

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

LIII.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

WHEN we consider the succession of amendments and improvements in Parliamentary procedure that has marked the course of the last twenty years, it is reasonable to expect the factory at Westminster to at least double its output of legislation. There are in the present House some (surprisingly few) members who can recall the good old times when the House, commencing public business at half-past four, thought Ministers fortunate if the first order of the day were reached before seven o'clock.

In those halcyon days members putting a question delighted themselves, their wives and daughters in the gallery, by reading aloud its every word. The Irish members, quick to see innocent-looking openings for obstruction, seized upon what was ironically called "the question hour." They put down innumerable questions of prodigious length with as much sting directed against the Saxon — particularly Mr. Forster and Mr. George Trevelyan, successively Irish Secretaries—as the vigilance of the clerks at the table permitted.

This went on for years, the House being relieved of the incubus by the intervention of Mr. Joseph Cowen, then member for Newcastle. He pointed out that the questions being printed on a paper held in every member's hand there was no necessity for reading the text, and suggested that citation of the number would suffice. The Speaker assented, and thus by an unpremeditated stroke the House was relieved from an intolerable burden. If there is room for more statues in the precincts of the House of Commons, or for a fresh stained-glass window in the Octagon Hall, a grateful Legislature should not forget "Joe" Cowen.

There was another outrage on the question hour that long survived this radical reform. The fact that there were only ninety or a hundred printed questions on the paper did not, up to a period not more distant than the coming of Mr. Gully to the Chair, indicate the precise amount of time that would be appropriated for the service. When a printed question had been replied to, up got the gentleman

responsible for it or some other member, and repeating the formula, "Arising out of that answer," another question was put. Members opposite, above or below the gangway, thinly veiling a controversial point in the garb of a question, followed, and quite a sharp debate lasting over several minutes sprang up.

Mr. Sexton excelled all others in this art. On an average a question on the printed list standing in his name was the prelude to five others, each "arising out of the answer just given." Not the least valuable of the services rendered by Mr. Gully during his occupancy of the Chair has been stern repression of this irregularity. The Orders, or rather the custom of the House, make it permissible that a Minister having replied to a question on the paper a member may without notice put a further question designed to elucidate a point left obscure.

He may not at the moment start on a new tack. Under Mr. Gully's alert supervision it is amazing to find how little a Minister leaves unanswered of questions set forth on the paper.

The deliberate and noisy prolongation of questions was only one of the opportunities for obstruction the question hour invited mutinous members to avail themselves of. The license of supplementary



A PARLIAMENTARY BENEFACTOR — MR. JOSEPH COWEN.

MOVING
THE
ADJOURN-
MENT.

questions frequently worked the House into an uncontrollable storm of passion. In the midst of it would be heard a voice exclaiming, "I move that this House do now adjourn." The member who spoke, however personally obscure, was by the utterance of this incantation master of the whole Parliamentary proceedings. The business of the day, whatever it might be, of whatever range of Imperial importance, was peremptorily set aside, and on this formal motion the flood of angry temper rushed forth uncontrolled, occupying as much of the sitting as physical endurance made possible.

A little more than nineteen years ago this month there was a scene in the House of Commons that illustrates the working of what were ironically called its rules. Mr. O'Donnell had a question on the paper making a violent personal attack on M. Challemel-Lacour, just appointed French Ambassador at the Court of St. James. Sir Charles Dilke, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the time, made due answer. Whereupon Mr. O'Donnell rose and began to make a speech enlarging on the indictment set forth on his printed question.

That such a course of procedure was permissible will appear incredible to members of the present House of Commons. Mr. O'Donnell, as usual when combating authority in the House of Commons, knew what he was about. Attempts being made to stop him, he quietly replied, "I will conclude by a motion," meaning that he would move the adjournment of the House.

Gulliver bound by the manifold threads of the pigmies of Lilliput was not more helpless than was the Imperial House of Commons in the hands of the member for Dungarvan. Mr. Gladstone, distraught, took the extreme course of moving that Mr. O'Donnell be not heard. That was a bold last card for the Premier to play. Mr. Parnell easily trumped it. Mr. O'Donnell had moved the adjournment of the House. Mr. Parnell now moved the alternative obstructive motion—the adjournment of the debate. For eight hours by Westminster clock the angry storm of

words waged. At one o'clock in the morning Mr. O'Donnell retired triumphant from the scene, and the wearied House, with nice assumption of nothing having happened in the interval, proceeded with the list of questions.

Gentlemen of England, who live at ease in the House of Commons in these last days of the century, beginning questions at half-past three, with the certainty that the Orders of the Day will be reached before half-past four, and that all will be over by midnight, find a difficulty in believing that, less than twenty years ago, such things might be. They were, and it took considerable repetition and increased aggravation before the House of Commons shook itself free from the chains that bound it.

Another, a less dramatic, but, by **BALLOTING.** its regular recurrence, not less effective, block to the advance of

business was the older manner of giving notices of motion. Every Tuesday evening, when the long labour of questions had been lifted from the shoulders of the House, the clerk at the table unlocked a box containing a pile of slips of paper carefully wrapped up. These were notices of motion, and the receptacle



THE O'DONNELL TERROR.

was the ballot-box. In full view of the watchful House the clerk, dipping the outstretched fingers of both hands into the mass, lifted them up and stirred them about as if he were publicly making a plum-pudding. This was designed to avoid suspicion of favouritism. Selecting at random one of the folded pieces of paper, he opened it and read aloud the number. The Speaker, referring to a long catalogue, called the name of the member to which the number was attached. Thereupon the member rose and recited the terms of a resolution he proposed to submit or the name of a Bill he desired to introduce.

On the first night of the Session four Tuesdays may be balloted for. It being the rule that a day for private members' motions may be secured only a month ahead, it follows that the weekly ballot thereafter opened only one opportunity—"this day four weeks." Nevertheless, the whole box of tricks was gone



MAKING A PUDDING.

through. Every folded paper was opened, the number called out by the clerk at the table, and the corresponding name on the list cited by the Speaker. Then would the stranger in the gallery be mystified by observing member after member, his name cried from the Chair, respond by mutely raising his hat. The prize of that day four weeks had been snatched by another hand. Nothing remained. The succeeding proceedings were a mere formula, an absolute waste of presumably precious time. Nevertheless the box had always been scrupulously emptied, the list gone through to the bitter and far-off end. So year after year, in entirely altered circumstances, with the *fin-de-siècle* device of syndicates in full practice "nobbling" the ballot, the old order of things prevailed. Just as a flock of sheep observing the leader jump over an imaginary obstacle jump at precisely the same spot, so the House of Commons, the highest development of British intelligence, carried on this ludicrous game.

Only a few Sessions ago the Speaker introduced the practice of inquiring as soon as the available Tuesday was appropriated whether any other members have motions to bring forward. Of course they have not. The box is shut up, the list laid down, and the business of the day proceeded with.

Once the hand of Parliament is put to the plough of reform of procedure it makes a deep, long furrow. Another tradition which long dominated the House of Commons was that private members should on the opening day publicly announce their

legislative intentions. This was called giving notice of motions. It was all very well in the days when the number was limited to a dozen or at most a score. In these days, with special wires to provincial newspaper offices, and with London correspondents on the lookout for the doings of local members, the situation is changed. Much as people coming to town for the season leave cards on a circle of friends advertising their arrival, so modern members of Parliament let their constituents know they are at their post by the costless contrivance of giving notice of motion on the opening day of the Session.

In recent times the average aggregate number exceeded two hundred. The business was carried on by the process described of the ballot-box and the list in the Speaker's hand. An hour, sometimes an hour and a half, of the freshest day of the Session was occupied with a performance that had no recommendation save its cheap advertising. Now the balloting is done by the clerks in a Committee Room upstairs, and a working hour of the Session is saved.

There remains an obvious con-
BRINGING sequential reform, whose accom-
IN BILLS. plishment cannot be long delayed.

Private members having had a field-day on the first night of the Session, had another performance all to themselves on the second day. This is called "Bringing in Bills"—a tiresome, objectless performance that might be dispensed with without injuring the foundations of the State. The Speaker, reading from his list, recites the name of a Bill, and asks, "Who is prepared to bring in this Bill?" Up rises a private member, and reads a list of names, modestly concluding with the not least important "And Myself." When the list has been gone through in monotonous fashion, the members in charge of Bills crowd the Bar, are called up one by one by the Speaker, and hand to the clerk at the table what purports to be their Bill. The proceeding is fraudulent, as well as foolish. The document is no Bill at all, merely a sheet of foolscap folded over and indorsed with a title.

This Session seventy-one Bills were brought in. Seventy-one times the Speaker asked, "Who is prepared to bring in this Bill?" Seventy-one lists of members were recited by as many members, concluding, with varying inflexions of modesty, "and Myself." Seventy-one members crowded at the Bar. Seventy-one names were called out by the Speaker. Seventy-one members marched up

to the table blushing with consciousness of the sham document carried in their hands. Seventy-one times the clerk at the table to whom the fraud was furtively handed read its title; seventy-one times the Speaker inquired, "What day for the second reading?" Three score and eleven fixtures were made.

It is not worth the trouble of looking up how many were kept. If when next month the prorogation take place it appear that the odd eleven Bills have been added to the Statute Book, private members may boast a record Session.

The death of Sir John Mowbray SIR JOHN removes from the House of MOWBRAY. Commons almost the last, certainly the best known, of an old type. In the present assembly its honoured Father was the only relic of the Parliament elected in 1852. He was first returned for Durham in 1853, and sat continuously through eleven Parliaments. For forty years he bore the honoured rank of Privy Councillor. He held modest office under three Administrations. Lord Derby called him to the Treasury Bench first in 1858, renewing the invitation in 1866. When, in 1868, Mr. Disraeli was Premier he promptly availed himself of the opportunity of associating with his Ministry so fine a type of the English gentleman. For nearly a quarter of a century Sir John acted as chairman of the Committee on Standing Orders and of the Committee of Selection.

He lived in and for the House of Commons, serene in the surety that he had not a single enemy. A party man in the sense that he always spoke and voted with the Conservatives, he looked with generous eye on the political vagaries of others. At a time when, owing to their violence in the House of Commons and suspicion of complicity in crime in Ireland, Irish members of the House of Commons were regarded as pariahs, Sir John Mowbray preserved his personal relations with such among them as he had known in quieter times. He was not a persistent contributor to debate. When he rose he was listened to with the respect his high character and far-reaching personal associations with public men and historic epochs commanded.

He had seen much and, happily, had preserved clear impressions. Only last year he gave me a vivid account of the coronation of William IV. He was at the time a Westminster boy, and availed himself of the ancient privilege of the school to take his place in the Abbey, just above the benches allotted to peers on the occasion of the coronation. He saw Queen Victoria riding in State to be crowned in the Abbey. He was at this time at Oxford. When the Queen married, the youth at Oxford drew up a loyal address. Young Mowbray had the good luck to be included in the deputation that proceeded to London to present it. He told me he did not remember very much about the Queen, his attention being concentrated on the figure of the Duke of Wellington standing in close attention on his youthful Sovereign.

"You know," he said, "I was born just before the Battle of Waterloo, and felt I had a sort of connection with the Duke."

Having long passed "VERY the age of fourscore COLD." the end could not be far off. It was

undoubtedly hastened by his insistence upon attending to his Parliamentary duties. A rumour was current that he meant to retire from Parliamentary life. He would show everyone that there was no foundation for such gossip. So he came up one bleak spring afternoon, took his familiar seat above the gangway, chatted with friends in the lobby, and went off to have a cup of tea. A very old friend who sat at the table with him told me he after a while withdrew in alarm. The old man was in such a state of nervous excitement, talked so rapidly, coughed so ominously, he thought he would be better left to himself. A very short time after Sir John sank back shivering in his chair.

"I am very cold," he said to another friend, a famous doctor, who approached him with shy endeavour not to look professional.

It seemed he would die in the House in which he had lived so long. But they managed to get him to his own home, where soon the cold of which he had complained deepened into the chillness of death. Sir John Mow-



"BORN JUST BEFORE WATER-
LOO"—THE LATE SIR JOHN
MOWBRAY.

bray was not a great statesman, nor will his name shine forth from Parliamentary annals as that of an orator or as a debater. But he was the kind of men who form the backbone of the House of Commons, who have built up and who, whilst they are with us, maintain its unique reputation.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS' AIR. The lot of the gentleman who has charge of the ventilation apparatus in the House of Commons is, like the policeman's, not a happy one. The machinery at his disposal is the most elaborate, and—having had longer continuous experience than the majority of members—I venture to say, is the most successful in the world. There is nothing about which two or three people gathered together more sharply differ than on the point of temperature. What is one man's freezing point is another man's approach to suffocation. In cold weather there are always elderly members sending imperative injunctions to have the temperature raised, followed in a quarter of an hour by angry protests from younger men that they can scarcely breathe in so heated an atmosphere. In summer time a window, whether open or shut, is equally a *casus belli*. The best thing the engineer can do is to go his own way, unmindful of private protests on one side or the other.

If any member wants to realize how great is the blessing of the ventilation machinery of the House of Commons, he should go over to "another place" on one of the rare occasions when it is crowded in view of debate on topics relating either to rent or religion. The elaborate contrivance that supplies the House of Commons with fresh air does not extend to the House of Lords. That gilded chamber is dependent, like ordinary halls, upon the manipulation of the windows. After a few hours' occupation by anything approaching a crowd, the atmosphere becomes distinctly stuffy. No matter how long or how late or how crowded the

House of Commons may sit, the atmosphere suffers scarcely perceptible change. Ever fresh draughts of air, drawn in from the surface of the salubrious Thames, purified by passage through thick layers of cotton-wool, iced in summer, warmed in winter, are driven up through the open ironwork of the floor, circulated through the chamber, steadily passing out by apertures in the roof.

In the good old days of all-night sittings I have left the House for a hasty bath and breakfast, and coming back in the brightness of early morning have found the atmosphere of the otherwise worn-out House as fresh as it was when the long sitting opened.

PROPOSED ANNUAL RETURN. Lord Peel tells me a curious circumstance garnered from his experience when Speaker. It was found that whenever discussion became heated the thermometer which

guides the engineer in his adjustment of the temperature invariably went up, falling as soon as order was restored.

At the end of each Session returns are ordered, showing among miscellaneous matters how many days the House has sat, the duration of sittings, the number of divisions,

the number of times the closure has been moved, and the proportion of acceptance by the Speaker or the Chairman of Ways and Means. Here is suggestion of a new and significant inquiry. A table marking the maximum temperature of the House from day to day, with foot-notes showing the subjects under discussion, would be most useful to the student and historian of Parliamentary manners.

It would be interesting to know (1) what was the temperature in the House on the 27th of July, 1893, five minutes before the cry of "Judas!" smote the ear of Mr. Chamberlain as he stood at the table, genially comparing Mr. Gladstone to King Herod at the moment preceding the awful fate following on a reign of unrelieved wickedness; (2) the temperature marked ten minutes later



"A HASTY BATH."

when Mr. Hayes Fisher seized Mr. Logan by the back of the neck and thrust him forth from the Front Opposition Bench.

Early in the Session a private RESURGAM. measure, The General Power

Distributing Company Bill, was disposed of by the euphuism of a resolution declaring that it be "read a second time upon this day six months." That is the delicate manner in which the House of Commons, dissembling its love, kicks Bills downstairs. The idea is that on the appointed date the House will be in recess. The Bill confidently coming up to be read a second time finds the lights are fled, the garlands dead, and all but he departed.

As the Session advances nearer to its close accident is averted by reducing the interval, obnoxious Bills being appointed to be read a second time "on this day three months."

In the good old days, before the introduction of the saving ordinance whereby Supply automatically closes so that the prerogative inevitably takes place in the first fortnight of August, there was always opening for accident. In this particular case it was on the 3rd of March the House resolved to read the Bill a second time. That would bring it up again on the 3rd of September. In the storm and stress of Mr. Gladstone's prime it was by no means impossible to find the Session prolonged into the first week in September.

LORD DENMAN'S LITTLE SURPRISE. There is a case wherein the unexpected happened. Among his active legislative habits the late Lord Denman took charge of a Woman's Suffrage Bill. At the beginning of every Session he brought it in, and noble lords, not to be outdone

in the matter of regularity, every Session threw it out. One year it happened that the accustomed fate befell his pet measure in the third week of February. In the fewest possible minutes the House resolved that the Bill should "be read a second time on this day six months." Lord Denman, like a well-known rabbit, lay low and said nuffin. The Session proved a busy one. Both Houses were sitting in the third week of August. One night Lord Denman rose, and blandly reminding their lordships of the date, claimed the privilege of having his Bill read a second time as ordered.

As a rule the House of Lords had Lord Denman at their feet, hustling about the poor pathetic figure as if it were a football. Now he had the House of Lords between finger and thumb. By some hocus-pocus of distinction between calendar months and

lunar months the House wriggled out of the difficulty. Lord Denman carried his grey hairs in sorrow down to the grave with the pained certainty that he had been cheated out of the reward of a rare opportunity.



"LAY LOW AND SAID NUFFIN."—THE LATE LORD DENMAN.

A BACK VIEW. Charming thing said by one of Her Majesty's Ministers about a nominal supporter of the Government whose general bearing does not endear him to mankind. A tender-hearted colleague was trying to make the best of a bad job.

"He means well," he said, "but is perhaps a little soured by disappointment. He may, you know, from his point of view be acting for the best. Anyhow, let us take the most favourable view of him possible under all circumstances."

"Very well," said the right honourable gentleman, with unwonted grimness. "Let us see his back."

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

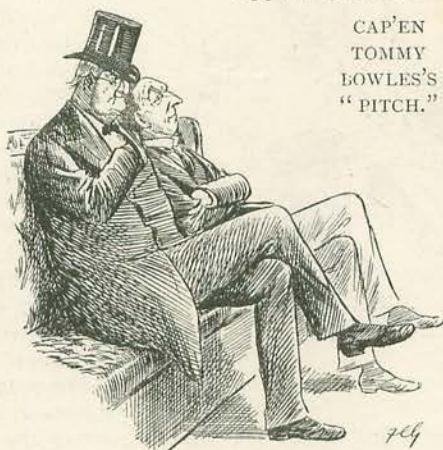
LIV.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

SEVEN years ago this month Mr. Gladstone formed his fourth and last Administration. Looking down the catalogue, it is startling to find how few then mustered are in the line of battle to-day. Mr. Gladstone is dead, so are his Lord Chancellor, Lord Herschell; his President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Mundella; his Second Whip, Mr. Ellis; and his Master of Horse, Lord Oxenbridge. Of the rest, his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Rosebery, has retired from official connection with the Party. So have his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir William Harcourt, and his Chief Secretary for Ireland, Mr. Morley. His Secretary for Scotland, Sir George Trevelyan, has gone back to his first love, Literature. His Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Acland, has retired owing to ill-health. His Postmaster-General, Mr. Arnold Morley, has long been out of Parliament; whilst his First Commissioner of Works, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre; his Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mr. Hibbert; his Parliamentary Secretary for India, Mr. George Russell; his Vice-Chamberlain, Mr. "Bobbie" Spencer; and his Controller of the Household, Mr. Leveson-Gower, are also shelved owing to lack of appreciation on the part of the constituencies.

His President of the Board of Agriculture, Mr. Herbert Gardner, is sunk in the obscurity of the House of Lords, where he has been joined by the Chief Whip of the new Parliament of 1892, Mr. Marjoribanks. His

Under-Secretary for War, Lord Sandhurst, is Governor of Bombay. His Attorney-General, Sir Charles Russell, is Lord Chief Justice of England. His Solicitor-General, Mr. Rigby, is also wrapped in the dignity of the ermine. His Lord Chancellor of Ireland, Mr. Walker, is Lord Justice of Appeal. All this in seven short years.



"IN THE CORNER."

CAP'EN
TOMMY
BOWLES'S
"PITCH."

The game which used to be played round the seat of Mr. Gibson Bowles had its serious effect in drawing from the Speaker judgment on a nice question. The member for Kings Lynn, with characteristic discernment, early in his Parliamentary career secured the corner seat on the bench immediately behind that on which Ministers sit. It has many advantages, being central, easy of

access, and conveniently contiguous to Her Majesty's Ministers, who are able to benefit by prompt communication of any counsels that may occur to Mr. Bowles at crises of debate.

The coign of vantage was, to begin with, secured in the ordinary fashion by early arrival and attendance at prayers. After a while Mr. Bowles grew slack in these observances. In other cases where eminent men have appropriated particular seats it is the custom to regard them as sacred. Mr. Courtney, for example, has a corner seat below the gangway, and if by chance he were absent from prayers, and so lose his legal claim to the place, he would doubtless on arriving find it reserved for him. It is



MR. TOMMY BOWLES—HIS CORNER SEAT.

one of the penalties of greatness that it excites jealousy. Envious eyes were cast upon Mr. Bowles's seat. One day, arriving at question time, he was pained and shocked to find Mr. Gedge installed in his place, holding it by the invulnerable right of a ticket with his name on it stuck in the receptacle at the back.



MR. GEDGE IN POSSESSION.

MR. GEDGE'S STRATEGY.

Mr. Gedge, when he is not looking after the bishops, or keeping the Prime Minister straight on constitutional points, is the guardian of ancient customs pertaining to the appropriation of seats on the floor of the House. His detection of the manœuvre whereby the corner seat and the one next to it on the Front Bench below the gangway on the Opposition side were invariably secured by Mr. Labouchere and Sir Charles Dilke is a matter of history. Long suspecting unlawful procedure, and failing to detect the criminal from his accustomed seat above the gangway, Mr. Gedge one day, with something more than usual of his air of innocence, strolled across the gangway, and during prayer time bowed his head in reverential attitude immediately opposite the right hon. but unsuspecting baronet who represents the Forest of Dean.

To the casual observer, Mr. Gedge's vision of earthly things was abso-
'tely obstructed by his

hands laid open upon his face. Actually he was peeping between his parted fingers, and distinctly saw Sir Charles Dilke slip a card into the receptacle at the back of the corner seat. Divine service over, and the congregation dispersed, Mr. Gedge, crossing the aisle, read the name of Mr. Labouchere on the card he had seen manipulated by Sir Charles Dilke.

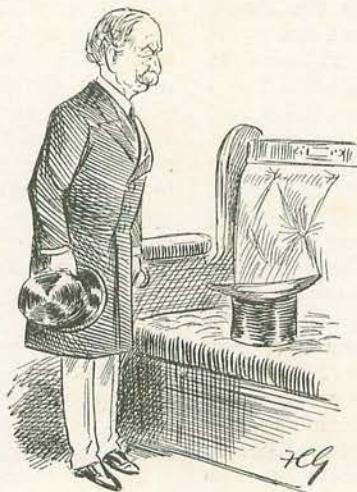
The murder was out. He, a constant worshipper, had never seen Mr. Labouchere on his knees. Unless he were present at prayers he could not secure this particular seat. Yet night after night he held it, and this was how it was done!

Later in the day Mr. Gedge unmasked the conspirators, and the Speaker, trying to look grave, administered rebuke. But to this day Mr. Labouchere regularly secures the corner seat below the gangway, and the Chaplain does not recollect being supported with his presence during prayers.

THE SIEGE OF THE CORNER SEAT.

Mr. Gedge's incursion on Mr. Bowles's territory led to a succession of scenes, watched with boyish delight by the House. On the day after the first incursion, Mr. Bowles came down in good time for prayers, resolved that nothing in the way of regularity should be lacking. Marching up to his place to deposit his hat, a preliminary process to obtaining the ticket that completes a claim, he found a hat already in possession. Robinson Crusoe coming on a man's footstep in what he had regarded as a desert island was not more startled. From a certain indefinable air of truculence combined with implacable respectability, he recognised the headgear as Mr. Gedge's.

Mr. Bowles is not easily beaten. The next day he went down before luncheon, marked the seat as his own by placing his hat on it, and enjoyed full possession throughout the evening sitting. Then followed a series of marching and counter-marching, accompanied by varied results. The member for Walsall had the advantage of living close by, and being an early riser, Mr. Bowles, reaching the House as early as six o'clock in the morning, elate with the certainty of triumph, was confronted with the silent sardonic regard of Mr. Gedge's hat.



TOUJOURS GEDGE.

It was at this stage of the campaign the Speaker's attention was called to the matter. He was asked to give a ruling on the point whether it is lawful for a member, having pegged out a claim to a particular seat by depositing his hat, straightway to depart about his business in the City or at the West-end, a strategy made possible by the possession of a second hat. The Speaker, having taken thought and consulted the authorities, gave judgment in the negative. A member, he said, having claimed a seat in the usual manner, must remain within the precincts of the House till his right be fully established by possession of the ticket.

Twenty-one years ago the com-
MR. DILL- petition for seats led to a striking
WYN'S scene. Mr. Dillwyn, long time
SEAT. member for Swansea, was the
regular occupant of the corner
seat below the gangway, now filled by Mr. Labouchere. He held it undisturbed till Mr. Roebuck was returned for Sheffield at a by-election. The old gentleman, presuming on his years and fame, coming down to the House at whatever hour suited his convenience, dislodged Mr. Dillwyn.

This genial custom was suffered for some time. But the worm will turn at last, and one day Mr. Dillwyn did. The situation is described in the following letter here published for the first time. I take it from a copy in the neat handwriting of Mr. Dillwyn which he gave me at the time. It bears date House of Commons, May 23rd, 1878, and commences:—

"MY DEAR MR. ROEBUCK,—Some time ago I mentioned to you that, although I wished to accommodate you by giving up to you the seat which I usually occupy in the House when you come here, I would ask you to let me know when you intended to come, as otherwise I am left without a place, and as I take rather an active part in the business of the House, this often occasions me considerable inconvenience. I understood you to assent to the reasonableness of this request, and upon one occasion you did so inform me. Of late, however, you have not done so, and, consequently, I have several times during recent debates been without a place, although I had secured my usual one, as I did not like to prevent you from occupying it. Under these circumstances I hope you will excuse me if I consider the arrangement at an end, and that I shall decline to give you up my usual seat should I have secured it. I may say that several members who sit on the Opposition side of the House

do not like to hear speeches directed against the Opposition, and in praise of the Government, such as you almost invariably make, emanating from their own side of the House, and they are surprised that you should like to make them from that side and that I should make way for you on it. Very many representations to this effect have been made to me since your speech this evening, and I cannot say that I am surprised at it. Wishing to act with courtesy with you, I think it right to inform you before you come next to the House that I shall in future decline to vacate for you any place which I may have secured.—Believe me,

"Yours truly,

"L. L. DILLWYN."

Before a week had sped after the dispatch of this letter crisis came. During question time, when the House was densely crowded, Mr. Roebuck entered, dragging his leaden footsteps in the direction of the corner seat. His habit was to stand there till Mr. Dillwyn either rose and left or moved lower down the bench. Now, as he stood and waited, Mr. Dillwyn steadily stared at the Treasury Bench, ignoring his presence. Not a word passed. The House paused, watching the scene. Finding the member for Swansea immovable, Mr. Roebuck crossed over to the Conservative side, half-a-dozen members, amid wild cheering, springing up to give him a seat within the Government fold.

Sir William Hart-Dyke is at least
AN ODD free from the charge of intentional
FISH. humour. He trotted his bull out
caparisoned in almost funereal
trappings. Debate sprang up upon a motion, made by Mr. James Lowther, charging the Lord Chancellor with breach of privilege, inasmuch as he had presided at a meeting summoned to select a Unionist candidate to represent Oxford University in place of the ever-lamented Sir John Mowbray. Sir William argued that such conduct on the part of a peer became actionable only if the interference took place after a writ had been issued. At the same time he was willing to concede to Mr. Lowther that he had for his purposes been fortunate in finding an offender in a person so highly placed as the Lord Chancellor.

"I admit," he said, "that the right honourable gentleman has undoubtedly gone up to the top of the tree and caught a very big fish."

I remember, during the debates
STOCK on foreign policy in the days of
BULLS. the Jingo excitement that bubbled
round Lord Beaconsfield, hear-



MR. HART-DYKE'S BULL: "CATCHING A BIG FISH ON THE TOP OF A TREE."

ing Mr. Alderman Cotton exclaim, "And this, Mr. Speaker, may be the one spark that will let slip the dogs of war!"

Mr. Shaw, during the time he was Leader of the Home Rule Party, was called upon to defend himself for having desecrated the Sabbath by appearing at a public meeting in Cork to discuss the Land Question. "If," he said, accepting the challenge, "an ox or an ass fall into the pit on the Sabbath day, we have the highest authority for the effort to take him out. Our brother is in the pit to-day, the farmer and the landlord are both in it, and I was at Cork last Sunday engaged in the effort to try to lift them out." Which was the ox and which the ass was information Mr. Shaw withheld from a laughing House.

It was Mr. O'Connor Power, one of the most finished speakers Ireland sent to the House of Commons in Mr. Parnell's time, who shrewdly 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."

A NEW
DINNER
DISH.

A striking success on somewhat different lines was obtained this Session by Mr. Kilbride. It was during the discussion on the second reading of the Food and Drugs Bill. Question arose as to how far the use of margarine might be safely encouraged. Mr. Kilbride startled the House, and after a moment's consideration sent it into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, by announcing that

margarine is "chiefly used for cooking porpoises."

That is how the humble familiar word "purposes" sounds when enunciated in fine rotund Galway accent.

Only Scotland could equal that. To the Parliament of 1874 was returned a gentleman named Smollett, who, though of Scotch blood and residence, represented Cambridge. He was, as he made a point of reminding the public in the pages of *Dod* and elsewhere, "the great-grand-nephew of the celebrated historian and novelist." Not gifted in either direction himself, Mr. Smollett endeavoured to keep his great-uncle's memory green by introducing into the House of Commons something of the manner of a surgeon's mate of the last century. He distinguished himself in the early days of the first Session of Parliament by a coarse attack on Mr. Gladstone, whom he accused in the matter of the recent dissolution of "concocting a pious fraud," of being "guilty of sharp practice more likely to have come from an attorney's office than from a Cabinet of English gentlemen."

This brought Mr. Gladstone up in a towering rage. He bestowed upon the new member a memorable castigation which, by the way, led to the birth of something of the bull pedigree. Amongst other genialities Mr. Smollett called Mr. Gladstone a "trickster." "Let the hon. member," the angry statesman thundered, "rise in his place and say whether he holds to the utterance of the word 'trickster.'"

Mr. Gladstone paused. All eyes were turned to Mr. Smollett seated above the gangway behind Ministers. After a moment's hesitation, he jumped up and hotly said: "I shall not rise again from my seat."

It was on a later occasion Mr. Smollett forestalled Mr. Kilbride by mystifying the House with broad pronunciation of an innocent word. It happened in debate on an Indian topic, through which Mr. Smollett strode, whacking his flail on both sides. In the course of his boisterous harangue, Sir George Balfour, sitting in his accustomed place above the gangway, ventured to interpolate a meek but critical "Hear! hear!" Smollett turned upon him with the ferocity of a tiger disturbed in its native jungle. "The hon. member cheers," he said, "and I will admit to the fool—"

The few members present stared at each other in indignant surprise. The Speaker half rose from the Chair: in his present

mood Smollett might be expected to say anything. But publicly to allude to poor old Sir George Balfour as a fool seemed going a little too far.

Smollett, not observing the consternation he had created, concluded his sentence: "I will admit to the fool all that has been said about these unjustifiable annexations."

Then the House discovered that misapprehension had arisen out of the Northerner's pronunciation of the innocent word "full."

A friend old enough to have been in the House of Commons when Lord Palmerston was Prime Minister recalls a scene in which there was delivered a speech at once the shortest and, as far as my memory goes, the bitterest ever uttered. It was in the Session of 1862, and, as happened in those days, Lord Palmerston, seated on the Treasury Bench, had fallen fast asleep. A member speaking from a bench immediately behind Ministers delivered a violent diatribe against the foreign policy of the Government. He was, as nearly as the undeveloped resources of the century permitted, something approaching the Ashmead-Bartlett type. It happened that, contrary to his custom, he had said something that needed answering. A colleague rousing the Premier hastily whispered in his ear.

Palmerston, with the instincts of an old war-horse, instantly rose to join in the fray. In his half-dazed state he had evidently misunderstood the source of the attack. "In reply to the right honourable gentleman opposite," he said, concluding assault had come from the usual quarter.

His colleague hastily whispered correction, but was again misunderstood.

"The hon. member below the gangway," said Palmerston, turning in that direction, "has thought fit to attribute to Her Majesty's Ministers——"

Once more his coat-tails were pulled, and

with audible inquiry, "Eh? What? What?" This time he mastered the name of the assailant of his policy. He turned round, looked his hon. friend full in the face, and bent towards his colleague, saying, "Oh, it was only you, was it?" and then resumed his seat.

We manage things differently now. The Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs is hedged about with a ring fence of prohibition to reply to inconsiderate questions from inconsiderable members. Palmerston's procedure was equally effective and more dramatic. But it needs a Palmerston to carry it off.

Does anyone read Kinglake's PROPHECY. "Eothen" now?

Temptation is provided by a little volume, excellently printed and neatly bound, recently issued at a small price by Messrs. Newnes. Looking over it I find a remarkable forecast of the present state of things in Egypt. In the shortest chapter of the book, containing an eloquent apostrophe of the Sphinx, Kinglake writes: "And we, we shall die, and Islam will wither away; and the Englishman, leaning far over to hold his loved India, will plant a firm foot on the banks of the Nile, and sit in the seats of the Faithful, and still that sleepless rock will be watching, and watching, the works of the new, busy race with those same sad, earnest eyes, and the same tranquil mien everlastingly."

"Eothen" was published in 1844, at which time Mehemet Pasha had, of his strength, forced the Sultan to concede to him the position of hereditary Viceroy. England had not at the time the slightest foothold in the country, nor was there anything visibly working in that direction. But Kinglake had a clear vision of the far-off future, and fitly framed it in this glowing passage.

I read in the newspapers how, preaching in the Abbey on a Sunday afternoon, "Canon Gore told a striking story, which he said had come to his ears within the last



"OH, IT WAS ONLY YOU, WAS IT?"



MR. BRODRICK, UNDER-SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

AN OLD
STORY
RE-TOLD.

few days. A hardened professional pick-pocket found himself within sight of death, and for the first time in his life had leisure to think. During a somewhat protracted illness the reality of the love of God was vividly borne in upon him, and he became, in the deepest sense, converted from darkness to light. He had received the Sacrament, and was *in articulo mortis*, when the priest, who was reading the commendatory prayer by his bedside, heard a hoarse whisper in his ear, 'Look out for your watch.' As the clergyman raised his head, the man lay dead with the watch in his hand. The will, said Canon Gore, was not strong enough to resist the habitual instinctive motions of the body, yet was strong enough to protest against its own act with the voice."

I know that story. It comes from THE STRAND MAGAZINE, and has journeyed many times round the world since, "within the last few days," it struck the Canon's ear. I am subdued by paternal regret on observing how sadly its points have been rubbed off in the journey. "The priest" was the late Mr. Henry White, and it was during his chaplaincy of the House of Commons that the grim incident occurred. Late one winter night a messenger came to his door and besought his attendance at the bedside of a sick man. He obeyed the summons, and was led to a house in a squalid neighbourhood by Waterloo Bridge. Entering a room lit by a tallow candle, he found a man of wasted frame and haggard features lying on a trundle-bed.

Curious to know why he, living some distance off, should be sent for, he questioned the sick man, who told him that he once dropped in at St. Margaret's Church, where Mr. White was preaching. The subject chanced to be the repentance and salvation of the thief on the Cross. The dying man admitted that he had been a

thief from his boyhood, had spent a considerable portion of his still young life in prison. But he was so much touched by the sermon that he had abjured his evil courses, had striven to lead an honest life, had mostly starved, and, feeling he was dying, there came upon him a strong desire to hear again the voice that once so strangely uplifted him.

Mr. White, much affected, prayed by the bedside, then sat and talked with the man. As he grew weaker he leaned over and whispered consoling words. Rising as he heard the death-rattle, he found himself grasped by the watch-chain, his watch in the closed hand of the penitent thief.

The ruling passion, literally, strong in death, propinquity had been irresistible.

HONOUR
TO WHOM
HONOUR
IS DUE.

In a recent number I quoted the following verse, with the explanation that I found it among some old papers and was not able to identify the hand-

writing or the author :—

The head of the Army and Chief of the Fleet
Went out on a visit to Cyprus and Crete.
The natives received them with joyful hurrahs,
Called one of them Neptune, the other one Mars.
They ran up an altar to Stanley forthwith,
And ran up a bookstall to W. H. Smith.

A reader of THE STRAND MAGAZINE in far-off Rio de Janeiro writes: "The poetry is without doubt twin-brother to the verse which appears in Chapter XII. of the new edition of Maxwell's 'Life of W. H. Smith.' It is there attributed to Mr. Bromley-Davenport, M.P."

Sir Herbert Maxwell confirms this reference, but admits that he was in error. The author of the *jeu d'esprit* is Sir Wilfrid Lawson, to whom the House of Commons is indebted for many similar flashes of good-humoured badinage. Sir Herbert tells me he found opportunity to correct the error in the pages of *Notes and Queries*.



"THE HEAD OF THE ARMY AND CHIEF OF
THE FLEET"
MARS: COL. THE HON. A. F. STANLEY.
NEPTUNE: THE LATE W. H. SMITH.