a very creditable one at the age of eighty-three. Next to this room is a bedroom specially kept for Mrs. Keeley whenever she visits Ramsgate. There is not a single picture on the drawing-room walls; just a photograph or two. Mr. Williams is much sought after as a god-father. Here are the children of his own daughter—Jessie Mary Richardson, wife of Colonel Richardson, now Colonel commanding the Nottingham Sherwood Foresters—a quartet of pretty youngsters, the little lad in Highland clothing being the magistrate's god-son. Mr. Williams also took vows at the font on behalf of little Jack Montagu, whose mother, Mrs. George Hillyard, carried off the lawn tennis champanionship one year, and of Cecil Montagu Ward, son of his old friend Russell, and grandson of Mrs. E. M. Ward, the celebrated artist.

The dining-room is agreeably comfortable. A signed "As You Like It," by Sir John Millais, and proofs before letters of Landseer's "Piper and Nut-Crackers," "Three Cubs," and "Midsummer's Night's Dream," were a present from Mr. Henry Graves, as a reminiscence of his successful prosecution in the noted case of piracy in photographing pictures. Here, too, is an extraordinary old print of Napoleon, and reproductions of the five pictures by W. P. Frith, constituting the "Race for Wealth." Mr. Williams points out in the trial scene at the Old Bailey excellent portraits of Baron Huddleston, Mr. Poland, Q.C., Sergeant Ballantine quietly reading a paper, Mr. George Lewis handing a barrister a brief, the Usher of the Court, and a striking likeness of Mr. Williams himself. Being educated at Eton, one necessarily finds on the walls T. M. Henry's trio of etchings, typical of school-life there: "Football at the Wall," "Calling Absence," and "Speeches in Upper School."

Mr. Williams is a member of the Orkney Cottage Rowing Club, some of the members of which are seen in photographs. One of their number is pointed out as Henry L. B. McCalmont, who stroked the Orkney Cottage "Four," and who, in the course of three years, comes into a fortune of between three and four millions sterling. Orkney Cottage, Taplow, is the seat of Mr. Edward Lawson. This is how Mr. Lawson got possession of this charming riverside retreat.

From a Photo. by] THE DINING-ROOM. [*Elliot & Fry.*

"About five and thirty years ago," said Mr. Williams, "I went down to Taplow with my wife, and saw the cottage—very different then—with a board up, 'To let—apply to Jonathan Bond, Maidenhead Bridge.' When I was at Eton during my holidays I used to play in the Maidenhead Eleven, and Jonathan Bond, a boat-builder, was a bowler in the eleven—I remember him; he bowled 'slow lobs'—with Langton, the brewer, Dicky Lovegrove, who kept 'The Bear,' and other well-known characters. I went to Bond, and asked him about the cottage. He remembered me, and advised me not to have it, as the best of reputations did not hang over its roof. But I didn't mind, so

I bought the lease, and having no cheque-book with me, made out the cheque on a slip of paper. I returned to London with the lease in my pocket. Edward Lawson then lived in Norfolk-street, Park-lane, and on his way home called on me at Upper Brooke-street. I told him of my purchase. He immediately wanted it for his boys, thinking it would be a capital place for them to come to from Eton. I couldn't resist him, so he gave me a cheque for just what I had paid in exchange for the lease. That's how Edward Lawson became possessed of one of the prettiest places along the river."

From a Photo. by] THE SITTING-ROOM, ALDFORD STREET. [*Elliott & Fry.*

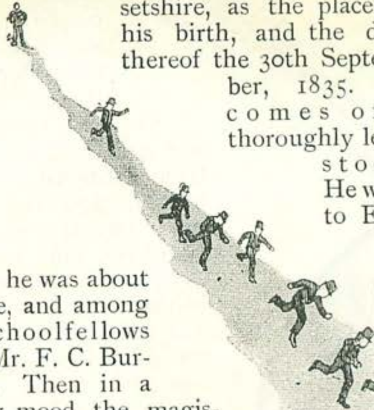
When in town Mr. Williams has a house in Aldford-street, Park-lane. The apartments are very cosy—the sitting-room a particularly inviting little corner. A pen and ink drawing by Charles Matthews is near the door. It was done whilst Mr. Williams "waited," and bears the date, July 26, 1867. Here is a picture, too, of the late Colonel Burnaby. The pair were great friends, though Mr. Williams was counsel in the Colonel's action against General Owen Williams, which, happily for the old friendship existing between them, was never tried. There are numbers of photos here—a pair of water-colours, the one of George Payne and Admiral Rous, the other of Fred Archer and Lord Falmouth. Two "Vanity Fair" sketches—one is of Douglas Straight, the present judge at Allahabad, represented with a big cigar in his mouth, the other of the magistrate himself, with a huge cigar in his hand.

My day at Ramsgate with Mr. Williams was spent for the most part in hearing hitherto unpublished anecdotes of his schoolboy days, with the noting of one or two reminiscences of his later life, and a cross-examination on a highly interesting point, which we decided, as we sat together on the garden seat, had hitherto been forgotten, namely that of how it feels to be a magistrate.

Mr. Williams is of somewhat slight build, with an eye that looks one through and through. He has a marvellous memory for dates, a wonderful faculty for telling a story, and a delightful method of doing it. He is a large-hearted man, and revels in the happy title bestowed upon him of being "the poor man's magistrate." I have watched him in Court. He is down on wife-beaters, and kindly disposed to people charged with first offences, whom he will let off if he can. The way in which he measures out justice is distinctly characteristic. He weighs the position of the delinquents in the case of a summons, and though two people may be charged with the same offence, the fine is according to their pockets. This is to be commended. I heard him fine an old lady for selling adulterated milk. He called her "a wicked old woman," and she had to pay a sovereign and costs. She had only a small trade. The next case was a similar one, but the delinquent sold twice as much milk, and forty shillings was the judgment. A man was charged with begging. He said he only wanted to get his fare to Colchester to get work there. Decision: Why should the fellow go to prison? Magistrate gave him the

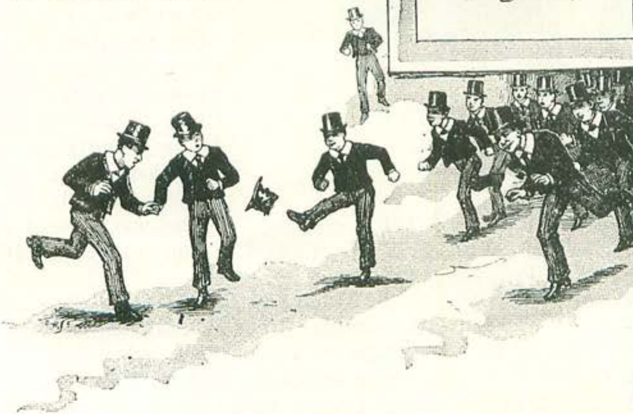
fare out of own pocket, and a policeman was told off to get his railway ticket. "But if ever you come before me again—"

Mr. Williams claims Freshford, in Somersetshire, as the place of his birth, and the date thereof the 30th September, 1835. He comes of a thoroughly legal stock. He went to Eton when he was about twelve, and among his schoolfellows was Mr. F. C. Burnand. Then in a merry mood the magistrate recalls some very happy doings there.



"When I first went to Eton," he said, "I was extremely small. Whether my fellow scholars took advantage of my size or not, I cannot say, but they certainly took advantage of my hat. For some reason or other there was a kind of passion amongst the bigger boys to turn my hat into a football. No sooner had I got a new one on than it was spotted; it was off in a minute and away it went. I can assure you I have walked about the play-fields there, with my hands in my pockets, with a hat on my head—the remains of a brim and ventilated with innumerable holes—such as a tramp would despise. Whenever one *wanted* a new hat, you had to go to your tutor, and get an order on Devereux's. I got through scores, until at last my tutor got so sick of writing me orders, that he flatly refused to give me any more, and I am perfectly serious when I tell you that I went about Eton hatless!

"I once ventured to write my name on the time-honoured walls. The late Provost there was then master of the lower division, fifth form. Now, he had a nasty knack of pretending to be asleep, and, suddenly waking up, would catch some poor pupil doing such things as should be left undone. One day we were assembled in his little room, just off the swishing room, where Hawtrey used to administer the instrument of torture. Ah! and he had a strong arm, too. I



"A TALE OF AN ETON HAT.

thought 'Goodford' asleep. I began the inscribing of my name on the walls. But he wasn't slumbering. He woke up just as I was in the middle of it.

"'Williams,' he cried, 'write out and translate your lessons three times. Writing on the wall, eh? That will be the only way in which your name will be handed down to posterity.'

"Years passed on, and when he became Provost of Eton I met him at a cricket m atch between Eton and Winchester. He shook me warmly by the hand, and congratulated me on my success in life.

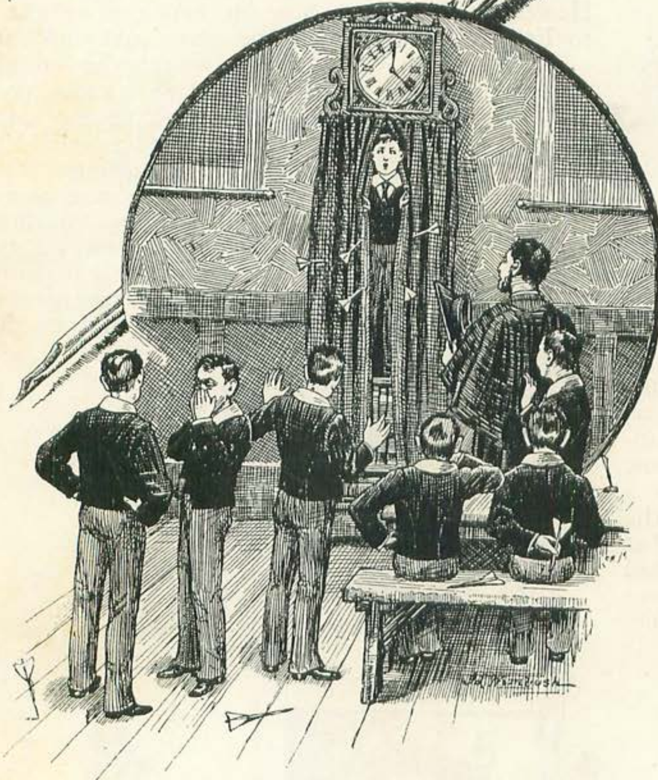
"'You haven't altered a bit,' he said.

"'I hope I have,' was my reply.

"'Why?' he asked. I told him his prediction of my writing on the wall. We had a good laugh, and he humorously said:

"'The fact is, Williams, I mistook your writing.'

"I shall never forget how the boys served me once. Really, the average small boy lives at a great disadvantage. It was one Sunday night, and happened during what was called 'private business.' On such occasions my tutor used to read Paley or some such work to us, and explain it. William Gifford Cooksley was my master, and he had a little country house at Farnham, some few miles away. He was late. Just behind the tutor's desk was a clock standing on top of a case some four feet from the ground, partly concealed by curtains. Now, there was just room for one small boy in that case, squeezed tight in, and some of the bigger boys had placed me there, and, to amuse themselves, were making arrows of their quill pens, my poor body being the bull's-eye. I was bearing the reception of these instruments of torture as well as possible when suddenly the tutor's step was heard in the corridor. There was no time to take me down, and the curtains were hurriedly drawn together by, I think, Whittingstall, now Major Whittingstall, very well known in coaching circles. Cooksley, the tutor, entered. There was a dead silence.



"PLEASE, SIR, HERE I AM!"

"He looked round to see if all were present.

"'Where is that wretched Peccator, that miserable sinner Williams?' he thundered. Think of my feelings behind the curtains when he added, ''Pon my word, I'll have the young rascal well whipped in the morning.'

"A small voice was heard to cry, as the owner thereof drew the curtains aside:

"'Please, sir, here I am!'"

"I was lifted down, and the whole room was condemned to the ordinary punishment of a hundred lines."

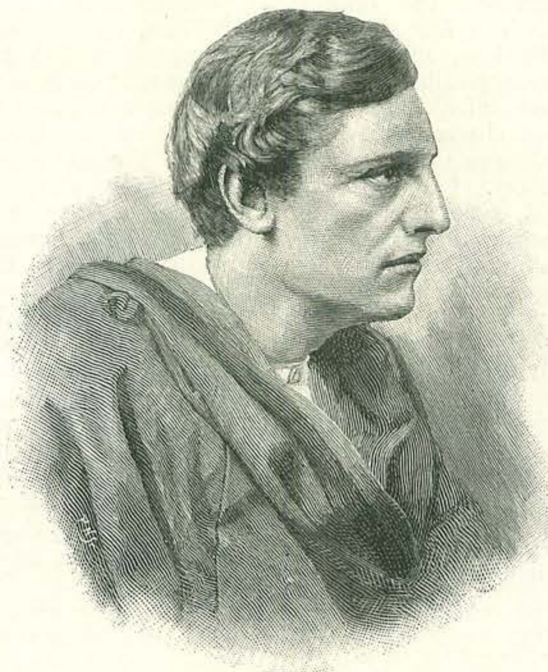
From Eton Mr. Williams went as a tutor

to Ipswich Grammar School, remaining there two years. Then he went into the South Lincoln Militia. At the opening of the Crimean War he got his hundred men to the line and so got a commission free in the 96th Regiment. From there he passed into the 41st Welsh Regiment, and, upon his corps being ordered to the West Indies, he resigned. "Starring" about the country as an actor was his next move, playing at Manchester, Brighton, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other towns. It was whilst playing at Edinburgh that he met his wife—Louise Keeley, a very gifted woman. She was "starring" at Edinburgh when he arrived, and after the company had finished their week's playing she returned again. Mr. Williams had to remain behind. About ten days after seeing her he proposed, and in six weeks they were married.

"It was on the advice of Serjeant Parry that I went to the bar," he continued. "I paid my 100 guineas, and went into the chambers of Mr. Holl, a well-known barrister, and now a County Court Judge. You know how, after having been called to the bar, I turned my attention to criminal practice. I think I was successful, for in my first year I made 600 guineas. I was always considered famous at the Bar for my quickness in dealing with cases. As a magistrate to-day I have often disposed of some 70 charges at the Thames Police-court in the morning and 40 summonses in the afternoon.

"I remember once I was conducting a long firm prosecution before the Recorder. There were over a hundred witnesses to examine. I was in the midst of "polishing off" a witness, when I overheard a barrister's clerk say, 'There he goes. He's determined to finish the case to-night. He's due at Birmingham in the morning. All right! Go it! Archer up!'

"About this time I was a member of a club called 'The Kaffirs.' We used to meet every Saturday afternoon at the Café de l'Europe. Amongst the 'Kaffirs' were such men as Douglas Jerrold, Albert Smith, Keeley, Buckstone, Ben Webster, John Povey, Dion Boucicault and John Brougham —one of the most genial men who ever lived, and, I firmly believe, the author of 'London Assurance.' This was thirty years ago. Rejlander, a well-known photographer in those days, was a member, and it was a set rule of the club that all 'Kaffirs' should be photographed by him.



From a Photo. by] "A MODERN CATO." [*Rejlander.*

"I went to him one afternoon. He took me in several positions, when suddenly he turned to me and said, 'You've got the head of a Roman. Here, take off your collar.' I did so. Then he seized the cloth off the table and threw it round me in the form of a toga. I stood for my picture. When it was printed he handed it to me and said, 'You'll never beat that as a modern Cato!'" Mr. Williams handed me the original photograph with his permission to reproduce it in these pages.

Mr. Williams tells in his "Leaves of a Life" the sad reason why he had to retire from his labours at the bar; how that whilst in the midst of his speech on behalf of a prisoner he felt his voice going, never actually to return; how that a small piece of flesh was taken from his throat, and after analysis the decision was that he could live only two or three months. An operation alone might save him—an operation rarely successfully performed. But it was successful in his case, his life was saved, but it was questionable if ever he would regain his voice. When asked, one morning,

by Sir James Paget, to try and speak, the first words he said were, "Gentlemen of the jury." After a long rest he subsequently became a metropolitan magistrate. It was on his experience as such that we talked for a long time.

"The position of a magistrate is agreeable enough," he said, "but it is very monotonous, and has its drawbacks. If you happen to be in the East End of London, your day is generally very depressing. Let me give you a day in the life of a magistrate. You arrive at the court at about ten or half-past, and the first thing you have to do is to see lunatics—not a very inspiriting beginning to the labours of the day.

"And then commences the ordinary business of the day. The first thing you do is to hear applications, and they are certain to be upon every possible complaint under which the poor suffer. They are of a very miscellaneous character. All the home troubles and wants are poured into the magisterial ear. I conceived the notion shortly after I became a magistrate that it was very unfair that these poor people's troubles should become public property, so I arranged that they should be heard before the ordinary visitors were admitted; and instead of sitting on the seat of Justice, as my colleagues do, I have an armchair brought out into the body of the court, where I give to all the use of my attention in private.

"Some of these applications are very trivial. It was only the other morning I was addressed by an angry mother, accompanied by her little girl, who complained that a boy had assaulted her child. Whilst listening to her, a man stepped up with a boy about the same age as the girl. 'My boy has a complaint, sir. She struck him first. I want a summons.' I asked the boy who struck the first blow. He said, 'She hit me first, sir,' and on questioning the girl she admitted this. I then interrogated her as to what was the cause. She replied, 'He called me names.' 'Well, what did he call you?' I asked. 'He cried out, sir, as loud as he could, "There goes Danger on the Line."' Now I was perfectly stumped as to what was the meaning of 'Danger on the Line,' so asked the mother if she could interpret these mysterious words to me. 'Oh,' she said, 'yes, sir, all the boys say that to my little girl; she suffers very much from cold, and has a very red nose from always rubbing it.'

"I think it was very hard on the poor little girl's highly-coloured nasal organ, but I told the mother it was six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. They left the Court in a more Christian-like spirit, and I have no doubt that in five minutes the father of the boy and the mother of the girl were having a friendly glass in the nearest public-house. I might mention that there is always a public-house next door or near to a police-court.

"With regard to the East End of London, the people there have great respect for a magistrate, and, as a rule, go away perfectly satisfied with the way in which their case has been dealt with, knowing that though they may often have to suffer, justice has been done.

"Then, after the hearing of these varied applications, and their name is legion, the charges are heard; and at the East End on a Monday and Tuesday, at the Thames and Worship-street police-courts, they are very heavy. You seldom get fewer than thirty or forty cases of drunkenness and disorderlies, and, perhaps, a score more cases of offences arising therefrom. These statistics principally apply to Monday and Tuesday, for as the wages are spent the cases perceptibly diminish. There is no mistake about what is the cause of nearly all the crime of the East End of London. The curse of all is drink, and I must say that the wives are often worse than the husbands. The woman often makes the first start towards breaking up the home whilst the husband is away at work. She forsakes her children and domestic cares for the bar of a ginshop, to drink with a friend, generally another female. There she passes most of the day, and when the greater portion of the husband's earnings, which in most cases is given bountifully, are spent, she goes and goes again to the pawnshop, until at last, in a state of despair, the husband, at the sacrifice of all he has in the world, thinks the publichouse not such a bad place after all, and nine men out of ten go after the wife.

"The next step in this fatal downfall is the East End lodging-house, and when once an honest working-man gets there, then comes the beginning of the end.

"At the conclusion of the charges the remands are taken, and then after a brief interval for luncheon the magistrate hears the summonses for the day. These are very varied. School-board, Excise, Revenue, removals of nuisances, sanitary, assaults, threats, wages, in fact almost every subject

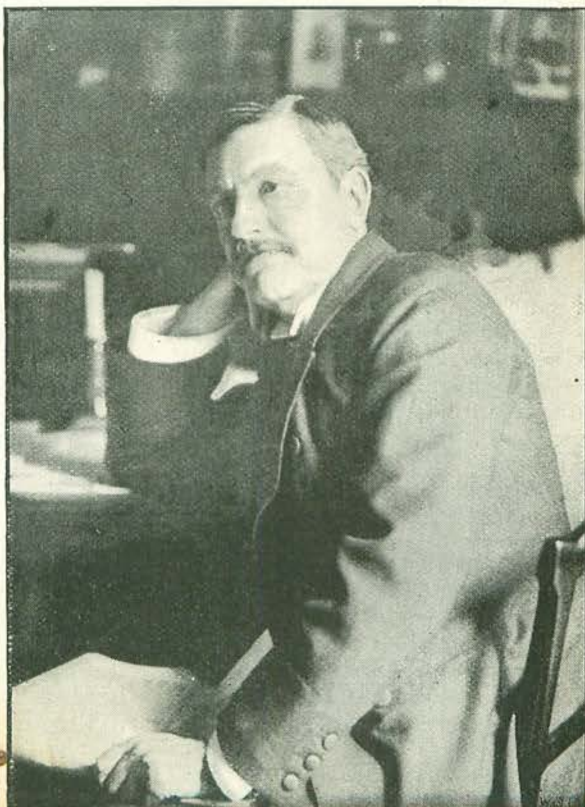
under the sun, and by the time these are exhausted so is the magistrate."

Mr. Montagu Williams has recently accepted the magisterial chair at the Marylebone police-court, in succession to the late Mr. Partridge. Referring to his connection with Worship-street and the Thames police-court, he said :—"I was extremely fond of the East End of London. I admire so much the heroic fortitude with which the poor bear misfortunes, and as I said the other day when leaving them, it was a great wrench for me to go. But under the present system it means one long, long grind of work, and, yielding to the solicitations of friends who take far more interest in me than I do myself, I determined to take a West End Court where the labour is so much lighter. The principal reason for this was that under the present system the leading magistrate of a district never sits out of his own Court ; in consequence, as junior magistrate of Worship-street I had to do all the out-door work, and for four months before my change I had been sitting five days, sometimes in three or four different Courts, a week.

"These Courts were situated miles from my house, and miles from one another. There was the Thames at Stepney, Worship-street at Finsbury-square, North London at Dalston, and Clerkenwell at King's-cross. So you can easily imagine the greater part of one's life was spent on the road. Another great drawback is that of one magistrate hearing one bit of a case, another a second, and a third finishing it.

"It has been said that two more magistrates are essential, and I think I can suggest a very easy way to the Treasury to bring this about. It is absurd to think that London in 1891 is the same as in 1821. Districts are changed, some have diminished, others greatly increased. What is needed is the re-carving out of the map of London. It would not involve the expense of the erection of new Courts, old Courts should do as they are. All that would be required would be somebody who thoroughly understands the district, say some magistrate who has sat at all, re-dividing up the boundaries. This seems to me a very economical and simple plan.

"I should just like to say that I take the greatest possible interest in the people of the East End of London. It has been said that the poor there have lost a friend. But such is not the case. If at any period when times are harder than they are at present, and I think that is a matter of impossibility, they are in need, I should be ready to aid and assist them, not as a magistrate but as a private friend. I intend to keep myself in touch with the missionary of the Court.



From a Photo. by] MR. MONTAGU WILLIAMS. *[Elliott & Fry.*

"During the three years of my life at the East End my poor-box was the largest in the metropolis, and the friends who helped me during that time will, I am perfectly certain, answer again to any appeal on behalf of the good people of the East End."

HARRY HOW.