

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

XXX.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

LORD
HARTING-
TON'S
CONTEM-
PORARIES.

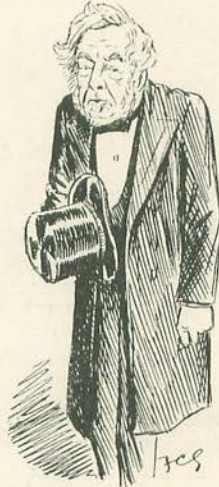
WITH reference to the article in the March Number showing how few remain in the House of Commons to-day of members present when, in 1857, the Duke of Devonshire, then Lord Cavendish, took his seat for North Lancashire, the Duke writes to me making an addition to my list. According to his Grace's computation, there are seated in the House to-day just six out of the six hundred and fifty-eight members who thronged the Chamber when he walked up the floor to take the oath. These are Mr. C. P. Villiers, who entered in 1835, and now bears the venerable title of Father of the House; Sir John Mowbray, who, born in the Waterloo year, was first returned for Durham in 1853; Sir James Fergusson, returned for Ayrshire in 1854; Mr. Abel Smith, a silent member for more than forty years; Sir Francis Powell, first returned for Wigan in 1857; and Mr. W. B. Beach, who has sat for Hants since 1857, and has chiefly contented himself with saving the State by his vote, leaving to others the task of verbal instruction, of counsel and re-proof.

Putting the matter on this further considered and, I believe, finally accurate basis, it is a remarkable thing, furnishing striking testimony of the mutability of the assembly, that within the limit of thirty-nine years, only six men should be left out of a company of six hundred and fifty-eight. The fact is more remarkable in the case of the House of Commons than of any other gathering numerically equal. It is a place in which a man, having once obtained a footing, does not of his own will lightly leave. As in the case of the six veterans, relics of the Old Guard of 1857, when a man of good family and high personal character becomes associated with a con-

stituency, it grows into the habit of returning him time after time. For this, and other reasons, the House of Commons more than any other composite body is likely to preserve through the ages some leaven of its earlier element.

During the last twenty INCREASED years there have been PRESSURE. new and increasing reasons why men having served a certain term in the House of Commons should voluntarily withdraw from the scene, giving place to others. In Lord Palmerston's time the House seems to have been a nice, sleepy, respectable place, where such moderate measure of legislative business as was undertaken jogged along, carefully refraining from interfering with the dinner hour or engagements in the hunting-field. Mr. Gladstone's accession to power in 1868 changed the aspect of things. His almost supernatural energy vibrated through the erstwhile lethargic House. For a while, in 1874, under Mr. Disraeli's adroit generalship, the House gratefully relapsed into a state of semi-somnolence.

In 1875 the Irish members stormed the place, and brought about a revolution in manner and procedure, as complete in its way as the French Revolution. There were prolonged Sessions, all-night sittings, pitched battles, and constant skirmishing, making the day's task of a member of the House of Commons far exceed that of any other working-man. The reform of procedure, giving the Speaker and the majority a firmer grip, has made impossible recurrence of the scenes that enlivened the Parliament of 1880-5. To that extent the labour of members of the House of Commons has been lightened. But in other ways the burden has been kept up. The institution of Grand Committees adds considerably to the day's work. For many members it practically means



RIGHT HON. C. P. VILLIERS.
(The Father of the House.)



SIR F. POWELL.

that the grind commences at noon instead of half-past four, a dozen years ago the hour for the commencement of public business.

Beyond the Grand Committees are the Select Committees, whose number steadily increases. Superadded are the Royal Commissions, which carry on work even in the Parliamentary recess. When in doubt play a Royal Commission, is an axiom in the Ministerial game recognised with increased favour.

THE
TWELVE
O'CLOCK
RULE.

The establishment of the rule whereby debate automatically closes at midnight has enormously reduced the strain on the endurance of members of the House of Commons. When it was introduced, matters had reached a condition in which either some such rule must be established, or the pick of the assembly must needs retire. The pace had grown too fast even for some who, in point of years, could not claim the privilege of veterans. With the establishment of the twelve o'clock closing rule, there came into vogue an alteration sharply affecting the large proportion of members engaged in private business. The House, which used to meet at four, commencing public business at half-past, now meets an hour earlier. As in order to secure a seat members must needs be in their place before the day's business is, at three o'clock, opened with prayer, it is evident that their attendance upon office or Chamber private work must be confined to the hours preceding luncheon.

This alteration of time has entirely and, from all points of view, happily altered the course of procedure in the House of Commons. Under the old rules questions dawdled on till six o'clock, or even half-past. A Minister in charge of a Bill probably found opportunity to make his speech before dinner. That was all that was possible in the available time. There followed a long interval—blank as far as business was concerned. About half-past ten members streamed back, the benches bubbled with excitement, favourite speakers came to the front, and the House more or less cheerfully made a night of it. In big debates, Mr. Gladstone (suppose he were Leader of the Opposition) would rise at eleven, or half-past, to sum

up the debate. Mr. Disraeli, from the opposite Bench, might expect to find his opportunity about half-past twelve or one in the morning. If the division were over by half-past two, members thought themselves fortunate.

NEW TIMES,
NEW
MANNERS.

That fashion has disappeared as completely as the equally obnoxious crinoline, a contemporary fashion, has vanished from the lady's wardrobe. Except on the rarest occasions, everything important in the House of Commons happens before the dinner-hour. Increase of activity on the part of the provincial Press has something to do with this change of fashion. The leaders of debate, Mr. Chamberlain earliest amongst them, discovered that they have better chances of being reported at full length if they speak between four and eight o'clock than if, as was their wont, they interpose after the dinner-hour. Beyond that is the assurance that in similar circumstances their chances of influencing public opinion is bettered. A speech delivered in Parliament now arrives in distant provincial towns in time to be discussed in the editorial columns of the leading papers, an advantage not attainable under the old system.

This earlier transaction of business, above all the certainty of the shutters being put up at midnight, serves to make life in the House of Commons more possible. Changes were absolutely necessary if the machinery was to go on. Benefitting by them there remain enough of storm and stress to make the life wearing, and to account for the fact that, though the play goes on from year to year, the company on the stage is always changing.

Colonel Saunderson is so widely recognised as a Parliamentary

force, a statesman of singularly judicial mind, as to obscure the bent of his natural genius. It is well known that if Mr. Gladstone had not entered the service of the public he might, amongst many other things, have been a woodman. Lord Salisbury is much happier in his workshop at Hatfield than at his desk in Downing Street, or on either Front Bench in the House of Lords.

If Colonel Saunderson were not a statesman he would



A BRITISH WORKMAN.

be a boat-builder. As it is, he manages to steal some hours, even days, from political duties to planning and building ships. From the inception to the launching he does it all himself, or, where he takes on assistance, he personally supervises the labour. He has trained a local carpenter with such success that between them they can turn out a yacht seaworthy from keel to mast-head. The Colonel also plans the engines, though that is necessarily work the carrying out of which must be committed to other hands.

As he never sells a boat and is always building, he has quite a fleet under his flag. Ulster is now in a state of comparative quietude. If there should ever arise occasion when Ulster must needs fight, she will be strengthened

by the reflection that, thanks to the industry and genius of one of her most patriotic sons, she has ready to hand the nucleus of a navy.

AN AUTO-GRAPHIC ALBUM. A member of the American Senate tells me Mr. Bidulph Martin's enterprise, described in this page of the April

Number of THE STRAND MAGAZINE, is a mere trifle compared with what, on somewhat similar lines, a lady has done in the United States. Mr. Martin, it will be remembered, devoted a considerable portion of his Parliamentary life between 1892 and the Dissolution in 1895 to obtaining the autograph and, in many cases, the photograph of members who sat in the House of Commons that passed the Home Rule Bill.

The American lady, whose name is Mrs. Deems, conceived a far more stupendous scheme. In the Centennial year of the Republic she set to work to obtain the autograph and the photograph of every public man, and every woman prominently known, who were alive in the happy year that saw the hundredth anniversary of the Republic. She began with General Grant, who displayed quite unusual enthusiasm. He not only wrote his name in the album and added his photograph, but undertook to secure similar interesting records from all his colleagues in the Cabinet.

This done, Mrs. Deems found her patriotic task quite easy. Through long weeks she

was found day by day seated in the old hall of the House of Representatives, with her album on a table near her. Senators and representatives passing by were invited to care for posterity by signing the book and, if they were good looking, adding their photographs.

They were all good looking, and the volume visibly swelled. In addition to members of both Houses of the Legislature, Mrs. Deems obtained the autograph of members of the Diplomatic Corps resident at Washington. Outside the Parliamentary field she hunted up novelists, artists, sculptors, lawyers, everyone whose name spoken in the streets or written in the newspapers had a familiar sound.

She had an iron safe specially made to hold her gigantic parchment album.

On the 4th of July, 1876, she, in the presence of witnesses, solemnly deposited the album in the safe, having first inclosed it in an airtight copper case. The safe was locked up, and Mrs. Deems, presenting the precious though bulky parcel to the nation, left it in the custody of the authorities of the Capitol.

When the guardians of the Capitol recovered their breath they discovered themselves in an embarrassing situation. Here was a gigantic safe blocking the way wherever it was temporarily located. No authority had been given for leaving it there, and if there had there was no convenient place in which to hide it.

Mrs. Deems was communicated with, and cordially invited to take away her treasure. She generously declined, protesting that she had presented it to her country, and would not be mean enough to withdraw the gift. An attempt was made to induce Congress to pass a resolution accepting the safe and its contents. At the time this was brought forward a new House was sitting. Many old members whose names were enshrined in the album were no longer returned. The new Congress would have nothing to do with the safe. But neither would Mrs. Deems.

So there it stands to this day in the east portico of the Capitol, a thing 6ft. high and 4ft. wide. The last indignity has been done it by painting it the same greyish white



COLONEL SAUNDERSON'S YARD.

colour as the wall against which it stands, with intent that it shall attract as little attention as possible.

LAW
OFFICERS
OF THE
CROWN.

It is a curious distinction that whilst the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General for England are always knighted, the Lord Advocate, filling an analogous position in respect to Scotland, and the Attorney-General for Ireland, are both made Privy Councillors. As for the Solicitors-General of Scotland and Ireland, they in respect of titles share a common neglect.

I believe that when in 1873 Mr. Vernon Harcourt and Mr. Henry James were respectively raised to the dignity of Attorney-General and Solicitor-General of England, they demurred to acceptance of the accustom'd knighthood. Stern, unbending Radicals, they regarded with unconquerable distaste the prospect of being set apart from their fellows by the mark of knighthood. Mr. Vernon Harcourt, I have been told, went the length of seeing Mr. Gladstone on the subject, and endeavoured to induce him to approve a variation of the ordinary course.

It was a new sensation for the Premier. He had long been accustomed to be pestered directly and indirectly for knighthoods. To have two rising, middle-aged young men not only begging to be let off acceptance of knighthood, but capable of arguing with ingenuity and force to show that the dignity and the post were not inseparable, was a novel experience. Mr. Gladstone could not deny himself the pleasure of arguing the matter out. But he ended as he began, by insisting that the newly-appointed law officers must, as their predecessors used, submit to the accolade.

Facilis descensus. The Solicitor-General of that day has become Lord James of Hereford, whilst his colleague, the Attorney-General of 1873, bears with dignified uncomplaining the titular burden laid upon him on crossing the threshold of a Ministerial career.

BEARDING
GARTER
KING-AT-
ARMS.

It was possibly not in connection with these two learned knights that there lingers at the Herald's Office a story which even at this time of day makes Garter King-at-Arms forlornly shake his head.

Shortly after the law officers of a certain Administration had knelt before the Queen and risen up knights, they received from Garter King a bill of fees amounting to a considerable sum. This they agreed in positively declining to pay. Garter King persisting, the Attorney-General politely offered to call upon him and discuss the matter. As nothing else seemed forthcoming, this proposal was accepted, and a very interesting conversation followed.

"You charge me all this," said the Attorney-General, in his most convincing manner, waving the long bill of particulars, "and, if you'll excuse me saying so, I don't see where you come in at all. At Her Majesty's command, I went down to Windsor. I did not have the pleasure of seeing you, or of being comforted by the sight of your tabard. As for myself, I was dressed in ordinary morning attire; was conducted to the Queen's presence, knelt, received the accolade, made due obeisance, and withdrew.

Whereupon, you appear on the scene, and attempt to charge me for all kinds of things."

In the end Garter King-at-Arms, descending from his high estate, made a compromise, accepting from these two law officers a sum smaller than had ever in similar circumstances been entered in his august account-books. It is probable the precedent was not established in the case of successors to the law offices. But it might be worth inquiring into by the next new-comers.

THE JUDGE
ADVOCATE-
GENERAL.

There is a general opinion arising out of the disappearance of the Minister from the Treasury Bench that the office of Judge Advocate-General has been abolished. That is not the case, though at the present time, and, in fact, since Lord Salisbury's Government went



A SHOCK FOR THE GARTER KING-AT-ARMS.

out in 1892, the duties of the post have been gallantly superadded by Sir Francis Jeune to those that already overload him in his Presidency of the Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Courts. The reason why ancient practice was departed from, and no Judge Advocate-General appointed in succession to Sir William Marriott, was explained by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in reply to a question arising in Committee of Supply in the Session of 1892.

Formerly there was a salary of £2,000 a year attached to the post of Judge Advocate-General. During the incumbency of Sir William Marriott, a re-arrangement of terms was effected. It was settled that the Minister should receive a salary of £500 a year certain, and that an additional £500 a year should be allocated by the Treasury to meet the learned gentleman's fees charged for specific services.

In the year 1892, as the new Minister of War reminded the House, a dissolution was imminent. No one knew from day to day, or from week to week, how long Parliament would last, still less what would happen to Lord Salisbury's Government at the poll. Ignoring this notorious state of things (so Mr. Campbell-Bannerman put it), Sir William Marriott having on the 1st of April, being the first day of the financial year, drawn his salary of £500, set himself with rare industry to deal with cases pertaining to his office. The consequence was that, before the year had progressed beyond the threshold of July, this zealous public servant had run up charges which absorbed the whole of the £500 allotted for fees over a period stretching to the 31st of March in the following year.

The consequence was that there was not a penny in the Treasury to bless a new Judge Advocate-General with, and none was appointed.

How things get along with no Minister specially devoting himself to the duties of the post is one of those mysteries that remain unexplained. That in former times the Judge Advocate-General was a position held in high repute appears from the circumstance that the salary exceeded that of Under-Secretaries. Moreover, the Judge Advocate-General has from time immemorial enjoyed

the privilege of demanding an audience from the Queen whenever he has business to bring under Her Majesty's notice. This rare privilege still pertains to the office.

There is nothing new under the "SINE sun, not even Mr. William BREECHES." O'Brien's experience in prison in old Coercion days. How there was rape of his breeches, how he declined the substitute proffered, how he lay in bed through the livelong day under a coverlet, are matters of history.

Wandering through one of the quaint old churches one unexpectedly comes upon in the bustling streets of London, quiet thumb-prints of Time, I heard of quite another breechless person. The church is that of St. Alban, in Wood Street, one of the many Wren built after the Great Fire of London. It replaced an earlier and, it is to be hoped, a much more beautiful edifice by Inigo Jones. There is still record of a monument in the old church which bore the following inscription:—



SIR FRANCIS JEUNE.
(Judge Advocate-General.)

*Hic jacet Tom Short-hose
Sine tombe, sine sheets, sine riches ;
Qui vixit sine gowne,
Sine cloake, sine shirt, sine breeches.*

Shortly before the death of Mr. "MY NAME R. L. Stevenson in far-off MACGREGOR." Samoa, a member of the House of Commons, erudite in Scottish lore, received a letter from the novelist stating his belief that, though his family had long been known as Stevenson, he believed they were really Macgregors. He begged the M.P. to see what he could do either to confirm or dispel the impression.

As everyone knows, in the good old days in Scotland the Macgregors, being beaten in many a fight, were nominally, if not literally, erased. Those that were not killed in battle or slain in captivity were ordered to abandon their clan-name. Thus the remnant of the ill-fated clan adopted various names as fancy or accident suggested.

Stevenson long brooded over the idea that though his foot was no longer on his native heath his name was Macgregor. Sir Herbert Maxwell's pursuit of the task to which he was invited was interrupted by news that the novelist was dead and his name no matter.

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

XXXI.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR. WRITING in the April number about the secret history of succession to the Speaker's Chair, I said: "When towards the close of the Session of 1883 Mr. Brand intimated his intention of retiring, Mr. Goschen was the first man turned to by Mr. Gladstone with invitation to step into the vacant Chair. Mr. Gladstone next approached Sir Farrer Herschell, at the time Solicitor-General."

Lord Herschell tells me this is not quite an accurate account of an episode in Parliamentary history recorded for the first time in these pages. The offer was first made to Sir Farrer Herschell, and when he took the courageous and, as it proved, farsighted course of declining the tempting offer, Mr. Goschen was next approached. Mr. Goschen, as I have said, reluctantly declined the honour on the ground of physical disability owing to short-sightedness.

One who was present at the pathetic scene tells me how Mr. Goschen, slow to abandon hope of presiding over the assembly of which he has long been an ornament, sat in the Speaker's Chair, and with the collaboration of a few friends made experiment as to how far he was able to recognise faces at varying distances. The rehearsal convinced him of his inability to play the part assigned to him. So he withdrew from the nomination, and lived to be Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Conservative Government, and First Lord of the Admiralty in a "Unionist" Administration.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN. It is a trite reflection how from slight causes great events have birth. It is not too much to say that had Mr. Goschen's eyesight been of average strength, the history of this country during the last ten years would have been materially altered. With him in the Chair, Lord Randolph Churchill would never have been reminded that he had "forgotten

Goschen"; on the contrary, he would at the beginning of the Session of 1887 have gone back to Lord Salisbury's Cabinet master of the position. There would never have been a Home Rule Bill of 1892, since Lord Randolph would have attempted, and would probably have succeeded in, the settlement of that burning question on the firm basis of "similarity, equality, and simultaneity" he had commenced to prepare during his brief Leadership of the House in 1886.

Amongst the uniforms that blazed KILTS AT during the ceremony of the coronation of the Czar, none, I am told, attracted more admiring attention than one worn by a member of the House of Commons, who attended in certain diplomatic capacity. Although he represents an English county in the Commons, the ex-Attaché is a Scot of ancient lineage, and when occasion presents itself, proudly wears the garb of Gaul. It seems a matter simple enough for a man of whatever nation, duly accredited to such a ceremony, to wear his national dress. But earlier experience at Court suggested the necessity of negotiating the matter of the kilt before it was packed up for Moscow.

A few years ago the owner of this particular costume was attached to the British Embassy at Berlin. On one occasion of State pageantry he proposed to wear his kilt. Timely suggestion was made to him that the Emperor, who, unlike the lilies of the field, takes thought of what himself and others shall wear, might object. On inquiry being made in the proper quarter the suspicion proved well founded. Consent to such an innovation at the Court of Berlin was sternly refused. A short time later, to the surprise of those in the secret—if, indeed, surprise is still possible to the *entourage* of the Emperor William—His Imperial Majesty one evening strutted forth in the full toggery of kilts.



THE MCWILHELM.

A NEW
HOUSE OF
COMMONS'
QUESTION.

At country houses, a question of growing difficulty is: Who is to clean the cycles? In these days, guests of both sexes invited to country houses, if they do not travel thither on their bicycles, include the machine among their personal luggage, and use it daily through their stay. Under the old order of things, when a guest made use of the stable the horses on their return were, naturally, cared for by the stablemen. The bicycle is too new an institution to have yet established its full attendant service. There are few gentlemen's gentlemen who hold the cleaning of a bicycle to be among their daily duties. For a lady's-maid the suggestion is even more absurd. But bicycles in daily use have to be cleaned, and with a house-party of a dozen or a score, every one with his or her cycle, who is to look after the machines?

That is a question, pressing enough last autumn, which in the coming months may be expected to come to a head. Meanwhile a difficulty is growing in the House of Commons as to the housing of bicycles during a sitting. The number of members who come down on the cycle is rapidly growing. There are few places of public meeting where its convenience is more marked. After a late sitting, closing with a big division, the supply of cabs in Palace Yard is altogether inadequate to the demand. First comers having been served, there ever remains something like two hundred who have to go forth in search of cabs in the streets. The cyclist is, both coming and going, independent of the hansom cab, a fact which week by week members are more fully appreciating.

Thus the difficulty of storing bicycles increases. Next Session we shall in all probability have formal demand made upon the First Commissioner of Works to arrange at some convenient place in the courtyard stalls for bicycles, each one numbered, in supplement of the existing locker.

The transmigration, much lamented in the House of Commons, of Mr. David Plunket into Lord Rathmore actually involves the

withdrawal from the scene of two esteemed members. Mr. Plunket was frequently accompanied in his attendance on his duties in the House of Commons by a beautiful collie dog. Of late years Cheviot found that "at my time of life," as he might have said, quoting a consecrated phrase, regular attendance upon the House of Commons was more than could be expected of him. In earlier years he came down regularly at prayer-time, and remained till his master went off to dinner, sometimes sauntering down again after the meal, and waiting till the House was up.

Cheviot was, of course, not admitted within range of the Speaker's eye. He used to wait in the courtyard flanking the entrance to the Ladies' Gallery and leading on to the terrace. There he lay by the hour, silent, watchful, waiting for his master's step, the signal gaily to bound homewards. He was so old a Parliamentary hand that he was able infallibly to distinguish between the signals of the bells. When a division is called the bells tinkle in three several bursts. When all is over, and the cry, "Who goes home?" reverberates through the lobby, the bell rings only once. Through a long sitting, when from time to time the division bell rang,



"CHEVIOT."

Cheviot pricked up his ears and waited. When after a brief pause the bell began again with the second of the three peals, his head sank down on his paw and he dozed off. The signal was to him like the chunk of old red sandstone to its recipient. "Subsequent proceedings interested him no more," at least, not till the bell rang again.

When the end came, and after a single outburst the bell stopped, Cheviot knew it was the home-going signal. He leaped to his feet, gambolled all over the yard with the glad certainty of presently hearing his master's footstep and his cheery voice. Cheviot is getting up in years now, has grown fat and prosperous, and is, happily, since circumstances have so ordained his master's lot, more in sympathy with the slow respectability of the House of Lords than with the

sometimes turgid vigour of the House of Commons.

LORD HARTINGTON'S DOG. Another dog that used to pay regular visits to the House of Commons was the property of Lord Hartington. Though, like Cheviot, a collie, Roy was of less mercurial temperament, and as he crossed Palace Yard ever walked sedately at the heels of his master, not without a certain subtle gesture, as if he had almost caught the trick of lounging along with one hand in his trouser pocket. He



LOUNGING ALONG.

did not long survive the disruption of the Liberal Party. Accustomed on his visits to the House of Commons to find a united party, buttressed by his master under the leadership of Mr. Gladstone, he, when the trouble came, displayed remarkable reluctance to go down to the House, and finally discontinued his visits.

Soon after he died, and now sleeps in an honoured grave, dug for him in the garden of Devonshire House, the roar of the life of London falling on unheeding ears.

Among his race, Roy enjoyed the rare distinction of being the only dog privileged to accompany a Cabinet Minister in attendance on the Queen at Balmoral. When Lord Hartington, at the time a member of Mr. Gladstone's Government, took his first turn at Balmoral, he carried with him his inseparable companion, Roy. There was some perturbation amongst authorities of the Royal Household, who had never known such a thing done. This led to only greater triumph for Roy. The Queen making his acquaintance was so delighted with him, that next time the Secretary of State for War took his turn as Minister in attendance on Her Majesty, Roy was "commanded" to accompany his master.

MR. GEDGE AT PRAYERS. One summer afternoon during the Session Mr. Gedge had his devotions disturbed by observation of a regrettable incident on the bench immediately opposite. Whilst the chaplain was approaching his last amen,

the member for Stockport observed Sir Charles Dilke enter the House with that rapid step that always brings him first man out of the division lobby. Mr. Gedge, who is above all things charitably inclined, came to the conclusion that Sir Charles, having been unavoidably detained, was endeavouring to make up for lost time, bent upon securing as much as possible of the ghostly comfort with which prayer-time fills the House of Commons. Moved by sympathy with this desire, Mr. Gedge, opening a little wider the fingers of the hands spread in devotional gesture across his face, observed that Sir Charles was inserting in the receptacle at the back of his seat the small ticket bearing his name which would secure the place for him during the remainder of the evening.

That was a shock to a man who HE SMELLS had expected better things. But A RAT. there was worse to follow. Sir

Charles, by dint of diligent attendance, has secured the tenancy of the second seat on the front bench below the gangway. The corner seat is invariably occupied by Mr. Labouchere, the regularity of whose appearance in it is a circumstance that conveys to the mind of Mr. J. G. Talbot an assurance that in some measure mitigates the pain with which he hears Mr. Labouchere attack the Church and speak disrespectfully of the House of Lords. It is an ancient and sacred condition of securing a particular seat in the House of



MR. GEDGE AT PRAYERS.

Commons that a member claiming it shall have been present at prayers. Every day the House is in Session Mr. Labouchere is found in the corner seat of the front bench below the gangway. *Argal*, he must have been present at prayer-time, and as the continual dropping of water weareth away a stone, so, in process of time, through the operation of this agency, Mr. Labouchere may be brought into a frame of mind in which he shall see eye to eye with the member for Oxford University.

HE SEES IT
MOVING IN
THE AIR.

Mr. Gedge may, previously to this fateful afternoon, have taken the same view. Rude awakening was at hand. As, almost petrified, grievously unmindful of the voice of the chaplain standing at the table, he opened still wider his fingers and peered with fuller freedom, he beheld Sir Charles Dilke take out of his waistcoat pocket another small card, and place it in the receptacle at the back of the seat from which Mr. Labouchere is wont to address inconvenient questions to Mr. Gedge's right hon. friends on the Treasury Bench! This done, Sir Charles folded his hands, bent his head, and assumed an attitude of prayer.

HE
SCOTCHES
IT.

This was too much for Mr. Gedge. He felt it his duty to

interpose in the course of public business, in order to tell a shocked House what he had seen. The Speaker, in his diplomatic manner, declined to be drawn into reproof of individuals, but solemnly reaffirmed the principle that, in order to secure a seat, members must personally attend prayers.

It is sad to reflect how the devotional exercise which in the House of Commons precedes attention to mundane matters has, for generations, been made the occasion of bringing out that residuum of depravity which exists even among members of Parliament. Up to Viscount Peel's Speakership, the established custom was that members desiring to secure a seat might take the preliminary step thereto by planting out their hats at any hour of the morning after the doors were

opened. The assumption was that the member owning the hat was in waiting within the precincts of the House, would enter at prayer-time, and at the close of the service, receiving a ticket, would complete the act of occupancy by inserting it at the back of his bench.

This worked well enough for a time, but it soon began to be whispered that old Parliamentary hands had possessed themselves of two hats. One they, looking in at the House of Commons in the early morning, placed on the desired seat; putting on the other, they went forth about their business.

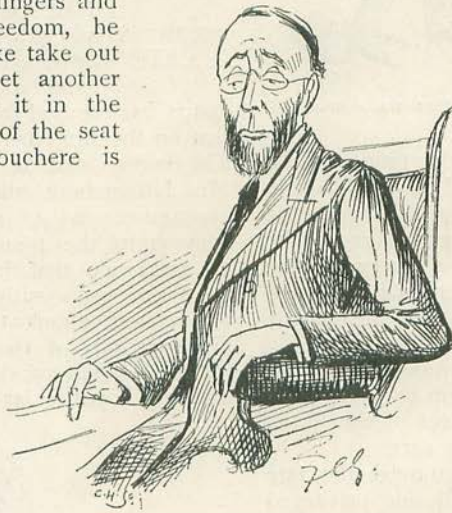
THE
WORKING
HAT.

One day in the Parliament of 1880-5, Mr. Mitchell Henry created a profound sensation by addressing the Speaker from a side gallery and blowing upon this little plot. It appeared that Mr. Henry, driving down in what he thought was good time to secure a seat, chanced to meet a well-known Liberal member wearing a new tall hat cantering in the park. On arriving at the House he was amazed to discover, on the very seat he coveted, another hat, not quite so glossy, bearing the card of his hon. friend.

There was evidently something wrong somewhere,

and Mr. Henry, as did Mr. Gedge in the Session just closing, appealed to the Speaker. It was then Mr. Speaker Brand laid down that rule, a kind of Magna Charta for innocent members, that two hats are much worse than one, and that in the securing of a seat only what was styled a working hat, in contradistinction to a supernumerary tile, would be recognised as securing a seat.

In the last year of Mr. Peel's Speakership a new procedure was approved. Strict enforcement of what had come to be known in text-books on Constitutional practice as the working hat principle obviously involved certain inconvenience, even danger, to precious lives. Members having placed their only hat on a desired seat, possibly some hours before the call to prayer, must needs



MR. TALBOT—A PAINED LISTENER.

go about the corridors and passages hatless. This led to discomfort, sometimes catarrh. An appeal was made to the Speaker, and after grave deliberation a new system was elaborated and sanctioned. Amid general cheering the Speaker announced that cards would be provided, obtainable at any hour of the morning after the House opened. These, placed upon a selected seat, would secure it until final appropriation was made at prayer-time.

It is possible that when the announcement was made some frail breasts were flushed with wild hope. Cards had not hitherto been distributed till after prayers. If in lieu of the hats they were to be available at any hour of the morning, why should not a member look in, take a card, write his name on it, forthwith place it in the brass frame let into the back of the seat, and there an end of the business? But Mr. Peel had not sat in the House of Commons for more than a quarter of a century and been four times elected to the Chair without learning a thing or two. When the new cards were available it was found they were too large to fit in the receptacle at the back of the seat, and that in order to obtain those particular cards it was still necessary to be present at prayers. Nothing was gained except the use of the hat during the morning.

Till Mr. Gedge, fortuitously opening his fingers as he covered his face with his hands when he bent in prayer, chanced to observe Sir Charles Dilke's manœuvre, it seemed that the system was impregnable, and that attendance at prayers would be an indispensable condition of securing a choice seat. Mr. Gedge's alertness spoiled that particular game for the Session. But the disclosure, as opening up fresh vistas of human duplicity, makes consideration of the situation not wholly relieved from anxiety.

POLITICS
AND
PRIVATE
FRIEND-
SHIPS.

One of the pleasantest characteristics of political warfare in this country is that it never (or hardly ever) interferes with personal relationships. It is by no means an uncommon thing for two members of the House of Commons after what looked down upon from the Strangers' Gallery, seemed a duel *à la mort*, to meet an hour



THE WORKING HAT.



THE PARK HAT.

later at the dinner-table of a common friend, possibly one of the duellists as the host, chatting in intimate cordiality.

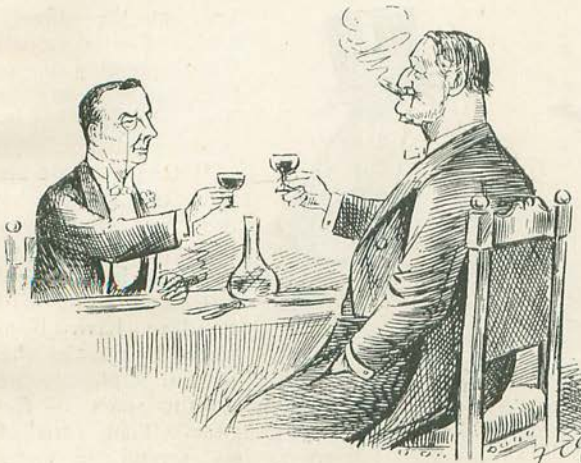
Within the last six years one great party has been riven by volcanic eruption. Political friends and colleagues of old standing have been parted by the breadth of the table in the

House of Commons, or the space of the flooring below the gangway. That, a trial of peculiar bitterness, has served in some measure to vary the rule which still happily exists in respect of the ancient division of parties. Still, in some cases, even Liberals and Liberal Unionists maintain their former social relations.

Early in the Civil War, when passion was at its hottest, a critical election took place at Southampton. A Liberal Home Ruler fought the seat against a candidate who had seceded from the Liberal camp on the Home Rule question. Sir William Harcourt went down to Southampton on the polling day to help the Liberal candidate. When he returned, he had the satisfaction of informing Mr. Chamberlain, who happened to be his guest, that the "Unionist" had been beaten, and that Southampton had been recaptured under the Liberal flag. It was at the time a great political event, a significant turn of the tide. Its imminence, and the condition of affairs it indicated, had not prevented Mr. Chamberlain becoming the guest of one of his most redoubtable political adversaries. It is safe to assume that the conclusion of the matter did not disturb the cheerful serenity of the house-party at Milwood.

DEGREES
OF
BROTHER-
HOOD.

There is another personal relationship enjoyed by Sir William Harcourt of older standing, of closer touch even, than that established with Mr. Chamberlain. The two men entered the House of Commons within three months of each other. They ran together neck and neck in the Parliamentary race, received Ministerial promotion on the same day, and worked hand in hand in the same department of the State. When the split came, one remained steadfast by the side of the statesman who had been their first chief. The other threw in his lot with the Dissident Liberals. In



STILL FRIENDS.

subsequent debate in the House of Commons they were often personally pitted against each other, mutually dealing blows that made the rafters ring—or would have done so if there had been any rafters in the House of Commons. An eminent Conservative lately remarked to Sir William Harcourt on the charm of this incident in the storm and stress of party warfare.

"Ye.," said Sir William Harcourt, softly, with a wistful, far-away look in his eyes, "we are, as you may say, brothers."

"So were Cain and Abel," retorted the irreverent Conservative.

HOW
GORDON
WENT TO
KHARTOUM.

The following note from Sir Charles Dilke explains itself: "In your June Number, Mr. Lucy, describing 'How Gordon Went to Khartoum,' says that 'a member of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet from 1880 to 1885, who from the Front Opposition Bench listened to' a speech of mine against the Soudan movement, heard it 'with amazement,' because I 'was largely responsible for sending Gordon to Khartoum. . . . Granville and he settled the whole business in the pauses of a quadrille at Waddesdon, the rest of the Cabinet knowing nothing about it until Gordon had received his orders.'

"Mr. Lucy then goes on to tone down the story in language of his accustomed accuracy and courtesy, and I have no complaint to make of him, except that he took some gentleman of the Front Opposition Bench as having been a 'member of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet from 1880 to 1885,' who cannot have been in that position. The only

such member who now sits on the Front Opposition Bench is Sir William Harcourt: the only such members in the House of Commons, except myself, are Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Chamberlain. It is quite impossible that Sir William Harcourt can have made such a statement, for, although there is no obligation of Cabinet secrecy about the main facts, inasmuch as they were laid before Parliament, the alleged facts in this story are entirely without foundation.

"Putting together two statements which were made by Lord Granville in the House of Lords and the despatches which were laid before Parliament, we find that on the 16th January, 1883, Sir Evelyn

Baring's request for a British officer to be sent to conduct the retreat from Khartoum was considered; and that on the 18th January a meeting of members of the Cabinet took place at the War Office which decided that the then Colonel Gordon should go, not to Khartoum, but to Suakim to consult the friendly Sheiks, and to report upon the best means of bringing about the evacuation of the Soudan. From Lord Granville's statements in the House of Lords we find that he had previously heard that Colonel Gordon was willing, but apparently had only heard this about the time that Sir Evelyn Baring telegraphed for a British officer to be sent. The Cabinet approved the action taken by the Committee at the War Office. It appears from despatches laid before Parliament that the alteration by Colonel Gordon of his journey from one to Suakim to one to Cairo was approved by the Cabinet under circumstances which Colonel Gordon's telegrams described; also that when Colonel Gordon saw Sir Evelyn Baring at Cairo, they revived the proposal of the latter for sending an officer—that is, Colonel Gordon himself—to Khartoum to personally conduct the evacuation.

"The trivialities of the story as it concerns myself are as absolutely incorrect as the main serious suggestion. Of several visits which at various times I paid to Waddesdon, the nearest to the date of the 18th January was one which occurred on the 22nd June; and as quadrilles are mentioned, I may perhaps be allowed to add that I was not aware that any took place at Waddesdon, and I, certainly, never witnessed one there."