

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

VII.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

**PARTIES
AND
PLACES.** THE sub-division of parties arising out of the adoption of Home Rule as a principal plank in Mr. Gladstone's platform has worked a curious and notable effect upon conditions of debate in the House of Commons. Time was when the House was divided between two political parties, one calling themselves Whigs or Liberals, the other Tories or Conservatives. When a member took part in debate he faced the foe, having the satisfaction of being surrounded and sustained by the company of friends. Now a member rising on either side does not precisely know where he is. The whole assembly is so inextricably mixed up that whichever way one turns he is certain to find unfriendly faces. The position of affairs is akin to that of a close *melée* on the battle-field. A battery in excellent position is afraid to fire lest in aiming at the enemy it may slay friends.

The new departure was marked on the birth of the Parliament of 1880, and it was, as usual, the Irish who took it. Through the Parliament of 1874, the Irish members, forming in accordance with their habit and customs part of the regular Opposition, sat together below the gangway, at the Speaker's left hand. When Lord Beaconsfield was routed at the polls, and Mr. Gladstone took his place on the Treasury Bench, the Opposition in the House of Commons crossed over to the Ministerial side. But the Irish members resolved to remain where they were. A change

of Ministry, more or less, was nothing to them.

Tros Tyrinsoe mihi nullo discrimine agetur. All Saxon Governments who refused to grant Home Rule to Ireland were their natural enemies, and they would remain with their back to the wall, their face to the foe.

This was a startling innovation on Parliamentary practice, made the more embarrassing by the circumstance that it brought the Irish members into close personal contact with a class that had been especially bitter in its animosity. Mr. Biggar, who, Imperial politics apart, was understood to be something in the pork and bacon line, sat on the same bench shoulder to shoulder with the son of a duke. Other members of the party similarly circumstanced at home more or less enjoyed analogous companionship. First, there was some doubt in the Conservative breast whether these things might be. Since Parliaments were, it had been the custom for the Opposition to cross over in a body on a change of Ministry, and question was raised whether the Irish

members might vary the custom. The Speaker, privately consulted, declared he was powerless in the matter. A duly returned member of the House of Commons may sit anywhere he pleases except on the Treasury Bench. Even the Front Opposition Bench, as some years later the House had occasion to learn, is not sacred to the use of ex - Ministers, although it is usually reserved for their convenience. It belongs by ancient



"SHOULDER TO SHOULDER."

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

XI.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

THE
MINIS-
TERIAL
MAJORITY.

WITH a House of Commons not yet entered upon its second year, it seems premature to be talking about the next General Election. Yet in political circles the topic is already stale. It came to the front almost as soon as the new Parliament met. There were authorities who declared, and seemed to have convinced themselves of the accuracy of their forecast, that the new House would not live through its first Session. Some, not to be lacking in precision, fixed Easter as the limit of its troubled life.

As we know, the House is not only still living but is still sitting, a Session running to the length of nearly eight months not being enough to sap its young energy. As for the Ministerial majority, jeered at as fragile and insufficient for everyday work, those who saw strength in its very narrowness have been justified by the result. A Liberal majority in the House of Commons is bound to crumble away as the sparks fly upward. A majority of from eighty to over one hundred begins the process with a light heart in the first week a Liberal Ministry takes its seat on the Treasury Bench. With such a backing, what does it matter if ten, twenty, or even thirty members, returned to support the Government, set up in business for themselves? With a majority of only forty, the instinct of self-preservation is alert and predominant. If on any division the majority falls by even a unit below the normal figure, there is a close, sharp examination of the lists, which brings to light the identity of the laggard or the rebel. The condition of affairs places exceptional power in

the hands of the Whips, and when it is used with the skill and urbanity that have marked the period of office of Mr. Marjoribanks and his rare team, the position of Ministers is impregnable against persistent, desperate, adroitly-planned and well-led attack.

Mr. Grenfell, having views on bimetallism, breaks away from a party pledged to Home Rule. Mr. T. H. Bolton, yielding at length to innate Imperialistic tendencies, formally joins the ranks of the "gentlemen of England." Mr. Saunders, like Martha, troubled with many things, absents himself from a critical division. By these items the majority is diminished. The main body stands firm, and, according to present appearance, will remain so to the end.

THE
GENERAL
ELECTION.

Nevertheless, the House of Commons elected in July of last year is predestined to an early dissolution, the circumstances attending which and the approximate date being plainly foreshadowed. The early and greater

part of the present Session having been devoted to the Home Rule Bill, the interests of the island adjacent to Ireland will next Session have an innings. It is not yet clearly understood whether a Home Rule Bill will find a place in the programme of the new Session. Such an arrangement is one to be contemplated only in view of the fatal tendency of a Liberal Ministry to attempt to get a quart of Bills into the pint pot of a Session. It would be idle to include a Home Rule Bill in the promises of a Queen's Speech unless it were intended to carry it through all its stages before the prorogation. That done, it would be futile to include a Registration Bill, much less a Church Disestablishment measure.



MR. T. H. BOLTON.



MR. W. SAUNDERS.

What will doubtless happen will be that next Session will be set apart for clearing the decks for action preparatory to a General Election; that in the Session of 1895 the Home Rule Bill will again be brought in, pressed through the Commons, thrown out again by the Lords, and, somewhere between Easter and Whitsuntide, battle will be given on a field in which will be staked much more than the issue of Home Rule for Ireland. Old electioneering hands know that for an appeal to the popular vote there is no cry more effective than that shouted round the walls of the House of Lords after its inmates have twice, within a brief period of time, set at naught the decrees of the House of Commons.

Whilst there is this unusual THE NEXT measure of certainty as to the MINISTRY. career of the present Parliament, an influential section of the Opposition are not less definite in their arrangements of what shall follow after the next General Election. They have convinced themselves that in the result the Liberals will be placed in a minority variously estimated at from fifty to seventy. There will then devolve upon the Unionist party the duty of carrying on the Queen's Government. How is it to be done? How are the conflicting claims of the two wings of the party to be adjusted?

It is all cut and dried, all parcelled out in larger and smaller allotments. The only thing not settled is, Who is to be Prime Minister? That is a matter left for final determination when the hour has struck and the man is called for. But as an alternative scheme is devised, no hesitancy or embarrassment

need be apprehended. Either Lord Salisbury or the Duke of Devonshire will succeed Mr. Gladstone, Lord Salisbury having precedence, not without expectation that he will yield it to the Duke of Devonshire, as he proffered it to Lord Hartington in 1886. Should Lord Salisbury elect to lead the House of Lords, Mr. Chamberlain will become Leader of the House of Commons. Should the Duke of Devonshire be Premier, Mr. Arthur Balfour will be Leader in the House of Commons, Mr. Chamberlain undertaking the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lord Salisbury will return to the Foreign Office.

MR. I do not know how far this CHAMBER- patent adjustable scheme has LAIN'S been accepted at Arlington Street FUTURE. and on the Front Opposition Bench. It was rough-hewn in Liberal Unionist councils, those of the inner circle not making any secret of the matter. It bears on the face of it the mark of a well-considered, equable arrangement, and forms the groundwork of a strong Ministry.

It is noteworthy at the present time as marking an important stage in Mr. Chamberlain's political development. In 1886, when Lord Salisbury's Government was formed, the Member for Birmingham might have had any office he liked to name as the price of his defection from the Liberal party. But he declined to take the Conservative shilling, protesting that he was not less Liberal than he had been at any earlier stage. It was the Liberal party that had gone astray, he and the few that remained with him being the only true Liberals. He would stand in



"TEMPORA MUTANTUR, NOS ET—"

with the Tories in their opposition to Home Rule, and even on that, as was shown by the Round Table confabulation, he was desirous of coming to an understanding with his own colleagues. But his new allies would make a fatal mistake if they supposed he was, on other questions of the day, less ruthlessly Radical than when, on the eve of the General Election of 1885, he preached the doctrine of the Unauthorized Programme to an applauding populace.

There were some who, knowing Mr. Chamberlain publicly and privately, through six years combated the assumption that he would finally drift within the ranks of Toryism, wherein he was of yore the most detested and the most feared of political adversaries. There have been times during the present Session when it has been difficult to cling to this belief. It would seem that there is no longer room for conjecture, and that the next time a Tory Ministry is formed, the gas-lit roof of the House of Commons, unabashed at sight of many strange things, will look down on Mr. Chamberlain rising from the Treasury Bench, officially to defend the measures and policy of a Conservative Government.

One other important matter THE NEXT settled in anticipation of a SPEAKER. Conservative majority after the next General Election is the choice of Speaker. It is assumed that Mr. Peel will not consent to a further term of office, an assumption which, in the interests of the House of Commons and of the country, it is hoped may prove baseless. But it will be seen that, in a particular quarter of the political camp, there is a wholesome disposition to be prepared for every contingency. Should Mr. Peel claim the right to retire with laurels that will remain green as long as the history of Parliament remains on record, Mr. Courtney will be nominated as his successor.

That is a choice which, should opportunity present itself for making it, will receive general if not enthusiastic approval. As Mr.



MR. L. COURTNEY.

Peel has been incomparably the best Speaker of modern times, so was Mr. Courtney the most unimpeachable Chairman of Committees. It does not follow that because a man has shown aptitude in the Chair at the table, he will, necessarily, be a success as a Speaker. A man may be quick in forming a judgment, may be thoroughly versed in Parliamentary procedure, may have earned the reputation of being inflexibly impartial, and yet may fail when he puts on wig and gown and sits in the Speaker's Chair. Still, long experience as Chairman

of Ways and Means is an admirable apprenticeship for the post of Speaker. Outside the House it may seem odd it so rarely leads to it.

MR.
CAMPBELL-
BAN-
NERMAN.

There are several men on the Liberal side of the present House of Commons who would make excellent Chairmen of Committees, though, from various reasons, they are impossible. Sir Charles Dilke would make a model Chairman. Mr. Campbell-Bannerman would do well at whatever station



MR. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN.

it pleased the Prime Minister of the day to call him. The mind dwells lingeringly on the picture of him seated in the Chair of Committee of Ways and Means. There possibly was a time when, had the offer come his way, he would have accepted it. He has long ago passed the milestone in a Parliamentary career indicated by such advancement. His name, like some others, is mentioned here, merely as indicating the kind of man who, if circumstances permitted, would make a successful Chairman of Committees. Mr. Campbell-Bannerman's capabilities range over a wider field. He would make an excellent Speaker, and will probably some day have the opportunity of showing his capacity as Leader of the House of Commons. At that post he would develop into a kind of sublimated Mr. W. H. Smith. That perhaps does not seem extravagant praise, but those most intimate with the House of Commons will know that "Old Morality" was the most successful Leader of the House of Commons since the days of Lord Palmerston.

Nature has bestowed upon Mr. Campbell-Bannerman a number of gifts; Fortune has withheld one that weighs even against their accumulation. If he had only been born a poor man, and had to fight for his living, he would have been something more to-day than Secretary of War. But men cannot expect to enjoy every advantage.

MR.
HENRY
FOWLER.

I have been told, upon authority that commands attention, that at one time Mr.

Gladstone was bent upon inducting Mr. Henry Fowler into the Chair of Committees. Here again was an excellent suggestion made at a time when the subject of it had outgrown the position. Ten years ago Mr. Fowler would have jumped at the offer, and would have filled the Chair with distinction. With the alternative of headship of a department and a seat in the Cabinet, he could not be expected to step down into the Chair.

Mr. Robertson is another member, picked out by Mr. Gladstone's quick glance for Ministerial office, who would make an excellent Chairman of Committees. He has the advantage over others named, inasmuch as he is younger and physically harder, an

important qualification for Chairman of Ways and Means in these times. The post of Civil Lord of the Admiralty, even with fair prospect of advancement, does not compete with the emoluments and the dignity of the Chairman of Committees. Should circumstances arise to create a vacancy in the Chair within the life of the present Parliament, it is comforting to know that there is a successor at hand in this self-possessed, gravely-mannered, capable young Scotsman.

THE
STRANGER
WITHIN
THE GATES.

With the resumption of the sittings in the House of Commons, the Strangers' Galleries have once more filled to overflowing. Next to the largeness of the divisions taken night after night, often several times in a sitting—an average unparalleled since Parliament began—there has been nothing more striking than the crowded state of the Strangers' Galleries. The time came when the House itself was tired out with the reiteration of the debate on the Home Rule Bill. The withers of the strangers were to the last unwrung. This was reasonable, since the composition of the House itself was in the main unchanged, whilst the strangers nightly varied with the chances of the ballot-box. Still, that condition exists through all Sessions, and in none of recent date has there been such competition for seats in the galleries.

There was something pathetic in the sight of the row seated in the corridor which used to be St. Stephen's Chapel. They were next in order for admission when by chance a seat was vacated. Or a big night it was a mathematical certainty that not more than two, at the utmost five, would gain admission. Nevertheless they all, to the remote hopeless man at the end of the queue, sat hour after hour patiently waiting. For those fortunate enough to attain admission neither hunger nor fatigue availed to damp the ardour of enthusiasm. They listened with delight to Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Balfour, or Mr. Chamberlain; they did not budge even when the debate fell into the doldrums of the dinner-hour.

Sometimes, carried away by the excitement of the moment, they openly applauded a speech. In one case enthusiasm



MR. E. ROBERTSON.

was chilled by the applause being led forth on the Speaker's injunction, and seen safe into Palace Yard. On a still more memorable occasion the strangers in the gallery, looking down on a free fight on the floor of the House of Commons, indignantly hissed. Here was lost an opportunity for fitly ending an unaccustomed scene. In the Christmas pantomime, when the uproar breaks forth, the attendant policeman, with novel and subtle humour, swoops down on the smallest and most inoffensive boy on the outskirts of the throng and leads him to the lock-up. If Mr. Mellor had only thought of it, he might have sternly called "Order! Order!" and directed the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the disturbers of peace in the Strangers' Gallery. After this episode the fracas on the floor of the House might, or might not, have been resumed.

MR. GLADSTONE ON THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE HOUSE.

The plans for a new House of Commons include fuller accommodation for strangers of both sexes. The scheme comes up with regularity at the mustering of every new Parliament, the clamour dying away even as the first Session advances, and, the novelty of the situation fading, attendance falls off. Mr. Gladstone has never publicly expressed an opinion on the question of the desirability or otherwise of enlarging the House. But in private conversation he makes no secret of his distaste for the proposal. To him it is a place of work, and he is averse to anything that should increase the tendency to make it a rival of the theatre.

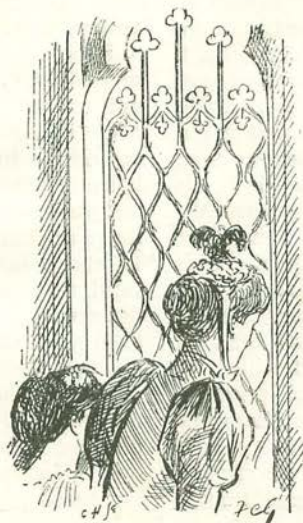
For this reason he is in favour of retaining the grille before the Ladies' Gallery, an opinion in which he is supported by a large majority of the ladies frequenting the House. Mr. Gladstone well remembers the old House of Commons, in which no accommodation for ladies was provided. Undaunted by this circumstance, ladies were present at all the big debates for some years prior to the destruction of the old House. Discovery was made that in the ventilating chamber in the roof there were shutters, through which persons peering might see and hear what was

going on below. It must have been a terrible ordeal, with no air to breathe save the vitiated atmosphere of a crowded House. But there was great competition for the privilege of standing there. Mrs. Canning, wife of the Prime Minister, was, Mr. Gladstone tells me, a frequent visitor to this chamber of horrors at times when her husband was intending to make an important speech.

"I remember one night," said Mr. Gladstone, looking back smilingly over a period of fifty years, "the House being crowded for a big debate, something fell on the floor with a distinct thud. It was a lady's bracelet, which had dropped through the open space in the ventilator."

LADIES IN THE VENTILATOR. History repeats itself in small things as well as in great. This very Session, a

small group of ladies, *cachées* in the ventilating chamber of the House of Commons, heard a speech delivered by Mr. Gladstone as, sixty years ago, another group in similar circumstances listened to his friend and early master, Mr. Canning. It happened on the night of the introduction of the Home Rule Bill. Every seat in the Ladies' Gallery, including the little-known stalls hidden behind the Strangers' Gallery facing the cage, had been appropriated. But the ladies of this generation are not more easily



THE LADIES' GAGE.

repulsed from a desired position than they were in the time of Canning.

Immediately under the House of Commons is a chamber running its full length, part of the elaborate construction of the ventilating department. The floor of the House, which to the casual glance seems of solid construction, is composed of perforated iron-work, covered with fine thread matting. Through this the fresh air drawn in from the river-terrace and elaborately treated in the lower vaults, is driven into the House. In this chamber, roofed by the fretwork of iron, speeches made in the House are as audible as if the listener were seated at the table or on one of the front benches. Four ladies, having obtained official permission, here sat and heard every word of Mr. Gladstone's speech. In respect of purity of air the

conditions were reversed as compared with those of Mrs. Canning and her companions. For them the air was a trifle stale. For these it was decidedly too fresh, and a severe cold was the penalty paid for the privilege of being (more or less) present on the historic occasion.

WHOM THEY WENT OUT FOR TO SEE. An unailing test of the place a member of the House of Commons fills in the eye of the public is supplied from the Strangers' Gallery. The attendants in the gallery might, if they gave themselves up to the task, supply a remarkable barometer of the current state of public feeling. Strangers always want to see one, two, or three men, and are not backward in asking to have them pointed out. At one time the eager inquiry incessantly ran upon Lord Randolph Churchill. To see him, and, above all, to hear him, if only putting or answering a question, was guerdon for all the trouble of getting the seat. Now, Lord Randolph is rarely asked for, the run being upon Mr. Balfour first, with Mr. Chamberlain a good second.

In this respect, as in some others, Mr. Gladstone stands apart. Even for those who have never beheld him in the flesh, his face and figure are so familiar that they are easily recognised on the Treasury Bench, whither the stranger's eyes are first bent on entering the House. Mr. Parnell, whilst he was yet with us, was one of the principal attractions as watched from the Strangers' Gallery. Another prime favourite was Joseph Gillis Biggar, a concatenation of circumstance that shows how wide are human sympathies.

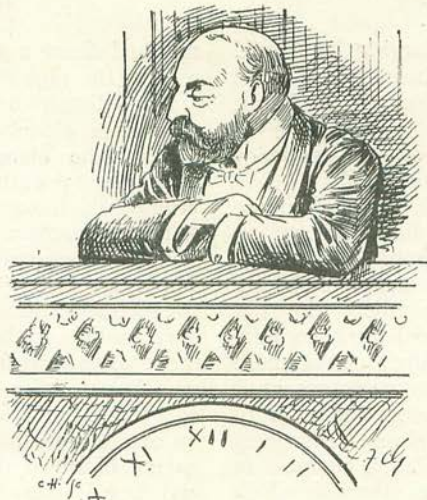
Mr. Biggar had a peculiar attraction for the Prince of Wales. Many a time in the stormy Sessions of 1880-5 I have seen His Royal Highness in his place over the clock looking down with beaming smile, whilst Joseph Gillis, with thumb in the armhole of his imitation sealskin waistcoat, talked of things present and to come. Joseph made a poor return for these marks of Royal favour. One night, just as the Prince had comfort-

ably settled himself in his seat, Joseph Gillis spied strangers, and under the standing order then suffered, he had the gratification of seeing the Heir Apparent compulsorily withdrawn with the rest of the strangers.

THE PREMIER'S VOICE. Perhaps the most striking testimony to the marvellous vitality of Mr. Gladstone is the recovery of his voice. Time was, a dozen years ago, when he was a chit of something over seventy, his voice suddenly failed. Public speaking became but labour and sorrow, promising shortly to be an impossibility. In the House of Commons he struggled against the growing infirmity with pathetic courage, but was sometimes obliged to own himself beaten. At his age there seemed no reasonable hope of recovery.

Recovery has been achieved, and members new to the present House of Commons cannot realize the existence of a period when Mr. Gladstone stood at the table speaking but almost inaudible. So completely has his voice regained strength that the pomatum-pot which used to play an important part in his oratorical efforts has become a tradition. In the delivery of his great speech on the third reading of the Home Rule Bill, he did not find occasion once to refresh himself even with the glass of water that stood at his right hand.

It is a happy dispensation that, in the majority of cases, Nature endows with pleasant voice men who do the most part of our public speaking. That a good voice is not absolutely essential to success as a public speaker is testified in the case of Lord John Russell. As a concomitant with other qualifications it is of priceless value. Of the voices of contemporary statesmen, Mr. Gladstone's is of the richest quality, capable of the widest range. In his prime, Mr. Bright was, I have been told, counted his equal in this respect. But whilst, as the years passed, Mr. Bright's voice deteriorated in quality and grew harshly metallic in the upper notes, Mr. Gladstone's



WATCHING MR. BIGGAR.

voice seems to improve, certainly is more skilfully and effectually modulated.

LORD SALISBURY'S SONOROUS, musical voice that makes it a physical pleasure to listen to him. As compared with Mr. Gladstone's vigorously varied tone, his manner of speech is charmingly equable. Mr. Gladstone sometimes orates; Lord Salisbury always converses. The contrast between him and his son and heir is deeply marked. When Lord Cranborne addresses the House of Commons his words come tumbling out after the fashion of the waters at Lodore. He is always at white heat, and conveys to his audience the impression that if they would excuse him he would find it a great relief to scream.

Lord Salisbury, though when making an important speech he is careful to speak up to the Press Gallery, rarely departs from his conversational manner. He never declaims or overwhelms the adversary with indignant denunciation. But he can upon occasion inflect his voice with a vibration conveying a feeling of scorn and contempt much harder to be borne by persons directly concerned than would be any amount of oratorical beating about the head.



ADDRESSING THE GALLERY.

MR. BALFOUR'S musical voice and a delivery that has vastly improved of late years, even of late months. He does not imitate the cynically unemotional manner of his uncle. He is indeed given to let his voice ring through the crowded House, as, with clenched hand beating the air, he pours contumely and scorn on hon. gentlemen below the gangway or seated on the benches opposite. His voice is admirably fitted to himself and his speech, having a certain note of elegance and distinction which forms the complement of his public performance and his social amenities.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S pleasant voice so something to soften the asperity of the Irish member who listens to him. It is soft and low—a beautiful thing in a public speaker, especially when there is added the quality of perfect distinctness. When occasion invites, Mr. Chamberlain can throw into his tone a rasping note, suggestive of jagged edges in the dart he is discharging. That happens seldom, and is least effective. The art of saying the very nastiest things in the most mellifluous voice is a rare possession. Mr. Chamberlain has cultivated it to perfection.

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

X.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

NEW
LIGHTS IN
THE NEW
HOUSE.

MR. GLADSTONE, meditating in the brief recess on the Parliament which meets again in this month of November, after one of the most arduous Sessions of modern times, has come to the conclusion that, taking it as a whole, whilst it has developed no marked phases of individual brilliancy or Parliamentary capacity, the present House of Commons is rather above the average than below it. That is an opinion possibly unconsciously influenced by the fact that it has, in face of unprecedented opposition, passed the Home Rule Bill.

However it be as to the general composition of the new House, there can be no question of the accuracy of the admission that at the end of twelve months no new member has stood forth with promise of making a high or even a first-class position. It is possible that the peculiar circumstances of the Session have in some degree been responsible for this. For months, when dealing with the principal measures of the year, the gag was morally enforced upon the rank-and-file of the Ministerial party. No one concerned for the advance of the Bill wanted to know what a young member thought of it, or how, opportunity given him, he would express himself. What was wanted was his vote.

"TOMMY"
BOWLES,
et cie.

This state of things did not extend to the Opposition side.

There there was the incentive of performing a double service to the party. By talking for half an hour a young Conservative of debating

capacity might pick a hole in the Home Rule Bill. By talking for sixty minutes, even if he said nothing to the point, he would postpone by an hour the passage of the obnoxious measure. It was a fine opportunity for young Chathams on the Conservative side. But the most striking if not the sole result has been Mr. "Tommy" Bowles. The member for King's Lynn early perceived his chance, and, late and early, has made use of it. Omniscient, impervious, he has filled so large a space on the Parliamentary canvas that there is hardly room for other figures; which, in view of the thirst for variety that marks average mankind, seems a pity.

Other new members on the Conservative side whose figures are partly visible behind the gigantic personality of the member for King's Lynn are Mr. Dunbar Barton, who has delivered some weighty speeches; Mr. Byrne, who has early caught the indescribable House of Commons' manner; and Mr. Vicary Gibbs, who has usefully instructed Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Goschen, and other tyros on financial matters, not to speak of his interposition on the final step of the Home Rule Bill in Committee, which, undesignedly, led to the most memorable riot seen in the House of Commons since Cromwell's day.

Mr. Carson is a gentleman who enjoys the confidence of his

colleagues on the Front Opposition Bench, notably that of Mr. Arthur Balfour, no mean judge of Parliamentary capacity. It must be said from the point



"TOMMY" BOWLES.



"COERCION CARSON."

of view of the dispassionate observer, that the junior member for Dublin University has not, in several speeches made since Parliament met, justified expectation. He is not as yet able to shake off the manner learned through a long course of Crown prosecutions in Ireland. When he is discussing the speech or action of an hon. or right hon. gentleman opposite, he always treats him as if he had found him in the dock, and as if the brief before him hinted at unutterable crimes brought home to him by the inquiry and testimony of members of the Irish Constabulary. The manner is so natural and ingrained that there is doubt whether it will ever be overcome or even modified. This is a pity, for it is simply professional. Nevertheless—indeed, therefore—it will never do in the House of Commons.

MR. MORTON of Mr. E. C. J. Morton is the only one that occurs to the mind in search of promise among new members. The matter of his speech is admirable, its arrangement lucid, its argument persuasive. Success is marred by lack of grace in delivery, accentuated by Mr. Morton's insistence on addressing the House from the corner seat of the front bench below the gangway. It is apparently a small matter, but he would, for immediate effect, do twice as well if he spoke from a back bench. The position would have the double effect of making less obtrusive the appalling collection of papers which seem indispensable to his addresses, and would relieve a sensitive audience from the distract-

tion of ungainly movements as, inflamed by his own eloquence, he, with shuffling feet, restlessly moves up and down and half way round.

Wales has brought no new member of note into the Parliamentary field, nor is there anything new from Ireland. Scotland, with the dry humour for which it was ever famous, has contributed Mr. Weir and Dr. Macgregor. It would be impossible for the ordinary student of Parliamentary reports to understand why these two gentlemen should make the House roar with laughter. It is not easy by any pen description to convey the secret. It lies in subtle eccentricities of manner, voice, attitude, and gesture. Mr. Weir, his useful legislative career unhappily handicapped by indisposition, has never taken part in ordered debate. He has found a wide and fruitful field of labour in addressing questions to Ministers. They do not often rise nearer to heights of Imperial interest than is found in the state of the drains at Pitlochrie, the tardy arrival of a train on the Highland Railway, or the post-



MR. GALLOWAY WEIR.

ponement by forty minutes of a telegram addressed to a fishmonger who thought it would reach Lochaber no more.

If Mr. Weir's mission, when he rises with two questions in hand, were to announce that the Russians are bivouacked on the Pamirs, or that the Tricolour flag flaunts over Bangkok, his manner could not be more impressive.

It is testimony to the richness of the soil that he has grafted upon it two distinct manners. When he first delighted the House by appearing at question time, he was wont

slowly to rise in response to the Speaker's call. For a moment no sound issued from his lips. He gazed round the waiting House and then, drawing forth his *pince-nez*, placed it on his nose with majestic sweep of the right arm. Another pause, and there was heard, rolling through the hushed Chamber, a deep chest note saying, "Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to ask the right hon. gentleman the Secretary for Scotland Ques-ti-on Number Eighty-three." Mr. Weir did not forthwith drop into his seat as others do when they have put a question. With another majestic sweep of the arm he removed the *pince-nez*, glanced round to watch the effect of his interposition, and slowly subsided, staring haughtily round at members rolling about in their seats in ecstasy of laughter at the little comedy. Mr. Weir rarely had less than a cluster of four questions on the paper, and, in time, it came to pass that his successive rising to put them was hailed with an enthusiastic burst of cheering that plainly puzzled the strangers in the gallery.

Towards the middle of the Session he achieved a new success. At an epoch when the Government were sorely pressed for time, he rose and, addressing Mr. Gladstone in his slow, solemn manner, invited him to state whether it would not be more convenient for members who had questions on the paper simply to recite the number, at which cue the Minister should rise and reply. This, from a gentleman whose preliminaries to a question often occupied as much time as the setting forth of the answer, hugely delighted the House. Mr. Weir was not to be disconcerted, and the next day, having on the paper his customary cluster of interrogations, he, being called on by the Speaker, responded with the remark, "Forty-four," going on as his turn came round with the subsequent remarks, "Forty-five," "Forty-six," "Forty-seven." No mere print could indicate the force and meaning he threw into the intonation of these numerals.

As for the purport of these momentous

interrogatories, I take at random two, following in a group of six which appear on one day's paper on an evening just before the adjournment for the holidays:—

"To ask the Secretary for Scotland, whether he is aware that Mr. Gordon, land valuator, one of the Deer Forest Commissioners now engaged in Caithness, has for a number of years acted as valuator for many of the landlords in that county: and, if he will inquire into the circumstances of the case."

"To ask the Secretary of State for War, how many black powder .303 cartridges can be fired from the Maxim machine gun before the barrel becomes unfit for accurate shooting."

Dr. Macgregor's manner, not less attractive to the House, GREGOR. which, above all things, likes to laugh, is wholly different. Whilst Mr. Weir sits below the gangway, a position



DR. MACGREGOR.

indicative of an independent mind, prepared upon occasion to vote against esteemed leaders, Dr. Macgregor is posted in the rear of the Treasury Bench, ready to protect its occupants against any strategic movement of the enemy. Like his countryman, he is interrogative in his manner, but unlike Mr. Weir, he has been known to take part in ordered debate. Whether rising to put a question or make a speech, nothing can exceed the impressiveness of his manner. He was, from the

first, convinced that Mr. Gladstone was too slow to anger against obstructive policy in the House of Commons. He felt unwilling to embarrass his right hon. friend, who, after all, might, to a certain extent, be supposed to know something of his own business. But the manner in which, with elbow resting on the back of the bench, and with legs crossed, the Doctor shook his head at fresh instances of unchecked inroads of obstruction, was more eloquent than words.

At one crisis he was moved to take upon himself the responsibility of immediate action. One night whilst the House was in Committee

on the Home Rule Bill, he rose and gravely gave the gentlemen opposite a week's notice. If, he said, at six o'clock on the following Friday the particular clause under discussion were not passed, he would move that forthwith the question be put, "that the clause be added to the Bill."

The Opposition affected to make light of this, but it was not without a thrill of apprehension they found the Doctor at his place when the fatal hour struck. It was a morning sitting, on which occasion the debate automatically closes at ten minutes to seven. Somehow the Doctor missed his chance, and before he could retrieve the opportunity the hands of the clock touched ten minutes to seven, and all was over for the day. But a very short time after a Cabinet Council was held, at which it was decided that obstruction must be scotched, and notice was given of the introduction of the guillotine process.

It was at a later stage of the interminable debate that Dr. Macgregor, whom members had forgotten, again appeared on the scene. The House had long been debating an amendment on the Report stage. The division was imminent. The Speaker had, indeed, risen to put the question, when Dr. Macgregor interposed, and, waving the Speaker down, said in solemn tones, "Mr. Speaker, Sir, one or two ideas have occurred to me."

What they might have been was never disclosed beyond the inquiry, not original—Dr. Macgregor attributed it to the late Sydney Smith—"When doctors differ, who shall decide?" The House laughed so uproariously, that Dr. Macgregor got no further, and was fain to resume his seat. Not to this day has he understood why the House should have gone into paroxysms of laughter at his opening sentence, though he probably has since ascertained that the epigrammatic remark he quoted was wrongly attributed to Sydney Smith.

Whilst no young members have earned laurels in the new Parliament, some old ones have added many leaves to theirs. First, appropriately, though not in accordance with invariable custom, comes the Premier. For twenty years I have had constant opportunity of observing Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons, and declare that never within that time has he excelled himself as compared with the past Session. He may have made speeches more striking in respect of eloquence and force, though of that I am doubtful. Taking the whole con-



MR. GLADSTONE AND HIS LIEUTENANTS.

duct of the Session, which has weighed almost exclusively upon his shoulders, there is nothing in his prime to compare with this prolonged triumph. At the beginning of the Session it was taken as a matter of course that he would divide the labour of the year with Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley. The plan was so excellent and precise that it was impossible to doubt its actuality. Mr. Gladstone was to introduce the Home Rule Bill, even to move the second reading. Charge of the long debate expected on this stage, and more especially the wearying work night after night in Committee, were to be confided to the Chief Secretary, whilst Sir William Harcourt would remain on guard reserved for emergencies.

As for Mr. Gladstone, he would probably be in his place every day up to the dinner hour, at approach of which he would disappear with the certainty of being put to bed before midnight. Conservative newspapers, anxious



MR. GLADSTONE GOES HOME.

above all things that the precious life of the Premier should not be endangered, were not to be comforted even by this prospect. It would, they perpended, be too much for a statesman, his energies sapped by sixty years' hard labour in the public service.

Of what really happened the student of Parliamentary reports has a general idea, though the situation can be fully realized only by those present in the House day by day and through all the sitting. Whilst the Home Rule Bill was to the fore, Mr. Gladstone was, with an interval for dinner, in his place from first to last. Even the dinner hour he cut shorter than was others' wont. Often when the hands of the clock drew close to eight and the Chamber grew empty, Mr. Gladstone was found at the end of the Treasury Bench, with hand to ear listening intently to some inconsiderable member at whose uprising the audience had hastily dispersed. Mr. Morley had no chance with him, nor Sir William Harcourt either. It might have been thought that he would be content with answering Mr. Balfour or his "right hon. friend" Mr. Chamberlain, leaving to the Chief Secretary or the Solicitor-General the task of replying to members of smaller calibre. That was a reasonable expectation, disappointed, if necessary, half-a-dozen times in a sitting. No one was too inconsiderable for him to reply to.

The only place at which he drew a line was the occasional interposition of Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, though with what pang self-restraint was here observed no man knoweth. In the opinion of some of his hearers he marred the otherwise perfect symmetry of his speech on the third reading, by devoting the opening passages to the confusion of Mr. Chaplin, who had challenged his presentation of Cavour's views on Irish Home Rule.

It seemed to impatient onlookers that this constant appearance of the Premier on the scene was conducive to prolongation of the

debate. If in Committee he had taken a course that would certainly have been adopted by Mr. Disraeli — either ignored the speech of a second or third rate man, or let it be answered by the Minister conjoined with himself in charge of the Bill — the conversation would have flickered out. The interposition of the Premier, upon whatever inducement, instantly raised the debate to the highest level, and drew into the controversy leaders in other parts of the House who otherwise would have abstained from speech. On many occasions that was indubitably true. The habit is mentioned here merely in illustration of the tireless activity of the youthful octogenarian.

The success which attended a much disputed strategy of the Premier's on analogous lines, makes one chary of assuming that he was, on the whole, wrong in this particular matter. On successive stages of the Bill the obstruction with which it was met wore away such patience as is possessed by the Radical section of his supporters. Had they won their way, the duration of the struggle would have been nearer forty days than eighty-two. Since the Reform Bill of 1831 was disposed of in forty-seven days, the Corn

Laws repealed in ten days, the Reform Bill of 1867 passed in thirty-four days, the Irish Church Disestablished in nineteen days, and the Irish Land Act of 1881 run through the Commons in forty-six days, that might have been held to suffice. Mr. Gladstone, patient, long-suffering beyond average capacity, resisted importunity, and without once even showing signs of losing his temper, politely pegged away.

He had his reward in a triumph which, as far as I have observed, did not in the comments on the final stage of the controversy receive the notice it merited. A main plank in Mr. Chamberlain's policy, eagerly adopted by the united Opposition, was to force the hand of the Government in the matter of the Closure, and thus provide excuse for the



"TIRELESS ACTIVITY."

House of Lords to throw out the Bill on the ground that it had not been fully debated in the Commons. The Old Parliamentary Hand perceived this game, and though Mr. Chamberlain won to the extent that the Closure was in the end systematically applied, Mr. Gladstone trumped his card by allotting to the measure a period of discussion equal in the aggregate to what had sufficed for the



"I SEE YOU, MR. FOX."

establishment of the Union, the passing of the Reform Act, and the Repeal of the Corn Laws. The result of this was seen when the Bill reached the Lords. Neither Lord Salisbury, as Leader of the Conservative Opposition, nor Lord Selborne, representing the Dissident Liberals, once alluded to "the gag."

MR. ARTHUR BALFOUR. Next to Mr. Gladstone, the honours of the Session undoubtedly rest with Mr. Balfour. The fact that he has not pushed his way to the front makes fuller the satisfaction with which his arrival is hailed. His position has been one of peculiar difficulty. Early in the Session his supremacy was threatened by the reappearance of Lord Randolph Churchill on the scene. In the Conservative ranks there was a sneaking affection for Lord Randolph, in which lurked grave potentialities. He had shown them sport in earlier days. To him more than to any other was due the overthrow of Mr. Gladstone's Ministry in 1885. At the beginning of the Session he was the dark horse of the political race. No one could

say at what point of it his colours might not suddenly flash.

Mr. Balfour at that time had shown no particular aptitude for the post of Leader, to which, consequent upon Lord Randolph's withdrawal from the boards, he had been called. He was plainly indifferent to the pride of place, and evidently bored with the duties it imposed upon him. Even in the matter of attendance he flouted the traditions of the commander of an army in time of war. He came late to his post on the Front Opposition Bench, and, like Charles Lamb at the India Office, made up for it by going away early. Of all men in the House he seemed most indifferent to the prospect of Lord Randolph Churchill's re-appearance. It was, I believe, at his instance that the Prodigal was invited to return to his old home on the Front Opposition Bench. It was from his side that Lord Randolph rose to make the speech on the introduction of the Irish Home Rule Bill that marked his re-entry in Parliamentary life. No voice cheered him so loudly as did Mr. Balfour's. As he spoke, no face beamed upon him with such kindly



"A FRIENDLY SMILE."

interest and friendly encouragement. The keen-eyed House, watching the scene with the interest all personal questions have for it, recognised in the young Leader's bearing at this critical epoch the simple influence of a fine nature incapable of petty jealousy, indifferent to personal aggrandisement.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN. Another and more truculent horn of Mr. Balfour's dilemma projected from the corner seat below the gangway on the benches opposite. It is no easy matter to run in

double harness with Mr. Chamberlain. At the end of a memorable and exciting course, it must be admitted that Mr. Balfour has achieved the undertaking with supreme credit. There have been times when party animosity has discovered Mr. Chamberlain leading and Mr. Balfour following. That would, in the circumstances, be personally and politically a position in which a high-spirited man would find life unbearable, in which open revolt would be irresistible. Whatever may have been Mr. Balfour's secret thoughts at particular turns of the long game, he has never publicly betrayed consciousness of the alleged situation. Only once has the House fancied he showed any disposition to lay a warning hand on Mr. Chamberlain's shoulder.

This happened on the seventy-fourth night "the gagged House" had been talking at large round the Home Rule Bill. Mr. Gladstone moved a resolution designed on the following Friday to bring the Report stage to a conclusion. Mr. Chamberlain resisted this in a speech more than usually acrimonious in its tone, in the course of which his "right hon. friend" on the Treasury Bench came in for something over the customary measure of attention. The attack, considering its elaborate preparation and the force with which it was delivered, had fallen a little flat—probably not



"DOUBLE HARNESS."

because it was less brilliant or forceful than Mr. Chamberlain's speeches through the Session had been; but because even the Opposition were under the spell of the monotony of vituperation. Mr. Chamberlain began the debate, and Mr. Balfour closed it in a speech not less effective from a debating point of view, but infused by an entirely different spirit. He did not spare the adversary, but his attempts to dispatch him were conducted with a

grace, a courtesy, and something of personal deference which recalled the highest Parliamentary standard. Unfriendly critics insisted that this tone and manner were specially designed to contrast with Mr. Chamberlain's. More probably it was due to a mere accident of exceptional good health and temper. However it be, it marked an advance in Mr. Balfour's supremacy over the House

of Commons from which he has not since fallen away. The marked approval of the most critical assembly in the world has reacted upon him, and success has engendered the resolve to succeed.

There is no temp-
OF tation
LORDS. tion

for noble Lords to flock to London to take their part in the autumn Session. As a rule, the vast majority of peers are successful in disseminating their interest in Parliamentary life. When the roll was scanned in



"LORDS."

anticipation of the division on the Home Rule Bill last September, it was found, though the Parliament of Victoria was already twelve months old, upwards of 100 peers had not made response to the writ received by them when it was summoned. They came up breathless in batches of a dozen or a score in time to vote against the Bill. That duty accomplished they have gone their ways, and will certainly not come to town for an autumn Session, in which no sacred ark of Land, or Church, or Union is touched.

It must be admitted that, on the whole, the House of Lords is not an attractive place, either for members or for lookers on. During the Session it meets four days a week, but oftener than not finds itself in the position of having no work to do. The Lord Chancellor, with something of the pomp, circumstance, and inutility of the valiant Duke of York, marches up to the Woolsack and marches back again; when, as the Parliamentary report puts it, "the House then adjourned."

For all practical purposes the House of Lords might for at least three months of an ordinary Session be content with meeting once a week, and need not on that particular night sit beyond the dinner hour. As such an arrangement would imply that for six days out of the seven the world would go round pretty much the same as if their lordships were in Session, they are not likely to fall in with this suggestion.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR. In various matters of procedure the House of Lords differs from the Commons. Like the Commons, it is presided over by a member of its own body, holding his seat by equal tenure. But a gulf, wider than the passage between the two Houses, divides the Lord Chancellor from the Speaker. In the first place the Speaker is elected by the House of Commons. The Lord Chancellor is nominated by and is actually a member

of the Government of the day. The consequence follows that whilst the Speaker is above all political consideration, the Lord Chancellor is a leading active member of his party. The Speaker never takes part in debate. In the House of Lords no big debate is complete without a deliverance from the Lord Chancellor.

It is a quaint custom, significant of some uneasiness in the situation, that when the Lord Chancellor takes part in debate, he steps a pace to the left of the Woolsack; thus, as it were, temporarily divesting himself of presidential function and speaking as a private member.

One natural consequence of the diverse circumstances under which the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker come to the chair is seen in their varied measure of authority. The Lord Chancellor presides, but does not govern. The Speaker in the chair of the House of Commons is autocratic. Whilst the Speaker orders the course of a debate, selecting successive contributors out of the competing throng, no one in the Lords is so poor as to do the Chancellor the reverence of trying to "catch his eye." In a set debate like that of September, the succession of

speakers is settled by the Whips in conference on either side.

Another custom in which Lords and Commons pointedly differ **PERSONAL REFERENCES.** is in the matter of reference to individual members made in the course of debate. In the Commons it is a grave breach of order that would be promptly and angrily resented for any member to allude to another by name. He is always "the hon. member" for the borough or county he represents, "the right hon. gentleman," "the noble lord," or "my hon. friend." The only variation to this custom is on the part of the Speaker, who when he calls upon a member to take his turn in debate, does so by name. Even the Speaker



THE LORD CHANCELLOR.

when addressing the House from the chair, and having occasion to allude to a member personally, must needs adopt the roundabout style enjoined by the House of Commons' usage. Since the peers represent no one but themselves, this practice would in their House be impossible. Members are accordingly directly alluded to in debate by their ordinary name and style.

HATS.

In the House of Commons it is the custom for members to wear hats while seated in debate, a fashion which strikes the stranger in the gallery as very odd. In the Lords, the hat is permissible, but its use is exceptional. There is a good and sufficient reason for this variation of custom. Whilst the House of Commons have for centuries been engaged in making history, they have never had a hat-rail made for themselves. It is true there is a cloak-room, half way down the broad staircase that gives entrance to the Lobby. But a hat might almost as well be left at home as planted out there. The Lords have hat and coat rail conveniently set in the hall outside the glorious brass gateway that opens on to their House. Peers in regular attendance have their own hook bearing their honoured name. It is as natural to place their hats there as it is to leave them in the hall of their residence, and they do it accordingly.

Last Session the First Commissioner of Works had his attention called by a despairing member of the House of Commons to this curious omission. Possibly when the new Session opens members may find a House of Commons, for the first time in its history, endowed with a convenient hat-rail.

Whilst members generally wear their hats in the House of Commons, Ministers are distinguished among other things by usually sitting bare-headed. This is doubtless owing to the fact that most Ministers have private rooms behind the Speaker's chair, where they can conveniently

leave their out-of-door apparel. There are not many members of the present Parliament who ever saw Mr. Gladstone seated on either front bench with his own hat on. Last time he wore his hat in the House was eighteen years ago. In the Session of 1875, he, having in a famous letter confided to Lord Granville his intention to retire from political life, occasionally looked in to see how things were getting on under Lord Hartington's leadership. Always he brought his hat with him and put it on as he sat at the end of the Front Opposition Bench, a quarter usually affected by ex-Under-Secretaries. Also, he wore his gloves and carried his stick, all, perhaps unconsciously, designed to complete the casual character of his visit and the "hope I don't intrude"-ness of his bearing. When news came of the Bulgarian atrocities, hat and gloves and stick were left outside the House, and have never since been seen in the House with the Speaker in the chair.

I said just now that not many members of the present Parliament have seen Mr. Gladstone with his own hat on. The distinction was drawn advisedly, for there is a time of later date when he was seen in the House under someone else's. It happened in the troublous days of the Parliament, 1885. One night business had boiled over in a storm of disorder. The House had been cleared for a division, in which circumstance a member desiring to address the Chair must do so seated, with his hat on. The Premier wished to raise a point of order, but his hat was in his room. Half-a-dozen were proffered for his use. He accepted the loan of that of the colleague who was then Sir Farrer Herschell, Solicitor-General. Mr. Gladstone

put it on, to find it was several sizes too small.

Many years have passed since that day, but none who were present can forget the curious effect as, with the inadequate hat comically cocked over his gleaming eye, the Premier addressed the appalled Chairman of Committees.



"TOO SMALL?"

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

IX.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

THE HOUSE OF LORDS. IN the closing weeks of the Session the House of Lords enjoyed the unaccustomed privilege of knowing that the eyes of the country were fixed upon it. At length, for a strictly limited time, the Lords have cut out the Commons. The period during which they have had the Home Rule Bill in charge has been brief compared with the long stretch of time during which they were as entirely ignored as if their existence had terminated. For weeks and months through the Session the House of Lords might easily, and more conveniently, have fulfilled all its legislative functions if it had met on the Monday and made holiday through the rest of the week.

For the large majority of noble lords, whether the House is sitting or not is a matter of small consequence. If they have time and inclination they may look in on the way to the Park or club, or they may forbear. They have no responsibilities to meet, no constituencies jealously counting the number of divisions from which they are absent. Indeed, there are very few divisions to take part in. When such an event occurs the House of Lords is inclined, as Mr. Disraeli once irreverently wrote, to cackle with content as a hen that has laid an egg. Still, there are the Lord Chancellor, the Ministers, and one or two ex-Ministers, not to mention the exhausted officials, who must needs be in their places if a sitting be appointed, and who would welcome an arrangement that would relieve them from an engagement that has not the value of utility to recommend it. Often it has come to pass that the Lord Chancellor in wig and gown, accompanied by Purse-bearer and Mace, with Black Rod on guard

at the Bar, has marched to the Woolsack, and having advanced a group of private Bills a formal stage, has marched back again, and so the House was "up."

It would, however, never do to admit by adoption of such an arrangement as that suggested, that the country could get along without the House of Lords. Therefore it will sit, though it has no work to do. A few years ago, when things were particularly dull, it suddenly resolved that it would meet an hour earlier than heretofore, so as to be the better able to grapple with accumulation of work. Lord Sherbrooke, a new recruit to the Chamber, was so tickled with this, that he dropped into verse, which appeared anonymously in the *Daily News* :—

As long as their lordships assembled at five,
They found they had nothing to keep them alive ;
By wasting more time they expect to do more,
So determine to meet at a quarter-past four.

It was explained at the time that the new arrangement was made with a view to giving an opportunity to the younger peers to take part in debate. It is only in rare and exceptional circumstances that noble lords will sacrifice their dinner on the altar of the State. It ordinarily requires a cry of either

the Church or the Land in danger to keep them sitting after eight o'clock. Complaint was made that, meeting at five o'clock, nearly the whole of the time up to the adjournment was occupied by the front benches, or the Duke of Argyll. It was said if the House met an hour earlier young fellows like Lord Denman might have the chance of showing what metal they are made of. No notable change has been wrought in that direction consequent upon the new departure.



LORD HERSCHELL.

Noble lords accustomed to speak before speak now with fuller frequency and more certain regularity. Failing that, their lordships get off to dinner an hour earlier.

A HOUSE OF COMMONS' SECRET.

There are many reasons why the House of Lords is not a successful school of oratory. The first and not least important is that it is an exceedingly difficult place in which to make oneself heard. When the new Houses of Parliament were opened, the Peers' Chamber was found to have in this respect a rival in the House of Commons. In the Commons then, as in the Lords now, the average human voice lost itself amidst the immensities of the roof. The Lords continue to suffer the inconvenience of lack of acoustical properties in their Chamber. In the Commons, where business really must be done, and is conducted *viva voce*, it was necessary to have a Chamber in which one man could hear another speak. After many devices and experiments the roof was lowered by a contrivance of glass, which served a double debt to pay. Through these sheets of glass falls the brilliant light that illumines the House of Commons, whilst it incloses a space by which the plan of ventilation is made practicable.

Few members looking up at the glass roof, the unique and now most familiar adjunct of the House of Commons, are aware that it is an after-thought, and that it conceals a roof not less lofty or ornate than that in the House of Lords. The result has been to make the House of Commons one of the most perfect Chambers in the world for public speaking, the House of Lords remaining one of the worst.

PEERS WHO MAKE THEMSELVES HEARD.

Whilst for the average member the House of Lords is a sepulchre of speech, it is a curious fact that, as far as I know, without exception, every man whom the House and the country desire to hear makes himself audible even in the Lords. When Mr. Disraeli left the Commons, there was much curiosity to learn whether Lord Beaconsfield could make himself heard amid his new surroundings. He succeeded, apparently, without an effort, being heard in



LORD DENMAN.

the Lords quite as well as he had been accustomed to make himself audible in the Commons. Earl Granville was heard in the Press Gallery, but only by dint of patient and painstaking endeavour. He literally "spoke to the Gallery," more especially when, as a Minister, he had anything important to communicate. At such times, unceremoniously turning his back on the Lord Chancellor seated on the Wool-sack, he faced the Press Gallery and spoke up to it.

Lord Salisbury, with more sonorous voice, to this day observes the same attitude, standing sideways at the table and addressing the Gallery. This is his habit when making ordered speech. When he flings across the House some barbed arrow of wit, he leans both hands on the table, and personally addresses the peer who is, for the time, his target. Even then, happily, he is heard, and the strangers in the Gallery may share the delight of the peers at the brilliant coruscations that play across the table. When Lord Granville was still alive there was nothing more delightful than the occasional encounters between himself and Lord Salisbury. The Conservative Chief has plainly suffered by the withdrawal of this incentive to playful sarcasm. Lord Kimberley, with many admirable qualities, is not the kind of man to inspire liveliness in a political opponent. Compared with the effect noticeable



LORD SALISBURY.

in the case of Lord Granville, the Earl of Kimberley in his influence upon Lord Salisbury acts the part of a wet blanket.

Happily Lord Granville has left behind him an inheritor of much LORD ROSEBERY. of his personal and oratorical charm, one, moreover, who has an equally happy effect in influencing Lord Salisbury. If the House of Lords were the House of Commons, and circumstances analogous to those taking place within the last two years had followed, Lord Rosebery would, as a matter of course, have stepped into the shoes of Lord Granville. But the ways of the House of Lords are peculiarly its own; and Lord Kimberley leads it.



LORD KIMBERLEY.



DUKE OF ARGVLL.

of the gilded chamber. He apparently makes no particular effort, but manages to fill every recess with the music of his voice. So does the Duke of Argyll, but he is

not without suspicion of uplifting his voice in unaristocratic shout. This is probably due to the fact that the MacCullum More, having all his life lived in association with the bagpipes, has unconsciously caught the attitude, and is apparently under sore temptation to take the strut, of the player. When he addresses the Lords he throws back his head, inflates his chest, and slightly extends his right foot, an attitude that only wants the accessory of the bagpipes to make it completely national.

Lord Rosebery's style, whether in the House or in after-dinner speech, is closely akin to Lord Granville's in respect of grace and delicacy of touch. Where difference is marked is possibly found in the particulars that Lord Granville's style was the more polished and Lord Rosebery's is the more vigorous. Lord Granville played around the victim of his gentle humour, almost apologetically pinking him with polished rapier. Lord Rosebery will do that sometimes; but, occasionally, as the late Lord Brabourne knew, he is capable of delivering a blow straight from the shoulder on the visage of a deserving object. His oratorical style may be described as English, benefiting by application of French polish. Lord Granville's was French, with substratum of what we are pleased to regard as British solidity.

Lord Rosebery is one of the few peers who make light of the ordinarily fatal effects

The late Lord Chancellor and the present occupant of the Woolsack have, in common, the advantage of making themselves heard in the House. As for Lord Bramwell, he has a voice that would be heard in a storm at sea. Lord Ashbourne, who used to be thought a little loud-voiced for the delicate arrangement of the House of Commons, is quite at home in the House of Lords. The Marquis of Waterford is another peer who under peculiar circumstances may be listened to without painful effort. Owing to an accident in the hunting field the Marquis is disabled from standing, and has special permission to address the House seated. This he does with surprising vigour alike of voice and invective. Lord Dudley, one of the youngest peers, has excellent voice and delivery, the more fortunate in his case as he generally has something to say worth listening to. Lord Winchilsea and Nottingham are still another peer who commands the ear of the House.

There are probably other peers who possess natural gifts that cope with the difficulty that handicaps genius in the Lords; but no other names occur to me.

The general run of oratorical effort may be illustrated by two incidents that happened during the Session. One night in June Lord Breadalbane, wearing the uniform of the Lord Steward, and carrying the wand of office, appeared at the table and stood there for some moments. As the House sat attentive it began to be suspected in the Press Gallery that he was saying something, in all probability reading a reply from the Queen to an address presented by the House. What it might be was not conveyed by any audible sentence. It was necessary to have some record in the report, and a message was sent down to the Clerk of the Table asking if he could inform the reporters what was the nature of the Lord Steward's business. The Clerk sent back word that he was always anxious to oblige, but the lamentable fact was that though Lord Breadalbane had been standing at the table at which he sat, he had not heard a word of his message.

That was possibly a calamity arising out of the natural modesty of an ingenuous young peer suddenly finding himself thrust into a position of prominence. The other case more precisely illustrates the chronic difficulty hinted at. In the course of a long debate in Committee on the Places of Worship (Sites) Bill, Lord Grimthorpe, standing on his legs for ten minutes, was understood to be moving an amendment. Lord Belper, in charge of the Bill, opposed the amendment in a speech almost as inaudible. Lord Halsbury, whose observations at least have the merit of being audible, protested that Lord Belper had not properly appreciated the arguments of Lord Grimthorpe. "I could not hear him," said Lord Belper. "I must confess, my lords," said the ex-Lord Chancellor, with his winning smile, "that I am not certain I myself correctly caught the drift of Lord Belper's remarks."

Happily for the welfare of the nation, this physical inability to follow the arguments of

a debate does not preclude noble lords from giving their opinion thereupon by their vote in the Lobby.

One result of the change in the hour of meeting sung by Lord Black Rod. Sherbrooke has been the abandonment of a practice which led to occasional explosions. When the House of Lords began to meet at a quarter-past four, the House of Commons at that time not commencing public business till half-past four, it was possible, with an effort at agility, for Black Rod to reach the Commons, and summon them to a Royal Commission before questions had commenced. When the House of Commons advanced its time of meeting by an hour Black Rod inevitably arrived, in discharge of his mission, at a time when questions were in full swing.

It is a reminder of old times that Black Rod, coming about the Sovereign's business, brooks no delay. It is true that, when watchful scouts in the Commons' Lobby breathlessly bring news that "Black Rod's a-coming," the doorkeeper leaves his chair, darts within the open doors, shuts and bolts them, and calmly awaits the consequences. Black Rod, coming up and finding the door thus unceremoniously closed in his face, raps upon it thrice with his stick.

The doorkeeper, cautious to the last, instead of unbolting the door, opens a little spy-hole cunningly built above the sturdy lock. With a start of surprise he finds Black Rod standing there, demanding entrance in the name of the Queen. Without more ado the doorkeeper unlocks and unbolts, and, hastening within the glass door of the House itself, stands at the Bar and at the top of his voice proclaims "Black Rod!"

The inconvenience of this sudden incursion and interruption has been felt for centuries. It might have gone on to the end of time

but for the accident that one afternoon the sudden cry "Black Rod!" broke in upon remarks Mr. Gladstone chanced to be making. There was under the ancient rules of the House no option to anyone. Black Rod must set forth for the Commons when he receives the word of command from the House of Lords. The doorkeeper,



LORD HALSBURY.

after peeping at him through the spy-hole, must straightway rush into the Commons and bellow "Black Rod!" The gentleman on his feet, be he Premier or private member, must forthwith resume his seat. The course of business is peremptorily interrupted, whilst Mr. Speaker, accompanied by the Mace and one forlorn member (usually the Home Secretary), trudges off to the Bar of the Lords to hear the Royal Assent given by Commission to a batch of Bills.

The chance interruption of Mr. Gladstone had the effect upon the procedure which is hopefully looked for in respect of railway management when a director has been maimed in a collision. Angry protests were made by loyal Radicals, and the Speaker undertook to communicate with the authorities in the other House with a view of devising means whereby inconvenience might be averted. The suggestion made to the Lords was that they should so arrange matters that Black Rod should appear on his picturesque but not particularly practical mission at a time when he would not interrupt the course of public business. An effort was made to carry out this suggestion, but, the hours clashing, it was found impossible. The consequence has been that occasionally a Saturday sitting has been found necessary for the purpose of going through the performance of giving the Royal Assent to Bills.

Whether Parliament might not, as Sir Walter Barttelot used to say, "go one step farther," and get rid of the anachronism of the Royal Commission is, I suppose, a question for which the time is not yet ripe. The assumption underlying the Constitution is that the Houses of Parlia-

ment, having agreed upon certain legislative measures, the Sovereign carefully considers them, and either gives consent or exercises the right of veto. In the good old days the King took an active part in the weekly, almost the daily, business of the House of Commons. Not only was the Session opened and closed by Majesty in person, but the

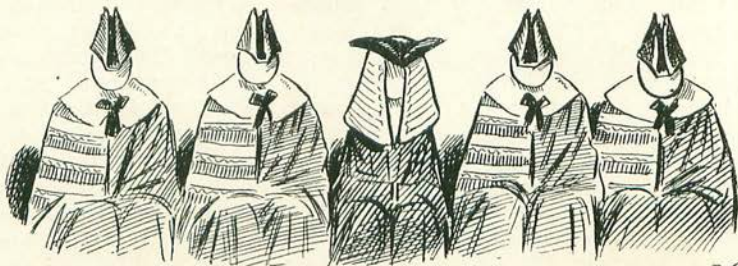
Royal Assent was given or withheld by the King's own hand. Now, with rare exceptions at the opening of a Session, the functions of the Sovereign are performed by Commissioners, the business degenerating into a formality which may be essential, but is certainly not dignified.

Several times in the course of a Session a Royal Commission sits. It consists of the Lord Chancellor and, usually, four other peers. They are dressed in the ermine-trimmed scarlet robes of a peer of Parliament, and are, as it is written in police-court reports, accommodated with a seat upon a bench set in front of the Woolsack. All

being in readiness, Black Rod is bidden to request the appearance at the Bar of the House of the faithful Commons. In the last days of the memorable Parliament of 1874 the delivery of this message raised what threatened to be a grave Constitutional question. General Knollys was Black Rod at the time, and the jealous ear of Sir George Bowyer had detected on his part a lapse into unwarranted imperiousness. Black Rod, having gained admittance to the House of Commons, in circumstances already described, approaches the table with



THE SPEAKER'S PROCESSION.



A ROYAL COMMISSION; OR, CLOCKWORK FIGURES.

measured step, thrice making obeisance to the Chair. Arrived at the table, he should say, "The presence of members of this honourable House is desired to hear the Lords Commissioners give their assent to certain Bills." Whether due to contempt for ordinary humanity born of daily contact with haughty nobles, or whether by pure accident, General Knollys had altered this formula, "requiring" instead of "desiring" the company of the Commons at the Bar of the House of Lords. Sir George Bowyer, a type extinct in the present Parliament, solemnly called the attention of the Speaker to the matter, and the next time Black Rod appeared all ears were cocked to catch his phrase.

General Knollys was at this time an elderly warrior, not too certain on his pins. Beneath his carefully cultured hauteur he nurtured a great terror of the House of Commons, which used to pretend fiercely to resent his entrances, and ironically cheered his painstaking exit backwards. This was his last mission to the Parliament of 1874. Its turbulent life was measured by a few gasps. When the Speaker obeyed the summons and stood at the Bar of the House of Lords to hear the prorogation read, all would be over. General Knollys might with impunity have flouted the moribund House, and avenged a long series of insults by rasping out the objectionable word "required." A swift retreat and a flight across the Lobby would have landed him in the sanctuary of his box in the House of Lords. The General was, happily, of a generous mind, and, meekly "desiring" the presence of members in the other House, what might have been an interesting scene passed off quietly.

When the Speaker, accompanied
A SOLEMN by the Serjeant-at-Arms bearing
FARCE. the Mace, and escorted by a
number of members who rarely
exceed a dozen, reaches the Bar of the House of Lords, the five cloaked figures on the bench before the Woolsack thrice uplift their cocked hats. This is designed as a salutation to the Speaker. Simultaneously the Clerk of Parliament, quitting his seat at the end of the table, advances midway adown its length. Halting, he produces a large document bearing many seals. This is the Royal Commission appointing "our trusted and well-beloved councillors" to act for the Sovereign in the matter of signifying Royal Assent to certain Bills. When the Clerk of Parliament comes upon a name in the catalogue of Commissioners, he stops, turns half to the

right and bows low to the red-cloaked figures on the bench. At this signal a hand appears from under the folds of one of the cloaks, and a cocked hat is uplifted. The process is repeated at the recital of each name, till the Royal Commissioners have been numbered off.



A ROYAL COMMISSIONER.

This formality completed, another clerk in wig and gown steps forth and takes a position on the left-hand side of the table facing the Lords Commissioners. He is known as the Clerk of the Crown, and it is his mission vocally to signify the Royal Assent. At this stage the performance becomes irresistibly comic. On the table by the Clerk of Parliament is a pile of documents. These are the Bills which have passed both Houses and now await the Royal Assent. Taking one in his hand, the clerk on the right-hand side of the table turns to face the cloaked figures, to whom he bows low. The clerk on the left-hand side of the table simultaneously performs a similar gesture. The two clerks then wheel about till they face each other across the table. The Clerk of Parliament reads the title of the Bill, the Clerk of the Crown responding, in sepulchral voice, "*La Reyne le veult.*" Both clerks wheel round to face the Lords Commissioners, to whom they again make a profound bow. Then they face about, the Clerk of Parliament takes up another document, reads out a fresh title, and the Clerk of the Crown, with deepening sadness as the moments pass, chants his melancholy refrain, "*La Reyne le veult.*"

Nothing more is said or done till the batch of Bills is exhausted and the clerks return to their seats. The cloaked figures

then raise their cocked hats to the Speaker, who gravely inclines his head and gets back to the work-a-day world, whose business has been interrupted in order that this lugubrious farce might be accomplished.

There is no harm in this, and as the Lords through the greater part of the Session have not much else to do, it would be unkind to make an end of it. But it would appear that it is scarcely the sort of thing on account of which the serious business of the nation, going forward in the House of Commons, should be rudely and peremptorily interrupted.

During a Session that has
A DIRE almost exclusively been given up
DILEMMA. to debate on the Home Rule
Bill, the House of
Commons has fully justified its
reputation as the most entertain-
ing theatre within the
Metropolitan area. Amid a
long series of exciting scenes
and swift surprises, nothing
exceeds in dramatic quality
the episode when Mr. John
Dillon "remembered Mitchel-
stown" nine months and four
days before that historic event
had happened. It was Mr.
Chamberlain who played up
to this scene, as he was per-
sonally responsible for many
others that stirred the passions
of the House to their deepest
depths.

When the question of transferring the control of the police to the proposed Irish Legislature was under discussion, Mr. Chamberlain argued that the body of men who would probably form the majority in the new Legislature were not to be trusted with control of the liberty and property of the community. In support of this contention he cited a speech delivered by Mr. Dillon at Castlereagh, in which the member for East Mayo was reported to have said that when the Irish Parliament was constituted, they would have the control of things in Ireland, and "would remember" the police, sheriffs, the bailiffs, and others who had shown themselves enemies of the people.

This effective attack was made in a crowded and excited House, that awaited with interest Mr. Dillon's rejoinder. It was made in immediately effective style. Mr. Dillon did not defend the threat cited, but urged that it had been uttered in circumstances of cruel

provocation. A short time earlier, the massacre at Mitchelstown had taken place. He had seen three innocent men shot down by the police in cold blood. "That recollection," he emphatically said, "was hot in my mind when I spoke at Castlereagh."

For ten minutes longer Mr. Dillon went on. At the end of that time the House observed that Mr. Sexton, who sat next to his colleague, handed him a scrap of paper. That is by no means an unusual occurrence in debate in the House of Commons. A member having a case to state or reply to forgets a detail and has it brought to his mind by watchful friends. Mr. Dillon took the paper and closely read it, still slowly proceeding with the incompleted sentence on which he had embarked when the interruption presented itself. Members listened with quickened attention to what followed, curious to know what was the point overlooked, and now to be introduced into the speech. It was not readily discernible in the conclusion of the speech, which Mr. Dillon accomplished without sign of hesitation or perturbation.

Yet the scrap of
THE SCRAP paper, unflinch-
OF PAPER. ingly read, con-
veyed one of the
most terrible messages ever
received by a prominent public
man addressing the House of
Commons. On it was written:
"Your speech delivered 5th
December, 1886. Mitchelstown

affair, 9th September, 1887."

Mr. Dillon had suffered one of the most curious and, in the circumstances, most damaging lapses of memory that ever afflicted a man in the House of Commons. An English member might have done it with comparative impunity. It would have seemed strange and would, for a long time, have been hurtful to his reputation for accuracy. At least, his *bona-fides* would have remained unchallenged. There would have been no accusation of attempting to "palm off" a false statement on an unsuspecting House. With John Dillon the case was different. Looking across the floor of the House, he could see Mr. Chamberlain, his keen face lighted up, his hands on the corner of the bench ready to spring up the moment he resumed his



THE SCRAP OF PAPER.



MR. SEXTON.

seat. He knew now what had been the meaning of Mr. T. W. Russell's hasty rush from the House towards the Library, and his jubilant return with another scrap of paper. They had detected his blunder, and

he was able to estimate what measure of charitable construction it was likely to receive from that quarter.

He was still in possession of the House, and had the next turn of the game in his hands. How should he play it? Either he might at once admit his blunder, make such apology and explanation as was possible, and, at least, forestall the plainly contemplated action of Mr. Chamberlain: or he might go on to the end, take his beating at the hands of the jubilant enemy, and thereafter endeavour to put himself right with the House and the country.

As everyone knows, Mr. Dillon, rightly or wrongly regarded as a matter of tactics, adopted the latter plan. But decision had to be taken as he stood there, the scrap of paper scorching his hand, the necessity of continuing and connecting his sentences imperative, the crowded House looking on. It was about as bad a five minutes as ever fell to the lot of a man actually off the rack, and was gone through with marvellous self-possession.



T. W. RUSSELL'S RUSH

From Behind the Speaker's Chair

VIII.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

ONE of the most interesting "OLD books of the forthcoming season MORALITY." will be the "Life of W. H. Smith," a work undertaken by his friend and colleague, Sir Herbert Maxwell. Sir Herbert, who combines the qualities of an excellent Whip with those that go to make up a successful literary man, will doubtless have found himself hampered in his task by the exceptional goodness of the subject of his memoir. I suppose the most depressing work of biography still in print is that which many years ago had considerable vogue under the title "The Dairyman's Daughter." Mr. Disraeli, a keen judge of public taste, desiring at one time to say something pungently deprecatory of Mr. Gladstone, observed that he had no pleasant vices. Mr. Smith more fully and accurately came within this category. It will be impossible even for so attractive a writer as Sir Herbert Maxwell to make his biography as interesting as, for example, that of Becky Sharp.

Mr. Smith was, in truth, monotonously good. Yet what was meant to be a placid life had its stream unexpectedly turned into turbulent courses. Prosperity made him acquainted with some notable work-fellows, and led him to take a part in making the history of England. It was a strange fate that drew this modest, retiring, gentle-minded bourgeois citizen into being a colleague, first of Mr. Disraeli, and at last the very pivot of an Administration which had the Marquis of Salisbury for its motive power.

I remember more than a dozen years ago, crossing Palace Yard, seeing Lord

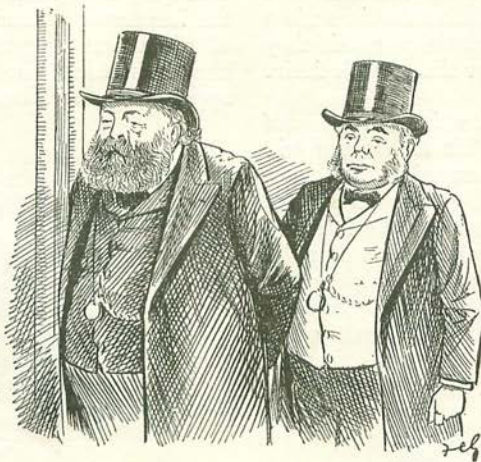
Salisbury and Mr. W. H. Smith enter the precincts of the House by the archway leading to the Ladies' Gallery. Mr. Smith had at that time, doubtless to his own modest surprise, been nominated First Lord of the Admiralty, the first of a series of uses made of him whenever the Government were in difficulty. "When in doubt play trumps" is a time-honoured maxim, the wisdom of which some players are inclined to dispute. "When in difficulties play W. H.

Smith" was a game Mr. Disraeli first led, and was followed up to the last by Lord Salisbury with un-failing success. It was doubtless a mere accident, but I noticed that Lord Salisbury strode along silent, taking no notice of his companion, who walked just half a pace behind him, as if feeling that he had no right to intrude on the meditation, or even the company, of the great patrician by whose side in the

Cabinet an inscrutable Providence had led him to take his seat.

This is a trivial incident which only riotous fancy could invest with significance. It often came back to my mind watching Mr. Smith steadily yet surely marching to the first place in the aristocratic Cabinet, progress involuntarily made, impelled not more by sheer capacity than by force of simple, honest, upright character. In course of time it came to pass that the Cabinet of Lord Salisbury could have better withstood the shock of the Premier's withdrawal than of the resignation of plain Mr. Smith.

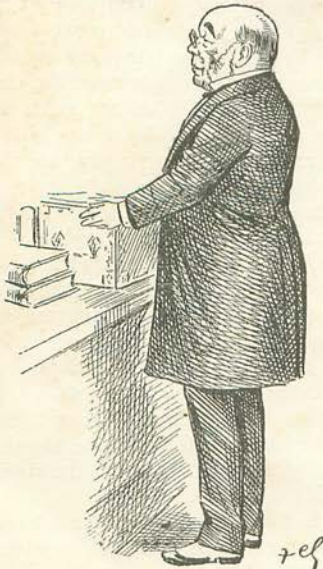
Though the study of such a character is apparently lacking in dramatic incident, what may be done with it by competent hands has



LORD SALISBURY AND MR. W. H. SMITH.

been triumphantly proved in another branch of literature. Mrs. Walford has made a charming and touching sketch, which not only in many respects recalls the sterling qualities of "Old Morality," but, by a strange coincidence, bore his surname. "Mr. Smith; a Part of His Life" was published long before the member for Westminster came to think he might succeed Pitt, Wellington, and Palmerston in the Lord Wardenship of the Cinque Ports. Yet if Mrs. Walford had used him as a model she could not have come to a closer or more striking appreciation of the subject. Naturally enough, she never dreamed of placing her Mr. Smith in the turmoil of political life, surrounding him more appropriately with the placidity of village life. But in respect of simplicity of character, sterling capacity, generous mind, and unfailing loving-kindness, her Mr. Smith and ours of the House of Commons are identical. The coincidence is completed by the fact that both unexpectedly died just at the time when everyone had discovered how good they were, and when the highest aim of their desire was within their reach.

There is one episode in the life of this good man in which his biographer will find the element of tragedy the more striking when found ruffling the serenity of the commonplace. Those most intimate with Mr. Smith firmly believe that had he been less resolute to do his duty to his Queen and country he would have been alive at this day, a placid pillar of strength to his party in the House of Lords. He died at the



"AT THE POST OF DUTY."

post of duty, with a heroism that need not shrink from comparison with the most brilliant deeds recorded in the annals of war by sea or land. He had meant to retire at the close of the Session of 1889, when the wearying illness that finally wore him away was beginning to sap his strength. At that time the Salisbury Government were already amid the breakers. The House of Commons was growing restive; the Ministerialists were disheartened; the Opposition growing in strength and audacity. Not only was Mr. Smith the only man who could be counted upon to ride upon the gathering storm, but his withdrawal from the scene would have led to extremely inconvenient competition for the vacant post of Leader of the House of Commons.

So he stayed on, suffering and patient, making his little jokes, declaiming his cherished copybook headings, sometimes genially laughed at, always trusted, and managing the peculiarly difficult business of the Leadership with an art the consummation of which was its perfect concealment—perhaps even from himself. The last time he appeared in the House was on a sultry after-



"THE LAST TIME."

noon in July. Members around him were gay in summer garb. He had brought with him his carriage rug, and as he sat on the Treasury Bench he tucked it round his knees, remaining there through the sitting with haggard eyes, pale face, still bravely smiling.

"A pitcher that goes often to the well will be broken at last," was a little tag he characteristically used about this time when one of his colleagues cheerily remarked that he was

looking better, and would be all right again after the recess.

He was never seen in the House of Commons again, though this was not his last appearance in public. The final journeying forth of the pitcher, the occasion when it, doubtless, received the final fracture, was on Monday, July 13th, 1890. The Shah was on a visit to London, and this day was fixed for a reception at Hatfield. All the world were bidden to the festivities, which culminated in a great luncheon party on the Monday. Mr. Smith was one of the house party, arriving on the Saturday. He would have been much better in his bed, but the occasion was important, and if he could only crawl along the path of duty, he would go. One of his fellow guests, a colleague in the Cabinet, tells me of his appearance at the dinner on Sunday night. As he sat at the table he was evidently in acute pain.

"We could see death written on his face," said his colleague.

But he talked and smiled and made-believe that nothing was the matter. He was induced to withdraw as soon as the ladies left the dining-room. So acute was his agony, his ancient trouble having developed in an attack of gout in the stomach, that he could not go to bed, passing a sleepless night in a chair. But there was the luncheon next day, with the big company down from London, a fresh call of duty which he obeyed. He sat through the meal, and gallantly went home to die.

The end came at Walmer, after three months' additional suffering, borne with unflinching courage and patience. He was always sanguine that on the morrow he would be able to go out for a cruise in his beloved *Pandora*, lying at anchor just off the battlements of the castle waiting for the Master. It seemed quite a natural and appropriate thing that on the very day the newspapers contained the announcement of his death, news came of the tragic end of Mr. Parnell, and as newspaper space is strictly limited, and the British public can give their minds to only one excitement at a time, there was hardly room to do justice to the quietly noble life just closed at Walmer.

Colonel Kenyon is not, except by chance, and unconsciously, a humorist. But there was one day in the Session when he flashed upon the pleased House a gleam of genuine humour. Being charged with the presentation of a number of petitions against the Welsh Suspensory Bill, he borrowed from

the Library a huge waste-paper basket, stuffed the bundles of circulars therein, and, marching round the table in full view of a crowded House, deposited them in the sack which hangs at the corner of the table by the Clerk's seat.

This was premature, and, in the circumstances, sardonic. Colonel Kenyon being



"PREMATURE."

in charge of the petitions, might, but for the unaccustomed temptation of humour, have let them go along the ordinary course to oblivion. All petitions presented to the House of Commons are predestined for the waste-paper basket. Colonel Kenyon, with a promptitude learned in tented fields on which forty centuries looked down, scorned circumlocutory habits, and put the petitions in the waste-paper basket to begin with.

The right of petitioning the House of Commons is ancient, and at one time may have had some significance, even importance. It must have been prior to the time of Dr. Johnson, that shrewd observer having in the hearing of Mr. Boswell gone to the root of the matter.

"This petitioning," he genially observed, when the subject cropped up in conversation, "is a new mode of distressing Government, and a mighty easy one. I will undertake to get petitions either against quarter-guineas or half-guineas with the help of a little hot wine."

At this *fin-de-siècle*, whilst a stable Government is in no wise distressed by a shower of petitions, the process of bringing them to bear on the House of Commons remains a mighty easy one, in some cases not

without suspicion of the help of a little hot wine.

This Session, concurrent with the introduction of a hotly contested measure such as the Home Rule Bill, there has been a notable recrudescence of petitions. It is true nothing in the way of petition presenting has equalled the famous scene in the Session of 1890, when "the Trade" demonstrated against an attack by the Chancellor of the Exchequer upon their preserves. On that occasion the floor of the House, from within the Bar to the shadow of the Mace, was packed with gigantic wooden frames, containing massive cylinders reported to enshrine the signatures of 600,000 citizens anxious that the poor man should not have his noggin of neat spirits enhanced in price. It turned out upon inquiry, hotly made, that the Speaker, having been approached on the subject, had given his consent to the petitions being brought in. But, as he apologetically observed, he had not taken into account the wooden cases. These, towering full six feet high, entirely obscured the view between the two sides of the House.

Mr. Bartley was, by chance, making a few preliminary observations, and one at this day



MR. BARTLEY.

remembers with pleasure the keen solicitude displayed by the Radicals that the hon. member should not be embarrassed, and that they should have opportunity not only of hearing his remarks, but of benefiting by

full view of the orator whilst they were delivered. They stood up in their places craning their necks so that they might catch a glimpse of him, over what one irreverently alluded to as "these vats." Suggestion was made that he should cross the gangway and continue his observations from the Treasury Bench. Mr. Labouchere bettered this by proposing, in softest voice and most winning manner, that the member for North Islington might scramble on to the top of the cases, and from that coign of vantage address the Speaker. In the end, the six House messengers who had brought in the cases one by one were summoned, and the things were ignominiously removed.

WHAT
BECOMES
OF
PETITIONS.

That demonstration, which must have cost much hot wine, was not so successful as to induce repetition on similar lines. But petitions have, through the Session, still flowed in, and have, from time to time, been made the occasion for objuratory remarks. Just after the House resumed at the close of the Easter holidays, the subject came up in piquant fashion with intent to show how vastly petitions against the Home Rule Bill preponderated. The Chairman of the Petitions Committee, whose withdrawal from Parliamentary life is regretted on both sides of the House, was asked to state the number of petitions for and against the Bill. Mr. McLagan set forth statistics which demonstrated the overwhelming activity in this field of the opponents of the measure. When the cheers this statement elicited subsided, Mr. Dalziel interposed, and read a letter



MR. DALZIEL.

which would have interested Dr. Johnson had he been privileged to peruse it. Written by the secretary of a Conservative Association, it was addressed to hotel-keepers at places of popular resort on the southern coast. Accompanying it were printed petitions against Home Rule, and the hotel-keepers were begged to obtain as many signatures as possible, "whether by man, woman, or child." "Your Easter visitors," the shrewd Conservative agent added, "should be able to fill up several sheets."

To a conversation which followed, Mr. McLagan contributed an interesting recollection of how a couple of years ago the Petition Committee had been called upon to deal with a case where a whole school of children had impartially signed a petition for (or against) some measure then engrossing public attention. Another member was able, as the result of his own investigation, to state that many petitions presented to the House of Commons were signed in a good flowing hand by infants in arms.

These facts, familiar enough in the House of Commons, would seem to suffice to put a stop to the industry of petitioning. But, as the experience of the Session shows, that anticipation is not realized. The cry is, "Still they come," and the labours of the Petition Committee, over which for many years the late Sir Charles Forster presided, are as exacting as ever. It must, I suppose, be to someone's interest and advantage to keep the thing going. In what direction the interest lies is indicated in the statement, more than once made in conversation on the subject in the House, that the labour of obtaining signatures is remunerated at the rate of so much per hundred.

That, with the rarest exceptions, petitions presented to the House of Commons have not the slightest effect upon its deliberations is an affirmation that may be made with confidence. One of the exceptions is to be found in the popular movement that demanded the Reform Bill. But that was sixty years ago, a time when the public voice had not such full opportunities of expression as are found to-day in the Press and on the

platform. For the most part, petitions addressed to the House of Commons do not secure even the compromising attention attained by the comicality of the situation created by the appearance on the floor of obstructive packing-cases, or the reading by a member of letters disclosing the indiscretions of too zealous agents.

What happens in the majority of cases is, that a petition being forwarded to a member, he quietly drops it in the sack at the corner of the table. When the sack is full it is carried out to one of the Committee rooms, and entry is made of the place whence each petition comes, of the number of signatures, and of the name of the Bill for or against which it is launched. The clerks attached to the Committee on Petitions subsequently glance over the list of names, and if there is anything in the array glaringly suggestive of irregularity, the Committee have their attention called to it, and occasionally think it worth while to bring the matter under the notice of the House with intent to have somebody punished. Otherwise the document unobtrusively proceeds on its way to the paper mill, the House of Commons, all unconscious of its existence, voting "Aye" or "No" on the various stages of the Bill with which it had concerned itself.

The most striking feature in the Session has been the position achieved by Mr. Chamberlain. Nothing seen in his travels by Baron Munchausen, nothing recorded in the adventures of "Alice in Wonderland," exceeds this marvel. Mr. Balfour has been the titular Leader of the Opposition; but Mr. Chamberlain has ordered the plan of campaign, and has led in person all the principal attacks on the enemy's entrenchment. Mr. Balfour has resigned; Mr. Chamberlain has governed.

Here is where the marvel comes in. It is no unusual thing for a prominent member of a party to break away from his colleagues in the Leadership and set up in business for himself. But he invariably opens his shop on the same side of the street. Mr. Chamberlain has gone over bag and baggage, has been received into the inner councils of



"CARRIED OUT."

MR.
CHAMBER-
LAIN.



MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

his ancient adversary, and, being there, rules the roost. There was a time within recent memory when he was of all public men the most detested in Conservative circles. In this respect he succeeded to the heritage of his friend and colleague, Mr. Bright. Mr. Gladstone they distrusted and detested. Mr. Chamberlain they loathed and feared.

The scenes that took place in the House of Commons in connection with the Aston Park riots, which for bitterness and fierce resentment have not been equalled during the Session by any attack on an individual made from the "Unionist" ranks, forcibly illustrate Mr. Chamberlain's position this time eight years ago in view of the Conservative party. He for his part joyously accepted the situation, hitting back swinging blows at the House of Lords that has "always been the obsequious handmaid of the Tory party," and at the larger body in the Commons and the country, the "men whom we have fought and worsted in a hundred fights, men who borrow our watchwords, hoist our colours, steal our arms, and seek to occupy our

position." That the relentless foeman of 1870-1885 should be to-day the foremost ally, the most prized captain of the host he then fought, seems to be a phantasy of nightmare.

Who but must laugh, if such a man there be ;
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he ?

How the miracle was wrought is a story that will doubtless some day be written large. Pending authoritative chronicle, there are not lacking those who trace the whole story back to troublous days in May, 1882. At that time Mr. Forster, long at issue with some of his colleagues in the Cabinet, resigned the office of Chief Secretary. A new pathway had been selected by the Government in their relations with Ireland. Coercion had been tried and had failed. Kilmainham Treaty had been signed. Mr. Parnell had come out of prison "prepared to co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal party in forwarding Liberal principles." Lord Cowper had resigned the Lord Lieutenantancy, and Earl Spencer reigned in his stead.

In bringing about this transformation scene Mr. Chamberlain had been principally active. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should succeed Mr. Forster



"BLOWS AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS."

at Dublin Castle. That he was prepared to do so and expected the appointment were matters certainly understood in the House of Commons at the time. A member of the Irish party, then as now predominant in its councils, tells me that on the 4th of May, 1882 (the day Mr. Forster announced in the House of Commons the reasons for his resignation), Mr. Chamberlain had an interview with him and sought his counsel as to the course he should take in the contingency of the Chief Secretaryship being

offered to him. This gentleman, with characteristic bluntness, asked whether the offer had been made. Mr. Chamberlain, with a meaning smile, said "No."

That the offer would be made was as-

sumed, as a matter of course, by both parties to the conversation. The friendly Irishman, whilst welcoming, as all his political friends did, the prospect of accession to the Chief Secretaryship of a statesman then above all others pledged to Home Rule, on personal grounds advised Mr. Chamberlain not to take the office, foreseeing, as he said, that it would bring upon him incessant trouble and possibly political ruin. On the next day, Friday, the 5th of May, the writ for a new election for the West Riding was moved consequent on the acceptance by Lord Frederick Cavendish of the post of Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant. The Irish member whom I am quoting added the amazing and, save on such authority, the incredible statement that the first intimation of this arrangement Mr. Chamberlain received was when, from his place on the Treasury Bench, he heard the writ moved.

If this story is true—and if I were at liberty to mention the authority it would be accepted as unimpeachable—it does much to explain, if not to excuse, Mr. Chamberlain's subsequent action, and the attitude of relentless animosity he has since exhibited towards Mr. Gladstone.

The long fight in the Commons over the Home Rule Bill has been rather a duel than a pitched battle. Night after night the forces were marshalled on either side; firing was incessantly kept up; brigades engaged, and now and then, from other quarters than the Treasury Bench and the corner seat of the third bench below the gangway, a speech was made that attracted attention. For the most part it was dull, mechanical pounding, varied now and then by a personal contest between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain. The House was invariably crowded when Mr. Chamberlain spoke. For him the audience was comprised in the one figure on the Treasury Bench. Mr. Gladstone, when he spoke, habitually turned round to the corner seat below the gangway, and personally addressed his "right hon. friend."

It was jarring throughout to hear the use of this phrase bandied across the gangway. Mr. Gladstone used it sparingly. Mr. Chamberlain interlarded his speech with it, investing the simple phrase with many shades of meaning, none particularly friendly. Once Mr. Gladstone, contrary to his habitude, moved to a personal jibe, audibly interposed with the remark, "Which 'right

hon. friend'?" The right hon. gentleman has so many right hon. friends."



"ONE OF HIS RIGHT HON. FRIENDS."

whilst we are still close to it. Still he resents the action of "men who, moved by motives of party spite, or eagerness for office, have not allowed his age, which should have commanded their reverence; his experience, which entitles him to their respect; his high, personal character, or his long services to his Queen and his country, to shield him from vulgar affronts and lying accusations." But Mr. Gladstone has gone wrong on the Home Rule Question, as, in quite another sense, he was wrong in the spring of 1882. Mr. Chamberlain, giving the first place to the interests of his country and sternly loyal to a sense of duty, has found himself leading the Conservative party against its former chief. But it is only the political leader from whom he has parted. He still retains the "right hon. friend."

There was a time when it seemed that Mr. Chamberlain, in stepping outside the pale of the Liberal party, had voluntarily suffered political



"THE RIGHT HON. FRIEND."

ostracism. It was a view in which to a certain extent he appeared to acquiesce. For a considerable period approaching the term of the last Parliament he was content to take a back seat in politics. Occasionally he appeared at a public meeting in the country. In the House of Commons he was not often seen, and still more rarely heard. He came down for the questions, went off in good time for dinner, and was seen no more through the sitting. If a division were pending, or any interesting speech expected, he broke through the rule, coming down in evening dress, dined and debonair.

It is apparently a small matter, really of profound significance, that, during the present Session, Mr. Chamberlain, whilst in nightly attendance, has not half-a-dozen times been seen in dinner dress. He must needs dine; but he performs the incidental duty as the Israelites fed at Passover time, with loins girded and staff in hand. He has been the backbone of the opposition to the Home Rule Bill, tireless, unfaltering, and ruthless. It is probable that but for him the Conservative gentry, weary of the monotony of constant attendance and incessant divisions, would have retired from the fight, content to leave the final destruction of the Bill to the House of Lords. Mr. Chamberlain has been pitiless. No point has been too minute for his criticism, none too large for his virile grasp. Through it all he has never swerved from the urbane, deferential manner with which he has turned to discuss successive points with his "right hon. friend" on the Treasury Bench.

Now and then a quick ear might detect

metallic notes in the ordinarily soft voice, or a watchful eye might observe a gesture that mocked the friendly phrase and the almost reverential attitude. These were idle fancies, possibly born of meditation on what may never have taken place in those far-off May days, when Mr. Forster was fighting forlornly at his last outpost.

MORE
ABOUT A
PREMATURE
REPORT.

M. P. writes: As I read THE STRAND MAGAZINE month by month through the Session I come to the conclusion that you must have either a marvellous memory or a priceless note-book. I remember very well O'Connor Power's prematurely reported speech in the House of Commons, but thought others had forgotten it. It was published, not, as you suggest, in a local paper, but in *Freeman's Journal*, then in the plenitude of its power and the full tide of its circulation. May I add to the details you give that the speech, evidently elaborately prepared, finished up by way of peroration with the not unfamiliar lines from Tennyson about "Freedom broadening slowly down from precedent to precedent"? In the too-previous report it was stated that this passage was received with "enthusiastic cheering."

O'Connor Power actually got off the speech on the following night. As, at the hour when he caught the Speaker's eye, no copy of *Freeman's Journal* had reached London, he was presumably safe from immediate consequences of

the accident. But some of his compatriots, learning by telegraph what had happened, gave him away, and when he arose to deliver the cherished oration, he was met by hilarious cries of "Spoke! Spoke!"



"PITILESS!"

right to Privy Councillors, and any such may, if he pleases, take his seat there, even though he never served in the Ministry.

Thus when the late Mr. Beresford Hope was evicted by the Fourth Party from his corner seat below the gangway, he crossed over and found a resting-place on the Front Opposition Bench, retaining it till his death. The gentleman who is now Lord Cubitt, being a Privy Councillor, always asserted his right to address the House from the table.

The Irish members, remaining in their old quarters, got along through the Parliament of 1880 much better than was at the outset expected. The Fourth Party set up in business for themselves at the corner of the Front Bench below the gangway. On the two benches behind them the Irish members were massed, and Lord Randolph Churchill frequently found the contiguity convenient when he had occasion to consult Mr. Tim Healy or other of the allies of the Constitutional party, then making common cause against Mr. Gladstone's Government.

That arrangement was all very well in its way; was indeed not without logical justification. The Irish

members were at the time in deadly opposition to the Government, and that they should sit on the Opposition side was convenient and desirable. It established and maintained the conditions that combatants should face each other. It is a different thing now, the localizing of parties being in a hopelessly intermixed state. The Irish members still keep their old places below the gangway on the Opposition

side, but being there they find themselves split up into two sections. There are two kings in the Irish Brentford, and while Mr. Justin M'Carthy, leader of the larger section, sits with his friends on the third bench, Mr. John Redmond occupies the corner seat on the fourth bench. Nor does this division represent the full measure of variety. Mr. William Redmond has planted himself out in the very arcanum of Toryism, on a back bench behind ex-Ministers. There he sits, solitary among the gentlemen of England, none holding converse with him, and he,

apparently, thoroughly enjoying isolation. From time to time the House is startled by hearing from this quarter explosive sentences, expressing sentiments foreign to those usually associated with Our Old Nobility, from whose citadel they fall upon the shocked ear.

The Labour Party is another new section developed in the modern House of Commons. They are exceedingly few in number, their political object is capable of narrow definition, and they, of all people, might be expected to sit together. But they, also, are divided. Mr. Keir Hardie and Mr. John Burns rise from time to time to address the Speaker from a back bench below the gangway on the Opposition side, whilst Mr. Havelock Wilson and other accredited representatives of the working classes sit immediately opposite, on the Ministerial side. When any Minister or private member desires to address himself personally and directly to Labour questions, he is thus compelled to divide his attention between diverse sides of the House.

The position of the Dissident Liberals is, perhaps, on the whole, most embarrassing, as being contrary to the traditions and convenient forms of the House. It is a little better in the present Parliament, since the Treasury Bench is free from the invasion to which Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues were subjected when they were tenants on the Front Opposition Bench. Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Henry James, and Mr. Heneage now sit with the rank-and-file of their party, not, as heretofore, mixed up with the Liberal leaders. But their quarters are selected on the Ministerial side. They sit surrounded by gentlemen from whom, on political grounds, they are separated by feelings of bitter animosity.

The effect of this state of things is, to a

considerable extent, paralytic on debate. It affects both orator and audience. It is a habit strongly marked with Mr. Gladstone, and common in degree with other speakers, to turn and face



MR. JOHN REDMOND.



MR. WILLIAM REDMOND.

supporters or Opposition according as the current passage in his argument may suggest. Now, as far as ordered lines of subdivision are concerned, there is neither Ministerial host nor Opposition. With a larger application of Mr. Bright's famous simile, it may be said that the House of Commons is like one of those hairy terriers of which it is difficult to distinguish between either extremity. Mr. Gladstone driving home an argument in favour of Home Rule, turning with eager face towards the benches opposite, finds himself preaching to the converted, being confronted by some eighty Irishmen, the very advance guard of his own party. Turning round with smiling face and palms outstretched for the sympathy and applause of the Liberal party, he meets the cold glance of Mr. Chamberlain's eye, and sees beyond that right hon. gentleman the buff waistcoat of Mr. Courtney.

These are chilling influences which tell even upon Mr. Gladstone, and are fatal to the success of less experienced debaters. The consequence of the existing state of things works even fuller effect upon the audience. It is responsible for the marked decline observable this Session of the practice of cheering. It will be seen from the slight sketch given of the localities of sections of party that it is now physically impossible to get up a bout of that cheering and counter-cheering which up to recent times was one of the most inspiring episodes in Parliamentary debate. That is possible only when the audience is massed in two clearly-defined sections. One cheers a phrase dropped by the member addressing the House; the other side swiftly responds; the cheer is fiercely taken up by the party who started it, echoed on the other side, and so the game goes forward. Now, as will be clearly seen, if the Conservative Opposition set up a cheer the Irish members sitting among them must remain silent, the Dissident Liberals observing the same attitude when the Ministerialists break forth into applause. They take their turn when opportunity presents

itself. But the whole thing is inextricably mixed up and loses its significance. Parliamentary cheering to be effective must be spontaneous, and, within the limits of party, unanimous. Hopelessly embarrassed by the situation, members are discontinuing the practice of cheering, thus withdrawing a wholesome stimulus from debate.

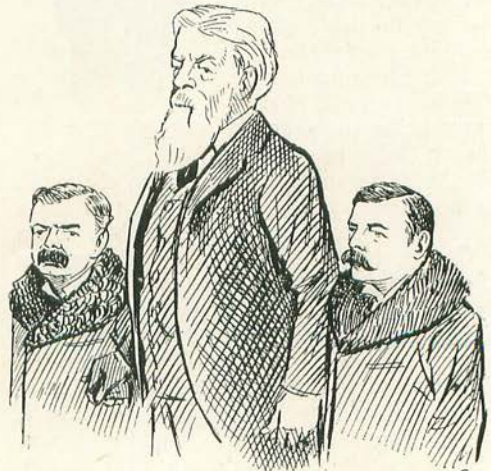
One of the minor consequences of the withdrawal of Mr. Henry AND SONS. Samuelson from Parliamentary life is that there simultaneously disappeared from the House of Commons an interesting and unique phenomenon. It is a

common, and perhaps natural, thing that sons sharing Parliamentary honours with their fathers should feel themselves embarrassingly overwhelmed with the parental position and authority. The present House contains several examples which will instantly suggest themselves. An additional one was spared by the strategic movement of Mr. Hicks Gibbs. In the last Parliament that eminent



CHILLING INFLUENCE.

merchant appropriately represented the City of London. At the last General Election one of his sons stood with fair chance of elec-



GIBBS AND SONS.

tion by the St. Albans Division of Herts. Mr. Gibbs thereupon retired from Parliamentary life, transferring his safe seat for the City of London to his elder son, thus leaving two able young men to make their way in Parliamentary life, unembarrassed by the presence on the scene of the head of the firm.

SAMUEL-
SON
père et fils.

With Mr. Henry Samuelson and his respected father matters stood on a different footing. Mr. Bernhard Samuelson, member for Banbury in the Parliament of 1880, is a man of sterling ability, a Fellow of the Royal Society, an ironmaster at Middlesbrough, and (though no one would suspect it) a Knight of the Legion of Honour. As an authority on educational matters, Banbury always thought he took the cake. But he was nothing in the House of Commons when son Henry appeared on the scene. The Parliamentary relations of the two were in their way a realization of a phase of Mr. Anstey's immortal "Vice-Versâ." Possibly it would have been a difficult matter for anyone to impress Mr. Henry Samuelson with a sense of his own comparative smallness. Certainly his father never succeeded in the undertaking. What threatened to become an awkward situation was averted by an act of magnanimity on the part of Samuelson *fils*, for which perhaps the House, though it knew him, was not prepared. Reversing the movements in the Gibbs family, the son retired from the Parliamentary scene, leaving his father in undisturbed possession.

It was a noble act, but in this case virtue, with something less than ordinary unobtrusiveness, brought its own reward. The member for Banbury, relieved from the moral incubus of his son's superiority, speedily blossomed into a baronetcy, and the former member for Frome in his act of self-abnegation was, all unknowingly, preparing the way for his becoming the second Baronet of Bodicote Grange.

The most familiar and GLADSTONE. the supremest case known to the House of Commons of a son being overshadowed by the reputa-

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tion and renown of a father is found in the case of the member for Leeds. Mr. Herbert Gladstone is a man of wide culture, rare knowledge of public affairs, shrewd judgment, tireless energy, and sound common-sense. Moreover, he is, as is better known in the country than in the House of Commons, an admirable and effective speaker. One of the most constant attendants on the business of the House, his name standing high in the derelict Buff Book for the number of divisions he has taken part in, he never, or hardly ever, speaks in the House of Commons.

His elder brother, when he sat in the House, occupied a precisely similar position. To him it was more natural, being of a gentle, retiring disposition, with no affinity for public life. He sat in the House of Commons for many years, but I do not remember hearing him speak. He had a curious way of entering by a doorway under the gallery and timidly making for a back seat. He habitually wore an apologetic air, as if he really begged you to excuse him going about as "Mr. Gladstone," an appellation shared in common with his father.

Herbert Gladstone is cast in another mould. He took to politics and the House of Commons with the same avidity as did William Pitt. But when Pitt entered the House his illustrious father had been dead two years. Fourteen years earlier he had quitted the Commons for the Lords, and only a few of the young member for Appleby's contemporaries were in a position to make comparisons between father and son. Herbert Gladstone is returned to the House his father still adorns, and in such circumstances has as much chance of

shining there as the most reputable planet enjoys when the sun is at meridian. He long ago deliberately abandoned the approach to endeavour, and his energy, which is great, and his capacity, which is high, are devoted to the service of the party in the country.

Mr. Herbert Gladstone has, perhaps, too acute a sense of the proper feeling in his peculiar circumstances. Talking on this subject he once told me that whilst he can speak without any embarrassment



"OVERSHADOWED."

on a public platform, he can never rise to address a meeting which numbers his father among the audience without faltering tongue and trembling knees. I remember something like ten years ago an interesting scene in which a crowded House took the kindest interest. At that time Mr. Henry Northcote sat for Exeter, and Mr. Herbert Gladstone had at the General Election been elected for Leeds. Mr. Gladstone was Premier, and Sir Stafford Northcote sat on the Front Bench as Leader of the Opposition, daily striving with the Fourth Party, then in the plenitude of its young life. It was arranged that in some debate the two young scions of the opposing houses should in succession make their maiden speech. I forget what the occasion was, but well remember the crowded House, and on the

two Front Benches, facing each other, the fathers, critical, kindly, and on the whole well pleased, each hastening to pay a compliment to the other's son.

It is difficult to picture one M'CARTHY, of the gentle mood and instinctively retiring habits of Mr. Justin M'Carthy hampering anyone with a consciousness of his superiority. His modesty is even more conspicuous than his capacity, which seems an exaggerated form of speech. But undoubtedly the presence of the father, even so gentle a presence as this, operated in the direction of effacing the son. Huntley M'Carthy is a young man who might well have been expected to



MR. JUSTIN
M'CARTHY.

make a high position for himself in the House of Commons. Of good presence, with pleasant voice, a pretty turn of phrasing, a mind stored with learning, familiar with history and politics, touched with the tender light of poetry, he should have gone straight to the heart of the House of Commons. But he rarely spoke, and took an early opportunity of gracefully retiring from the scene.

Mr. Bernard Coleridge in this, at least, resembles Pitt, that he is not handicapped by the presence in the House of an illustrious father. Still like the younger

Pitt, he has the further advantage of his father's disappearance from the scene at a period so remote that there are few of his contemporaries in the present House. It is doubtful, moreover, whether the member for the Attercliffe Division of Sheffield would have been embarrassed had his father still been sitting for Exeter. We must not be misled by the coincidence that he bears the same Christian name as the young gentleman who sat for Frome in the Parliament of 1874. If any movement of the kind then suggested by family devotion had been entered upon, it is not probable that Bernard Coleridge, like Bernhard Samuelson, would have retired from the scene, so that his father might have fuller scope. He is too deeply impressed with the debt he owes his country to permit natural modesty or family affection to draw him into taking a back seat. He is filled with that ambition which distinguished the acceptable youth who figures in *Le Nouveau Jeu*. "Soyons de notre époque," says Costard. "Je veux même être plus que le jeune homme d'aujourd'hui. Je veux être le jeune homme de demain, d'après-demain si possible." For Mr. Coleridge possibility looms larger even than this, nothing more than the middle of next week bounding his clear, steadfast vision.

Mr. Coningsby Disraeli is not handicapped in the Parliamentary race by overbearing connection with the fame of his father. That gentleman was not unknown at Westminster, he having through many years occupied a useful position in the legislative machinery, serving in wig and gown as one of the clerks at the table of the House of Lords. It was from that comparatively



MR. CONINGSBY DISRAELI.

humble position he, on a February afternoon in 1877, watched the entrance on a new scene of his illustrious brother. It chanced that on this day the Queen opened Parliament in person, and made her entry with all the ceremony proper to the rare occasion. But for the distinguished and illustrious crowd that peopled the chamber from floor to top-most gallery the most attractive figure in the pageant was that disguised in red cloak tipped with ermine, who bore aloft a sword sheathed in jewelled scabbard, and whom the world thenceforward knew as Benjamin Earl of Beaconsfield.

It is with the Parliamentary fame of his uncle that the young member for Altrincham has to struggle. To be a Disraeli in the House of Commons is to fill a place from the occupant of which much is expected. It is to Mr. Coningsby Disraeli's credit in the past, full of hope for the future, that he has hitherto shown himself so modestly that few members know his personal appearance or where he sits. Before he found a seat in the House he threatened to fall into courses of conduct that alarmed his best friends. He took to writing in the *Times* on questions of Imperial policy, lucubrations the style of which was plainly founded on his uncle's earliest and worst style. This procedure seemed to portend that when he once took his seat he would be incessantly rising from it and putting things straight generally. Happily he has taken the wiser course, sitting attentive and watchful, endeavouring to learn before he begins to teach. Up to this present time of writing he has interposed only once in the proceedings of the House, and that was to ask a pertinent question, addressed to the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Probably for him also "the time will come when we

shall hear him." He is judiciously preparing for it by a reasonable interval of silence.

L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO. No one regarding Lord Wolmer would, with whatsoever imaginative fancy, be able to construct out of him the Earl of Selborne as he is known in the House of Lords and in other phases of public life. It is im-

possible to conceive two different temperaments, personal appearance, or modes of thought. Lord Selborne might stand as *Il Penseroso*, whilst Lord Wolmer might dance as *L'Allegro*. There are few members of the present House of Commons who recollect Sir Roundell Palmer seated on the Treasury Bench as Attorney-General. Lord Palmerston was Prime Minister at the time; Mr. Gladstone was for the third time Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir George Grey had lately succeeded Cornwall Lewis at the Home Office; Lord John Russell was Foreign Secretary; Lord Westbury was Lord Chancellor; and Sir Robert Peel was just beginning to tire of the Irish Office, because, as he found to be the case in those halcyon days, there was not enough to keep the Chief Secretary going.

Lord Wolmer is relieved from competition in the House of Commons with the memory of his father. He will possibly never rival his father's fame, but he really means business in the political world. He had an admirable training as Whip to the Dissident Liberal party when it was led in the Commons by Lord Hartington. When he was returned for Edinburgh in the new Parliament, he thought the time had come when he might better serve his country in the Legislative Chamber than in the bustling Lobby. Early in his new career he received a slight check, having, with the exuberance of comparative youth and extreme conviction, spoken of the Irish members in terms that led to an awkward debate on a question of breach of privilege. But Lord Wolmer has survived that, and though it led to a momentary pause in his public conversation on current affairs, it would not be safe to regard the influence as other than temporary.

THE CHAMBERLAINS. Mr. Austen Chamberlain supplies perhaps the most striking example in the present House of the embarrassment of a young member whose father stands in the front rank of House of Commons' debaters. On the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill the member for East Worcestershire delivered



LORD WOLMER.



LORD SELBORNE.

possible to conceive two men of more widely

a maiden speech that, for any other young member, would have established a Parliamentary position. Mr. Gladstone, with keen appreciation of the peculiar personal circumstances of the case, described it as "a speech dear and refreshing to a father's heart." If the father in question had happened to be engaged, at whatever point of eminence, in some other walk of life—say, science, art, or literature—it would have been well for the new member, complimented by this high authority, and cheered by the general good-will displayed towards him by a crowded House.

The speech was in every way excellent. Mr. Austen Chamberlain has a good presence, a recommendation which Lord John Russell managed to dispense with, but which is nevertheless desirable. He has a pleasant voice, excellent delivery, and really had something to say. But close by him as he spoke sat his father, and what critics said was, not that the young member for East Worcestershire had made a notable maiden speech, but that his voice was singularly like his father's, the manner of speech almost identical, and that he much resembled him in face, only that he was perhaps better looking—this last being the solitary approval personal to the debutant that was forthcoming. Worse than all, as indicating the hopelessness of the situation, it was more than hinted that the best things which sparkled in the speech were contributions from the paternal store. The voice might be the voice of Austen. The polished antitheses, the piercing darts, the weighty arguments, were from the armoury of Joseph.

This is scarcely any the less unimportant because it does not happen to be true. Mr. Austen Chamberlain's speech, like the grace of its delivery, was his own; but that is of no matter if the House of Commons insists upon thinking otherwise. "Why drag in Velasquez?" Mr. James Whistler asked, when a gushing lady insisted upon telling him that he and Velasquez were the greatest painters of this or any age. "Why drag in my father?" the member in the position of

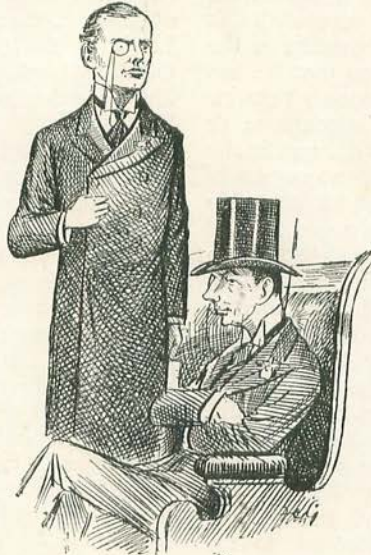
capable young men like Mr. Herbert Gladstone and Mr. Austen Chamberlain may reasonably ask. But the protest will be in vain, and the dragging-in process will instinctively and inevitably follow whenever they chance to take prominent part in the proceedings of the House.

HOW
HISTORY IS
WRITTEN.

In Mr. Patchett Martin's "Life of Lord Sherbrooke," just issued, I find the following passage: "Much as he bewailed the signs of democracy in the House of Commons, Mr. Lowe grew tolerant as the years passed by, and regarded legislative folly and dulness with an amused smile. It was in this mood that he pointed to the deaf M.P. who used to skirmish all over the House with an ear-trumpet, listening to the dreary speeches on both sides. 'Good Heavens!' said he, 'to think of a man so throwing away his natural advantages.'"

The story will be familiar to the public, since there was scarcely an obituary notice in the newspapers published immediately after the death of Lord Sherbrooke which did not include it. I did not take notice of that method of enshrining a myth, but when it comes to making part of a serious book, written avowedly upon special authority, I am impelled to unbosom myself.

The fact is, Mr. Lowe is as innocent of this little jape as is Lord Selborne. One night in the Session after he had gone to the House of Lords, the keen debater whom we long knew in the Commons as Mr. Lowe re-visited the glimpses of the gas-lit roof in the Commons. As he sat in the gallery, blinking on the old familiar scene, Mr. Thomasson, then member for Bolton, happened to be sitting, ear-trumpet in hand, listening to the late Mr. Peter Rylands making one of his not infrequent speeches. Mr. Rylands was an estimable, well-meaning man, but not specially acceptable as a speaker. He had a loudly verbose way of saying nothing particular which irritated the sensitive mind, and used to render Mr. Lowe more than usually impatient. Mr. Thomasson had a way of flitting over the House (much as an



FATHER AND SON.

hon. baronet in the present Parliament has), and was wont to sit down drinking in, through his ear-trumpet, words that the ordinary person would willingly have let die.

It struck me at the moment that Lord Sherbrooke might be thinking, as in truth I was myself, of the pandering with Providence displayed by a deaf man putting himself to some inconvenience in order not to lose a word of one of Peter Rylands's harangues. In a London Letter to the provinces I was then contributing, I put in Lord Sherbrooke's mouth the phrase quoted

—a fashion habitually and sometimes less reasonably adopted at the present time in the writing of "Toby's Diary" in *Punch*. It took on immensely, largely because it was supposed to be Lord Sherbrooke's. It has since been quoted so widely and frequently that it is not impossible Lord Sherbrooke may have come to believe he had really said it, just as King George, by dint of frequent repetitions, convinced himself that he had led a regiment in the last charge at Waterloo. But his memory is really free from the reproach.



THE LATE MR. RYLANDS.