From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

[*The first of what, it is hoped, will be a long series of articles, descriptive of the House of Commons, is here appended. The author is Mr. Henry Lucy, who has spent nearly a quarter of a century in the Press Gallery of the House, and who, in addition to much other successful journalistic work, has, in the character of "Toby, M.P.," supplied to our distinguished contemporary, "Punch," some of its most amusing sketches. "From Behind the Speaker's Chair" will be continued, and will, we believe, be looked forward to by our readers, month by month, with constant interest.*—EDITOR.]

HEU FUGACES! It is just twenty years, marked by the opening Session, since I first had the opportunity of viewing the House of Commons from a coign of 'vantage behind the Speaker's Chair. It is more than twenty years since I looked on the place with opportunity for closely studying it. But, as I am reminded by an inscription in an old rare copy of "Dod," it was in February, 1873, that I was installed in the Press Gallery in charge of the Parliamentary business of a great daily paper.

I first saw the House in circumstances that might well have led me to the Clock Tower. It was in the spring of 1869. I was passing through London, on my way to Paris, where I had proposed to myself to live for a year, master the language, and proceed thence to other capitals of Europe, learn their tongues, and return to storm the journalistic citadel in London, armed with polyglot accomplishments. Even then I had a strong drawing towards the House of Commons, but desired to see it, not as the ordinary stranger beheld it from the gallery facing the Chair, but from the Press Gallery itself.

In those days the adventure was far more difficult than in existing circumstances. The country Press was not represented save vicariously in the form of a rare London correspondent, who wrote a weekly letter for some phenomenally enterprising county paper. The aggregate of the London staffs was far smaller than at present, and was, it struck me at the time, composed almost exclusively of elderly gentlemen. The chances of detection of an unauthorized stranger (being, moreover, a beardless youth) were accordingly increased. But I was determined to see the House from behind the Speaker's Chair, and was happy in the possession of a friend as reckless as myself. He was on the staff of a morning journal, and, though not a gallery man, knew most of the confraternity.

One night he took me down to the gallery and endeavoured to induce more than one of the old stagers to pilot me in. They stared aghast at the proposal, and walked hurriedly away. We were permitted to stand at the glass door giving entrance to the gallery and peer upon the House, which struck me as being very empty. The door swung easily to and fro as the men passed in and out, taking their turn. The temptation proved irresistible.

"I think I'll go in," I said.

"Very well," dear old Walter hoarsely

OLD STAGERS.

whispered. "Turn sharp to the right, sit down on a back bench, and I daresay no one will notice you."

At the corner of the bench, presumably guarding the doorway, sat a portly gentleman in evening dress, with a gold badge slung across his abundant shirt front. He was fast asleep, and I passed along the bench, sitting down midway. At that time there were no desks in front of these back benches, which were tenantless. I suppose my heart beat tumultuously, but I sat there with apparent

FAST ASLEEP.

composure. At length I had reached the House of Commons, and eagerly gazed upon it, feeling like some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken;

> Or like stout Cortez when, with eagle eyes,
> He stared at the Pacific.

I don't know how long I sat there; probably not five minutes, certainly long enough to be struck with the smallness of the chamber, the commonplace appearance of the personages forming the historic assembly, and the perfect manner in which they dissembled their interest in current proceedings. Then I became conscious of a movement in the sunken boxes before me, where the reporters, taking their turn, sat. Heads were turned and whispered consultations took place. Someone woke up the portly gentleman, whom through many later years I knew as Steele, the chief janitor of the Press Gallery.

In time, then far off, he became the possessor of a cottage and garden in Kent, whither, wearied with his legislative labours, he used to retire from Saturday to Monday.

ROSES.

In summer-time he always brought me two or three roses, which he put in my hand with an awkward sort of flap, as if they were a slice of bacon he was depositing on a counter. That was his way of intimating that it was of no consequence. He noticed that I always comforted myself through long debates and all-night sittings with a handful of flowers set in a little glass on my desk, which was generally upset in the course of the evening by some unsympathetic reporter borrowing my box during a temporary absence, and clumsily turning round in the circumscribed space.

But that is another story. It was no flowers that Steele now brought me, but stern peremptory command to "get out!" He was unusually irate, first at having been

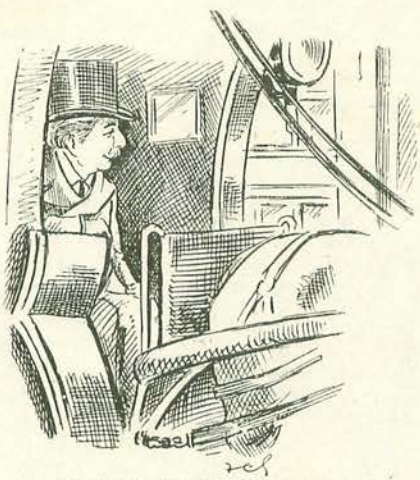
'GET OUT!"

wakened out of his sleep, and secondly at having in probably unique circumstances been caught napping at the post of duty. I went forth disconsolate, and there was a great hubbub in the dark little room outside. My friend and co-conspirator fled in affright when he saw me actually enter the gallery. Now he dropped in in a casual way, and stood at the edge of the crowd whilst Steele took down my name and address, and told me I should "hear from the Serjeant-at-Arms." I don't know whether that potentate ever communicated with me. I fancy Steele, recognising his own somewhat imperilled position, was not anxious to pursue the matter. Anyhow, I never heard from the Serjeant-at-Arms. Walter and I agreed, as a matter of precaution, that I had better

hasten my departure for Paris, and two days later the English Channel rolled between me and the Clock Tower.

Next time I entered the Press Gallery it was as the accredited representative of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. I came over from Paris to spend Christmas at home, and never went back to complete that continental tour in search of knowledge, which I fancy had been suggested by Goldsmith's trip with his flute. It happened that in the early days of 1870, the proprietor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* began the first of the series of chequered changes in the history of the journal, by starting it as a morning paper. I had been an occasional contributor in a humble way to the evening edition, and thought I might have a chance of an appointment on the staff of the new morning paper.

Mentioning this to my friend Walter, he undertook to see it through, just as he had fallen in with the even more audacious proposal to enter the Press Gallery. I remember we were not far off Northumberland Street when the subject was broached, and might easily have walked there. But Walter could never embark upon enterprises of this kind unless he went in a cab, the driver being incited to go at topmost speed.



OUTSIDE THE "PALL MALL" OFFICE.

He left me in the cab whilst he ran upstairs to the office in Northumberland Street —I saw him going two steps at a time—and flung himself into the office of Mr. Fyffe, an old and highly-esteemed member of the *Times* staff, who had joined Mr. Frederick Greenwood in the editorial direction of the new development of the *Pall Mall*. What Walter said to Fyffe I never learned in detail, but subsequently had reason to guess he told him he had in the cab downstairs a young fellow who was (or would be) one of the wonders of the journalistic world, and that the morning edition of the *Pall Mall* would have no chance unless it secured his services.

However it came about; whether Fyffe had some work in hand and was anxious to be relieved from the embarrassing presence of his visitor bounding all over the room in the enthusiasm of his advocacy; or whether, as usually happens with a new paper, choice was limited, I was engaged then and there as assistant sub-editor at the salary of four guineas a week. I believe the regular average rate of remuneration was five guineas. But I was young and inexperienced; and after living in the Quartier Latin for nearly a year on fifteenpence a day, cultivating French literature on *petits noirs*, four guineas a week was a competency. "*Trois de café*" is what Daudet in his "*Trente ans de Paris*" calls this sip of nectar. "*C'est a dire*," he explains, "*pour trois sous d'un café savoureux balsamique raisonnablement édulcoré.*" But Daudet must have frequented aristocratic quarters. At our *crèmerie* we never paid more than two sous, and, bent on attaining luxury, we demanded "*un petit noir.*"

When the paper started, Mr. Fyffe did the Parliamentary summary, of which the *Pall Mall* made a feature, placing it on the leader page. One afternoon, after I had been on the staff for some six weeks, I looked in at the office, and found it in a state of consternation. Fyffe had been suddenly taken ill, and it was impossible for him to go down to the House to do the summary. Mr. Greenwood sent for me and asked me to take his place, for that night at least. To go down to the House of Commons and take an ordinary "turn" of reporting for the first time is, I suppose, a trying thing. To be bundled off at an hour's notice to fill the place of one of the most eminent Parliamentary writers of the day, and to supply a leading article on a subject of the surroundings of which one was absolutely ignorant, might seem appalling. It all came very naturally to me. I did my best in the strange, somewhat bewildering, circumstances, and as long as the morning edition of the *Pall Mall* lasted, I continued to write its summary. Fyffe came round again in a week; but he never more took up the summary, leaving it in my hands, with many words of kind encouragement.

It was in October, 1872, I joined the staff of the *Daily News*, having, under Mr. Robinson's watchful eye, gone through a

period of probation as contributor of occasional articles descriptive of current events. I might, in the ordinary course of events, have continued in that line, as my friend and colleague Senior has done these twenty years, with honour to himself and credit to the paper. But here, again, chance befell and irresistibly led me back to the Press Gallery. In this very year a change took place in a long-standing management of the *Daily News* Parliamentary corps and the writing of its summary, and Mr. Robinson designated me as successor of the gentleman who retired. It was a curious and, in some respects, a delicate position, seeing that I was, compared with some members of the staff, a mere chicken in point of age. There were three who had been on the paper since it started, any one of whom might, had Fortune favoured me in that direction, have been my grandfather. But we got along admirably, they easing my path with kindly counsel and the friendliest consideration.

MR. ROBINSON.

THREE OLD MEN.

It was different with some of the old hands on the other corps, who bitterly resented the intrusion. I am not quite sure whether the two or three who still survive have got over it yet. Certainly old "Charlie" Ross, then and for some years after manager of the *Times* staff, carried the feeling to his honoured grave. After I had sat next but one to him in the gallery for many Sessions he used, on encountering me in the passage, to greet me with a startled expression, as if I were once more an intruder, and would walk back to the outer doorkeeper (whom he autocratically called Smeeth, because his name was Wright) to ask, "Who's that?"

Old Ross's personal affront in this matter probably dated back to the Session of 1872, when I took an occasional turn for a friend who was a member of his staff. This was young Latimer, son of the proprietor of the *Western Daily Mercury*, who had been called to the Bar and occasionally got a brief on the Western Circuit. When he went out of town I became his substitute in respect of his Parliamentary duties. It was Mr. Ross's custom of an afternoon to seat himself on the bench in the ante-chamber of the Press Gallery, armed with a copy of the *Times* report of the day, with the "turns" all marked with the name of the man who had written them. He genially spent the morning in reading the prodigious collocation in search of errors. When found, these were made a note of, the guilty person was sent for and had a more or less pleasant quarter of an hour. This was called being "on the gridiron."

I had only one experience of the process. Seated one day by command beside this terrible old gentleman, he produced the marked passage containing one of my turns, and pointing to the name, Mr. Ward Hunt, fixed a glowering eye on me and said, with his slow intonation:—

"Who is 'Mr. Ward Hunt'?"

"He is the member for North Northamptonshire," I timidly replied.

"Oh!" he said, witheringly, "that's whom you mean. 'Ward Hunt'! Let me tell you, sir, Ward Hunt may do very well for the penny papers, but in the *Times* report we write 'Mr. W. Hunt.'"

I don't know why this should have been, since the burly gentleman, who in the next Parliament was Chancellor of the Exchequer, was invariably called by his full style. But then, as I have said, nobody knew why old "Charlie" Ross dubbed Wright Smith, and pronounced it Smeeth.

Gentlemen of the Press Gallery who now live at Westminster at ease, with their library, their smoking-room, their choice of writing-out rooms, their admirably-appointed and self-administered commissariat department, little know the state of things that existed twenty years ago. Committee Room No. 18 had then recently been appointed to their use

as a writing-room, providing it were not, when the House met, still in the occupation of a Committee. But the writing-out rooms originally apportioned, and then still in constant use, were two dark, ill-ventilated dens which served as ante-chambers from the Press Gallery. The *Times* staff appropriated the room to the right, still occupied by their telephonic service; the corresponding room to the left being for general use. The room at the top of the stairs—where Wright still presides and entrances the telegraph messengers with sententious remarks on political, social, and philosophic affairs—was

SMEETH.

also used for writing-out purposes, if a man could find a corner at the table at which to sit.

This was difficult, since this closet, not bigger than a boot-room in an ordinary household, was also sole dining-room attached to the Press Gallery. In addition to his official duties at the door, Wright, in his private capacity, added those of purveyor. Every Monday he brought down (in two red cotton pocket-handkerchiefs, it was profanely said) a round of cold boiled beef and a chunk of boiled ham; the latter tending, if memory serves, rather towards the shank end. This, with bread, cheese, and bottled beer, was the sole provision for the sustenance of the sixty or seventy gentlemen who then composed the corps of the Press Gallery. At that time it was more widely the practice to go out to dinner or supper. But for those whose duties kept them in close attendance on the gallery there was nothing for it but cold beef, cold ham, or an amalgamation carefully doled forth. Many a night,

CUTTING THE BEEF.

seated at the little table that still remains in this outer room, I have watched Wright prepare my sumptuous repast. He was even then short-sighted, and to this day I have vivid recollection of the concern with which I saw his nose approach to dangerous contiguity of the round of beef as he leaned over it to cut a slice with judicious thinness.

Even this accommodation was regarded askance by the constitutional authorities of the House, still accustomed to regard the Press as an intruder happily subject, under the beneficent regulations of the Stuart days, to instant expulsion if any member pleased

LORD CHARLES RUSSELL.

to take note of the presence of its representatives. In 1867, a Committee sat to consider the general arrangements of the House. The reporters, greatly daring, took the opportunity of laying before it a statement of their grievances, and asked for fuller convenience for carrying on their work. Lord Charles Russell, then Serjeant-at-Arms, was, very properly, astonished at their unreasonableness, and plaintively deplored the times when, as he put it, reporters seemed to require only the necessaries of life, not presuming to lift their eyes to its luxuries.

MR. DAVID PLUNKET.

"They used, I am told," Lord Charles added, "to have just a glass of water and biscuits, or anything of that sort. Now they have their tea at the back of the gallery."

Oliver Twist asking for more scarcely reached the height of the audacity of these reporters in 1867. Like Mr. Bumble, the Serjeant-at-Arms of the day literally gasped in dismayed astonishment.

All this is changed. Thanks to the courtesy and reasonableness of successive First Commissioners of Works, of whom Mr. David Plunket was not the least forward in doing good, the arrangements in connection with the Press Gallery of to-day leave nothing to be desired.

Of the changes that have taken place in the House itself, and of the ghosts that flit about the benches where twenty years ago they sat in flesh and bone, I shall have something to say next month.

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

II.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

LOOKING round the House of Commons now gathered for its second Session, one is struck by the havoc death and other circumstances have made with the assembly that filled the same chamber twenty years ago, when I first looked on from behind the Speaker's Chair. Parliament, like the heathen goddess, devours its own children. But the rapidity with which the process is completed turns out on minute inquiry to be a little startling. Of the six hundred and seventy members who form the present House of Commons, how many does the Speaker suppose sat with him in the Session of 1873?

Mr. Peel himself was then in the very prime of life, had already been eight years member for Warwick, and by favour of his father's old friend and once young disciple, held the office of Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade. Members, if they paid any attention to the unobtrusive personality seated at the remote end of the Treasury Bench, never thought the day would come when the member for Warwick would step into the Chair and rapidly establish a reputation as the best Speaker of modern times.

THE SPEAKER.

I have a recollection of seeing Mr. Peel stand at the table answering a question connected with his department; but I noticed him only because he was the youngest son of the great Sir Robert Peel, and was a striking contrast to his brother Robert, a flamboyant personage who at that time filled considerable space below the gangway.

SIR ROBERT PEEL.

In addition to Mr. Peel there are in the present House of Commons exactly fifty-one members who sat in Parliament in the Session of 1873—fifty-two out of six hundred and fifty-eight as the House of that day was numbered. Ticking them off in alphabetical order, the first of the Old Guard, still hale and enjoying the respect and esteem of members on both sides of the House, is Sir Walter Barttelot. As Colonel Barttelot he was known to the Parliament of 1873. But since then, to quote a phrase he has emphatically reiterated in the ears of many Parliaments, he has "gone one step farther," and become a baronet.

SIR W. BARTTELOT.

This tendency to forward movement seems to have been hereditary; Sir Walter's father, long honourably known as Smyth, going "one step farther" and assuming the name of Barttelot. Colonel Barttelot did not loom large in the Parliament of 1868-74, though he was always ready to do sentry duty on nights when the House was in Committee on the Army Estimates. It was the Parliament of 1874-80, when the air was full of rumours of war, when Russia and Turkey clutched each other by the throat at Plevna, and when the House of Commons, meeting for ordinary business, was one night startled by news that the Russian Army was at the gates of Constantinople—it was then Colonel Barttelot's military experience (chiefly gained in discharge of his duties as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Second Battalion Sussex Rifle Volunteers) was lavishly placed at the disposal of the House and the country.

When Disraeli was going out of office he made the Colonel a baronet, a distinction the more honourable to both since Colonel Barttelot, though a loyal Conservative, was never a party hack.

Sir Michael Beach sat for East Gloucestershire

in 1873, and had not climbed higher up the Ministerial ladder than the Under Secretaryship of the Home Department. Another Beach, then as now in the House, was the member for North Hants. William Wither Bramston Beach is his full style. Mr. Beach has been in Parliament thirty-six years, having through that period uninterruptedly represented his native county, Hampshire. That is a distinction he shares with few members to-day, and to it is added the privilege of being personally the obscurest man in the Commons. I do not suppose there are a hundred men in the House to-day who at a full muster could point out the member for Andover. A close attendance upon Parliament through twenty years necessarily gives me a pretty intimate knowledge of members. But I not only do not know Mr. Beach by sight, but never heard of his existence till, attracted by the study of relics of the Parliament elected in 1868, I went through the list.

MR. W. W. B. BEACH.

Another old member still with us is Mr. Michael Biddulph, a partner in that highly-respectable firm, Cocks, Biddulph, and Co. Twenty years ago Mr. Biddulph sat as member for his native county of Hereford, ranked as a Liberal and a reformer, and voted for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church and other measures forming part of Mr. Gladstone's policy. But political events with him, as with some others, have moved too rapidly, and now he, sitting as member for the Ross Division of the county, votes with the Conservatives.

MR. A. H. BROWN.

Mr. Jacob Bright is still left to us, representing a division of the city for which he was first elected in November, 1867. Mr. A. H. Brown represents to-day a Shropshire borough, as he did twenty years ago. I do not think he looks a day older than when he sat for Wenlock in 1873. But though then only twenty-nine, as the almanack reckons, he was a middle-aged young man with whom it was always difficult to connect associations of a cornetcy in the 5th Dragoon Guards, a post of danger which family tradition persistently assigns to him. Twenty years ago the House was still struggling with the necessity of recognising a Mr. Campbell-Bannerman. In 1868, one Mr. Henry Campbell had been elected member for the Stirling Districts. Four years later, for reasons, it is understood, not unconnected with a legacy, he added the name of Bannerman to his patronymic. At that time, and till the dissolution, he sat on the Treasury Bench as Financial Secretary to the War Office.

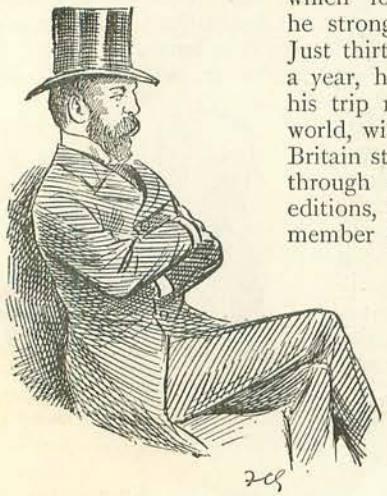
MR. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN.

Mr. Henry Chaplin is another member, happily still left to us, who has, over a long space of years, represented his native county. It was as member for Mid-Lincolnshire he entered the House of Commons at the memorable general election of 1868, the fate of the large majority of his colleagues impressing upon him at the epoch a deeply rooted dislike of Mr. Gladstone and all his works.

MR. HENRY CHAPLIN.

Mr. Jeremiah James Colman, still member for Norwich, has sat for that borough since February, 1871, and has preserved, unto this last, the sturdy Liberalism imbued with which he embarked on political life. When he entered the House he made the solemn record that J. J. C. "does not consider the recent Reform Bill as the end at which we should rest." The Liberal Party has marched far since then, and the great Norwich manufacturer has always mustered in the van.

In the Session of 1873, Sir Charles Dilke had but lately crossed the threshold of manhood, bearing his days before him, and possibly viewing the brilliant career through which for a time he strongly strode. Just thirty, married a year, home from his trip round the world, with Greater Britain still running through successive editions, the young member for Chelsea had the ball at his feet. He had lately kicked it with audacious eccentricity. Two years earlier he had made his speech in Committee of Supply on the Civil List. If such an address were delivered in the coming Session it would barely attract notice any more than does a journey to America in one of the White Star Liners. It was different in the case of Columbus, and in degree Sir Charles Dilke was the Columbus of attack on the extravagance in connection with the Court.



SIR CHARLES DILKE.

What he said then is said now every Session, with sharper point, and even more uncompromising directness, by Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Storey, and others. It was new to the House of Commons twenty-two years ago, and when Mr. Auberon Herbert (to-day a sedate gentleman, who writes good Tory letters to the *Times*) seconded the motion in a speech of almost hysterical vehemence, there followed a scene that stands memorable even in the long series that succeeded it in the following Parliament. Mr. James Lowther was profoundly moved; whilst as for Mr. Cavendish Bentinck, his feelings of loyalty to the Throne were so overwrought that, as was recorded at the time, he went out behind the Speaker's chair, and crowed thrice. Amid the uproar, someone, anticipating the action of Mr. Joseph Gillis Biggar on another historic occasion, "spied strangers." The galleries were cleared, and for an hour there raged throughout the House a wild scene. When the doors were opened and the public readmitted, the Committee was found placidly agreeing to the vote Sir Charles Dilke had challenged.

Mr. George Dixon is one of the members for Birmingham, as he was twenty years ago, but he wears his party rue with a difference. In 1873 he caused himself to be entered in "Dod" as "an advanced Liberal, opposed to the ratepaying clause of the Reform Act, and in favour of an amendment of those laws which tend to accumulate landed property." Now Mr. Dixon has joined "the gentlemen of England," whose tendency to accumulate landed property shocks him no more.

MR. GEORGE DIXON.

Sir William Dyke was plain Hart Dyke in '73; then, as now, one of the members for Kent, and not yet whip of the Liberal Party, much less Minister of Education. Mr. G. H. Finch also then, as now, was member for Rutland, running Mr. Beach close for the prize of modest obscurity.

SIR W. HART DYKE.

In the Session of 1873 Mr. Gladstone was Prime Minister, sixty-four years of age, and wearied to death. I well remember him seated on the Treasury Bench in those days, with eager face and restless body. Sometimes, as morning broke on the long, turbulent sitting, he let his head fall back on the bench, closing his eyes and seeming to sleep; the worn face the while taking on ten years of added age. In the last two Sessions of the Salisbury Parliament he often looked younger than he had done eighteen or nineteen years earlier. Then, as has happened to him since, his enemies were those of his own household. This Session —of 1873—saw the birth of the Irish University Bill, which broke the power of the strongest Ministry that had ruled in England since the Reform Bill.

Mr. Gladstone introduced the Bill himself, and though it was singularly intricate, he within the space of three hours not only made it clear from preamble to schedule, but had talked over a predeterminedly hostile House into believing it would do well to accept it. Mr. Horsman, not an emotional person, went home after listening to the speech, and wrote a glowing letter to the *Times*, in which he hailed Mr. Gladstone and the Irish University Bill as the most notable of the recent dispensations of a beneficent Providence. Later, when the Tea-room teemed with cabal, and revolt rapidly spread through the Liberal host, presaging the defeat of the Government, Mr. Horsman, in his most solemn manner, explained away this letter to a crowded and hilarious House. The only difference between him and seven-eighths of Mr. Gladstone's audience was that he had committed the indiscretion of putting pen to paper whilst he was yet under the spell of the orator, the others going home to bed to think it over.

MR. GLADSTONE.

On the eve of a new departure, once more Premier, idol of the populace, and captain of a majority in the House of Commons, Mr. Gladstone's thoughts may peradventure turn to those weary days twenty years dead. He would not forget one Wednesday afternoon when the University Education Bill was in Committee, and Mr. Charles Miall was speaking from the middle of the third bench below the gangway. The Nonconformist conscience then, as now, was a ticklish thing. It had been pricked by too generous provision made for an alien Church, and Mr. Miall was solemnly, and with indubitable honest regret, explaining how it would be impossible for him to support the Government. Mr. Gladstone listened with lowering brow and face growing ashy pale with anger. When plain, commonplace Mr. Miall resumed his seat, Mr. Gladstone leaped to his feet with torpedoic action and energy. With voice stinging with angry scorn, and with magnificent gesture of the hand, designed for the cluster of malcontents below the gangway, he besought the honourable gentleman "in Heaven's name" to take his support elsewhere. The injunction was obeyed. The Bill was thrown out by a majority of three, and though, Mr. Disraeli wisely declining to take office, Mr. Gladstone remained on the Treasury Bench, his power was shattered, and he and the Liberal party went out into the wilderness to tarry there for six long years.

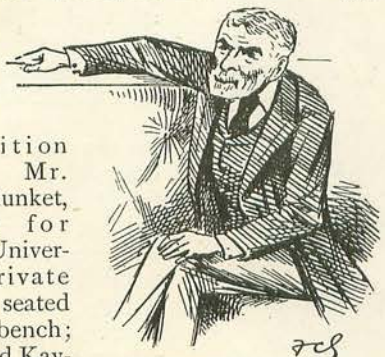
To this catastrophe gentlemen at that time respectively known as Mr. Vernon Harcourt and Mr. Henry James appreciably contributed. They worried Mr. Gladstone into dividing between them the law offices of the Crown. But this turn of affairs came too late to be of advantage to the nation. The only reminders of that episode in their political career are the title of knighthood and a six months' salary earned in the recess preceding the general election of 1874.

Mr. Disraeli's keen sight recognised the game being played on the Front Bench below the gangway, where the two then inseparable friends sat shoulder to shoulder. "I do not know," he slyly said, one night when the Ministerial crisis was impending, "whether the House is yet to regard the observations of the hon. member for Oxford (Vernon Harcourt) as carrying the authority of a Solicitor-General!"

Of members holding official or ex-official positions who will gather in the House of Commons this month, and who were in Parliament in 1873, are Mr. Goschen, then First Lord of the Admiralty, and Liberal member for the City of London; Lord George Hamilton, member for Middlesex, and not yet a Minister; Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, member for Reading, and Secretary to the Admiralty; Mr. J. Lowther, not yet advanced beyond the Secretaryship of the Poor Law Board, and that held only for a few months pending the Tory rout in 1868; Mr. Henry Matthews,

"MEMBER FOR DUNGARVAN."

then sitting as Liberal member for Dungarvan, proud of having voted for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1869; Mr. Osborne Morgan, not yet on the Treasury Bench; Mr. Mundella, inseparable from Sheffield, then sitting below the gangway, serving a useful apprenticeship for the high office to which he has since been called; George Otto Trevelyan, now Sir George, then his highest title to fame being the Competition Wallah; Mr. David Plunket, member for Dublin University, a private member seated on a back bench; Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth, just married, interested in the "First Principles of Modern Chemistry"; and Mr. Stansfeld, President of the Local Government Board, the still rising hope of the Radical party.



SIR GEORGE TREVELYAN.

Members of the Parliament of 1868 in the House to-day, seated on back benches above or below the gangway, are Colonel Gourley, inconsolable at the expenditure on Royal yachts; Mr. Hanbury, as youthful-looking as his contemporary, ex-Cornet Brown, is aged; Mr. Staveley Hill, who is reported to possess an appreciable area of the American Continent; Mr. Illingworth, who approaches the term of a quarter of a century's unobtrusive but useful Parliamentary service; Mr. Johnston, still of Ballykilbeg, but no longer a Liberal, as he ranked twenty years ago; Sir John Kennaway, still towering over his leaders from a back bench above the gangway; Sir Wilfrid Lawson, increasingly wise, and not less gay than of yore; Mr. Lea, who has gone over to the enemy he faced in 1873; Sir John Lubbock, who, though no sluggard, still from time to time goes to the ants; Mr. Peter M'Lagan, who has succeeded Sir Charles Forster as Chairman of the Committee on Petitions; Sir John Mowbray, still, as in 1873, "in favour of sober, rational, safe, and temperate progress," and meanwhile voting against all Liberal measures; Sir Richard Paget, model of the old-fashioned Parliament man; Sir John Pender, who, after long exile, has returned to the Wick Burghs; Mr. T. B. Potter, still member for Rochdale, as he has been these twenty-seven years; Mr. F. S. Powell, now Sir Francis; Mr. William Rathbone, still, as in times of yore, "a decided Liberal"; Sir Matthew White Ridley, not yet Speaker; Sir Bernard Samuelson, back again to Banbury Cross; Mr. J. C. Stevenson, all these years member for South Shields; Mr. C. P. Villiers, grown out of Liberalism into the Fatherhood of the House; Mr. Hussey Vivian, now Sir Hussey; Mr. Whitbread, supremely sententious, courageously commonplace; and Colonel Saunderson.

SIR W. LAWSON.

SIR J. MOWBRAY.

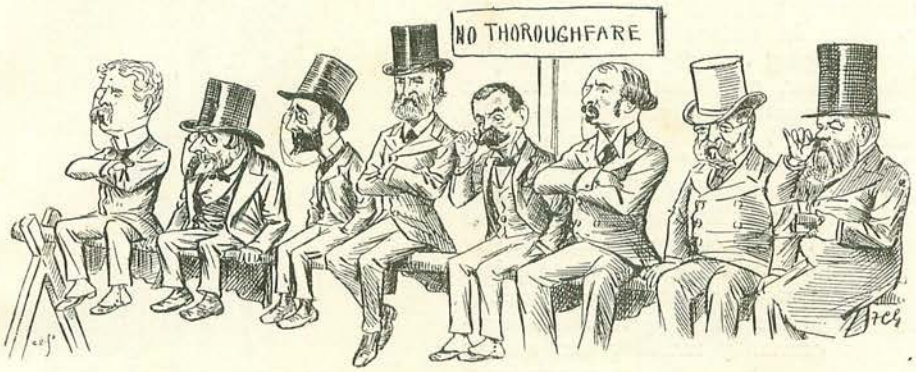
But here there seems a mistake. There was an Edward James Saunderson in the Session of 1873 as there is one in the Session of 1893. But Edward James of twenty years ago sat for Cavan, ranked as a Liberal, and voted with Mr. Gladstone, which the Colonel Saunderson of to-day certainly does not. Yet, oddly enough, both date their election addresses from Castle Saunderson, Belturbet, Co. Cavan.

COLONEL SAUNDERSON.

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

III.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)



"OBSTRUCTION."

IT is thirteen years since a new Parliament last blithely started on its way with Mr. Gladstone sitting in the seat of the Premier. Since March, 1880, a great deal has happened, not least in the change of circumstances under which the business of the House of Commons is conducted. The majority of the House of Commons may be Liberal or Conservative, according to a passing flood of conviction on the part of the constituencies. When presumptuous hands are stretched forth to touch the Ark of its procedure, its instincts are all Tory. For more than two hundred years preceding the advent of a Tory Ministry in 1886, this was so. Mr. Gladstone, driven to desperation in the second Session of the Parliament of 1880–5, endeavoured to reform procedure so that obstruction might be fought on even terms. He was met by such resolute and persistent opposition from the Conservative side that, even with an overwhelming majority at his back, he succeeded only in tinkering the pot. Oddly enough, it was left for the Conservatives when they came into office to revolutionize the system upon which, through the ages, Parliamentary business had been carried on.

There was nothing in the reforms more startling to the old Parliamentarian than the proposal automatically to close debate at midnight. A dozen years ago members of the House of Commons assembled at four o'clock for prayers. Questions began at half-past four, and no one could say at what hour of the night or of the next morning the cry "Who goes home?" might echo through the lobby. In those days Mr. O'Donnell was master of the situation, and he had many imitators. A debate carried on through several nights might seem to be approaching a conclusion. The Leader of the Opposition, rising between eleven o'clock and midnight, spoke in a crowded House. The Premier, or his lieutenant, followed, assuming to wind up the debate. Members wearied of the long sitting were prepared to go forth to the division lobby; when from below the gangway on the left there uprose a familiar figure, and there was heard a well-known voice.

These usually belonged to Mr. O'Donnell

F. H. O'DONNELL.

bent upon vindicating the right of a private member to interpose when the constituted authorities of the House had agreed in the opinion that a debate had been continued long enough. A roar of execration from the fagged legislators greeted the intruder. He expected this, and was in no degree perturbed. In earliest practice he had a way of dropping his eye-glass as if startled by the uproar, and searched for it with puzzled, preoccupied expression, apparently debating with himself what this outburst might portend. He did not love the British House of Commons, and delighted in thwarting its purposes. But he knew what was due to it in the way of respect, and, however angry passions might rise, however turbulent the scene, he would never address it looking upon it with the naked eye. As his eye-glass was constantly tumbling out, and as search for it was preternaturally deliberate, it played an appreciable part in the prolongation of successive Sessions.

"EYE-GLASS PLAY."

What has become of Frank Hugh now, I wonder? Vanishing from the House of Commons, he reappeared for a while on the scene, characteristically acting the part of the petrel that heralded the storm Mr. Pigott ineffectively tried to ride. It must be a consolation to Mr. O'Donnell, in his retirement, wherever it is passed, to reflect on the fact that it was he who directly brought about the appointment of the Parnell Commission, with all it effected. His action for libel brought against the *Times* preluded and inevitably led up to the formal investigation of the famous Charges and Allegations.

The member for Dungarvan was, in his day, the most thoroughly disliked man in the House of Commons, distaste for Mr. Parnell and for Mr. Biggar in his early prime being softened by contrast with his subtler provocation. An exceedingly clever debater, he was a phrase maker, some of whose epigrams Mr. Disraeli would not have disowned. He was a parliamentary type of ancient standing, and apparently ineradicable growth. In the

O'DONNELL'S LAST APPEARANCE.

present House of Commons fresh developments are presented by Mr. Seymour Keay and Mr. Morton. These are distinct varieties, but from the unmistakable root. Both are gifted with boundless volubility, unhampered by ordinary considerations of coherency and cogency. Neither is influenced by that sense of the dread majesty of the House of Commons which keeps some members dumb all through their parliamentary life, and to the last, as in the case of Mr. Bright, weighs upon even great orators. The difference between the older and the new development is that whilst over Mr. O'Donnell's intentional and deliberate vacuity of speech there gleamed frequent flashes of wit, Mr. Morton and Mr. Keay are only occasionally funny, and then the effect was undesigned.

MR. SEYMOUR KEAY.

Since we have these two gentlemen still with us, it would be rash to say that if Mr. O'Donnell could revisit the glimpses of Big Ben he would find his occupation gone. He would certainly discover that his opportunities had

MR. A. C. MORTON.

been limited, and would have to recommence practice under greatly altered conditions. One of the former member for Dungarvan's famous achievements took place in the infancy of the Parliament of 1880–5, and, apart from its dramatic interest, is valuable as illustrating the change effected in parliamentary procedure by the New Rules. On that particular June night the paper was loaded with questions in a fashion unfamiliar in the last Parliament, though there are not lacking signs of renewed activity since political parties changed places. Question No. 23 stood in the name of Mr. O'Donnell, and contained in his best literary style a serious indictment of M. Challemel-Lacour, just nominated by the French Government as their representative at the Court of St. James.

Sir Charles Dilke, then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, made categorical reply, directly traversing all the points in the indictment. When he resumed his seat Mr. O'Donnell rose in his usual deliberate manner, captured his eye-glass, and having fixed it to his satisfaction, remarked in his drawling voice that it was "perfectly impossible to accept the explanation of the Government." Being interrupted with cries of "Order! Order!" he quietly played his trump card: "If I am not allowed to explain," he said, "I will conclude with a motion."

The House howled again, but it was a cry of despair. Mr. O'Donnell, they knew, had the whip hand. In those good old days he, or any other member desiring to obstruct ordinary procedure, might, in the middle of questions, start a debate on any subject under the sun. This and other outrages were doubtless recalled by the House of Commons when revising its Rules. It then ordered that no member might, during the progress of questions, interpose with a motion on which to found debate. If, in this current month of March, Mr. O'Donnell, being a member of the House of Commons, had wanted to attack M. Challemel-Lacour, he must needs have waited till the last question on the paper was disposed of, and could then have moved the adjournment only if his description of the question—as one of urgent public importance — was approved by the Speaker, and if, thereafter, forty members rose to support the request for a hearing.

In June, 1880, all that was left for the crowded House to do was to roar with resentment. Mr. O'Donnell was used to this incentive, and had it been withheld would probably have shown signs of failing vigour. As it was, he produced a pocket-handkerchief, took down his eye-glass and carefully polished it, whilst members yelled and tossed about on their seats with impotent fury. Under the existing Rules this scene, if it had ever opened, would have been promptly blotted out. The closure would have been moved, probably a division taken, and the business of the evening would have gone forward. There was no closure in those days, and Mr. Gladstone, after hurried consultation with Sir Erskine May, hastily moved that Mr. O'Donnell be not heard.

A shout of savage exultation rising from every bench, save those on which the Irish members sat, hailed a stroke that promised to deliver the House from the thraldom of Mr. O'Donnell at the very moment when its chains had taken a final twist. In ordinary circumstances this resolution would have played the part of the as yet unconsecrated closure. A division would have followed, the motion carried by an overwhelming majority, and Mr. O'Donnell would have been temporarily shut up.

But those were not ordinary times. The Fourth Party was in the prime of its vigour. Lord Randolph Churchill's quick eye discovered an

SIR CHARLES DILKE.

opening for irritating Mr. Gladstone and damaging the Government by making what should have been a business night one long turmoil. Mr. Parnell, whilst disclaiming any personal sympathy with Mr. O'Donnell, moved the adjournment of the debate, and poor, placid Sir Stafford Northcote, egged on by the young bloods below the gangway, raised various points of order. Finally,

STIRRING UP SIR STAFFORD.

at eight o'clock, the House dividing on Mr. Parnell's amendment, Sir Stafford Northcote voted with the Irish members, leading a hundred men of the Party of Law and Order into the same lobby.

Hour after hour the riot continued. At one time blameless Sir William Harcourt, then Home Secretary, appearing at the table, a Conservative member, amid tumultuous shouts, moved that he be not heard. When members grew tired of shouting at each other they divided on fresh motions for the adjournment, and it was not till one o'clock on the following morning that Mr. O'Donnell, grateful for a pleasant evening, was good enough to undertake that before he recurred to the question he would give due notice, so that the Speaker might exercise his discretion in revising its terms. At five minutes past one in the morning, after a wrangle full eight hours long, the Speaker, with a pretty assumption of nothing particular having happened, called on the next question on the paper, which was Number 24.

All this might happen again on any night of this month save for the beneficent action of the New Rules a long-suffering Parliament was finally induced to adopt. On the threshold of a new Parliament it is useful to recall the scene as an assistance in calculating what may be accomplished by the Parliament elected in 1892, as compared with that which began its history in 1880. On the face of it, Parliament to-day has much less time at its disposal for the accomplishment of work than it had a dozen years ago. Then, the duration of a sitting was indefinite. The House might, as it did in February, 1881, meet at four o'clock on a Monday afternoon and sit continuously till Wednesday morning. Now, the Speaker takes the Chair at three o'clock; public business commences at half-past three; and at midnight, save in cases where the Standing Order has been formally suspended, the Speaker leaves the Chair, and the House adjourns, whoever may be on his feet.

The influence of this automatic procedure is beneficially felt throughout the whole of debate. One wholesome influence works in the direction of using up the early hours of the sitting, an arrangement which carries comfort to countless printing offices and editorial sanctums. Some time before the New Rules came into operation, Mr. Gladstone discovered for himself the convenience and desirability of taking part in debate at the earliest possible hour of a sitting. His earlier associations drifted round a directly opposite course. In the good old days the champions of debate did not interpose till close upon midnight, when they had the advantage of audiences sustained and exhilarated by dinner. That was before the era of special wires to the provincial papers, early morning trains, and vastly increased circulation for the London journals. Mr. Gladstone discovered that he was more carefully reported and his

"DISGUST."

observations more deliberately discussed if he spoke between five and seven o'clock in the evening than if, following his earlier habit, he addressed the House between eleven and one in the morning. He has, accordingly, for some years been accustomed, when he has an important speech to deliver, to interpose in debate immediately after questions.

This habit has become general, even compulsory, with members who may, within certain limits, choose their own time for speaking. All the cream of debate is now skimmed before the dinner-hour. At the close of a pitched battle, the two Leaders of Party, as heretofore, wind up the debate. But their opportunity for orating is severely circumscribed. The audience in the House of Commons does not begin to reassemble after dinner till half-past ten. Rising at that hour, the Leader of the Opposition, if he fairly divides the available time with the right honourable gentleman opposite, must not speak more than three-quarters of an hour, and should not exceed forty minutes.

MR. KEIR HARDIE.

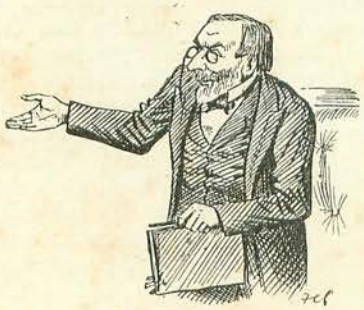
This is a necessity desirable not less in the orator's interest than in that of the audience. Except for the exposition of an intricate measure, twenty minutes is ample time for any man to say what is useful for his fellow-men to hear. All Mr. Disraeli's best speeches were made within half an hour, and if he thought it necessary, from a sense of the importance of his position, to prolong them, his stock of good things was exhausted in twenty minutes, the rest being what Carlyle disrespectfully described as thrice-boiled colewort. Mr. Gladstone can go on indefinitely, and in very recent times has been known to hold his audience spell-bound for three hours. But even he has profited by the beneficent tyranny that now rules the limit of debate, and, rising with the knowledge that he has but forty minutes to speak in, has excelled himself. For less exuberant speakers not gifted with his genius, the new discipline is even more marked in its benefits.

It is too soon to endeavour to estimate the general characteristics of the *personnel* of the new Parliament. It will probably turn out to be very much of the same class as the innumerable army of its predecessors. When Mr. Keir Hardie came down on the opening day in a wagonette, with flags flying and accordions playing, it was cried aloud in some quarters that the end was at hand. This apprehension was strengthened when Mr. Hardie strolled about the House with a tweed travelling cap on his head, the Speaker at the time being in the chair. This, as Dr. Johnson explained, when the lady asked him why he had described the horse's pastern as its knee, was "ignorance, pure ignorance." Mr. Hardie is not a man of the quietest manners, as was testified to by the apparition in Palace Yard of the wagonette and its musical party; but in the much-talked-of incident of the cap he sinned inadvertently. Before the Speaker took the chair he had seen members walking about with their hats on. He had observed that even in his presence they remained seated with their heads covered. The shade of etiquette which approves this fashion whilst it sternly prohibits a member from keeping his hat on when in motion, even to the extent of leaning over to speak to a friend on the bench below him, was too fine to catch the eye of a new member.

Mr. Keir Hardie has done much worse things than this in his public appearances during the recess, and since the Session opened there has not been lacking evidence of resolve to keep himself in the front of the stage where the gallery may see him. But this is no new thing, to be cited in proof of the deterioration of the composition and style of the House of Commons. It has been done repeatedly in various fashions within recent memory, and always with the same result. No man, not even Mr. Biggar—and he may be cited as the most ruthless experimenter—has successfully struggled against the subtle disciplinary influence of the House of Commons.

From the first the member for Cavan set himself in deliberate fashion to outrage Parliamentary traditions and usages. He finished by becoming a punctilious practitioner of Parliamentary forms, a stickler for the

minutest observation of order. Whilst Mr. Gladstone and other members of old standing were content to preface their speeches with the monosyllable "Sir," nothing less than "Mr. Speaker, sir," would satisfy Mr. Biggar. No one who has



THE LATE MR. BIGGAR.

not heard the inflection of tone with which this was uttered, nor seen the oratorical sweep of the hand that launched it on its course, can realize how much of combined deference and authority the phrase is capable of. Mr. Biggar, having in his early Parliamentary days defied the Chair and affronted the sensibilities of the House, alike in the matter of dress and deportment, developed into a portly gentleman of almost smug appearance, a terror to new members. Woe to any who in his ignorance passed between the Chair and the member addressing it; who walked in from a division with his hat on; or who stood an inch or two within the Bar whilst debate was going forward. Mr. Biggar's strident cry of "Order! Order!" reverberated through the House. Others joined in the shout, and the abashed offender hastily withdrew into obscurity.

It is the same with others of less strongly marked character. Vanity or garrulity may force a new member into a position of notoriety. He may, according to his measure of determination, try a fall again and again with the House, and may sometimes, as in the case of Mr. O'Donnell, seem to win. But in the end the House of Commons proves victorious. It is a sort of whetstone on which blades of various temperature operate. In time, they either forego the practice or wear themselves away. In either case the whetstone remains.

This is a rule without exception, and is a reassuring reflection in view of the talk about the degeneracy of the House of Commons, and the decadence of its standard of manner. It would not be difficult to show that the House at present in Session will, from the point of view of manners, favourably compare with any that have gone before—though, to be just, the comparison should be sought with Parliaments elected under similar conditions, with the Liberals in office and the Conservatives in opposition. That is an arrangement always found to be more conducive to lively proceedings than when parties are disposed in the contrary order. The Parliament dissolved last year was decorously dull. Mr. Gladstone in opposition is not prone to show sport, and no encouragement was held out to enterprising groups below the gangway to bait the Government. It was very different in the Parliament of 1880–5, of which fact the Challemel-Lacour episode is an illustration, only a little more piquant in flavour than the average supply.

There are already signs that the new Parliament will not lie under the charge of deplorable dulness brought against its predecessor. But these varying moods are due to waves of political passion, and do not affect the question whether the House of Commons as a body of English gentlemen met for the discharge of public business has or has not deteriorated. I have an engraving of a picture of the House of Commons in pre-Reform days. It was carefully drawn in the Session of 1842. A more respectable body of the gentlemen of England it would be difficult to gather together. With the possible exception of one or two political adventurers like the then member for Shrewsbury, there is probably not a man in the House who is not well born or at least rich. Mr. Keir Hardie would look strange indeed in these serried ranks of portly gentlemen with high coat collars, cravats up to their chin, short-bodied coats showing the waistcoat beneath, and the tightly trousered legs. Yet this House, and its equally prim successors, had its obstruction, its personal wrangles, and its occasional duel. Peel was attacked by Disraeli in a fashion and in language that would not be tolerated in the House of Commons now, even though the target were Mr. Gladstone.

It is not necessary to go back as far as the days of Peel or Parliamentary Reform to sustain the bold assertion that, so far from having degenerated, the manners of the House of Commons have improved. In the Parliament elected in 1874 there sat on the Conservative side a gentleman named Smollet, who early distinguished himself by bringing Parliamentary debate down to the level of conversation in "Roderick Random." In those days Mr. Gladstone was down after the

General Election, and Mr. Smollet, to the uproarious delight of gentlemen near him, savagely kicked him.

It was in the second year of this same Parliament, less than twenty years ago, that Mr. Gladstone, issuing from a division lobby, was suddenly pounced upon by some fifty or sixty Conservative members, and howled at for the space of several moments. It is, happily, possible for Mr. Gladstone to forget, or at least to forgive, personal attacks made upon him through his long career. In this very month of the new Session he may be nightly seen working in cordial fashion with ancient adversaries from Ireland, describing as "my honourable friends" gentlemen who, ten years ago and for some time subsequently, heaped on his head the coarsest vituperation permitted by practised manipulation of Parliamentary forms. But this scene in the division lobby on the 12th of April, 1875, is burned into his recollection. I have heard him, within the last few months, refer to it in those tones of profound indignation and with that flashing fire in his eyes only seen when he is deeply moved. He mentioned, what I think was not known, that Lord Hartington happened to be walking with him at the time. But there was no mistake for whom the angry cries were meant. Mr. Gladstone spoke with the profounder indignation because, as he said, he had on this occasion gone out to vote on behalf of a man whose character he detested, because he saw in the action taken against him an attack upon one of the privileges of Parliament.

"MOBBING HIM."

That scene was an outburst of political animosity; and the movements of political animosity, like the dicta of taste, are not to be disputed. But on the question of good manners, the only one here under consideration, it may be affirmed that the present House of Commons would be safe from lapse into such an exhibition. To this better state of things the operation of the New Rules has conspicuously contributed, and though, as we know, they have not operated to the absolute extinction of Parliamentary scenes, they have appreciably limited opportunity and incentive.

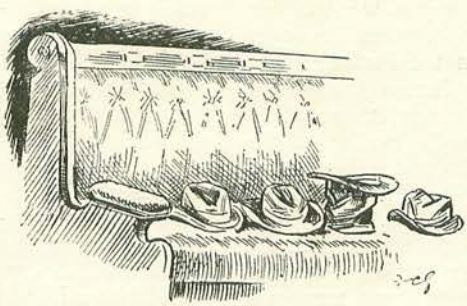
From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

IV.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

ABOUT INDENTED HEADINGS.

I SUPPOSE if anyone has a right to indulge in the convenience of indented headings when writing a discursive article, I may claim a share in the privilege. When I retired from the editorship of a morning newspaper, a not obtrusively friendly commentator wrote that my chief claim to be remembered in that connection was that I had invented sign-posts for leading articles. But he was careful to add, lest I should be puffed up, this was not sufficient to establish editorial reputation.



INDENTED HEADINGS.

It is true; but it is interesting to observe how the way thus adventured upon has grown crowded. The abstentions indicate a curious and interesting habitude ingrained in the English Press. Whilst most of the weekly papers, not only in the provinces but in London, have adopted the new fashion, no daily paper in London, and in the country only one here and there, has followed it. That is a nice distinction, illustrating a peculiarity of our honoured profession. As it was a daily paper that made the innovation, weekly papers may, without loss of dignity, adopt the custom as their own. But it is well known that, in London at least, there is only one daily paper, and that is the "We" speaking from a particular address, located somewhere between Temple Bar and St. Paul's.

Argal, it is impossible that this peculiarly situated entity should borrow from other papers. Yet I once heard the manager of what we are pleased to call the leading journal confess he envied the *Daily News*' side-headings to its leaders, and regretted the impossibility of adapting them for his own journal. That was an opinion delivered in mufti. In full uniform, no manager—certainly no editor—of another morning paper is aware of the existence of the *Daily News;* the *Daily News*, on its part, being courageously steeped in equally dense ignorance of the existence of other journals.

Few things are so funny as the start of surprise with which a London journal upon rare occasion finds itself face to face with a something that also appears every morning at a price varying from a penny to threepence. Nothing will induce it to give the phenomenon a name, and it distantly alludes to it as "a contemporary." This is quite peculiar to Great Britain, and is in its way akin to the etiquette of the House of Commons, which makes it a breach of order to refer to a member by his proper name. It does not exist in France or the United States, and there are not lacking signs that the absurd lengths to which it has hitherto been carried out in the English Press are being shortened.

"CONTEMP(T)ORARIES."

SIR WALTER BARTTELOT.

But that is an aside, meant only to introduce an old friend in a new place. I was going to explain how it came about that, in the mid-February issue of THE STRAND MAGAZINE, the name of Sir Walter Barttelot should appear in the list of members of the present House of Commons who had seats in the House in 1873, and that another number of the Magazine has been issued without the correction, widely made elsewhere, being noted. It is due simply to the fact of the phenomenal circulation of a magazine which, in order to be out to date, requires its contributors to send in their copy some two months in advance.

It is not too late to say a word about the late member for Sussex, a type rapidly disappearing from the Parliamentary stage. He entered the House thirty-three years ago, when Lord Palmerston was Premier, Mr. Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir George Cornewall Lewis was at the Home Office, and Lord John Russell looked after Foreign Affairs.

The House of Commons was a different place in those days, the heritage of the classes, a closed door against any son of the masses. Sir Walter was born a country gentleman, his natural prejudices not being smoothed down by a term of service in the Dragoon Guards. He was not a brilliant man, nor, beyond the level attainments of a county magistrate, an able one. But he was thoroughly honest; suspected himself of ingrained prejudice, and always fought against it. He suffered and learnt much during his long Parliamentary life.

One of the earliest shocks dealt him was the appearance in the House of Mr. Chamberlain, newly elected for Birmingham. It is difficult at this time of day to realize the attitude in which the gentlemen of England sixteen years ago stood towards the statesman who is now proudly numbered in their ranks. When he presented himself to be sworn in, it was one of the jokes of the day that Sir Walter Barttelot expected he would approach the Table making "a cart-wheel" down the floor, as ragged little boys disport themselves along the pavement when a drag or omnibus passes. Sir Walter was genuinely surprised to find in the fearsome Birmingham Radical a quietly-dressed, well-mannered, almost boyish-looking man, who spoke in a clear, admirably pitched voice, and opposed the Prisons Bill, then under discussion, on the very lines from which Sir Walter had himself attacked it when it was brought in during the previous Session.

"REALITY."

It was characteristic of this fine old English gentleman that, having done a man an injustice by unconsciously forming a wrong opinion about him, he hastened forthwith to make amends.

"If," he said, when Mr. Chamberlain had resumed his seat, "the hon. member for Birmingham will always address the House with the same quietness, and with the same intelligence displayed on this occasion, I can assure him the House of Commons will always be ready to listen to him."

This is delicious, looking back over the years, watching Mr. Chamberlain's soaring flight, and thinking of the good county member thus loftily patronizing him. But it was a bold thing to be said at that time of Mr. Chamberlain by Sir Walter Barttelot, and some friends who sat near him thought his charity had led him a little too far.


"ANTICIPATION."

The Sussex squire was of a fine nature—simple, ever ready to be moved by generous impulses. There were two men coming across the moonlight orbit of his Parliamentary life whose conduct he detested, and whose influence he feared. One was Mr. Parnell, the other Mr. Bradlaugh. Yet when the Commission acquitted Mr. Parnell of the charges brought against him by the forged letters, Sir Walter Barttelot sought him out in the Lobby,

publicly shook hands with him, and congratulated him upon the result of the inquiry. When Mr. Bradlaugh lay on his death-bed, on the very night the House of Commons was debating the resolution to expunge from the Order Book the dictum that stood there through eleven years, declaring him ineligible either to take the oath or to make affirmation, Sir Walter Barttelot appealed to the House unanimously to pass the motion, concluding his remarks with emphatic expression of the hope that "God would spare Mr. Bradlaugh's life."

"SHADOWS."

Sir Walter never recovered from the blow dealt by the death of his son in Africa, aggravated as the sorrow was by the controversy which followed. Of late years he spoke very little; but in the Parliaments of 1874–80 and 1880–85 he was a frequent participator in debate. He was no orator, nor did he contribute original ideas to current discussion. Moreover, what he had to say was so tortured by the style of delivery that it lost something of whatever force naturally belonged to it.

I have a verbatim note taken fifteen years ago of a speech delivered in the House of Commons by Sir Walter, which faintly echoes an oratorical style whose master is no longer with us. It lacks the inconsequential emphasis, the terrific vigour of the gesture, and the impression conveyed by the speaker's intense earnestness, that really, by-and-by, he would say something, which compelled the attention of new members and strangers in the gallery. But if the reader imagines portentous pauses represented by the hyphens, and the deepening to tragic tones of the words marked in italics, he may in some measure realize the effect.

The speech from which this passage was taken was delivered in debate upon a resolution moved by Mr. Forster on the Cattle Plague Orders. Whenever in the passage Mr. Forster is personally alluded to it is necessary, in order to full realization of the scene, to picture Sir Walter shaking a minatory forefinger, sideways, at the right hon. gentleman, not looking at him, but pointing him out to the scorn of mankind and the reprobation of country gentlemen: "Yet *he knows* [here the finger wags]—and—*knows full well*—in the—position he occupies—making a proposal of this kind—must be one—which—must be—fatal—to—the Bill. *No one knows better* than the right hon. gentleman—that when—he—raises a great question *of this kind*—upon a Bill *of this sort*—*namely* upon the second reading—of—this Bill—that that proposal—that he makes—is absolutely against the principle—of—the Bill. Now, I—de—ny that the principle—of—this Bill—is confined—and *is to be found*—in the 5th Schedule—of—the Bill."

A few minutes later an illustration occurred to the inspired orator, and was thus brought under the notice of the entranced House:—

"Now, Denmark—it is a *remark*—able country, is *Den*—mark—for—we have little—or no—dis—ease from *Den*—mark. The importation—from *Den*—mark—is something like fifty-six—thousand—cattle—*and the* curious part of it is this, that *nine*teen—thousand—of these—were—cows—and *these cows* came—to—this country—and—had been allowed to go—*all over*—this country—and—I have never yet heard—that these cows—that—have so—gone over *this country*—have spread any disease—in this country—."

This was a mannerism which amused the House at the time, but did nothing to obscure the genuine qualities of Sir Walter, or lessen the esteem in which he was held. It cannot be said that the House of Commons was habitually moved by his argument in debate. But he was held in its warmest esteem, and his memory will long be cherished as linked with the highest type of English country gentleman.

THE PAYMENT OF MEMBERS.

At this time of writing there is talk in the House about payment of members. A private member has placed on the paper a resolution affirming the desirability of adopting the principle, and it is even said—(which I take leave to doubt)—that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a card up his sleeve intended to win this game. It would be rash to predict stubborn resistance on the part of a body that

has so often proved itself open to conviction as has the House of Commons. But I should say that to secure this end it would need a tussle quite as prolonged and as violent as has raged round Home Rule. Lowering and widening the suffrage has done much to alter the personal standard of the House of Commons. Nothing achieved through these sixty years would in its modifying effect equal the potency of the change wrought by paying members.

One illustration is found in the assertion, made with confidence, that under such a

"A PERSONAL STANDARD."

system the House would know no more men of the type of Sir Walter Barttelot. He was not the highest form of capacity, knowledge, or intelligence. But he was of the kind that gives to the House of Commons the lofty tone it speedily regains even after a paroxysm of post-prandial passion. The House of Commons is unique in many ways. I believe the main foundation of the position it holds among the Parliaments of the world is this condition of volunteered unremunerated service.

In spite of sneers from disappointed or flippant persons, a seat in the House of Commons still remains one of the highest prizes of citizen life. When membership becomes a business, bringing in say £6 a week, the charm will be gone. As things stand, there is no reason why any constituency desiring to do so may not return a member on the terms of paying him a salary. It is done in several cases, in two at least with the happiest results. It would be a different thing to throw the whole place open with standing advertisement for eligible members at a salary of £300 a year, paid quarterly. The horde of impecunious babblers and busybodies attracted by such a bait would trample down the class of men who compose the present House of Commons, and who are, in various ways, at touch with all the multiform interests of the nation.

HATS AND SEATS.

The great hat question which agitated the House of Commons at the commencement of the new Session, even placing Home Rule in a secondary position, has subsided, and will probably not again be heard of during the existence of the present Parliament. Whilst yet to the fore it was discussed with vigour and freshness; but it is no new thing. With the opening Session of every Parliament the activity and curiosity of new members lead to inconvenient crowding of a chamber that was not constructed to seat 670 members. In the early days of the 1880 Parliament the hat threatened to bring about a crisis. One evening Mr. Mitchell Henry startled the House by addressing the Speaker from a side gallery. This of itself was regarded as a breach of order, and many members expected the Speaker would peremptorily interfere. But Mr. Mitchell Henry, an old Parliamentary hand, knew he was within his right in speaking from this unwonted position. The side galleries as far down as the Bar are as much within the House as is the Treasury Bench, and though orators frequenting them would naturally find a difficulty in catching the Speaker's eye, there is no other reason

A SURPRISE.

why they should not permanently occupy seats there.

Mr. Mitchell Henry explained that he spoke from this place because he could not find any other. He had come down in ordinarily good time to take his seat, and found all the benches on the floor appropriated by having hats planted out along them. In each hat was fixed a card, indicating the name of the owner. What had first puzzled Mr. Henry, and upon reflection led him to the detection of systematic fraud, was meeting in remote parts of the House, even in the street, members who went about wearing a hat, although what purported to be their headgear was being used to stake out a claim in the Legislative Chamber. Mr. Henry made the suggestion that only what he called "the working hat" should be recognised as an agent in securing a seat.

THE NON-WORKING HAT—UNIONIST.

The strict morality of this arrangement was acquiesced in, and its adoption generally approved. But nothing practical came of it. By-and-by, in the ordinary evolution of things, the pressure of competition for seats died off, and the supernumerary hat disappeared from the scene. This Session the ancient trouble returned with increased force, owing to the peculiar circumstances in which political parties are subdivided. The Irish members insisting upon retaining their old seats below the gangway to the left of the Speaker, there was no room for the Dissentient Liberals to range themselves in their proper quarters on the Opposition side. They, accordingly, moved over with the Liberals, and appropriated two benches below the gangway, thus driving a wedge of hostile force into the very centre of the Ministerial ranks. It was the Radical quarter that was thus invaded, and its occupants were not disposed tamely to submit to the incursion. The position was to be held only by strategy. Hence the historic appearance on the scene on the first day of the Session of Mr. Austen Chamberlain with relays of hats, which he set out along the coveted benches, and so secured them for the sitting. On the other side of the House a similar contest was going forward between the Irish Nationalist members, represented by Dr. Tanner, and their Ulster brethren, who acknowledge a leader in Colonel Saunderson.

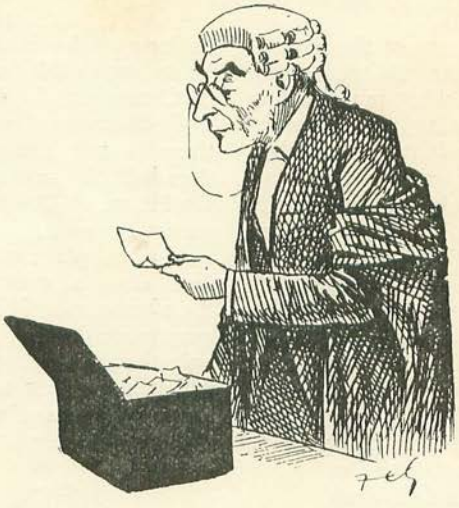
These tactics are made possible by the peculiar, indeed unique, arrangement by which seats are secured in the House of Commons. In all other Legislative Assemblies in the world each member has assigned to him a seat and desk, reserved for him as long as he is a member. That would be an impossible arrangement in the House of Commons, for the sufficient reason that while there are 670 duly returned members, there is not sitting room for much more than half the number. When a member of the House of Commons desires to secure a particular seat for a given night he must be in his place at prayer time, which on four days a week is at three o'clock in the afternoon. On the fifth day, Wednesday, prayers are due at noon. At prayer time, and only then, there are obtainable tickets upon which a member may write his name, and, sticking the pasteboard in the brass frame at the back of the seat, is happy for the night.

THE NON-WORKING HAT—IRISH.

Where, what Mr. Mitchell Henry called, the non-working hat comes in is in the practice of members gathering before prayer time and placing their hats on the seat they desire to retain. That is a preliminary that receives no official recognition. "No prayer, no seat," is the axiom, and unless a member be actually present in the body when the Chaplain reads prayers, he is not held to have established a claim. Thus his spiritual comfort is subtly and indispensably linked with his material comfort.

A NEW THING IN SYNDICATES.

There is nothing new under the glass roof of the House of Commons, not even the balloting syndicates, of which so much has been heard since the Session opened. Fifteen or sixteen years ago the Irish members astonished everybody by the extraordinary luck that attended them at the ballot. The ballot in this sense has nothing to do with the electoral poll, being the process by which precedence for private members is secured. When a private member has in charge a Bill or resolution, much depends on the opportunity he secures for bringing it forward. Theoretically, Tuesday, Wednesday, and (in vanishing degree) a portion of Friday are appropriated to his use. On Tuesday he may bring on motions; on Wednesday advance Bills; and on Friday raise miscellaneous questions on certain stages of Supply. On days when notices of motion may be given there is set forth on the Table a book with numbered lines, on which members write their names. Say there are fifty names written down—or four hundred, as was the melancholy case on the opening night of the Session—the Clerk at the Table places in a box a corresponding number of slips of paper. When all is ready for the ballot, the Speaker having before him the list of names as written down, the Clerk at the Table plunges his hand into the lucky-box and taking out, at random, one of the pieces of paper, calls aloud the number marked upon it.



BALLOT.

Say it is 365. The Speaker, referring to the list he holds in his hand, finds that Mr. Smith has written his name on line 365. He thereupon calls upon Mr. Smith, who has the first chance, and selects what in his opinion is the most favourable day, *ceteris paribus*, the earliest at liberty. So the process goes through till the last paper in the ballot-box has been taken out and the list is closed.

It is at best a wearisome business, a criminal waste of time, useless for practical purposes. It was well enough when Parliament was not overburdened with work, and when the members balloting for places rarely exceeded a score. But when, as happened on the opening day of the Session, two of the freshest hours of the sitting are occupied by the performance, it is felt that a change is desirable. This could easily be effected, there being no reason in the world why the process of balloting for places on the Order Book should not be carried out as was the balloting for places in the Strangers' Galleries on the night Mr. Gladstone introduced his Home Rule Bill. On that occasion the Speaker's Secretary, with the assistance of a clerk, and in the presence of as many members as cared to look on, arranged the ballot without a hitch or a murmur of complaint from anyone concerned. The sooner the public balloting is relegated to the same agency the better it will be for the dispatch of public business. With it should disappear the consequent wanton waste of time involved in members bodily bringing in their Bills, a performance that appropriated nearly half the sitting on the second day of the Session.

The spread of the syndicate contrivance would happily hasten the inevitable end. It was by means of the syndicate, though it was not known by that name, or indeed at first known at all, that the Home Rule party managed in the Parliament of 1880–85 to monopolize the time pertaining to private members. Their quick eyes detected what is simple enough when explained—that the ballot system contained potentialities for

increasing the chances of a Bill by twenty or thirty fold. Suppose they had ten Bills or motions they desired to bring forward. They usually had more, but ten is sufficient to contemplate. These were arranged in accordance with their claim to priority. Every member of the party wrote his name down in the ballot-book, thus securing an individual chance at the ballot. Whilst the ballot was in progress, each had in his hand a list of the Bills in their order of priority. The member whose name was first called by the Speaker gave notice of the most urgent Bill, the second and third taking the next favourable positions, and so on to the end.

It will be seen that, supposing fifty or sixty members thus combined, their pet Bill would have fifty or sixty chances to one against the hapless private member with his solitary voice. The secret was long kept, and the Irish members carried everything before them at the ballot. Now the murder is out, and there are almost as many syndicates as there are private Bills. All can grow the flower now, for all have got the seed. But it naturally follows that competition is practically again made even. The advantage to be derived from the syndicate system has appreciably decreased, whilst its practice immeasurably lengthens the process of balloting.

LOUIS JENNINGS.

Mr. Louis Jennings, though he sat on the same side of the House as Sir Walter Barttelot, and within a week or two of his neighbour's departure likewise answered to the old Lobby cry, "Who goes home?" was of a different type of Conservative, was a man of literary training, generous culture, and wide knowledge of the world, and made his fame and fortune long before he entered the House of Commons. It was the late Mr. Delane whose quick eye discovered his journalistic ability, and gave him his first commission on the *Times*. He visited America in the service of that journal, and being there remained to take up the editorship of the *New York Times*, making himself and his journal famous by his successful tilting against what, up to his appearance in the list, had been the invincible Tweed conspiracy. He edited the "Croker Papers," and wrote a "study" of Mr. Gladstone—a bitterly clever book, to which the Premier magnanimously referred in the generous tribute he took occasion to pay to the memory of the late member for Stockport.

Upon these two books Mr. Jennings's literary fame in this country chiefly rests. It would stand much higher if there were wider knowledge of another couple of volumes he wrote just before he threw himself into the turmoil of Parliamentary life. One is called "Field Paths and Green Lanes"; the other "Rambles Among the Hills." Both were published by Mr. Murray, and are now, I believe, out of print. They are well worth reproducing, supplying some of the most charming writing I know, full of shrewd observation, humorous fancy, and a deep, abiding sympathy with all that is beautiful in Nature. I thought I knew Louis Jennings pretty intimately in Parliamentary and social life, but I found a new man hidden in these pages—a beautiful, sunny nature, obscured in the ordinary relations of life by a somewhat brusque manner, and in these last eighteen months soured and cramped by

MR. LOUIS JENNINGS.

a cruel disease. Jennings knew and loved the country as Gilbert White knew and loved Selborne. Now

> His part in all the pomp that fills
> The circuit of the summer hills
> Is, that his grave is green.

His Parliamentary career was checked, and, as it turned out, finally destroyed, by an untoward incident. After Lord Randolph Churchill threw up the Chancellorship of the Exchequer and assumed a position of independence on a back bench, he found an able lieutenant in his old friend Louis Jennings. At that time Lord Randolph was feared on the Treasury Bench as much as he was hated. For a Conservative member to associate himself with him was to be ostracised by the official Conservatives. A man of Mr. Jennings's position and Parliamentary ability was worth buying off, and it was brought to his

knowledge that he might have a good price if he would desert Lord Randolph. He was not a man of that kind, and the fact that the young statesman stood almost alone was sufficient to attract Mr. Jennings to his side.

AS CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.

Up to an early date of the Session of 1890 the companionship, political and private, of Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Jennings was as intimate as had been any one of his lordship's personal connections with members of the Fourth Party. This alliance was ruptured under circumstances that took place publicly, but the undercurrent of which has never been fathomed. One Monday night, shortly after the opening of this Session of 1890, there appeared on the paper a resolution standing in the name of Mr. Jennings, framed in terms not calculated to smooth the path of the Conservative Government, just then particularly troubled. That Mr. Jennings had prepared it in consultation with Lord Randolph Churchill was an open secret. Indeed, Lord Randolph had undertaken to second it. Before the motion could be reached a debate sprang up, in which Lord Randolph interposed, and delivered a speech which, in Mr. Jennings's view, entirely cut the ground from under his feet. He regarded this as more than an affront—as a breach of faith, a blow dealt by his own familiar friend. At that moment, in the House, he broke with Lord Randolph, tore up his amendment and the notes of his speech, and declined thereafter to hold any communion with his old friend.

PRESENT DAY.

No one, as I had opportunity of learning at the time, was more surprised than Lord Randolph Churchill at the view taken of the event by Mr. Jennings. He had not thought of his action being so construed, and had certainly been guiltless of the motive attributed to him. There was somewhere and somehow a misunderstanding. With Mr. Jennings it was strong and bitter enough to last through what remained of his life.

Whilst he did not act upon the first impulse communicated to one of his friends, and forthwith retire from public life, he with this incident lost all zest for it. Occasionally he spoke, choosing the level, unattractive field of the Civil Service Estimates. It was a high tribute to his power and capacity that on the few occasions when he spoke the House filled up, not only with the contingent attracted by the prospect of anything spicy, but by grave, financial authorities, Ministers and ex-Ministers, who listened attentively to his acute criticism. His public speaking benefited by a rare combination of literary style and oratorical aptitude. There was no smell of the lamp about his polished, pungent sentences. But they had the unmistakable mark of literary style. Had his physical strength not failed, and his life not been embittered by the episode alluded to, Louis Jennings would have risen to high position in the Parliamentary field.

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

V.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

SIR CHARLES LEWIS.

THE history of Sir Charles Lewis, long time member for Derry, who sat in the last Parliament for North Antrim, is full of instruction for young members. Mr. Charles Lewis, as he was most familiarly known, entered the House as member for Derry in 1872, representing the city for just fourteen years He was returned again at the General Election of 1886; and it was part of the evil fate that pursued him through his Parliamentary career that he should have been unseated on a petition. In the following February he was returned for North Antrim, and with the Salisbury Parliament disappeared from the political arena.

SIR CHARLES LEWIS.

It was in the Session of 1874 that he bounded into fame. Conservatives were in high spirits, just entering under Mr. Disraeli's leadership upon a long lease of untrammelled power. Mr. Lewis unnoticed in the preceding Parliament, came to the front in the earliest weeks of the new one, buzzing around in what some of his contemporaries were inclined to regard as an unnecessarily blatant manner. He attracted the notice of the *World*, just then founded, and, under the new and vigorous system of editorship inaugurated by Mr. Edmund Yates, boldly striking out for a leading place in weekly journalism. Mr. Lewis, whom his most relentless detractors would not accuse of lack of courage, resented the playfully bitter attacks of the *World*, and brought before Mr. Justice Coleridge and a special jury what, at the time, achieved some notoriety as the great White Waistcoat question.

It must be admitted that whether a member of the House of Commons wears a white waistcoat or a black one is no business of anyone but himself; certainly has nothing to do with his political position. But of Mr. Lewis's once famous white waistcoat it may be said, as was written long ago in another connection, "which thing is an allegory." A white waistcoat worn in sultry weather with light tweed or other summer suit is appropriate to the occasion and pleasant to the eye. It was an indication of Mr. Lewis's character—perhaps too subtly, possibly erroneously, deduced—that in bleak March weather he should have breasted an angry House of Commons in a spacious white waistcoat, made all the more aggressive since it was worn in conjunction with a stubbornly-shaped black frock-coat and a pair of black trousers of uncompromising Derry cut. However it be, Mr. Lewis would stand no reflections upon his white waistcoat, and gave the new *World* an appreciable fillip on its career by haling it into court on a charge of libel, which Lord Coleridge dismissed without thinking it necessary to trouble a jury.

That was not a hopeful start for a new member. But Mr. Lewis was not the kind of man to be daunted by repulse. It supplies testimony to his strong personality that, whilst more or less damaging himself, he succeeded on more than one occasion in seriously compromising his political friends

and the House itself. In the whirlwind that followed it was forgotten that it was Mr. Lewis (now Sir Charles, "B. B. K." as the Claimant put it) who brought about the appointment of the Parnell Commission and all it boded. When in May, 1887, the *Times* published an article accusing Mr. Parnell of wilful and deliberate falsehood in denying his connection with P. J. Sheridan, Sir Charles Lewis reappeared on the scene, and, with protest of his desire that the Irish leader should have the earliest opportunity of clearing his character from the slur cast upon it, moved that the printers of the *Times* be brought to the Bar on a charge of breach of privilege. Mr. W. H. Smith, then fresh to the leadership, did his best to shake off this inconvenient counsellor. Sir Charles's proposal was burked; but he had laid the powder, which was soon after fired and led to the successive explosions around the Parnell Commission.

That in later life Sir Charles Lewis should have taken this precise means of bringing himself once more to the front was fresh proof of his courage. It was on an analogous motion that he had made his earliest mark. A Select Committee sitting on Foreign Loans, the morning papers had, as usual, given some report of the proceedings. But though this was customary, it was, none the less, technically a breach of Standing Order. Mr. Charles Lewis, availing himself of the existence of the anachronism, moved that the printers of the *Times* and the *Daily News* be summoned to the Bar, charged with breach of privilege. Mr. Disraeli, then leader, did his best to get out of the difficulty. Mr. Lewis, in full flush with the white waistcoat, was inexorable. The printers were ordered to appear. They obeyed the summons, and the House finding itself in a position of ludicrous embarrassment, they were privily entreated to withdraw, and, above all, to be so good as to say nothing more on the matter.

Never since the House of Commons grew out of the Wittenagemot has that august Assembly been brought so nearly into the position of Dogberry. "You shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in the Prince's name." "How, if a' will not stand?" queried the wary second watchman. "Why, then," said the unshakable City officer, "take no note of him, but let him go; and presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave." Thus, in the spring of 1875, under the temporary leadership of Mr. Charles Lewis, did the House of Commons act towards the representatives of the *Times* and the *Daily News*, with the added embarrassment that the vagrom men in question had not refused to stand, but were even then in the lobby awaiting judgment.

In the following Session Mr. Lewis succeeded in stirring up another historic scene. It was he who brought under the notice of the House of Commons Mr. Lowe's historic declaration, made in a speech delivered at Retford, that before Mr. Disraeli had undertaken to pass a Bill creating the Queen Empress of India, two other Prime Ministers had been approached on the subject by Her Majesty, and had declined to be a party to the proceedings. Mr. Lewis was utterly devoid of sense of humour, a poverty that largely accounts for his failure in public life. The only joke he ever made was unconsciously produced. It happened one night in Committee of Supply, when, girding at the Irish members opposite, he sarcastically expressed the hope that the vote before the Committee "would not prove another fly in the ointment to spoil the digestion of honourable gentlemen opposite."

"Mr. Chairman," observed Mr. Delahunty, who then represented Waterford City, "we have many peculiarities in Ireland, but we don't eat ointment."

Thus, though Mr. Lewis had no humour in his own nature, he was occasionally the cause of its ebullition in others. The short note he elicited from Mr. Lowe when he assumed the right to call the right hon. gentleman to task for this indiscretion hugely delighted the House of Commons.

MR. LOWE.

"Sir," snapped Mr. Lowe, "my recent speech at Retford contains nothing relating to you. I must therefore decline to answer your questions."

That would have shut up some men. It had the effect of inciting Mr. Charles Lewis to further action. He brought forward a motion for a return setting forth the text of the oath of Privy Councillors, explaining that he desired to show that Mr. Lowe had, in the disclosure made, violated his oath. There followed an animated and angry scene. Disraeli, whilst dealing a back-handed blow

at the inconvenient friend behind him, struck out at his ancient enemy, Lowe, whose statement he said was "monstrous, if true." He added that he was permitted to state on the personal authority of the Queen it was absolutely without foundation.

These are some of the episodes writ large in a notable Parliamentary career. Their range shows that Mr. Lewis was a man of high, if ill-directed, capacity. No mere blunderer could have stirred the depths of the House of Commons as from time to time he did. He was, in truth—and here is the pity of it—a man of great ability, an admirable speaker. If his instincts had been finer and his training more severe he would have made a position of quite another kind in Parliamentary annals. Vain, restless, with narrow views and strong prejudices, he was his own worst enemy. But he will not have lived in vain if new members, entering the House from whatever quarter, sitting on whichever side, will study his career, and apply its lesson. His character in its main bearings is by no means unfamiliar in the House of Commons. It was his special qualities of courage and capacity that made him so beneficially prominent as an example of what to avoid.

CABINET SECRETS.

Amongst the characteristics of the present Government that make them in Ministries a thing apart is the almost total absence of the air of mystery that, through the ages, has enveloped Cabinets and their consultations. Never in times ancient or modern was there on the eve of a new Session so little mystery about the intentions of the Government. There was still practised by the morning newspapers the dear old farce of purporting to forecast the unknown. On the morning that opens the new Session there appears in all well-conducted morning papers an article delivered in the style of the Priestess Pythia in the temple at Delphi. Nothing is positively assumed, but the public are told that when the Queen's Speech is disclosed "it will probably contain promise of legislation" on such a head, whilst it will "doubtless be found that Her Majesty's Ministers have not been unmindful of" such another question.

This fashion was invented generations ago, either by the *Times* or the *Morning Chronicle*. The editor, having access to those gilded saloons to which Lord Palmerston once made historic reference, or profiting by personal acquaintance with a Minister, obtained more or less full knowledge of what the Queen's Speech would contain. But he was bound in honour to preserve his informant from possibly inconvenient consequences of his garrulity, and so the oracular style was adopted. When other papers, put on the track, obtained information in the same way they adopted the same quaint practice, till now it has become deeply ingrained in journalism. To-day, whilst there is no secret of the sources of information very properly conveyed to the Press on the eve of the Session, this same style of dealing with it, in which Mr. Wemmick would have revelled, is sedulously observed.

At the beginning of this Session other than newspaper editors had been made aware of the general legislative intentions of the Government. Ministers speaking at various public meetings had openly announced that their several departments were at the time engaged upon the preparation of particular Bills, the main directions of which were plainly indicated. It is true that details of the Home Rule Bill were lacking, though two or three weeks in advance of its presentation one journal, the *Speaker*, gave an exceedingly close summary of its clauses. But that a Home Rule Bill was to be introduced, that it would take precedence of all other measures, and that it would be thorough enough to satisfy the Irish members, were commonplaces of information long before the Speech was read in the House of Lords. It used to be different. Within the range of recent memory, the publication of the Queen's Speech, or at least a forecast in the morning papers, was the first authoritative indication of the drift of legislation in the new Session.

Talking of this new departure with one of the oldest members of the House, he tells me a delightful story, which I have never found

LORD PALMERSTON.

recalled in print, and it is too good to be buried in the pages of *Hansard*. At one time, in the run of the Parliament of 1859–65, Lord Palmerston being Premier, a rumour shook the political world, affirming the resignation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Gladstone. The newspapers were neither so alert nor so well informed in those days, and the rumour drifted about, neither confirmed nor contradicted. At length, Mr. Horsman could stand the uncertainty no longer, and from his place in the House of Commons he asked Lord Palmerston whether there was any truth in the report.

The Premier approached the table in his gravest manner, and the crowded House was hushed in silence for the anticipated disclosure. He had, he said, just come from a meeting of the Cabinet Council, and could not pretend to be uninformed on the matter of the question submitted to him. The House, however, knew how stringent was the oath of a Privy Councillor, and how impossible it was for one in ordinary circumstances either to affirm or deny a report current as to what had taken place within its doors. Lord Palmerston was evidently struggling between a desire to tell something and disinclination to tamper with his oath. As his manner grew more embarrassed, the interest of the House was quickened. All heads, including that of Mr. Horsman, were craned forward as he went on to observe that, perhaps, in the peculiar circumstances of the case, he would be justified in saying that, at the Council just held, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been present and had displayed no sign of intended resignation.

MR. DUFF.

"In fact," said Lord Palmerston, turning round to face Mr. Horsman, seated at the corner bench below the Gangway, "*my right hon. friend has had his ear at the keyhole of the wrong door.*"

THE PARLIAMENTARY OLD GUARD.

I have received a sheaf of correspondence arising out of the article in the February number, cataloguing the Old Guard who were in the House of Commons twenty years ago and stand there to-day. One or two demand acknowledgment as adding to the information there garnered. Mr. Thomas Whitworth, of Liverpool, a member of the House of Commons from 1869 to 1874, has made independent investigation, with the result of adding several to the names I gave. These are Sir Charles Dalrymple, Mr. Duff (who has just retired from Parliament on his appointment to the Governorship of New South Wales), Sir Julian Goldsmid, Sir John Hibbert, Sir J. W. Pease, Mr. J. G. Talbot, Mr. Abel Smith, and Mr. James Round. Mr. Whitworth adds Mr. Charles Seeley. That is an error, since Mr. Seeley does not sit in the present Parliament — having been defeated at the General Election when he stood for the Rushcliffe Division of Nottinghamshire.

"Sir Thomas Lea (not Mr. Lea) was, in 1873," Mr. Whitworth writes, "member for Kidderminster, and is the only English member of that date who has changed into an Irish one."

The present member for Londonderry was certainly "Mr." Lea in 1873, his baronetcy dating from 1892, being one of the recognitions made by Lord Salisbury of the services of the Dissentient Liberal allies. The reference to Sir William Dyke as Liberal Whip was, as the context shows, an obvious slip of the pen, Sir William having been for many years prominent in the Conservative ranks as an able Whip.

One of the late Mr. Miall's kinsmen points out that "it was Edward Miall, M.P. for Bradford, not Charles," who, side by side with the late Mr. Fawcett, fought Mr. Gladstone on the Irish University Bill, and did much to bring about the subsequent *débâcle* of the Liberals.

Finally, Mr. Johnston, of Ballykilbeg, writes from the House of Commons: "In your interesting paper, 'From Behind the Speaker's Chair,' in THE STRAND MAGAZINE for this month, you say, 'Mr. Johnston, still of Ballykilbeg, but no longer a Liberal, as he ranked twenty years ago.' In politics I am to-day what I was twenty years ago. Always anxious to vote for measures for the good of the country, and sometimes being in the Lobby with Liberals, I never belonged to that party. Mr. Disraeli, in a letter which

I have, expressed his regret that I should have been opposed, in 1868, by some Belfast Conservatives, and did all in his power to prevent this. I was always, as he knew, and Lord Rowton knows, a loyal follower of Disraeli."

In conversation, Mr. Johnston adds the interesting fact that when in 1868 he was first returned for Belfast, he was in the habit of receiving whips from both sides of the House, a remarkable testimony to the impression of his absolute impartiality thus early conveyed to observers. The House of Commons, by the way, is ignorant that in this sturdy Protestant it entertains a novelist unawares. Mr. Johnston has written at least two works of fiction, one entitled "Nightshade," which presumably deals with the epoch of the fellest domination of

MR. JOHNSTON.

Rome; and the other "Under Which King?" a, perhaps unconscious, reflection of the unsettled state of mind with which the hon. gentleman entered politics, and which led to embarrassing attention from the rival Whips.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL.

The interest attached to Lord Randolph Churchill's reappearance on the Parliamentary scene proved one of the most interesting and significant incidents in the early days of the new Parliament. There is no doubt that, whatever be his present views and intentions, Lord Randolph years ago convinced himself that he was cut adrift from the political world, and that it had no charms to lure him back. He began by giving up to Newmarket what was meant for mankind, took a share in a stable, and regulated his social and other engagements in London not by the Order Book of the House of Commons, but by the fixtures in the "Racing Calendar." He was seen only fitfully in his place at the corner seat behind his esteemed friends and leaders then in office. A year later he went off to Mashonaland, and for a full Session Westminster knew him no more.

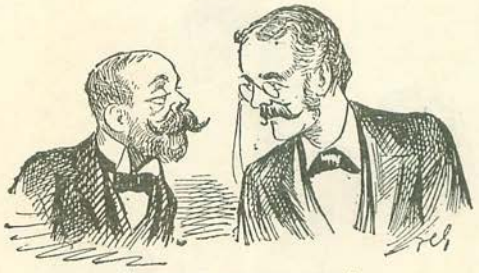
"NEWMARKET."

"MASHONALAND."

When the new Parliament began its sittings Lord Randolph in private conversation was not less insistent as to the permanency of his act of renunciation. He was tired of politics, he said, and saw no future for himself in an assembly where at one time he was a commanding figure. Some of his friends, whilst puzzled and occasionally staggered by his insistence on this point, have always refused to accept his view of the possibilities of the future. A dyspeptic duck gloomily eyeing an old familiar pond might protest that never again would it enter the water. But as long as the duck lives and the water remains, they are certain to come together again. So it

has been with Lord Randolph Churchill, who in this Session has, quite naturally, returned to his old haunts, and with a single speech regained much of his old position.

It is possible that accident, untoward in itself, may have had something to do with hastening the conclusion. When the House first met amid a fierce tussle for seats, Lord Randolph found his place at the corner of the second bench in peril of appropriation. If he desired to retain it, it would obviously be necessary for him to be down every day in time for prayers. Rather than face that discipline he would suffer the company of his old colleagues on the Front Opposition Bench. As a Privy Councillor and ex-Minister he had a right to a seat on that bench equal, at least, to that of Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett. One evening, coming in at question time and finding his seat appropriated by an Irish member, he dropped on to the remote end of the Front Opposition Bench, hoping he did not intrude. His old colleagues warmly welcomed him, made much of him, entreated him to go up higher, and it came to pass that the House of Commons grew accustomed to seeing the strayed reveller sitting in close companionship with Mr. Arthur Balfour. If the whole



"IN CLOSE COMPANIONSHIP."

story of the tragedy of Christmas, 1886, were known, it would appear more remarkable still that from time to time he should have been observed in friendly conversation with Mr. Goschen.

It was from this quarter that, within the first fortnight of the Session, Lord Randolph rose to make his *rentrée.* It was characteristic of him that he had sat silent through the long debate on the Address. That meant nothing, except the occupation of a certain space of time. There was no substantial amendment before the House, nor any prospect of the existence of the new Government being challenged on a division. But when the Home Rule Bill was brought in, things were different; there was a tangible substance round which statesmen might give battle.

It was known that Lord Randolph would resume the debate on this particular night,

"ROSE TO MAKE HIS RENTRÉE."

and the thronged state of the House testified to the deathless personal interest he commands. Not since Mr. Gladstone had, a few nights earlier, risen to expound the Bill was the House so crowded. The Prince of Wales, accompanied by the Duke of York, returned to his seat over the clock, whilst noble lords jostled each other in the effort to obtain seats in the limited space allotted to them. It happened that the *débutant* was destined to undergo a serious and unexpected ordeal. His time should have come not later than five o'clock, questions being then over, and the House permitted to settle down to the business of the day. But there intervened a riotous scene, arising on a question of a breach of privilege. This extended over an hour, and throughout it Lord Randolph sat in a state of almost piteous nervousness.

That was a sore trial for the intending orator, but it reacted with even worse effect on the audience. The House of Commons, though it likes its dishes highly spiced, cares for only one such at a meal. Like the modest person in the hymn, "all it asks for is enough"; and in such a scene as that which raged round the Irish indictment of the *Times* for breach of privilege it found sufficiency. There are only two, or at most three, men in the House who could have kept the audience together after the prolonged excitement sprung upon it. Very few left their seats when, at six o'clock, Lord Randolph Churchill appeared at the table.

"PITEOUS NERVOUSNESS."

What had just happened, taken in conjunction with this peculiar position, plainly told upon him. He was nervous, occasionally to the point of being inaudible, and did not mend matters by violently thumping the box at the precise moment when otherwise the conclusion of his sentence might have been heard. Some people said in their haste he was but the shadow of his former self, and that he had done well all these years to remain in the background. But the faults of this speech were all of manner. Those who listened closely, with whatever painful effort, recognised in it the old straightforward, vigorous blows, the keen insight, the lucid statement, the lofty standpoint from which the whole question was viewed with the gaze of a statesman rather than with the squint of a politician. Those whose opportunities were limited to reading a full report of the speech perceived even more clearly that Lord Randolph had lost none of his ancient power, had even, with added years and garnered experience, grown in weighty counsel.

His second speech, delivered on the Welsh Suspensory Bill, being free from the accidental circumstances that handicapped his first effort, confirmed this impression. Reassured in his position, confident of his powers, encouraged by a friendly audience, he equalled any of the earlier efforts that established his fame.

What will happen to Lord Randolph in the future is a matter which, I believe, depends entirely upon the state of his physical health. I have written elsewhere, with perhaps tiresome iteration through the six years he has been wilfully trying to lose himself in the wilderness, that he might win or regain any prize in public life to the attainment of which he chose seriously to devote himself. His indispensability to the Conservative party is testified to by the eagerness with which hands are held out to him at the earliest indication of desire to return to the fold. That by his loyalty to the party he has earned such consideration is a truth not so fully recognised as it might be if he were less modest in putting forth a claim. If he had been a man of small mind and mean instincts, what a thorn in the flesh of Lord Salisbury, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Balfour he might have proved in the whole period following on his resignation up to the dissolution of the last Parliament!

There were many inviting turning points in his career where he had only to lift hand and voice, and a belated Government, living upon the sufferance of not too-affectionate allies, would have found themselves in a strait place. It will suffice to recall one. It happened four years ago last month. On one of the earliest days of April, 1889, the Conservatives of Birmingham turned to Lord

"BIRMINGHAM."

Randolph and invited him to contest the seat vacated by the death of Mr. Bright. I have reason to believe that at that time, and for some years earlier, it had been the dearest object of his political life to represent Bir-

mingham. As early as 1885 he had, recklessly as it seemed, gone down and tried to storm the citadel even when it was held by so redoubtable a champion as Mr. Bright. He had not been very badly beaten then. Now, with the Conservatives enthusiastically and unanimously clamouring for him, and with the assistance of the Dissenting Liberals which, had he presented himself, could not have been withheld under penalty of losing the seat, he would have been triumphantly returned.

Happening at this particular time, in view of his strained relations with Lord Salisbury, election by such a constituency would have placed Lord Randolph in a position of personal influence not equalled by that of any private member. The moment seemed ripe for the birth of an organized party raising the standard of social Toryism, and under that or any other flag there are always ready to rally round Lord Randolph a number of Conservatives sufficient to make things uncomfortable at Hatfield. He had only to go in and win, and had he been inclined to play his own game he would have done so. But it was represented to him that his candidature was distasteful to a powerful ally of the Government; that if he insisted in accepting the invitation, the compact between Dissenting Liberals and the Conservatives would be straightway broken up; and that thereupon Mr. Gladstone would romp in with his Home Rule Bill. It was a bitter pill. But Lord Randolph swallowed it. Unmoved by the angry, almost passionate, protestations of the deputation from Birmingham that waited upon him, he withdrew his candidature, sacrificing himself and his prospects on the party shrine.

Now, Lord Randolph, travelling on other less independent and less interesting lines, seems half inclined to make his way back.

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

VI.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT.

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT has been so long a familiar figure in the House of Commons, and has established so high a reputation, that it seems odd to speak of him as one of the successes of the new Session. But the phrase accurately describes his position. Circumstances connected with the personality of the Premier have given him opportunity to show what potentialities as Leader of the House modestly lurk behind his massive figure, and the result has been

"MODESTLY LURKING."

eminently satisfactory to his party and his friends. Sir William's early reputation was made as a brilliant swordsman of debate, most effective in attack. The very qualities that go to make success in that direction might lead to utter failure on the part of a Leader of the House.

If one sought for a word that would describe the leading characteristics of Sir William Harcourt in Parliament it would be found in the style aggressive. Perhaps the most fatal thing a Leader of the House of Commons could do would be to develop aggressiveness. The Leader must be a strong man—should be the strongest man on his side of the House. But his strength must be kept in reserve, and if he err on either side of this particular line, submissiveness should be his characteristic. The possession of this quality was the foundation of Mr. W. H. Smith's remarkable success as Leader. It is true he could not, had he tried, have varied his deferential attitude towards the House by one of sterner mould, and the House enjoys the situation more keenly if that alternative be existent. It took Mr. Smith as he was, and the two got on marvellously well together.

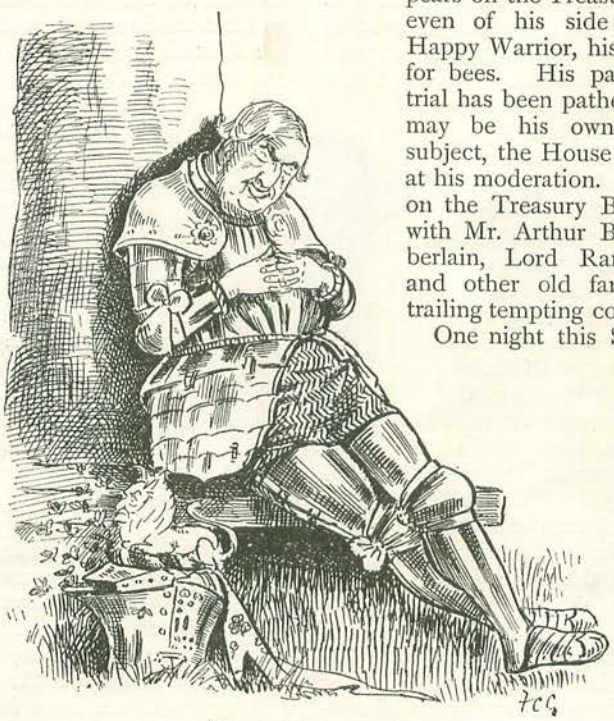
Nothing known of Sir William Harcourt's Parliamentary manner forbade the apprehension that, occupying the box-seat, there would be incessant cracking of the whip. It was difficult in advance to imagine how he would be able to resist the opportunity of letting the lash fall on the back of a restive or a stubborn horse. The opportunity of saying a smart thing, at whatever cost, seemed with him irresistible. If only he had his jest they might have his estate; in this case the estate of his party.

Reflection on an earlier experience of Sir

"AGGRESSIVE."

William in the seat of the Leader might have caused these forebodings to cease. Four

years ago, towards the close of the Session of 1889, the temporary withdrawal of Mr. Gladstone from the scene gave him his chance. It happened that the Government under the leadership of Mr. Smith, and, it was understood, on the personal instruction of Lord Salisbury, were pressing forward the Tithes Bill. They had an overwhelming, well-disciplined majority, and being pledged up to the hilt to carry the Bill, the issue seemed certain. Through a whole week Sir William led the numerically-overpowered Opposition, fighting the Bill at every step. The hampered Government were determined to get some sort of Bill passed, and, hopeless of achieving their earliest intention, foreshadowed another measure in a series of amendments laid on the table by the Attorney-General. The Opposition were not disposed to accept this with greater fervour than the other, and finally Mr. Smith announced a total withdrawal from the position.



"THE HAPPY WARRIOR."

Nothing was finer throughout the brilliant campaign than Sir William Harcourt's lamentations over this conclusion. Having inflicted on a strong Government the humiliation of defeat upon a cherished measure, he, in a voice broken with emotion, held poor W. H. Smith up to the scorn of all good men as a heartless, depraved parent, who had abandoned by the wayside a promising infant.

In the present Session Sir William, as Deputy Leader, finds himself in a position different from, and more difficult than, the one filled in August, 1889. He was then in the place of the Leader of the Opposition, and had a natural affinity for the duty of opposing. In the present Session he has been frequently and continuously called upon to perform the duties of Leader of the House, and his success, though not so brilliantly striking as in the short, sharp campaign against the Tithes Bill, has stood upon a broader and more permanent basis. The House of Commons, as Mr. Goschen learned during the experiments in Leadership which preceded his disappearance from the front rank, may be led, but cannot be driven.

It is curious that two of the most aggressive controversialists in the House, being temporarily called to the Leadership, have shown themselves profoundly impressed with this truth. Like Lord Randolph Churchill, when he led the House, Sir William Harcourt appears on the Treasury Bench divested even of his side-arms. Like the Happy Warrior, his helmet is a hive for bees. His patience in time of trial has been pathetic, and, whatever may be his own feelings on the subject, the House has been amazed at his moderation. He has sat silent on the Treasury Bench by the hour, with Mr. Arthur Balfour, Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Randolph Churchill, and other old familiar adversaries, trailing tempting coat-tails before him.

One night this Session, in debate on Uganda, Mr. Chamberlain interposed and delivered a brilliant, bitter speech, which deeply stirred a crowded House. It was drawing to the close of an important debate, and Mr. Chamberlain sat down at half-past eleven, leaving plenty of time for the Leader of the House to reply. To an old Parliamentary war-horse the situation must have been sorely tempting. A party like to be sent off into the division lobby with a rattling speech from the Front Bench. There was ample time for a brisk twenty minutes' canter, and the crowded and excited House were evidently in the vein to be shown sport. But there was nothing at stake on the division. Though Mr. Chamberlain could not withstand the opportunity of belabouring his old friends and colleagues, he did not intend to oppose the vote for Uganda which would receive the hearty support of the Con-

servatives. Half an hour saved from speech-making would mean thirty minutes appropriated to getting forward with other votes in Committee of Supply. Sir William followed Mr. Chamberlain, and was welcomed with a ringing cheer; members settling themselves down in anticipated enjoyment of a rattling speech. When the applause subsided the Chancellor of the Exchequer contented himself with the observation that there had been a useful debate, the Committee had heard some excellent speeches, "and now let us get the vote."

There was something touching in the depressed attitude of the right hon. gentleman as he performed this act of renunciation. What it cost him will, probably, never be known. But before progress was reported at midnight half-a-dozen votes had been taken.

THE WHIPS.

Of the various forms ambition takes in political life the most inscrutable is that which leads a man to the Whip's room. In Parliamentary affairs the Whip fills a place analogous to that of a sub-editor on a newspaper. He has (using the phrase in a Parliamentary sense) all the kicks and few of the half-pence. With the sub-editor, if anything goes wrong in the arrangement of the paper he is held responsible, whilst if any triumph is achieved, no halo of the resultant glory for a moment lights up the habitual obscurity of his head. It is the same, in its way, with the Whip. His work is incessant, and for the most part is drudgery. His reward is a possible Peerage, a Colonial Governorship, a First Commissionership of Works, a Postmaster-Generalship, or, as Sir William Dyke found at the close of a tremendous spell of work, a Privy Councillorship.

SIR WILLIAM DYKE.

Yet it often comes to pass that the fate of a Ministry and the destiny of the Empire depend upon the Whip. A bad division, even though it be plainly due to accidental circumstances, habitually influences the course of a Ministry, sometimes giving their policy a crucial turn, and at least exercising an important influence on the course of business in the current Session.

An example of this was furnished early in the present Session by a division taken on proposals for a Saturday sitting made necessary by obstruction. Up to the announcement of the figures it had been obstinately settled that the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill should be moved before Easter. The Opposition had pleaded and threatened Mr. Gladstone stood firm, and only three days before this momentous Friday had almost impatiently reiterated his determination to move the Second Reading of the Bill on the day appointed when leave was given to introduce it. The normal majority of forty reduced to twenty-one worked instant and magic charm. The falling-off had no political significance. Everyone knew it arose from the accidental absence of a number of the Irish members called home on local business. But there it was, and on the following Monday Sir William Harcourt, on behalf of the Premier, announced that the Home Rule Bill would not be taken till after Easter.

For other members of the Ministry there is occasional surcease from work, and some opportunity for recreation. For the Whip there is none. He begins his labour with the arrival of the morning post, and keeps at it till the Speaker has left the chair, and the principal doorkeeper standing out on the matting before the doorway cries aloud: "The usual time!"

That ceremony is a quaint relic of far-off days before penny papers were, and the means of communicating with members were circumscribed. It is the elliptical form of making known to members that at the next sitting the Speaker will take the chair at the usual time. For ordinary members, even for Ministers, unless they must be in their place to answer a question, "the usual time" means whatever hour best suits their convenience. The Whip is in his room even before the Speaker takes the chair, and it is merely a change of the scene of labour from his office at the Treasury. He remains till the House is up, whether the business be brisk or lifeless.

In truth, at times when the House is reduced almost to a state of coma, the duties of the Whip become more arduous and exacting. These are the occasions when gentle malice loves to bring about a count-out. If it is a private members' night the Whips have no responsibility in the matter of keeping a House, and have even been sus-

MR. JARRETT, DOOR-KEEPER.

pected of occasionally conniving in the beneficent plot of dispersing it. But just now private members' nights stand in the same relation to the Session as the sententious traveller found to be the case with snakes in Iceland. There are none. Every night is a Government night, and weariness of flesh and spirit naturally suggests a count-out. The regular business of the Whip is to see that there are within call sufficient members to frustrate the designs of the casual counter-out.

"BOBBY" SPENCER.

Mr. Gladstone and other members of the Cabinet, on many dull nights of this Session, have been cheered on crossing the lobby by the sight of Mr. "Bobby" Spencer gracefully tripping about, note-book in hand, holding an interminable succession of members in brief but animated conversation. He is not making a book for the Derby or Goodwood, as one might suspect. "Do you dine here to-night?" is his insinuating inquiry, and till he has listed more than enough men to "make a House" in case of need, he does not feel assured of the safety of the British Constitution, and therefore does not rest.

"BOBBY" SPENCER.

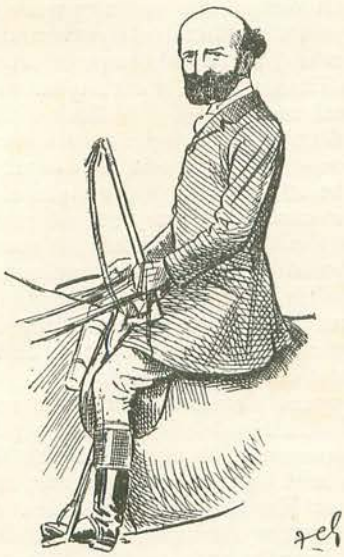
This is part of the ordinary work of the average night. When an important division is impending, the labour imposed upon the Whip is Titanic. He, of course, knows every individual member of his flock. With a critical division pending he must know more, ascertaining where he is and, above all, where he will be on the night of the division. It is at these crises that the personal characteristics of the Whip are tested. A successful Whip should be almost loved, and not a little feared. He should ever wear the silken glove, but there should be borne in upon the consciousness of those with whom he has to deal that it covers an iron hand.

It happens just now that both political parties in the House of Commons are happy in the possession of almost model Whips. As was said by a shrewd observer, no one looking at Mr. Marjoribanks or Mr. Akers-Douglas as they lounge about the Lobby "would suppose they could say 'Bo!' to a goose." The goose, however, would do well not to push the experiment of forbearance too far. All through the last Parliament Mr. Akers-Douglas held his men together with a light, firm hand, that was the admiration and despair of the other side. Mr. Marjoribanks has, up to this present time of writing, maintained the highest standard of success in Whipping.

MR. MARJORIBANKS.

With a Ministerial majority standing at a maximum of forty, it is of the utmost importance to the Government that there shall be no sign of falling off. If the forty were diminished even by a unit, a storm of cheering would rise from the Opposition Benches, and Ministerialists would be correspondingly depressed. With the exception named, due to circumstances entirely beyond the Whip's control, Mr. Marjoribanks has in all divisions, big or small, mustered his maximum majority of forty, and has usually exceeded it.

That means not only unfailing assiduity and admirable business management, but personal popularity on the part of the Whip. Aside from party considerations, no Liberal would like to "disoblige Marjoribanks," who is as popular with the Irish contingent as he is with the main body of the British members. He is fortunate in his colleagues—



MR. MARJORIBANKS.

Mr. Ellis, Mr. Spencer, Mr. Causton, and Mr. McArthur. The Whip's department has not always been a strong feature in a Liberal Administration. In the present Government it is one of the strongest.

Why Mr. Marjoribanks should be content to serve as Whip is one of the mysteries that surround the situation. He does not want a peerage, since that will come to him in the ordinary course of nature. He is one of the personages in political life who excite the sympathy of Lord Rosebery, inasmuch as he must be a peer *malgré lui.* He served a long apprenticeship when the office of Whip was more than usually thankless, his party being in opposition. When Mr. Gladstone's Ministry was formed, it was assumed, as a matter of course, that Mr. Marjoribanks would have found for him office in other department than that of the Whip. But Mr. Gladstone, very shrewdly from the Leader's point of view, felt that no one would be more useful to the party in the office vacated by Mr. Arnold Morley than Mr. Marjoribanks. Mr. Marjoribanks, naturally disposed to think last of his own interests and inclinations, did not openly demur.

ALL-NIGHT SITTINGS.

The Whip's post, though hard enough, is much lightened by adoption of the twelve o'clock rule. Time was, at no distant date, when for some months in the Session Whips were accustomed to go home in broad daylight. It is true the House at that time met an hour later in the afternoon, but the earlier buckling to is a light price to pay for the certainty that shortly after midnight all will be over. Even now the twelve o'clock rule may be suspended, and this first Session of the new Parliament has shown that all-night sittings are not yet impossible. But so unaccustomed is the present House to them, that when one became necessary on the Mutiny Bill everyone and everything was found unprepared. In the old days, when Mr. Biggar was in his prime, the commissariat were always prepared for an all-night sitting. When, this Session, the House sat up all night on the Mutiny Bill, the larder was cleared out in the first hour after midnight.

It is not generally known how nearly the valuable life of the Chairman of Ways and Means was on that occasion sacrificed at the post of duty. Having lost earlier chances by remaining in the chair, it was only at four o'clock in the morning he was rescued from famine by the daring foraging of Mr. Herbert Gladstone, who, the House being cleared for one of the divisions, brought in a cup of tea and a poached egg on toast, which the Chairman disposed of at the table.

Mr. Mellor is an old Parliamentary campaigner, and remembers several occasions

MR. MELLOR.

when, living injudiciously near the House, he was brought out of bed to assist in withstanding obstruction. Being called up one morning by an imperative request to repair to the House, he observed a man violently ringing at the bell of the house of a neighbour, also a member of the House of Commons. On returning two hours later, he found the man still there, diligently ringing at the bell.

"What's the matter?" he asked; "anyone ill?"

"No, sir," said the man. "Lord Richard Grosvenor sent me to bring Mr. —— down to the House, and said I was not to come away without him."

"Ah, well, you can go off now; the House is up."

Mr. ——, it turned out on subsequent inquiry, had gone down to Brighton with his family, and the servants left at home did not think it necessary to answer a bell rung at this untimely hour.

"PAIRED FOR THE NIGHT."

It was about the same time, in the Parliament of 1880, that another messenger from the Government Whip went forth in the early morning in search of a member. He lived in Queen Anne's Mansions, and the messenger explaining the urgency of his errand, the night porter conducted him to the bedroom door of the sleeping senator. Succeeding in awakening him, he delivered his message.

"Give my compliments to Lord Richard Grosvenor," said the wife of the still somnolent M.P.; "tell him my husband has gone to bed, and is paired for the night."

BARE-HEADED.

It is an old tradition, observed to this day, though the origin of it is lost in the obscurity of the Middle Ages, that a Whip shall not appear in the Lobby with his head covered. It is true Mr. Marjoribanks does not observe this rule, but he is alone in the exception. All his predecessors, as far as I can remember, conformed to the regulation. In the last Parliament the earliest intimation of the formation of a new Radical party was the appearance in the Lobby of Mr. Jacoby without his hat. Inquiry excited by this phenomenon led to the disclosure that the Liberal opposition had broken off into a new section. There was some doubt as to who was the leader, but none as to the fact that Mr. Jacoby and Mr. Philip Stanhope were the Whips. Mr. Stanhope was not much in evidence. But on the day Mr. Jacoby accepted the appointment he locked up his hat and patrolled the Lobby with an air of sagacity and an appearance of brooding over State secrets, which at once raised the new party into a position of importance.

MR. JACOBY.

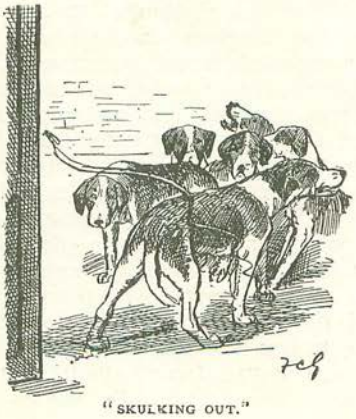
Dick Power, most delightful of Irishmen, most popular of Whips, made through the Session regular play with his hat. Anyone familiar with his habits would know how the land lay from the Irish quarter. If Mr. Power appeared hatless in the Lobby, a storm was brewing, and before the Speaker left the chair there would, so to speak, be wigs on the green. If his genial face beamed from under his hat as he walked about the Lobby the weather was set fair, at least for the sitting.

THE WINSOME WIGGIN.

One of the duties of the junior Whips is to keep sentry-go at the door leading from the Lobby to the cloak-room, and so out into Palace Yard. When a division is expected, no member may pass out unless he is paired. That is not the only way by which escape from the House may be made. A member desirous of evading the scrutiny of the Whips might find at least two other ways of quitting the House. It is, however, a point of honour to use only this means of exit, and no member under whatsoever pressure would think of skulking out.

For many nights through long Sessions, Lord Kensington sat on the bench to the left of the doorway, a terror to members who had pressing private engagements elsewhere, when a division was even possible. There is only one well-authenticated occasion when a member, being unpaired, succeeded in getting past Lord Kensington, and the result was not encouraging.

One night, Mr. Wiggin (now Sir Henry), the withdrawal of whose genial presence from the Parliamentary scene is regretted on both



"SKULKING OUT."

sides of the House, felt wearied with long attendance on his Parliamentary duties. There came upon him a weird longing to stroll out and spend an hour in a neighbouring educational establishment much frequented by members. He looked towards the doorway, but there was Lord Kensington steadfast at his post. Glancing again, Mr. Wiggin thought the Whip was asleep. Casually strolling by him he found that this was the case, and with something more than his usual agility, he passed through the doorway.

Returning at the end of an hour he found Lord Kensington still at his post, and more than usually wide awake.

"You owe me £25," said Mr. Wiggin.

"How?" cried the astonished Whip.

"If," said Mr. Wiggin, producing his unencumbered watch-chain and dangling it, "you hadn't been asleep just now, I wouldn't have got past you; if I hadn't got past you, I wouldn't have dropped in at the Aquarium; and if I hadn't looked in at the Aquarium, I shouldn't have had my watch stolen."

Quod erat demonstrandum.

"ABSORBED."

REMARKABLE FEAT OF A COUNTRY PAPER.

It was stated at the time, to the credit of the provincial Press, that at the very moment Mr. St. John Brodrick was delivering in the House of Commons his luminous speech on the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill, his constituents at Guildford, thanks to the enterprise of the local weekly paper, were studying its convincing argument, lingering over the rhythm of its sentences, echoing the laughter and applause with which a crowded House punctuated it. I enjoyed the higher privilege of hearing the speech delivered, and was probably so absorbed that I was not conscious of the crowd on the benches, and do not recollect the laughter and applause. Indeed, my memory enshrines rather a feeling of regret that so painstaking and able an effort should have met with so chilling a reception, and that an heir-apparent to a peerage, who has had the courage to propose a scheme for the reform of the House of Lords, should receive such scant attention in the Commons.

Il y a POWER *et* POWER.

Mr. Brodrick, however, got off his speech, and the local paper came out with its verbatim report, a concatenation of circumstances not always achieved. In the high tide of the Parnell invasion of the House of Commons, there happened an accident that excited much merriment. Mr. O'Connor Power—one of the ablest debaters the early Irish party brought into the House, a gentleman who has with equal success given up to journalism what was meant for the House of Commons—had prepared a speech for a current debate. Desirous that his constituents should be at least on a footing of equality with an alien House of Commons, he sent a verbatim copy in advance to the editor of the local paper, an understanding being arrived at that it was not to be published till signal was received from Westminster that the hon. member was on his feet. It happened that Mr. O'Connor Power failed on that night to catch the Speaker's eye. Mr. Richard Power was more successful, and the local editor receiving through the ordinary Press agency intimation that "Mr. Power opposed the Bill," at once jumped to the conclusion that this was the cue for the verbatim speech. Mr. Power was speaking; there was not the slightest doubt that Mr. O'Connor Power, when he did speak, would oppose the Bill. So the formes were locked, the paper went to press, and the next morning County Mayo rang with the unuttered eloquence of its popular member, and Irishmen observed with satisfaction how, for once, the sullen Saxon had had his torpid humour stirred, being frequently incited to "loud cheers" and "much laughter."

SIR ELLIS ASHMEAD-BARTLETT'S DILEMMA.

In this same debate on the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill, where the energy and enterprise of the provincial weekly Press was incidentally illustrated in connection with Mr. Brodrick's speech, there happened another episode which did not work out so well. Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett broke the long silence of years by delivering a speech in the House of Commons. It was a great occasion, and naturally evoked

supreme effort. It was, in its way, akin to the wooing of Jacob. For seven years that eminent diplomatist had worked and waited for Rachel, and might well rejoice, even in the possession of Leah, when the term of probation was over. For nearly seven years Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett had sat on the Treasury Bench wrapped in the silence of a Civil Lord of the Admiralty. Now his time was come, and he threw himself into the enjoyment of opportunity with almost pathetic vigour. It was eleven o'clock when he rose, and the debate must needs stand adjourned at midnight. When twelve o'clock struck, Sir Ellis was still in the full flow of his turgid eloquence. His speech was constructed on the principle of, and (except, perhaps, in the matter of necessity) resembled, the long bridge in Cowper's "Task"—

> That with its wearisome but needful length
> Bestrides the wintry flood.

The scene and the atmosphere were sufficiently Arctic to bear out the comparison. The audience had long since fallen away, like leaves in wintry weather. In ordinary circumstances Sir Ellis, an old Parliamentary Hand, would have wound up his speech, and so made an end of it, just before the stroke of midnight gave the signal for the Speaker's leaving the chair.

There were, however, two reasons, the agony of whose weight must have pressed sorely on the orator. One was the recollection of an incident in his career still talked of in the busy circles round Sheffield. One night in yesteryear he was announced to deliver a speech at a meeting held in Nottingham. "For greater accuracy"—as the Speaker says, when, coming back from the House of Lords on the opening day of a Session, he reads the Queen's Speech to hon. members who have two hours earlier studied it in the evening papers—Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett had written out his oration and supplied it to the Sheffield paper whose recognition of his status as a statesman merits reward. Proceedings at the Nottingham meeting were so protracted, and took such different lines from those projected, that the orator of the evening, when his turn came, found the night too far advanced for his ordered speech, which would in other respects have been beside the mark. He accordingly, impromptu, delivered quite another speech, probably better than the one laboriously prepared in the seclusion of the closet. In the hurry and excitement of the moment he forgot to warn the Sheffield editor, with the consequence that the other speech was printed in full and formed the groundwork of a laudatory leading article.

That was one thing that agitated the mind of Sir Ellis, and probably gave a profounder thrill to his denunciation of Mr. Gladstone's iniquity in the matter of the Home Rule Bill. Another was that this later speech, with all its graceful air of ready wit, fervid fancy, and momentarily inspired argument, was also in print, and, according to current report, was in advance widely circulated among a friendly Press. It turned out to be impossible to recite it all before the adjournment; equally impossible to cut it down. That mighty engine, the Press, was already, in remote centres of civilization, throbbing with the inspiration of his energy, printing off the speech at so many hundreds an hour. It was impossible to communicate with the unconscious editors and mark the exact point at which the night's actual contribution to debate was arrested. There was only one thing to be done: that was boldly to take the fence. So Sir Ellis went on till twelve o'clock as if nothing were happening elsewhere, was pulled up by the adjournment, and, turning up bright and early with the meeting of the House next day, reeled off the rest regardless of the gibes of the enemy, who said some of the faithful papers had muddled the matter, reporting on Tuesday morning passages that were not delivered in the House of Commons till Tuesday night.

SIR ELLIS ASHMEAD-BARTLETT.

THE PITY OF IT.

These accidents have their comical aspect. When it comes to appropriating two hours of the time of a busy Legislature, they also have their serious side. The House of Commons is a debating assembly, not a lecture hall, where prosy papers may be read to sparse audiences. The House is seen at its best when masters

of fence follow each other in swift succession, striking and parrying, the centre of an excited ring. A prevalence of the growing custom of reading laboriously-prepared papers will speedily bring it down to the level of the Congress meeting at Washington. There the practice has reached its natural and happy conclusion, inasmuch as members having prepared their papers are not obliged to read them. They hand them in to the printer, and, at a cost to the nation willingly borne in view of compensating circumstances, they are printed at length in the *Congressional Globe*.

"REELING IT OFF."

Perhaps when we have our official report of debates in the House of Commons this also will follow. It is easy to imagine with what eagerness the House would welcome any alternative that should deliver it from the necessity, not of listening to these musty harangues—that, to do it justice, it never suffers—but of giving up an appreciable portion of its precious time to the gratification of ponderous, implacable, personal vanity.

THACKERAY ON THE SUBJECT.

There is one gleam of light flickering about this intrinsically melancholy topic in connection with the name of Thackeray. I have read somewhere that it was a kindred calamity of a public speaker which led to Thackeray's first appearance in print. At a time when the century was young, and the author of "Vanity Fair" was a lad at Charterhouse, Richard Lalor Sheil, the Irish lawyer and orator, had promised to deliver a speech to a public meeting assembled on Penenden Heath. In those days there were no staffs of special reporters, no telegraphs, nor anything less costly than post-chaises wherewith to establish rapid communication between country platforms and London newspaper offices. Sheil, rising to the height of the occasion, wrote out his speech, and, before leaving town, sent copies to the leading journals, in which it, on the following morning, duly appeared.

Alack! when the orator reached the Heath he found the platform in possession of the police, who prohibited the meeting and would have none of the speech. The incident was much talked of, and the boy Thackeray set to and wrote in verse a parody on the printed but unspoken oration. Here is the last verse, as I remember it:—

"What though these heretics heard me not?"
Quoth he to his friend Canonical;
"My speech is safe in the *Times*, I wot,
And eke in the *Morning Chronicle*."

[*The original drawings of the illustrations in this Magazine are always on view, and on sale, in the Art Gallery at these offices, which is open to the public without charge.*]