

## From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

XVI.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

LORD ROSE-  
BERY'S MIS-  
FORTUNE.

WHILST everybody, with the perhaps solitary exception of Mr. Labouchere, admits Lord Rosebery's qualifications for the Premiership, there is one aspect unfavourable to his claim which, as far as I have noted, has not been commented upon. The personal appearance of the new Premier does not adapt itself for familiar and friendly representation in the pages of *Punch*. Already Sir John Tenniel has had occasion to try his practised hand, and the result has been a melancholy failure. The stout, elderly - young man entering the lists in the double cartoon which welcomed the appearance on the scene of the new



LORD ROSEBERY.

Premier was like, and yet hopelessly unlike, the statesman who has fallen into the line of succession of his favourite Minister, Pitt; not without reasonable expectation of emulating his fame. This is not Sir John Tenniel's shortcoming, as witness the spirited and picturesque appearance in the same block of Sir William Harcourt, squiring the new knight. Nor is it Lord Rosebery's fault. To quote the impressive phrase which occurs in the policies of marine insurance, it is "the act of God."

There are some men whom the cleverest and most *habile* artist cannot present with that likeness yet touch of exaggeration essential to success in caricature. An example is to be found in the case of Mr. John Morley. It would be hard, looking at his keen, intellectual face, to say why he is the despair of the caricaturist. That such is the case will appear from any paper, whether weekly or daily, devoted to this class of art. This inscrutable and inexplicable peculiarity is undoubtedly a misfortune for the public man

whom it besets. As a rule, it will be found that all the men who have filled a prominent place in English political life during the last half century have been endowed with a personal appearance that has made it possible for Tenniel, or some of his colleagues on *Punch*, to create a counterfeit presentment which has struck the public fancy, and has made the statesman familiar in every household throughout the English-speaking world.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. It is by no means necessary, may indeed be fatal to immediate and full success, that the likeness should be of photographic fidelity. There is, for example, Harry Furniss's *Punch* portrait of Lord Randolph Churchill. At its inception Lord Randolph was invariably presented as a person considerably below the average height, he, as a matter of fact, being fully up to it. The ideal was created at a time when, leader of the numerically infinitesimal Fourth Party, he was emerging on the political horizon, and was nightly doing battle in the Parliamentary lists against the gigantic personality of Mr. Gladstone. When Lord Randolph first began to stump



"WAS I REALLY LIKE THAT?"



the country at political meetings he was conscious of a feeling almost approaching distrust of his identity. The British public had been educated to expect to see a little man, and when Lord Randolph, with his at least five-foot-eight of height, stepped on the platform, the audience were genuinely surprised.

The same tradition has, through MR. G.'s the same agency, attached to Mr. COLLARS. Gladstone's collars. These are actually of fuller, looser make

than has been the fashion of late years. I have an etching from Watts's portrait of Mr. Gladstone painted some forty years ago. It bears, by the way, a striking resemblance to the eldest son of the house, William Henry, who died some years ago. Whilst he was yet with us in the House of Commons, sitting for, I think, a Worcestershire constituency, one was often struck by a look in his face that seemed to recall a something out of which his father had grown. I had not at the time seen this portrait of Watts's. Looking at the etching, the resemblance between W. H. Gladstone at forty-five and his father at the same age is very striking.

In this portrait the now famous Gladstone collars show with even fuller folds than have gladdened the eyes of the present generation. What has happened has simply been that the fundamental Conservative phase of Mr. Gladstone's character, in this connection untrammelled by the interests of the classes, has prevailed. When he was Under-Secretary for the Colonies and, later, Vice-President of the Board of Trade and Master of the Mint, gentlemen wore collars of a certain cut, comfortable and commodious, and he wears them to this day.

I have heard that Mr. Gladstone at one time grew a little weary of the iteration of the gigantic collars. A communication was made by one of the family to a member of the *Punch* staff. Mr. Gladstone, it was pointed out, was a constant student of the journal, the issue of whose first number he remembered. He had figured in its pages in all guises, represented under all circumstances, and knew no occasion upon which he was not able to join in the genial merriment of the public. But hadn't there been enough about the fabulous collars?

The hint was taken as kindly as it was conveyed. Harry Furniss drew a picture in which the big collars were presented undergoing the process of burial. But before long they were out again, flapping their folds in the political breeze.

Mr. Gladstone, first in most things, fulfilled in largest degree the by no means immaterial qualification of a public man that his personal appearance should be capable of striking reproduction in the pages of *Punch*. His mobile face, his nervous figure, his

unique personality throb through the pages of that periodical for more than a quarter of a century. The late Lord Derby, Lord Brougham, Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Bright, and at this day, happily for *Punch* and the public, Lord Salisbury and Sir William Harcourt, have each and all, in distinct manner, this indefinable quality. As yet Mr. Arthur Balfour has not taken on with conspicuous success. But he will do,

will come out all right as fuller opportunities for study are provided.

MR. BRIGHT AND PAM. To his last appearance in the pages of *Punch*, John Bright was represented as wearing an eyeglass. To the readers of *Punch* the Tribune would not have been recognisable without an eyeglass. To his personal friends he would not have been recognisable with one, since he was never seen in its company. I once asked Tenniel why he always fixed him with the eyeglass. He said he did not know. It was there when he succeeded to the position of cartoonist, and he went on drawing it.

"If," he added, "Mr. Bright does not wear an eyeglass, it is very wrong of him. He ought to do so."

A similar mannerism was affected in all the cartoons in which Lord Palmerston figured. Ever he was presented with a bit of straw between his teeth. This probably had its origin in the jaunty Premier's love of horse racing. At some time in mid-century, Leech or Doyle, full of stable associations, placed the straw in Pam's mouth, and there ever after it remained.

Lord Brougham's trousers of BROUGHAM'S Brobdingnagian check pattern BREECHES. supply another instance of the success with which *Punch* has arbitrarily associated a fable with the personal



"THEY'RE NOT REALLY SO LARGE."



appearance of a public man. Possibly at one period of his turbulent career Lord Brougham may have worn small-clothes of loud check pattern. But trousers of such design as Dicky Doyle clothed the Lord Chancellor's nether limbs withal were never seen on sea or land. Apart from this fanciful touch, Brougham's face was a priceless endowment to the caricaturist. A photograph of it in profile would have been sufficient to illumine a satiric page. In the pages of *Punch* it lives through many years, sublimely grotesque with the slightest, subtlest touch of the caricaturist's pencil.

AN ORNAMENT OF DEBATE. Mr. Field, the member for St. Patrick's Division of Dublin, has long endeared himself to the House of Commons by his picturesque dress and his fine oratorical style. As I

showed last month, he shines most brilliantly in his process of interrogating and cross-examining Ministers. He has a genuine thirst for information, almost as consuming as that which possesses Mr. Weir. That he can sustain an effort beyond that necessary for fragmentary questioning was demonstrated on the occasion when Mr. John Morley introduced his Irish Evicted Tenants Bill. Long looked forward to with keen interest by the Irish members, their reception of it was watched with some anxiety from the Treasury Bench. Mr. Field presented himself as the spokesman of the little Parnellite faction, and summed up the characteristics of the Bill in a sentence. "As Scripture says," he remarked, inflating his chest, and rearranging his glossy curls behind his ear—"As Scripture says, 'it is all sound and fury signifying nothing.'"

This has not been beaten this Session, even by Dr. Macgregor, who, quoting the familiar remark, "When doctors differ, who

shall decide?" recommended it to the attendance of the House as the utterance of Sydney Smith.

SIR BOYLE ROCHE, M.P. Sir Boyle Roche never sat in the Parliament of the United Kingdom. He was member for Tralee in the Irish Parliament,

representing it from 1775 till its dissolution. There was a Sir David Roche, Bart., in the House of Commons up to so recent a period as 1865. But he sprang from another stock. Sir Boyle's family belonged to Fermoy, and as far as the baronetcy is concerned is now extinct. Happily the picturesque confusion of terms, the practice of which makes Sir Boyle's name live in history, still survives in the House of Commons. There are two of Sir Boyle Roche's bulls which still linger in the records of the Irish Parliament. "Mr. Speaker," he said, on one occasion, lamenting the distressfulness of Ireland, even then noteworthy, "single misfortunes never come alone, and the greatest of all national calamities is generally followed by one much greater." On another occasion he uttered the patriotic remark: "Sir, it is the duty of every true lover of his country to give his last guinea to save the remainder of his fortune."

BULLS OF MODERN BREED. Mr. Shaw, for some time leader of the Home Rule Party, in succession to Mr. Butt and in advance of Mr. Parnell, was not

a man who might be expected to approach Sir Boyle Roche in his peculiar felicity of language. Yet there was one sentence of his, of which I have preserved a note, that is reminiscent of the Tralee baronet's style. At one time during the earliest Home Rule campaign Mr. Shaw addressed a meeting at Cork, held on a Sunday. "They tell us," he said, "that we violate the Sabbath by being here to-day. Yet if the ox or the ass fall into the pit on a Sabbath day we are enjoined to take him out. Our brother is in the pit to-day—the farmer and the landlord are both in it, and we are come here to-day to try if we can lift them out."

When Mr. Shaw came back to Westminster many efforts were made to get him to say of the farmer and the landlord which was the ox and which the ass. But he could never be induced to be communicative on the subject.

In a Budget discussion during the Parliament of 1880-5, Mr. O'Connor Power remarked: "Since the Government has let the cat out of the bag, there is nothing to be done but to take the bull by the horns."



MR. FIELD.



The late A. M. Sullivan, a foremost figure in the same Parliament, assured me that when he was beginning his practice in Ireland he was present at a case where a small farmer brought an action against a neighbour for alleged malversation of three bullocks. His counsel, a well-known and popular member of the circuit, concluded his speech by saying: "Gentlemen of the jury, it will be for you to say whether this defendant shall be allowed to come into court with unblushing footsteps, with the cloak of hypocrisy in his mouth, and draw three bullocks out of my client's pocket with impunity."

But Irish members have by no ENGLISH means the monopoly of this BULLS. particular turn of unconscious humour. In this very Session Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, speaking in the debate on the Scotch Grand Committee, which he desired to show was designed as a forward movement of the Home Rule Party, said: "They are getting in the thin end of the wedge by a sort of side wind."

A similar confusion of idea was more epigrammatically expressed by another member whose name I forget at the moment, who warmly protested against the House of Commons permitting members to "open the door to the thin end of the wedge." It is quite a common thing for nervous members of all nationalities to conclude their speech with the remark: "And now, Mr. Speaker, I will sit down by saying."

The ready orator always finds it dangerous to handle familiar tools and well-known pieces of machinery. I remember a short sentence delivered by Mr. Hopwood, in the Session of 1879. Talking in Committee of Supply, on a vote for the expenses of vaccination, the present Recorder for Liverpool said: "Don't drive the steam engine of the law overpeople's consciences." It was Mr. Alderman Cotton, a clear-headed man and an able speaker, to-day Remembrancer of the City of London, who turned out a gem of thought which I gratefully added to my collection. It was during debate on a motion made by Lord Hartington at a critical moment in the relations between Russia and Turkey in the year 1877. "Sir," said the Alderman,

dropping his voice to a hushed whisper, "it requires only a spark to let slip the dogs of war."

In this same Session Mr. Rodwell, then member for Cambridge, who has long since quitted the Parliamentary scene, was opposing a proposition of the Chairman of Ways and Means affecting procedure in respect of private Bills. He piteously pleaded that, if carried, the amendment "would lead to gas Bills going into the House of Commons with a rope round their necks."

It was Mr. Thwaites, Conservative candidate for Blackburn, who made one of the freshest hits of the General Election of 1880. "Unfortunately," he said, "the Government is on the wrong side of the book. But, however, we have a prudent Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he has done his best. The right hon. gentleman has done what I would like you all to do, namely: *When you lay an egg, put it by for a rainy day.*"

The Home Secretary is the last man in the House of Commons who might be expected to distinguish himself by a slip of the tongue. Yet there is an occasion, cherished to this day in the memory of young Cambridge, in which Mr. Asquith, entering this new field of competition, characteristically beat the record. It happened before he became a Minister. The Eighty Club were being entertained by the Cambridge Liberal Association, not without an eye on the pending general election, at which that eminent and impartial "coach," Mr. R. C. Lehmann, stood as the Liberal candidate. A great

speech was expected from Mr. Asquith, and he rose to the occasion. The Liberals were in high spirits, cheered by the result of a series of by-elections. Mr. Asquith desired to let whomsoever was concerned know that in going to the country the Liberal Party stood by every plank of their Newcastle Programme, abating not one jot or tittle of their demands. In the heat and excitement of the moment, what he with tremendous

emphasis declared was: "Let it be known, gentlemen, that of those just demands we abate not one jot or tittle."



ALDERMAN COTTON.



Young Cambridge was too polite to laugh outright at this slip on the part of its guest. Moderation was atoned for subsequently, wherever two or three were gathered together at the cheerful board. To this day "jit and tottle" is a catch phrase among those present on this interesting occasion.

In a chatty record of Signor Crispi's visit to Prince Bismarck at Friedrichsruh, it is mentioned that one day at luncheon the Princess went up to Bismarck, and deftly



AFTER HIS SPEECH.

adjusted his necktie, which had got almost under his right ear. "For fifty years," said Bismarck, "I have been battling with my necktie. The bow will never remain in its place, but always turns round, and ever to the same side."

It is a curious point of resemblance between two of the mightiest men living at the same time in European history, that the little peculiarity here noted by Bismarck as attaching to himself also beset Mr. Gladstone. Often in critical epochs in the House of Commons, as he stood at the table adding to the record of momentous speeches, I have watched his necktie slowly but surely creeping round. Its course was towards the left side, and when Mr. Gladstone resumed his seat after an energetic speech that had encroached far upon the second hour, his black necktie would be found ominously knotted under his left ear.

A certain indication of a great A TICKLISH speech from Mr. Gladstone, ARGUMENT. whether as Premier or Leader of the Opposition, was the appearance of a flower in his buttonhole—usually

the white flower appropriate to a blameless life. One time during a stormy epoch in the Parliament of 1880-5, the loving hand which thus decked him when he went forth to war selected a tall spray of lilies of the valley. As the Premier warmed to his speech, the little bouquet became dislodged. The spiky leaf was uplifted till it was high enough to touch the orator's jaw as he turned his head towards the Speaker's Chair. It was a serious time, and the speech was struck on the loftiest note. But it was irresistibly comical to see the Premier, absorbed in his theme, mechanically brushing away an imaginary fly whenever the motion of his head brought the tip of the leaf in contact with his cheek.

When the present Government STARS AND WAS formed it was Sir William GARTERS. Harcourt's boast that when he and his colleagues sat in array on the Treasury Bench in the House of Commons, they would possess the unique distinction of not having amongst them a single ribbon or a solitary star. Early last year the spell was broken by the creation of a Knight Commandership of the Bath. But the ribbon was flung around the most modest and retiring figure on the Bench; and people did not notice or, having seen, forgot it. During the present year the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been known to repeat the proud boast, forgetful that Sir John Hibbert is K.C.B.

Even with that exception the commonality on the Treasury Bench is highly distinguished as compared with many strata of predecessors. Sir William Harcourt himself has a handle to his name, but that was the inevitable corollary of his exceedingly brief career as Solicitor-General. Sir Walter Foster was



SIR JOHN HIBBERT.



created a baronet, whilst to Sir George Trevelyan and Sir Edward Grey baronetcies, like reading and writing in Dogberry's time, come by nature. There are also the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General, who must needs be knights. With these exceptions, men who are practically the fountain of honour are chary about sprinkling its waters upon themselves. Mr. Gladstone undoubtedly did much to maintain a lofty tradition founded by Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox. I suppose he has made more marquises, dukes, and a' that, not to mention bishops, baronets, deans, and knights, than any statesman of modern times. And yet to the end of the chapter he remains plain "Mr."

LORD  
BEACONS-  
FIELD.

Mr. Disraeli was not able to withstand the glittering lure of a coronet. The temptation to transmute into actual life the Lord Beaconsfield of his early novel was, apart from other considerations, irresistible. But there was one other high tradition of English public life which the statesman whom his own political party at one time derided as an adventurer passed onward unstained. Master at various epochs of State secrets that might have been transmuted into fabulous wealth, Disraeli never was a rich man, and his chief sustenance, not counting what came to him with his wife, was the fruits of hard labour.

This state of things is happily so much a matter of course in English political life, that it seems almost an insult to comment upon its unbroken record. It is, nevertheless, a striking fact which, more especially when contrasted with wholesale charges and allegations made against public men in a neighbouring country, is something to be proud of.

There is no doubt that, regarded A POINT OF from the point of view of HONOUR. pecuniary recompense, the service of the richest State in the world is poorly paid. It would not be difficult to add up the amount Mr. Gladstone has received in the way of salary through his more than sixty years' service to the State. Compared with the wage his supreme genius would have earned had it been directed in any other channel, the aggregate is pitiful in amount. Unlike Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Gladstone has never accepted the pension available for Cabinet Ministers who care to make the declaration that would yield them the possession. Neither for himself nor his family has he been inclined to accept a penny more than was actually due to him in the shape of wages for work done. With all the fat places of the Church at his

disposal, his son lives contentedly in the family parsonage, whilst his daughter married a curate, who, as far as the Premier was concerned, received no preferment. When he was returned to office in 1880, at the head of an overwhelming majority, with the Ministerial offices at his absolute command, he appointed his son, Herbert, his private secretary, the special arrangement being made that no salary should be attached to the office. It was not till Mr. Gladstone had retired from active participation in Ministerial affairs that the member for West Leeds received due recognition of long, arduous, and distinguished services to the Liberal Party, being made First Commissioner of Works.

POLITICAL  
PEN-  
SIONERS. It is generally supposed that it is only

ex-members of the Cabinet who may benefit by the Political Offices Pensions Act of 1869. The pensioners are in nearly every case ex-Cabinet Ministers, but the rule is not inexorable. One of the earliest pensioners, a gentleman who for nearly twenty-four years has been drawing a yearly income out of the coffers of a grateful nation, is Mr. Headlam, who represented Newcastle-upon-Tyne for over a quarter of a century. He was Judge-Advocate-General from 1859 to 1866, acting also as Secretary to the Treasury for a year in the closing period of his office. These are services which, probably, in this less sentimental age, would scarcely be regarded as warranting a pension. Mr. Headlam had the good fortune to make his application in 1870.

THE  
OLDEST  
PENSIONER. The oldest pensioner is Mr. C. P. Villiers, Father of the House of Commons, who entered it as member for Wolverhampton in the year 1835, and still sits for the borough. It would be too much to say that the Political Offices Pensions Act was created for the benefit of Mr. Villiers. But it is true that within a few weeks of the Act being added to the Statute Book a pension was granted to the member for Wolverhampton, then of the comparatively juvenile age of sixty-seven.



HERBERT.



Like Mr. Headlam, Mr. Villiers had held the office of Judge-Advocate-General, being in a subsequent Ministry promoted to the Presidency of the Board of Trade, which he held from 1859 to Midsummer, 1866.

No place was made for him in the Ministry of 1868, but Mr. Gladstone, careful for the welfare of former colleagues, passed the Political Offices Pensions Act even amid the herculean labour of dealing with the Irish Church; and gave his old friend the benefit of its earliest dispensation. As sometimes happens to annuitants, Mr. Villiers still lives on to green old age. Up to last Session he was vigorous enough to come down at the crack of the Tory whip to vote against his old chief and his old party. During the present Session he has been paired with Mr. Gladstone, their united ages being 177.

Mr. Childers

YOUNGER comes next on the roll of PENSIONERS. honour, his pension dating back to October, 1881. At least he had the claim of incessant work in a high position, under which his health broke down. He held in succession the offices of First Lord of the Admiralty, Secretary of State for War, and Chancellor of the Exchequer. For many years Mr. Shaw-Lefevre drew the pension, resigning it when his private circumstances no longer justified the declaration which must be made before the pension is assigned.

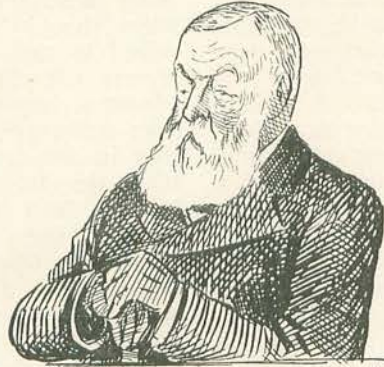
When what Mr. Chamberlain in unregenerate days called the Stop-Gap Government came into office in 1885, one of its earliest acts was to make provision for two of its most esteemed members. On the 6th of July in that year Parliament re-assembled, after adjournment for the election of new Ministers. Four days later the names of Lord John Manners and Sir Stafford Northcote were added to the

Pension List. Lord Iddesleigh lived only eighteen months to enjoy the well-earned recognition of a useful and unselfish life. Lord John Manners, succeeding to the Dukedom of Rutland, resigned his pension in March, 1888. A few days later it was bestowed upon Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who still retains it. In 1892 Lord George Hamilton found himself in a position to make the necessary declaration, and obtained the reversion of Lord Iddesleigh's pension.

Lord Cross's pension dates from the 1st of January, 1877. As he was at that time Secretary of State for India, drawing a salary of £5,000 a year, he of course would not add on the pension. He was simply, to adapt Mr. Thwaites's imagery quoted on an earlier page, getting the Treasury to lay for him an egg which he put

by for a rainy day. This came with the General Election of 1892, and since then Lord Cross has drawn his pension. The last name on the list, though not in point of date, is that of Lord Emly, whose pension dated from Midsummer Day, 1886. His claim rested on the fact that as Mr. Monsell, for many years member for County Limerick, he successively served as Secretary to the Board of Trade, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and Postmaster-General.

Lord Emly's recent death leaves a pension vacant. There can be little doubt as to the quarter in which it will be disposed. In this connection it is interesting, summing up the list, to find that, as between ex-members of Liberal Cabinets and ex-Conservative Cabinet Ministers, the proportion stands as one to three — Mr. Childers against Lord Cross, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, and Lord George Hamilton.



MR. CHILDERS.



DUKE OF RUTLAND.



## *From Behind the Speaker's Chair.*

XVII.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

A DAY'S WORK. THE British workman who insists upon the limit of an eight hours' day might usefully meditate on the particulars and extent of a day's work of one of Her Majesty's Ministers when the House of Commons is in Session. He appears in his place—and in the Parliamentary reports—at half-past three in the afternoon, when public business commences. He will have an average of a dozen questions to reply to, each involving more or less research and consideration. Afterwards he may take a leading part in debate on the question of the hour. In these days, happily, business of the House of Commons occasionally terminates on the stroke of midnight. But at best there is necessitated close attendance for eight hours and a half upon work of the most exigent character, carried on in the fierce light that beats on the Treasury Bench.

Yet the actual House of Commons work is merely the supplement of what has already amounted to far more than an ordinary day's work. The other day a Minister casually mentioned to me, rather with an air of satisfaction than of complaint, how he had spent the last twenty-four hours. After breakfast, following upon a late sitting of the House (the twelve o'clock rule having been suspended), he went to his office and spent a couple of hours in transacting the business of one of the most important departments of the State. Thence he proceeded to a Committee-room of the House of Commons, where, at noon, he took the chair, and conducted the cross-examination of three experts giving evidence upon an intricate case of inquiry remitted to a Select Committee. At half-past three he was on the Treasury Bench and answered eleven questions, not to count others "arising out of the answer just made." As soon as questions were over, he moved the second reading of one of the principal measures of the Government programme, explaining a scheme of

infinite detail affecting national interests and bristling with controversial points. Thereafter, till midnight approached, he sat attentively listening to and noting a long succession of speeches offering criticisms on the measure. At twenty minutes past eleven he rose and replied on the whole debate, concluding his speech in time to suffer the disappointment of seeing the debate adjourned.

This is pretty rough on a man. "IN PRISON OFTEN." But perhaps the hardest thing to bear is the necessity imposed upon a Minister of dining at the House of Commons every night the House is in Session. Not for him the bright social feasts which make merry the London season. More especially at the present epoch, when parties are evenly balanced, the duty of being present for every division weighs with more than usual heaviness on a Minister.

Even in times of less strenuous strife it is considered bad form for a Minister to show himself in the House of Commons in dinner dress. Oddly enough, variation to this rule was in recent years made by Mr. Gladstone, who during the last few Sessions of active Parliamentary life was a habitual diner-out. Even when the Home Rule Bill of last Session was in Committee, he would leave the House just before eight o'clock, dress with the rapidity of what in theatrical parlance is known as a quick change artist, dine out, and be back again soon after ten o'clock, ready, if necessity called (and sometimes when it didn't), to make a big speech.

It was only an octogenarian of MR. MR. Gladstone's vitality that DISRAELI. could thus burn the candle at both ends. I knew Mr. Disraeli in the House of Commons through the last years of his Premiership, and do not recall a single occasion when he appeared in evening dress. He did not habitually dine in the House, but went off at regular hours, and



after a moderate interval returned, to remain at his post till the principal order of the day was disposed of, an event which, in his time, was not accomplished on the stroke of midnight. But he was always in morning dress, and none of his colleagues ventured to vary the fashion on the Treasury Bench.

In the Parliaments following the General Election of 1886 Mr. Gladstone became a regular diner-out. Through the Parliament of 1880-85 he dined at home, in morning dress, and used to astonish the House with the brevity of the time he found sufficient to drive to Downing Street, swallow his dinner, and be back on the Treasury Bench. The present Leader of the House of Commons dines regularly in the House, in which respect he resembles the late Mr. W. H. Smith. Mr. Smith dined every night in his own room, covers being laid for four or six, according to invitations issued to his colleagues, or to occasional guests from the back Ministerial benches.

The Speaker is within measurable distance of his own dining-table. But his opportunities for enjoying an evening meal are strictly and sorely limited. Half an hour is the period during which proceedings in the House of Commons are suspended so that the Speaker may take what is known as "his chop."

That the meal should be thus designated is a practice of long standing. It certainly goes back as far as the time of Fergus O'Connor, who was member for Cork from 1832 to 1835, sitting for Nottingham from 1847 to 1852. Towards the close of his career Mr. O'Connor displayed signs of eccentricity that filled his friends with concern. According to an old House of Commons' tradition, which it would be difficult to trace to a reliable source, the Chartist leader was left unrestrained, till one day, so the story runs, "he went behind the chair and ate the Speaker's chop."

There is a looseness of reference to locality which throws doubt on this record. It seems to imply that the Speaker's evening meal was spread on a table at the

back of the chair; that the member for Nottingham accidentally passing by, attracted by a savoury smell, lifted the cover from the dish, and, finding a chop there, straightway sat down and ate it. Forty years ago, as now, the Speaker had his residence within the precincts of Westminster, and would take his chop in his own dining-room, where no stray members of Parliament of tottering intellect would be admitted. I mention the story only as showing that the tradition which particularizes the Speaker's evening meal as a chop is of respectable antiquity.

Whilst Ministers who have their private rooms may and often do have their dinners sent in from the common kitchen, it is more usual to use one of the dining-rooms, where a table is reserved. Private members may secure tables, or places at tables, by giving due notice. There is a room known as the Terrace-room that may be engaged by members for dinners of which strangers may partake, and where,



"MEASURABLE DISTANCE."

THE TERRACE-ROOM.



"I DON'T WANT TO SIT THERE."



after dinner, smoking is permitted. It is in great request through the season, and that accommodation should be limited to its use is one of the curiosities of Parliamentary social life. There is another and larger room where members may entertain ladies at dinner. But the whole accommodation to meet the stern necessity of dining in the House of Commons is lamentably inadequate.

Up to a period dating back some ten years the commissariat of the House of Commons was in the hands of an outside purveyor. He retired, it is said, with a considerable fortune. Whereupon it was decided that members should undertake the direction of their kitchen affairs on the principle of club management. A Kitchen Committee was formed, and is appointed every Session, with others of far less importance. Up to the present time the Committee has not been more fortunate than was the professional purveyor in realizing the ideal of the ordinary member of a decent dinner at a fair price. This is certainly not due to the fact that they are making a large profit out of the undertaking. On the contrary, were it not for a subsidy of a thousand a year forthcoming from the public purse, the balance-sheet of the commissariat department of the House of Commons would last year have been on the wrong side by the sum of £993 5s. 7d.

It would seem at first sight that the contract for feeding the House of Commons is a sure way to wealth. The advantages pertaining to the undertaking are extensive and peculiar. There is no rent to pay; gas and firing are free; glass, crockery, knives and forks and table-linen are thrown in. Finally there is the subsidy of £1,000 a year—all this in addition to the monopoly of feeding for six or seven months in the year 670 gentlemen.

The difficulty arises from the uncertainty attending sittings of the House. The cooks may prepare broth, with things to follow, for two or three hundred legislators. The House may forthwith be counted out, and not half-a-dozen remain for dinner. On the other hand, as happened last Session, the House may unexpectedly sit all night, and the larder

may be picked absolutely clean before one o'clock in the morning. These are extreme cases; but they are conditions that must be met, and are faced according to existing arrangements by what would appear to be absolutely the worst device. The conditions of the House of Commons are precisely those which test most severely the resources of a private and exclusive commissariat department. They are, moreover, exactly those that would be best controlled by an independent outside organization which, at touch with the hungry public at various points, would never be embarrassed by having suddenly and unexpectedly thrown on its hands material for dinner not wanted by the House of Commons on a particular night.



ONE OF THE KITCHEN COMMITTEE.

A gentleman closely connected with the Kitchen Committee told me with tears in his eyes that the Irish members are at the root of the undoubted failure of the House of Commons' kitchen.

"An Irish member," he said, "will insist when he is helped to chicken upon having the wing served to him—by choice, the liver-wing. Now, there are a hundred and three Irish members, eighty of whom pretty regularly dine in the House when they are in attendance on their Parliamentary duties. When you come to serving out eighty chicken wings, you will see that what is left for the mere British is

of a monotonously inferior description, sure to lead to heart-burning and reproaches. *Toujours* drumstick unhinges a man's mind, and leads to a state of things in which complaint is common and dissatisfaction rife."

There may be something in this. Obviously it does not cover the whole ground of dissatisfaction with House of Commons' dinners.

This Session the Kitchen Committee, pertinaciously pursued by Mr. Alpheus Cleophas Morton, coyly put forward a balance-sheet setting forth their expenditure and receipts. This shows that there was taken over the counter a sum exceeding £17,000. That would be above the average of ordinary Sessions, since the accounts are

THE  
KITCHEN  
BALANCE-  
SHEET.



those of the year 1893, when there was a winter Session.

The sales are somewhat arbitrarily grouped, "cigars and provisions" being bracketed as realizing £10,498, whilst "wines, spirits, mineral waters, etc.," bring in £6,519. What the "etc." may stand for remains a matter for conjecture. Presumably it has something to do with cheese, for on the other side of the ledger there is a sum of £983 paid for "cheese, etc."

The largest item in the kitchen account is for wines and spirits, which tot up to the precise sum of £3,985 11s. 11d. This, with an addition of £532 for beer and £422 for mineral waters, shows that the House of Commons is a pretty thirsty place. A stock of cigars to the tune of £567 was laid in. The butcher's bill is a trifle over £3,000. Fish stands at £941; poultry and game at £761, within 40s. of the amount spent for vegetables. Bread and biscuits cost £360, and groceries £628. This last item is concerned with those tea-parties on the terrace, which through the summer of last year formed one of the most popular features of a brilliant season. Wages and management sum up to close upon £4,000, and last of all in the ledger comes the modest line: "Net profit, £6 14s. 5d."

This profit, as has been shown, would have been swallowed up and a dire deficit substituted but for the £1,000 which the House in its own relief votes from the national coffers.

This is not, as it stands, a particularly flourishing balance-sheet.

THE MORAL OF IT. It would be interesting to have a few remarks upon it from an expert engaged in one of the big hotels or large clubs. It would not greatly matter if the result were satisfactory, and the House of Commons' dinner were in any reasonable degree delectable. That such is not the case is a fact painfully notorious. In debate on the subject which took place in June, not a single good word was said for cook or Committee. Mr. Chamberlain, speaking elsewhere about the same time, humorously contemplating the prospect of prison fare, said he could face it with equanimity, since he was accustomed to dine in the House of Commons. The gibe is cruel, but not nearly so cruel as the fate imposed upon Ministers and other members compelled or accustomed to dine regularly at the House. It is hard and unjust upon the Committee who devote much time and thought to the business, getting, by

way of recompense, kicks unrelieved by the gleam of halfpence. That they know nothing about the business, have neither natural aptitude nor experience gained elsewhere, is not their fault. What is wrong with the business is that it is entirely bad, founded upon a system hopelessly unapplicable to the situation.

It seems a bitter satire on sufficiency that the House of Commons can supervise the affairs of the universe and cannot serve itself with a comfortable dinner at a moderate price.

COLONEL SAUNDERSON. The temporary withdrawal of Colonel Saunderson from the political arena has done something to eclipse the gaiety of the

House of Commons. At this present time of writing, the Colonel, who last Session was usually in front of the fight, whether with tongue or fists, has made but a solitary appearance. That was in the earliest days of the Session, when the Address was still under consideration. Mr. Labouchere having carried an amendment which the Government could not accept, it became necessary to begin all over again. A fresh Address was brought in. Sir William Harcourt had risen to move it. Mr. John Morley, with nothing more striking in his dress than the familiar red necktie tied in sailor's knot, was waiting to second it, when Colonel Saunderson interposed, and gravely suggested that the House should adjourn, so as to give opportunity to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to retire to his room, and before he moved the Address "array himself in uniform suitable to his rank."

Having fired this shot, the Colonel disappeared from the field in which he was wont to fill a prominent part, and everyone will be sorry to know that the limitation of his public duties is occasioned by failing health.

Whilst the Colonel was still in A NEW constant residence in his house OUTRAGE. in Sloane Street, he was the victim of an outrage sufficient to shatter nerves of less tempered steel. One morning during the height of the controversy round the Home Rule Bill, he was seated in his study preparing a few impromptus to brighten up a speech against Mr. Gladstone's Bill. Raising his eyes from the manuscript in pursuit of an idea, they fell upon a snake stealthily making its way across the floor in the direction of the statesman's chair. The Colonel is not to be trifled with, even by a snake. He was on his



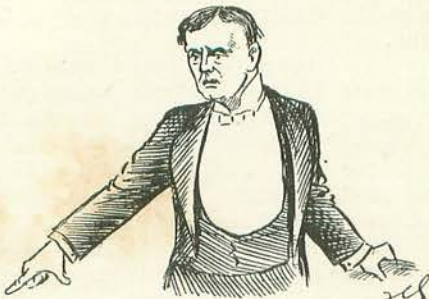
feet in a moment, and after brief exertion the snake stretched its long length, dead on the floor.

This incursion seemed a development of Home Rule tendencies passing all bounds. It was enough to have unhappy Ireland scared by dynamite explosions, shocked by the houghing of cattle, and the slaughtering of successors on homesteads of evicted tenants. But that a prominent member of a party opposed to Nationalist feeling should have the study of his London house infested with deadly reptiles seemed to be going too far.

Colonel Saunderson is a practical man. He lamented this fresh development of internecine animosity. But he put the snake in a bottle of spirits, and placed it on a shelf to await further development of the mystery.

This was not long coming, being brought about in a manner equal to the dramatic discovery of the direful snake. Dining one evening in Stratton Street, Colonel Saunderson told this latest, and abnormally true, snake story. Amongst the guests at table was a popular actor accustomed to thrill London audiences in various dark disguises and multiform desperate situations. Never in his most inspired moments had his voice possessed such blood-curdling thrill, or his gestures more command, than now when he smote the table and cried aloud :—

“Why, that’s my snake !”



“THAT’S MY SNAKE !”

Explanations were forthcoming that established the fact. The Colonel and the actor are neighbours in the same street, divided by



COLONEL SAUNDERSON.

a house and a long strip of garden. Amongst the cherished members of the family circle in the actor’s home was a spotted snake. One day it disappeared, the most persistent and passionate inquiries failing to discover its place of retirement. Now the whole secret was out. The snake had climbed the wall, crossed the intervening garden, made another ascent, dropped into Colonel Saunderson’s garden, and, finding the study window open, had made itself at home in new quarters.

“OH ! MOST  
RIGHTEOUS  
JUDGE.”

There now arose fresh complication. To whom did the body of the defunct snake belong? The actor claimed it as his ; Colonel Saunderson insisted

that the laws of sport gave it to him. He had hunted it, slain it, and, moreover, put it in pickle.

Fortunately there was present at the dinner-table a judge whose opinion deservedly carries supreme weight. Appealed to to decide, he delivered an interesting and important judgment. Suppose, he said in effect, the reptile had been of the rattlesnake breed, or even a *trigonocephalus tisiphone*, it would, coming within the category of a wild animal, have been the property of the man who killed it. It was apparently a *coluber constrictor*, naturally harmless, and, according to the evidence, tame. Therefore it was the property of its original owner, and must be returned to him. But—and it was here Lord Esher’s famed subtlety in regard to the niceties of crowner’s quest law came in—the spirits in which the snake had been preserved belonged to Colonel Saunderson, and no portion of them, even though absorbed in the skin of the reptile, might be abstracted and retained by the rightful owner of the snake.

There the matter was left, and there it rests, as does the body of the snake in the bottle of brandy.

BIRTHDAY  
NIGHT AT  
THE FOREIGN  
OFFICE.

In the matter of official or Ministerial spectacles London lags behind some of the other capitals of Europe. There is, however, one occasion when this sort of thing is done as well in London as it used to be in Paris in the days of the





THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS SETTLES THE CASE.

Empire, and is to-day in Berlin or St. Petersburg. It is the reception given at the Foreign Office on the Queen's birthday.

All the circumstances and surroundings contribute to success. The Foreign Office is one of the few public buildings suitable for the gathering. Its spacious staircase, not too far-reaching nor steep of access, serves as a conduit through which the brilliant stream passes on the way to spread itself out in the spacious reception-room. For more than an hour the staircase is the centre of attraction. Guests make a point of going early, so that they may obtain favourable positions on the landing to look over, and watch the crowd slowly struggling upwards. Here may be seen nearly all Britons famous in Politics, Literature, Science, and Art. Later, when the theatres are closed, comes on the Drama.

The faces are familiar enough, but the apparel is often rare. It is the custom on the Queen's birthday for some of the principal Cabinet Ministers to entertain their colleagues and others at full-dress dinners. After dinner all ways lead to Downing Street, converging on the staircase of the Foreign Office. Apart from the Ministerial dinners, every man who owns a uniform of any

kind or a Court suit puts it on. Ribbons of all the Orders known to European Courts lend added colour to the scene. Stars and Orders flash on manly breasts. Every State in the world is represented by its Minister, in uniform or, in the case of the emissary of the Emperor of China, in national dress. Amid the crowd of bared heads Rustem Pasha wears his fez, and on this year's Birthday Count de Staal invested Russia with more than usual distinction by wearing a pair of ivory coloured pantaloons—"mystic, white samite."

A one feels what a blow was dealt at the not too lavish decoration of London by the pressure of economic considerations which led to the withdrawal of the Greek Minister. At Foreign Office parties, M. Gennadius, the exceedingly clever diplomatist who long represented the King of Greece at the Court of St. James's, was a thing of beauty and remains a joy for ever. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the Greek Minister. Cloth of gold was the material out of which his cunningly-constructed raiment was devised. There was, perhaps, more gold than cloth. As far as peeps were permitted of the material beneath the heavy braid of gold, the coat was blue, the trousers white. By his side dangled a heavily jewelled scimitar. Essentially a man of peace, M. Gennadius, with the instinct of a diplomatist, seized the opportunity of showing what Greece would look like if, owing to difficulties on the currant import duty or other vexed question, it was compelled to go to war.

In the absence of this picturesque figure, the Diplomatic circle this year supplied another striking personality of quite a different style. His round, full face was black as night. His head was covered with material which, in the case of Uncle Ned before he laid down the shovel and the hoe, was shortly described as "wool." He wore a uniform that was a happy compromise between the garb of a general, an admiral, and a band-



"TURKEY."



master. A lady inquiring of a young but highly esteemed personage at the Foreign Office who the stranger was, was told it was "Mr. Johnson of the Christy Minstrels."

This flippancy received apparent confirmation from a cheerful habit indulged in by the foreign guest of audibly humming a tune as he surveyed the ever-changing crowd. It seemed possible that at any moment after this preparatory exercise he might break forth into the ordered harmony of "O! dem golden slippers," or "Way down upon de Swanny River." The distinguished stranger was, however, none other than the emissary of the Republic of Hayti at the Court of the Queen of England and Empress of India.

A TRAGEDY OF BUTTONS. A Minister I met at the birthday party told me he never re-entered the Foreign Office on these occasions without melancholy reflections on his earliest experience. It happened that his appointment to Ministerial office exactly coincided with opportunity to appear at the birthday party, for the first time in Ministerial uniform. There was not much time to spare for preparation. But the tailor faithfully promised that the uniform should be delivered for the eventful occasion. The parcel had not arrived by dinner-time on the appointed day, and things began to look gloomy. The Minister waited on in hope, reflecting that if it came to the worst he might go in ordinary evening clothes. Still, on

such an occasion he would like to wear the unwonted uniform.

Just as he had given up hope and was mournfully surveying his modest claw-hammer coat, a messenger arrived from the tailor with the precious bundle. The Minister hastily but satisfactorily dressed, and got to the Foreign Office in such good time that he was able to make his way up the comparatively uncrowded staircase in considerably under a quarter of an hour.

As he walked about the reception-room he was conscious of being an object of marked attention. That was not unexpected — was indeed, as he felt, his due. He was a new and, he hoped, a popular Minister, wearing for the first time a novel, and, he had reason to believe, a becoming uniform. Still, it was odd that everyone should turn round to look at him, and he was uncomfortably conscious of a smile broadening as he passed along.

"My dear fellow," said a colleague, gently taking his arm and leading him to a recess, "for goodness' sake let me take these bits of paper off the buttons at the back of your coat."

The wretched tailor, in sending the coat home, had omitted to remove the bits of soft paper that guarded the gilt buttons from harm. The hapless Minister, hurriedly dressing, had not noted the carelessness, and for nearly an hour had strutted through the brilliant scene thus curiously adorned.

