From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

LV.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

THE DISSOLUTION.

THE Angel of Death hovers over the House of Commons. You can almost hear the rustling of its wings. Of course, there is no statutory reason why the present Parliament should be dissolved this year. As far as precedent goes, it might, without reproach, continue its existence through next Session, the General Election taking place at some convenient time after harvest. The Parliament which, for the first time, saw Disraeli in power as well as in office, meeting on the 21st of February, 1874, ran through six years and sixty-seven days. Only twice in the Queen's long reign has that record been beaten. In both cases it was—rare coincidence—exceeded by the same number of days. The Parliament the Queen found at work when she came to the Throne placed Lord Melbourne in power in the year 1835. It sat for six years and 141 days, an accomplishment precisely paralleled by the last Parliament over which Lord Palmerston presided.

The Parliament of 1880-5, the thin-spun thread of its life nipped by what Mr. Chamberlain, before he reached a period of grace, called "The Stop-Gap Government," did not survive for quite six years. The Unionist Parliament of 1886 exceeded that term by fifteen days. On the 1st of July next year the full term of six years' office will have been enjoyed by the present Ministry. If a General Election does not take place till September or October of next year, Lord Salisbury and his colleagues cannot be reproached for unduly lingering on the stage.

A LESSON FROM THE PAST.

But will they play the game so low? The shade of Lord Beaconsfield seems to forbid it. There is little doubt that had he dissolved Parliament immediately after his return from Berlin arm-in-arm with Lord Salisbury, bringing Peace with Honour, he would have obtained a triumphantly renewed lease of power. He hesitated, and was lost. Lulled into false security by the blustering popularity of the hour, the Beaconsfield Ministry held on, to face the fearful rout that befell them in the spring of 1880.

History is, to a marked extent, repeating itself in the cases of Lord Salisbury's Government in the year 1900 and Lord Beaconsfield's in the year 1878. Early in the present Session, Lord Salisbury in one House and Mr. Arthur Balfour in the other will be able to announce a peace not only with honour, but with substantial profit. The hour will seem to have struck when appeal should be made to the nation for a vote of confidence. Apart from the glamour of success of British arms in South Africa, Ministers have no reason to believe that this time next year, or eighteen months hence, they will be in a stronger position than they will find themselves in the early spring. The odds are in favour of their being much worse off. To begin with, two more Sessions will appreciably increase the natural impatience, not to say the loathing, with which after the first year of office the British elector regards the Ministry of the day. Beyond this is the ordinary risk of unforeseen disaster or unpremeditated blunder.

To dissolve Parliament next month means the sacrifice, unnecessary as far as law and custom go, of fully eighteen months' tenure of office. To some cautious Ministers it may seem that, after all, a year in the hand, with salaries paid quarterly, power, patronage, and the patriotic duty performed of keeping out the wicked Liberals, is worth more than six years in the bush. That is exactly the sentiment that fatally prevailed in Lord Beaconsfield's Cabinet after the return from Berlin in 1878.

PILING UP DEBT.

There is a special reason likely to weigh with Ministers in deciding on the problem of the date of Dissolution. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach is not lacking in courage. But he may well shrink from the duty of facing preparation of the Budget for the financial year that closes on the 31st of March. None better than he knows what a millstone the finance of the last four years has fashioned for hapless Chancellors of the Exchequer in the opening years of the new century. What with the relief of the clergy, subvention of Church schools, and large transference to the Imperial Exchequer of rates hitherto chiefly borne by the landlords, the national expenditure has permanently increased by many millions. Added to these drafts on the pocket of the taxpayer are the enormous additions made during the last few years to the expenses of the Army and Navy.

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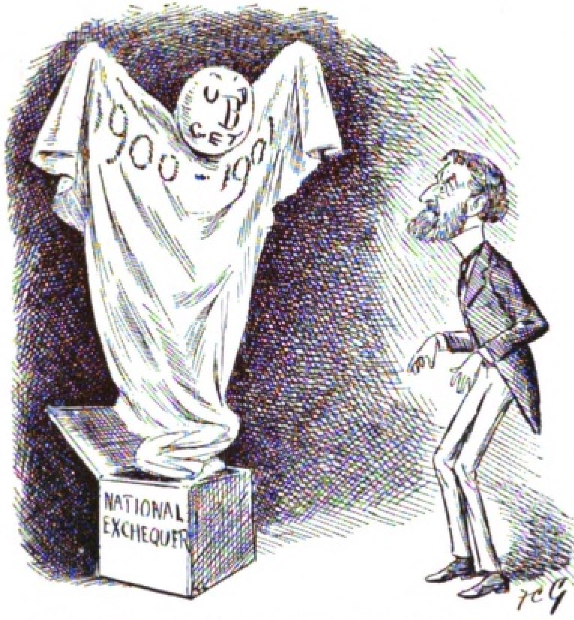


AN UNPLEASANT PROSPECT FOR THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.

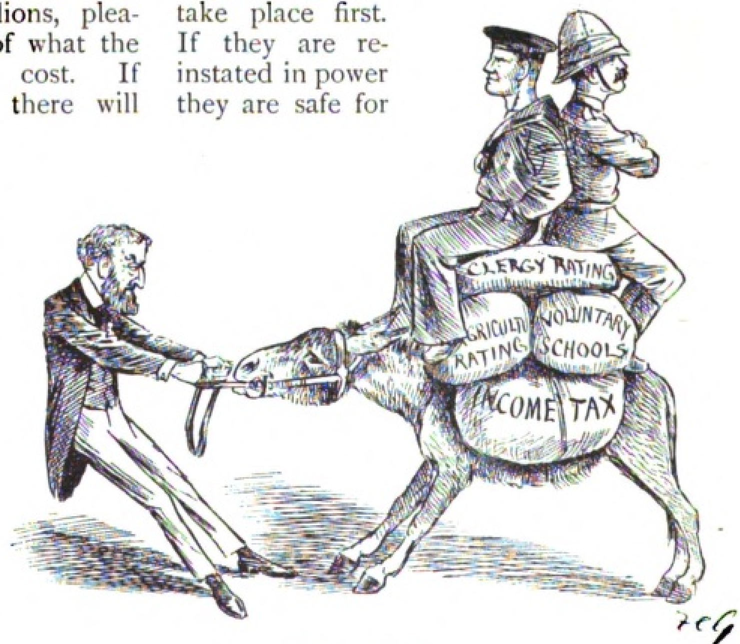
These influences were at work before war broke out in the Transvaal. Already a little bill of ten millions has been accepted on that particular account, seven-tenths of it raised by the alluring device of borrowing on Treasury bills. But, on obtaining the sanction of the House of Commons for this transaction, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was, above all things, insistent that this addition to the floating debt should be regarded as temporary. "I hope," he said, "no one will suggest that this is a case in which war expenditure should be provided for by a permanent addition to the debt of the country." This bill of ten millions, pleasantly rotund, is but a fraction of what the campaign in South Africa will cost. If it turn out to be only one-half, there will be ground for congratulation. The prudent taxpayer will be disposed to contemplate its being trebled. Of course, there will be a war indemnity from the Transvaal. As the Chancellor of the Exchequer put it in the speech already quoted from, "Under a pure and honest Government it will be perfectly possible for the Transvaal, not only to bear the ordinary expenses of government, but to provide a reasonable sum towards the expenses of the war, consistently with a reduction in the taxation of the goldfields."

Supposing this forecast is fully realized we might count the British share of contribution to the war cheque at the ten millions already voted, but not met out of taxation. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is pledged to make such provision in the Budget to be introduced two months hence.

A SHILLING INCOME-TAX.

For the Income-tax payer there was an ominous note in the speech. Sir Michael plainly declared that the existence of an eightpenny Income-tax would not deter him from increasing the impost. "However high the Income-tax may stand," he said, "it will be the duty of the Income-tax payer to take his full share in providing for such additional expenditure in common with the other taxpayers in the country." That plainly means anything from an additional twopence to a supplementary fourpence in the pound.

A shilling Income-tax, in addition to innumerable rates and the pressure of indirect taxation, is nothing when you are used to it. When the Crimean War broke out the Income-tax was simply doubled, being raised at a stroke from sevenpence to one shilling and twopence. In 1855 it was further raised to one shilling and fourpence, and so remained for a couple of years. In Pitt's time Income-tax for a long time stood at two shillings in the pound. All the same, if the most unpopular of taxes, pressing directly on a wide range of electors, must needs be increased at a time when a General Election is imminent, Ministers, being only human, will naturally prefer that the General Election shall take place first. If they are reinstated in power they are safe for



HEAVILY LADEN.

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another five or six years, and need fear no man. If they are beaten, and the Opposition come in, they have the double satisfaction of having a heavy burden removed from their shoulders, and of seeing the triumphant adversary, on the very threshold of his career, hampered by a load of debt, and made unpopular by the necessity of increasing taxation in order to meet applications he, when in Opposition, strenuously fought against.

For this and other reasons indicated it is at least on the cards that the month of March will see a Dissolution sprung on the constituencies.

THE CUCKOO TRICK.

DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS.

The first Session of what some people venture to regard as the new century does not differ from its predecessors in the matter of the Queen's Speech and debate on the Address. It will not be forgotten how narrow was the risk of deprivation of this privilege run by an indifferent Empire. When, last October, Parliament met for the War Session it was with avowed intention of making it the starting-point of the business Session of this year. The brief Queen's Speech then read was to serve all purposes. There would be no second edition when Parliament re-assembled in the new year. Consequently there would be no debate in reply to the gracious communication.

That is a course of procedure for which there are those precedents dear to the heart of the Constitutional member. Quotation of one will suffice to show how the thing works. On the 5th of December, 1878, Parliament was summoned to vote the money needed in connection with the war in Afghanistan. The Queen's Speech, as happened in the War Session of last autumn, dealt exclusively with the one matter in hand. On the 17th of December the sittings were adjourned till the 13th of February, 1879. There being no Queen's Speech, Lord Beaconsfield in one House and Sir Stafford Northcote in the other indicated, as the Premier put it, "the measures which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been recommended to your notice in the Speech from the Throne at the opening of the present Session."

IN DAYS OF YORE.

Sentiment apart, and regarding Parliament as a business assembly, that seems a commendable procedure. It contrasts with a performance well enough at the time it was devised, but something of an anachronism in the altered conditions of the day. Time was, within the present reign, when it was the regular custom of the Sovereign to open Parliament in person. The ceremonial being carried out with the pomp and circumstance pertaining to Royalty, it was proper that Parliament should make attempt to live up to it, at least for the day. Therefore, we had in both Houses members, arrayed in military or naval costume, echoing through a painfully prepared oration the often bald phrases of the most gracious Speech.

That is called moving the Address. In either House the Leader of the Opposition followed, protesting in solemn voice that never since the days of Demosthenes had there been a speech equal in point and polish to those just delivered by the flustered gentlemen in unaccustomed uniforms, painfully conscious of a sword with a tendency to get between their legs if they indulged in freedom of action. The Leader of the House followed, gravely capping the compliment. If the Opposition meant business the Leader would conclude with an amendment to the Address, equivalent to a vote of censure on the Government. At such crises debate might go on for two or even three nights. If the Opposition did not feel themselves strong enough to challenge the existence of the Ministry the Address was usually voted before dinner, the business of the Session commencing at the next sitting.

TO-DAY.

The Irish members changed all that. When, in 1875, they, under the impulse of Mr. Parnell, began to feel their feet, they discovered the rich and rare opportunities for obstruction provided by the antique ceremonial of moving the Address. From the opening of the Session of 1876 began a new era, which has since prevailed, with the result that in these times Ministers think themselves fortunate if not more than the first ten days of

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the freshest period of the Session are appropriated for the delivery of miscellaneous speeches, styled, with grim humour, "debate on the Address."

It was prospect of this opportunity being shut off at the commencement of the new Session that led to the storm before which Mr. Arthur Balfour shrank abashed. To men properly jealous of the privileges of the Mother of Parliaments there was something shocking in the prospect of cutting off Mr. Dillon, Mr. Caldwell, Dr. Clark, Mr. W. Redmond, Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett, and eke Mr. Weir from opportunity of discoursing at length under favour of an amendment to the Address. To tell the truth, the privilege safeguarded, the House does not show itself tumultuously anxious to benefit by its exercise. The statesmen mentioned have grown too familiar with the spectacle of members rising with one accord and hurriedly quitting the House when they take the floor. Nevertheless, the ancient custom, flourishing, as we have seen, under wholly different circumstances, must not be touched by sacrilegious hands.

"MR. ARTHUR BALFOUR SHRANK ABASHED."

WORTH THINKING ABOUT.

Still, something may be whispered in favour of the course following on the Autumn Sessions of 1867 and 1878. If it were, as was wont, the custom of the Sovereign to open Parliament in person, reading the Speech from the Throne, the accessories of the pageant would be well enough. But no one can aver that there is anything dignified or useful in the spectacle of half-a-dozen elderly gentlemen, styled Lords Commissioners, masquerading in scarlet ermine-trimmed gowns, with cocked hats, sitting all in a row on a bench. Nor are the speeches of the uniformed mover and seconder of the Address anything but sheer waste of time. A detailed statement and elucidation of the business programme of the Session, given by the responsible Minister, confronting either House is preferable to the document which sets forth the Queen's Speech, not always in the Queen's English. The statement made, and commented upon from various points of view, the House might, as it did in February, 1879, forthwith get about its appointed work, the development of which through succeeding stages of Bills supplies abundant opportunity for saying all that is really useful to say on the public questions of the day.

SHEPHERD AND SHEEP.

On the eve of the opening of the Session good Conservatives are, with quickened interest, asking each other whether, as heretofore, they shall in party strife receive the valuable assistance of their friend the enemy. As far as numbers count, Liberals in the House of Commons are in a hopeless minority. But because a minority is numerically insignificant it by no means follows that it shall be politically impotent. Proof of this assertion is found in the case of Mr. Parnell, who through successive Sessions, with a following of between sixty and eighty, practically dominated the House of Commons. Another even more striking case is furnished by the Fourth Party. Four strong, counting the desultory mustering of Mr. Arthur Balfour, they were mainly instrumental in transforming into a minority Mr. Gladstone's magnificent majority won at the polls in 1880. But these two factions, great and small, always pulled together, sinking individual prejudices, animosities, and opinions in the common movement.

HISTORIC CABALS.

With Liberals in the House of Commons, whether in power or opposition, similar instinct and habit do not prevail. It was sadly rather than bitterly said by a great Liberal Leader: "When the constituencies have gone the right way, returning the Liberals to power by a commanding majority, the very first thing members composing it set their hands to do is to break it up."

That is a hard saying, but modern history supplies abundant proof of its accuracy. It was the dwellers in the Cave of Adullam, dug on the Liberal side of the House, that wrecked the Reform Bill of 1866. It was the Tea Room Cabal against the Dublin University Bill, led by Mr. Miall, that brought about Mr. Gladstone's defeat and resignation in

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March, 1873. It was desertion and active hostility on the Bradlaugh question that in the first Session of the 1880 Parliament gave a powerful Ministry a shock from which it never recovered. It was the great secession of Liberals on the Home Rule question that hurled Mr. Gladstone from power in 1886, and drove the party into the wilderness where it still forlornly strays. It was the Welsh Radical members who made impossible the Government of Lord Rosebery. It was enemies within the gate who, according to the testimony of Sir William Harcourt, elbowed him out of the leadership of the party when in opposition.

THE CASE OF C.-B.

Doubtless bearing these matters in mind, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, receiving at the Reform Club meeting a unanimous call to the Leadership, in succession to Sir William Harcourt, timidly expressed a hope that, at least upon points of procedure not involving great issues, the party would submit to their leader's judgment. Of course it was not contemplated that on issues affecting great principles a man's conscience should be suborned in the interests of party solidarity. Sir Henry is not Naaman that he should plead for indulgence if from motives of policy he were constrained to bow himself in the House of Rimmon. He simply meant that for the sake of the party itself he should not be habitually subjected, as Sir William Harcourt was, and as was not unknown in the experience of Mr. Gladstone, to having his advice on immaterial matters flouted and his authority lowered in the eyes of the House and the world.

THE ONLY SAFE PLACE (FROM THE MINISTERIAL POINT OF VIEW).

How this appeal prospered the records of the first Session of last year testify. To quote three instances that recur to the mind: On the 1st of May, the Old Age Pension Committee having been selected in the ordinary manner by consultation and agreement between the Whips of the two parties, its nomination was moved from the Treasury Bench. Objection to its constitution was taken by some members of the Opposition Benches, and in two divisions the Leader found himself opposed in the Division Lobby by a section of his following. On the 19th of June Mr. Balfour made the customary motion appropriating for the remainder of the Session Tuesdays and Wednesdays for Government business. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, speaking in his official capacity, unreservedly admitted the reasonableness of the demand. It being opposed from below the gangway to the point of a division, the Leader of the Opposition, amid ironical cheers from the delighted Ministerialists, walked out of the House, a number of his nominal supporters going into the "No" lobby. On the 3rd of July conversation arose on a resolution affecting the settlement of the Niger territory. A Blue-book fully recording the history of the case was at the printers, and issue was promised in a few days. Mr. Balfour made the not unreasonable suggestion that it would be better to postpone discussion till the Blue-book was circulated, when members would be in full possession of the facts. The Leader of the Opposition, a plain business man, having secured a pledge that the papers should be immediately forthcoming, assented. Whereupon his followers below the gangway moved to report progress, insisted upon taking a division, and drove their leader into the Government lobby.

HOW LONG! HOW LONG!

It will be seen from consideration of these modern instances that there was at stake no question of principle or conscience. The mutiny in face of the enemy was due to pure cussedness. To some minds it will appear that the trifling nature of the quarrel adds to the seriousness of the situation. For petty, wilful insubordination no excuse can be found in the conduct of the Captain. Bubbling with good humour, always urbane, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman has upon meet occasion shown that these qualities are not incompatible with fighting force. In varying circumstances he has displayed a born genius for filling a thankless post. He has known when to speak and, more priceless gift, has

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A DIFFICULT MOUNT.

known when to be silent. In accepting the arduous, thankless task of leading a Liberal minority in the House of Commons he, animated by a sense of duty and loyalty, made infinite sacrifice of personal ease and comfort. It is a poor reward to find himself publicly flouted by a section of his nominal followers, however insignificant in numbers or inconsiderable in personal position.

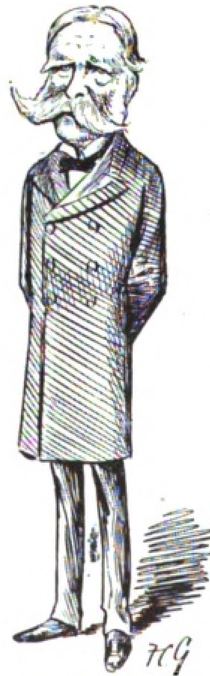
"TAKE CARE OF DOWB." This is a watchword that still lives in political commentary, though it is not so frequently dragged in as it used to be. I wonder how many men of the present generation know its history? I confess I did not till I learned it sitting at the feet of that vivacious chronicler, Sir Algernon West.

Sir Algernon, at that time fresh home from a visit to the Crimea, remembers sitting under the gallery of the House of Commons when Sir de Lacy Evans expounded the riddle to puzzled members. Upon the death of Lord Raglan, General Simpson, second in command, received from Lord Panmure, then War Minister, the following message: "You are appointed Commander-in-Chief in the Crimea. Take care of Dowb." Sir de Lacy Evans, who was with the General when the telegram arrived, gave a racy description of the scene. The staff called in to assist in solving the mystery were utterly at sea. Officers of the Engineers were summoned with unavailing inquiry as to what part of the trenches Dowb might be serving his country in.

At length there flashed upon one of the staff recollection that Lord Panmure had at the seat of war a cousin named Dowbeggin. At this great crisis in the campaign, the Commander-in-Chief dead, a new man selected to succeed him, the cousinly heart of the Minister of War was touched by the opportunity of serving his kinsman. Over land and sea he cabled, at his country's expense: "Take care of Dowbeggin." The economical operator cut the name short after the fourth letter. Thus it came to pass that the nation was enriched with the canny aphorism, "Take care of Dowb."

Lord Panmure must have been a peculiarly stupid man even for the governing class that came to the front at the epoch of the Crimean War. The late Lord Malmesbury had a delightful story about him, current on the authority of that charming lady, Mrs. Norton. When the pathetic remnant of veterans came home from the Crimea on the conclusion of peace the Queen reviewed them. After the ceremony Mrs. Norton asked Lord Panmure: "Was the Queen touched?" "Bless my soul, no!" said the Secretary of State for War, horrified at suggestion of such indiscretion. "She had a brass railing before her, and no one could touch her." "I mean," said Mrs. Norton, hurriedly, "was she moved?" "Moved!" cried Lord Panmure, beginning to think much gadding about had made Mrs. Norton mad. "She had no occasion to move."

Here the conversation terminated.



SIR ALGERNON WEST.

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From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

LVI.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

THE TWELVE O'CLOCK RULE.

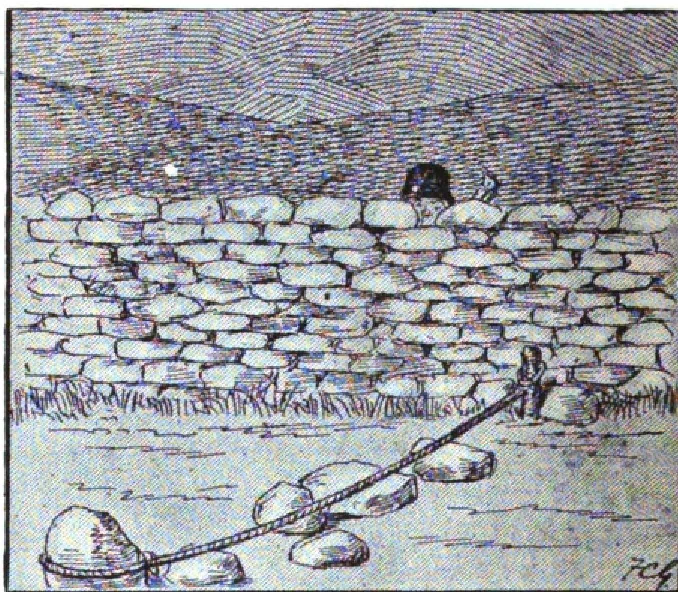
GENTLEMEN of England who sit at ease on the benches of the House of Commons with public business commencing at half-past three and, save on special occasions, shutting up with a snap at midnight, can hardly realize the life of a member before the blessed era of the twelve o'clock rule. In these days, when Ministers under pressure of accumulated work and diminishing time move to suspend the twelve o'clock rule, they are met with loud protests and a division. So rooted is the distaste of modern M.P.'s to sit up after midnight that it frequently happens the abnormal extension of the sitting does not exceed the time occupied by protest against it. That is to say, if members had not insisted on taking a division on the proposal they might, the appointed work completed, have got home at twelve o'clock just as usual. The twelve o'clock rule, like the closure, was avowedly introduced as an experiment. It would be a bold, indeed a doomed, Minister who would propose to abolish either.

VOTING SUPPLY.

Whilst the labour of legislators is lightened by the forms forced upon the House by the disguised blessing of Irish obstruction, the amount of work accomplished is at least equal to that achieved in any average Session under the old *régime*. At the same time, the conditions under which work is accomplished are more favourable to its fashioning. Under the old style, measures brought in by the Government of the day were met by the tactics of the Obstructionist, master of the situation against whatever preponderance of reasoned opinion. The only way to overcome him was by the fuller opportunity of sheer physical endurance provided by the system of relays. When the Obstructionist was worn out, usually at some early hour of the morning, a particular amendment or clause of a Bill passed. In many cases it had not been discussed, members having something useful to say being elbowed aside by the Obstructionists.

Mr. Arthur Balfour is, with lessening vehemence, accused of burking debate because he strictly limits to something over a score the number of nights allotted to discussion in Committee of Supply. Everyone who pays close attention to the business of the House knows that since that rule was established, with its condition of giving one night a week to Committee from the beginning of the Session, Supply is more fully and intelligently discussed than at any earlier period within the memory of the oldest member.

It is true that if at a specified date in August particular Votes have not been passed they are carried without debate by the automatic pressure of the closure. That is very sad. But exactly the same thing came to pass under the clumsier machinery of elder days. What happened then was prolongation of the Session, a House kept by a few score of fagged members, a series of late sittings, and the Votes carried in their integrity after a prolonged squabble.



"IRISH OBSTRUCTION!"

THE LENGTH OF SITTINGS.

It must not be forgotten in considering labour conditions in the House of Commons that, though the House usually adjourns at midnight, it, contrary to Charles Lamb's principle, makes up for it by meeting an hour earlier. Before the twelve o'clock rule

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FAGGED.

was established the Speaker took the Chair at four o'clock in the afternoon. Now he is seated at three. One of the most laborious Sessions of modern times was that of 1881, when Mr. Gladstone, full of great schemes of legislative reform, was met by Irish obstruction, then in its palmiest days. Looking back I find that the average length of the daily sittings in that Session was nine hours and five minutes. Of these, not less than 238 hours and 35 minutes were, in the course of the Session, spent after midnight. I have not at hand information about the average length of the daily sittings last Session. But I should be surprised if they fell far short of the terrible times of nineteen years ago, with the important difference that work was wound up before midnight.

Previous to the Session of 1881, the House sat longest and latest in the quinquennial period, 1831 to 1836. That was the Reform epoch, when Sir Charles Wetherell, father and founder of Parliamentary obstruction as fifty years later practised by Mr. Parnell and Mr. Biggar, was to the fore. The House sat daily on the average for eight hours and forty minutes. After the spurt round the Reform Bill, exhausted nature sought repose, and for the next quinquennial period the average of sittings ran down to six hours and thirty-two minutes. It jumped up again in Corn Law time to a daily average exceeding eight hours, a state of things not paralleled till, after the General Election of 1868, Mr. Gladstone came in with a run. From 1872 to 1876 the average daily sitting was extended to eight hours and four minutes. The time went on increasing till, as we have seen, in 1881 the sittings through 154 days, an exceptionally long Session, exceeded an average of nine hours.

THE HOUR OF MEETING.

What is the best hour for the daily meeting for business has always been a troubled question for the House of Commons. In 1833, the sitting hitherto commencing at four o'clock, a curious and long-forgotten expedient was tried. It was ordered that the House should meet at noon, adjourn at three o'clock, resume its sittings at five, and sit the agenda out. It would seem that human ingenuity could not hit upon a more inconvenient hour. It is true the dinner-hour was much earlier then. But dinner would not be ready in ordinary households between three and five in the afternoon. The arrangement lasted only for two Sessions, the House in 1835 going back to the four o'clock arrangement.

Disraeli did not enter the House till this experiment had been dead for two Sessions. It must have been familiar to him, and was probably the germ of the scheme of morning Sessions invented by him and established in 1867. Here the hours were more sanely selected, the House now, as then, meeting at two o'clock on Tuesdays and Fridays when morning sittings are appointed, the sitting being suspended between seven o'clock and nine. The Wednesday sitting does not date farther back than 1845. Up to that date the sittings on Wednesdays were fixed for the evening, like other days. In that year it was ordered that the House should, on Wednesdays, meet at noon, rising at six.

MR. GLADSTONE'S ORATORICAL GESTURES.

The familiar story of the barrister who acquired a habit of fingering a particular button when he was pleading, and who lost the thread of his discourse when the button was secretly and maliciously cut off, finds no parallel in the House of Commons. But whilst in no case is mannerism of the kind marked to exaggerated extent, several frequent participants in debate have certain tricks of action more or less indispensable to successful speech. Mr. Gladstone's gestures, like his other resources, were infinite. At one time —it was during the fever heat of the turbulent Parliament of 1880–5—he fell into a habit of emphasizing his points either by beating his clenched fist into the open palm of

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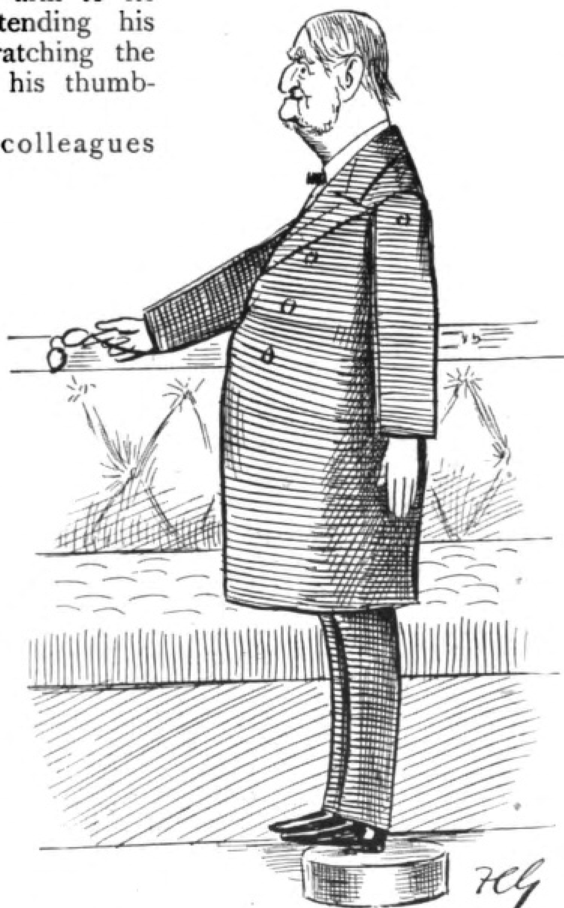
his left hand, or violently thumping the harmless box with open right hand. This last trick was recurrence to an earlier manner observation of which drew from Disraeli an expression of heartfelt thanksgiving that so substantial a piece of furniture as the table of the House of Commons separated him from the right hon. gentleman.

In its fuller development the exercise became so violent it occasionally happened that the very point he desired especially to force on the attention of his audience was lost in the clamour of collision. Mr. Gladstone was, of course, unconscious of this habit, as he was of another trick, manœuvred by stretching his right arm to its full length, rigidly extending his fingers and lightly scratching the top of his head with his thumb-nail.

The Premier's colleagues on the Treasury Bench were so perturbed by the fisticuffing, which frequently gave cause to the enemy to guffaw, that they proposed among themselves that one of them should delicately call his attention to the matter. The proposal was pleasing, but who was to bell the cat? After fruitless discussion of this question in the inner camp, the Dean of Windsor, an old personal friend of Mr. Gladstone's, was meanly approached and induced to undertake the task. I don't know how the mission fared. Its curative effects were certainly not permanent.



AUTOMATIC GESTURES.—I. SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT.

SOME OTHERS.

Sir William Harcourt, while addressing the House of Commons, has a persuasive habit of lightly swinging his eyeglasses suspended from his outstretched forefinger. He also, when occasion arises, thumps the box with mailed fist. When he fires a heavy shot into the opposite camp he revolves swiftly on his heel, looking to right and left of the benches behind him in jubilant response to the cheers that applaud his success. Mr. Arthur Balfour, whose always growing perfection of Parliamentary debate sloughs off tricks of manner, is still sometimes seen holding on to himself with both hands by the lapels of his coat, apparently afraid that otherwise he might run away before his speech was ended. A similar fancy is suggested by Mr. Goschen's trick of feeling himself over, especially in the neighbourhood of the ribs. Finding he is all right (on the spot, so to speak), he proceeds to wash his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water.

Even more apologetic in manner when delivering an excellent speech is Mr. Lecky. If he had chanced to be born, like another Irish member long since departed, without arms or legs, he would be a much more effective debater. As it is there are arms and legs, even of exceptional length, and Mr. Lecky, whilst discoursing on high themes of politics, painfully conscious of their presence, mutely apologizes for their intrusion.

Lord George Hamilton explaining away Chitral campaigns, or other awkward things, with swift action and painful precision rearranges the pages of his MS. notes. Using both hands to move a sheet off the box on to the table, he straightway, with equally anxious care, returns it. Sheets of paper have an irresistible fascination for the Secretary of State for India. Seated on Treasury Bench following the debate, he occupies himself hour after hour in folding sheets of paper into strips, re-folding them lengthwise, and tearing them up in square inches. If his life, or even his office, depended on the mathematical accuracy of the square, he could not devote more time to its achievement.

Sir John Gorst, leaning an elbow on the

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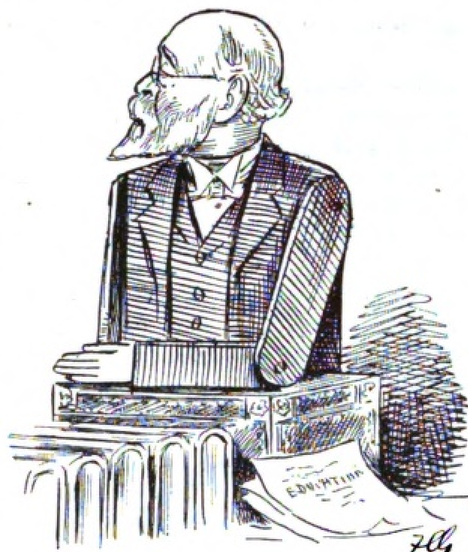
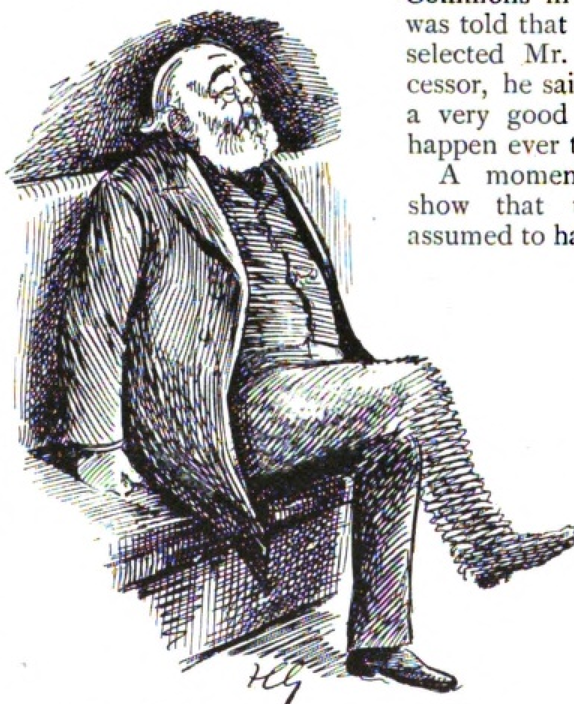
box, turns his head slowly to the left, then to the right, as if he were expecting the entrance upon the scene of the corporate body of that mystic entity the Committee of Council. Lord Rosebery is a more marked offender than Sir John in the matter of the almost fatally ineffective habit of leaning an elbow on the table whilst addressing the House. In the Lords the effect is more disastrous, since neither Ministers nor ex-Ministers have anything corresponding to the historic boxes on the table of the House of Commons. Sir John Gorst, falling into this attitude, has not to stoop lower than the height of the box. Lord Rosebery, lounging at the table of the House of Lords, is fain considerably to stoop, an attitude not attractive in itself or conducive to effective speaking. But then Lord Rosebery's speech, whether in the House of Lords or elsewhere, is so precious and so welcome it does not matter how he chooses to stand in the act of delivery.


AUTOMATIC GESTURES.—II. SIR JOHN GORST.

Lord Salisbury has no gestures when he gets up to speak, but he makes up for the deficiency before he rises. It is easy to know when he intends to take part in a current debate. If he does, his right leg, crossed over his left knee, will be observed jogging at a pace equivalent to ten miles an hour on a level track. The working of this curious piece of machinery seems indispensable to the framing of the exquisitely pungent, perfectly-phrased sentences presently to be spoken without the assistance of written notes.


AUTOMATIC GESTURES.—III. LORD SALISBURY.

THE MYSTERY OF MR. WHALLEY.

Of all the tricks attendant upon speech in Parliament, the late Mr. Whalley, long time member for Peterborough, practised the strangest and the most inexplicable. Whenever he rose to speak, and he was frequently on his legs when the Jesuits or the non-believers in the Tichborne Claimant were to the fore, he thrice tapped with the knuckles of his right hand the bench before him. What this might portend, whether it was in the nature of an incantation or invocation, I cannot say. I can only testify that, during the Parliament that met in 1874 and was dissolved in 1880, Mr. Whalley sat on the second bench behind the Opposition Leader immediately under my box in the Press Gallery. I closely watched for the uncanny movement, and never once saw him rise without the preliminary of this weird signal.

"DON'T HAPPEN TO KNOW HIM."

Sir Algernon West in his Recollections says, "When on the retirement of Mr. Denison from the Speakership of the House of Commons in 1872, Mr. Disraeli was told that Mr. Gladstone had selected Mr. Brand as his successor, he said, 'I daresay he is a very good man, but I don't happen ever to have seen him.'"

A moment's reflection will show that unless Disraeli is assumed to have told a deliberate and purposeless falsehood, this rumour cannot be true. At the time of his election to the Chair, Mr. Brand had held a seat in the House of Commons for twenty years. For nine years, from 1859 to 1868, he was chief Whip of the Liberal Party. Concurrently Mr. Disraeli was in succession Chancellor of the Exchequer, Prime Minister, and Leader of the House. To suppose the Leader of the House of Commons "didn't happen ever to have seen" the Opposition Whip, one of whose duties is to march up to the Table with the

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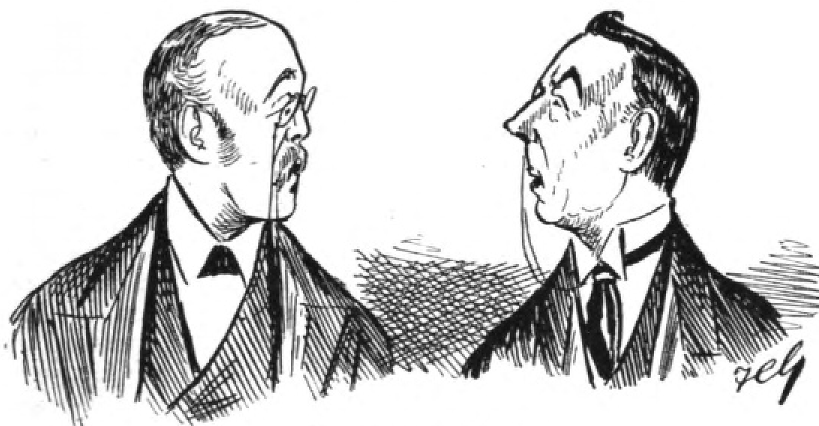
other tellers on big party divisions, is too great a strain on credulity.

A DARK HORSE.

It is, however, true that when the present Speaker's name came to the front, as the Government nominee for the Chair vacated by Mr. Peel, there were many members who would have been nonplussed if they had been called upon to pick him out. I remember, shortly after his election, Mr. Arthur Balfour telling me that, at dinner on the evening of the day authoritative notice was published of intention to nominate Mr.



"DO YOU KNOW HIM?"
"NO—DO YOU?"

Gully for the Chair, Mr. Chamberlain asked him what sort of a man the candidate was. Mr. Balfour was obliged to admit that as far as he knew he had never set eyes upon him, Mr. Chamberlain confessing to a similar state of ignorance.

AN UNDELIVERED SPEECH.

During the storm and stress of obstruction in Parnell's palmy days a strange accident befell one of his faithful followers. He had devoted much time and the appliance of native genius to the preparation of a speech in a current debate. In order that the area of humanity benefiting might be as large as possible, he arranged with the editor of the newspaper circulating among his constituency in the West of Ireland for a verbatim report. This was made possible by the simple and inexpensive means of furnishing the paper in advance with a copy of his speech. By way of precaution against misadventure, it was arranged that unless a telegram reached the office by midnight announcing postponement the report should be inserted in the morning's issue.

It happened that out of embarrassment of riches in the way of obstruction the Irish members on this night broke out in a fresh place. Moving the adjournment they upset the ordered arrangement of business, occupying the evening with the newly launched wrangle. Meanwhile their colleague, with the MS. of his oration in his breast-pocket, and painfully conscious of another copy in type in the newspaper office, sat upon thorns. At any moment the irregular debate on the adjournment might close, the Order of the Day might be called on, and with it would come opportunity of delivering his speech.

Just after eleven o'clock this turn of events seemed close at hand. But the conversation dragged on, and at half-past eleven the worn-out watcher, giving up in despair, telegraphed to hold back the report. Unfortunately it was a stormy night outside as well as inside the House of Commons. The message was not delivered till the paper had gone to press with a full report of "our hon. member's speech in the House of Commons last night," supplemented by some editorial reflections on the influence it was likely to have on the course of public affairs and the conscience of the Chief Secretary.

That was bad enough. Worse still was the circumstance that the sub-editor, reading the proof, had plentifully interpolated "cheers," "laughter," "loud laughter," cries of "Oh! oh!" these last from the Ministerialists writhing under the lash of our hon. member's oratory.

THACKERAY'S FIRST "POME."

There is nothing new under the sun. A similar accident befell another and a greater Irishman. It was otherwise notable for the fact that it led to Thackeray's first appearance in print. It befell when he was a lad, some fifteen years old, staying with his stepfather, Major Smyth, who, turning his sword into a ploughshare, settled down as a gentleman farmer in Devonshire. Ottery St. Mary is the name of the district in the matter-of-fact "Postal Guide." Later, in a work of even greater circulation, it became famous as Clavering St. Mary, "the little old town" in which Pendennis was born.

It happened that Lalor Sheil, the Irish

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orator, proposed to advocate the policy of emancipation at a mass meeting on Peneden Heath, in Kent. When he presented himself to deliver his discourse there burst forth an outcry that prevented a sentence being heard beyond the limits of the cart on which he stood. Happily he had observed the precaution before leaving town of sending to the morning papers a copy of his projected speech. Accordingly, though unspoken at Peneden, it appeared in the morning newspapers in verbatim form.

Boy Thackeray thus described the incident:—

He strove to speak, but the men of Kent
Began a grievous shouting;
When out of the waggon the little man went
And put a stop to his spouting.

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

A NOTE OF HEREDITY.

At best, Lalor Sheil was not equipped by Nature for the difficult task of addressing a mass meeting out of doors. Mr. Gladstone, who heard many of his speeches, and had a profound admiration for his eloquence, described his voice as "resembling the sound of a tin kettle beaten about from place to place."

There is a curious note of heredity in the fact that his kinsman and successor in the House of Commons, Mr. Edward Sheil, was equally weak in the matter of voice. Once he managed to deliver a long speech without sound of voice.

He acted as Whip to the party, a post for which he had the prime qualification of being popular on both sides of the House. As Whip, he was not expected to contribute to the campaign of speech-making carried on by his colleagues with a view to obstructing public business. As a rule he availed himself of his privilege, remaining a silent spectator of the fun.

One night, after prolongèd sitting, when the ordinary contributors to speech-making from the Irish side were worn out, Mr. Sheil gallantly undertook to hold the field whilst his comrades had a brief rest. He rose from the third bench below the gangway on the Opposition side. The Speaker had called him; he was in possession of the House, and members turned with languid interest to hear what he might have to say.

A dead silence fell over the Chamber. Members looking more closely to see why Mr. Sheil had not commenced his speech observed that his lips were moving. Also, from time to time, he with outstretched arm enforced by gesture a point he thought he had made. But not a whisper escaped his lips. After a while members beginning to enter into the fun of the thing cried, "Hear! hear!" Thus encouraged, Mr. Sheil's oratorical action became more forcible and frequent, but never a sound from his lips was heard. The scene went on for fully a quarter of an hour, amid rapturous cheering from the delighted House, Mr. Sheil resuming his seat with the air of a man who felt he had spoken to the point.

A PRIVATE NOTE ON WALMER CASTLE.

Among Lord Granville's papers (when are we to have his memoirs?) will be found a letter written to him by the late Lord Stanhope, dated from "Chevening, October, 1866." Lord Granville had recently come into the office, more prized than the Foreign Seals, of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. The late Lord Stanhope was born almost within the precincts of Walmer Castle, Mr. Pitt, then Lord Warden, having on their marriage lent his father and mother the cottage which stands close to the entrance of the Castle grounds from the village side. As one familiar with Walmer Castle in the time of Pitt and the Duke of Wellington, Lord Granville asked Earl Stanhope to give him a few notes on the subject, a task cheerfully undertaken by the historian and genially accomplished.

PITT'S ROOM.

One of the distinctions of Walmer Castle is that on a treeless coast its grounds are umbrageous. It was Pitt who planted the trees, though he did not live long enough to sit under their shade. Pitt, with all the Castle wherein to choose, selected a curious room as his own. He might have had one facing either the sea or the south. His room to this day looks into the moat, and is faced by the dead wall that guards it. For more than thirty years the room was left exactly as it was when Pitt lay down in it for the last time. The Queen and Prince Consort spent a portion of their honeymoon at Walmer Castle. In anticipation of the event a new dining-room was contrived by knocking down the wall of Pitt's room and joining it to the next one. When the young couple left the wall was re-built, and to-day Pitt's room is—or was in Lord Dufferin's day when I was a guest at the Castle—the *habitat* of the housekeeper.

Long before her time the room had quite another occupant. Lord Stanhope, in the letter quoted from, says, "Wellington told

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TALLEYRAND SLEEPING IN PITT'S BED.

me that when he received a visit from Prince Talleyrand at Walmer Castle, Talleyrand asked particularly to occupy Mr. Pitt's room, and seemed to live there in some sense of triumph. His idea was that he had been treated rather slightingly by Mr. Pitt when he came over as secretary to M. Chacevelin in 1792, and that to sleep in his rival's bed was like taking a *revanche*."

That is, perhaps, rather a fanciful conclusion. In the circumstances Pitt's profounder sleep was not likely to be disturbed by reflections on the fact that Talleyrand was tucking himself up in his old bed at Walmer Castle.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S ROOM.

The room in which the Duke of Wellington slept and died has not since been occupied by any lesser mortal. Thanks to the loyalty and liberality of Mr. W. H. Smith, the room has been reinstated in something like the condition in which the Duke left it. In matter of proportions and outlook it is not much better than Pitt's. It is furnished with the stern simplicity of a camp.

When Mr. W. H. Smith was nominated to the Lord Wardenship in succession to Pitt, Wellington, Palmerston, and Lord Granville, he found that the fixings of Walmer Castle, memorials of the daily life of the mighty dead, did not pertain to the Castle. They were "taken over," like ordinary fixtures, by successive tenants, upon payment of their valuation.

Lord Palmerston, when he became Lord Warden, did not want the Duke of Wellington's boots or his bedstead. Nor was he disposed to fork out £5 for the quaint-looking chair in which Pitt often sat meditating on Napoleon's triumphal march through Europe. The priceless relics were accordingly distributed.

Happily the present Duke of Wellington obtained all pertaining to his father, and liberally joined Mr. W. H. Smith in reinstating them. Things seem a little out of joint when we reflect that the dispersal of these historic relics took place under the *régime* of the blue-blooded aristocrat Viscount Palmerston, and that their restoration was painstakingly accomplished by a tradesman from the Strand, W.C.

"NAME! NAME!"

In the smoking-room of the House of Commons there is a simple device whereby is spelled out the names of members as they successively address the House. Just as in travelling on the District Railway the name of the approaching station is displayed and stands in view till the point is passed, so whilst a member is on his legs in the House of Commons his name is shining over the fireplace of the smoking-room as if he were Bovril or Vinolia soap.

This arrangement is so convenient that it might well be extended. It would be of especial use in the Central Lobby, where members drop out for a chat whilst Mr. Caldwell or Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett is on his legs. That is all very well, but it may happen that either of these gentlemen is succeeded by a member whose speech one would not like to miss. The danger would be averted if at some convenient point in the Lobby the names of speakers were set forth as they are in the smoking-room.

A DEFINITION.

I have been much struck by an observation, contributed by a well-known Irishman, to a conversation upon the qualifications necessary for an Irish member.

"There are," said he, "three classes of people from whom the Irish member may be best recruited—millionaires, who can afford it; paupers, who have nothing to lose; and fools of all descriptions."

An Englishman mustn't say things of that kind. An Irishman may, and does.

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From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

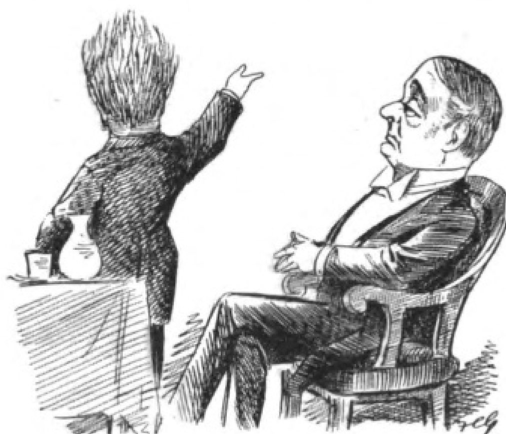
LVII.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

DULNESS AT WESTMINSTER.

PRESIDING during the recess at a lecture delivered at Epsom on "The Parliaments of the Queen," Lord Rosebery offered some remarks which were widely discussed. The lecturer commented on the frequent assumption that, with the lowering of the franchise, the admission of working men members, and the consequent leavening of the aristocratic mass, the standard of the House of Commons in the matter of conduct must needs be lowered. He advanced the opinion that the present House of Commons is the best mannered he, with more than a quarter of a century's experience, had known. "In that respect," he added, "it even runs the risk of being described as dull."

Lord Rosebery, assenting to this view, advanced three reasons in explanation of the phenomenon. The first and most original was that the growing concern taken by the public in the work of County Councils has dulled the keen edge of interest formerly attached to Parliamentary proceedings. A second reason he found in the overpowering majority that exists in the present House of Commons. Thirdly, he noted the withdrawal from the scene of Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Gladstone, and, he might have added, of Mr. John Bright.



PRESIDING AT A LECTURE.

The first reason, obviously suggested by Lord Rosebery's patriotic and beneficent personal share in the work of County and District Councils, will not appeal to others with equal force. It falls before a simple test. Do the public in any county or district crowd the auditorium of the council chamber as the Strangers' Galleries of the House of Commons are thronged even on the dullest night? Do the newspapers, whose managers presumably know what the public want, report at any length, or report at all, the proceedings at meetings of the average County Council?

The answer is in the negative. County Councils doubtless have created a special interest of their own within local areas. But these do not interfere with the wider range of profounder attention, not only in this country but through continents peopled by the English-speaking race, which even the dull Parliament of the present epoch commands.

THE WET BLANKET OF THE MAJORITY.

Lord Rosebery goes nearer to the root of the matter when he cites the overpowering majority at the command of Ministers as a reason for prevailing dulness. A majority which after a slow course of defeats at by-elections still may be counted at 130 leaves no margin for either expectation or surprise. If it happened to be ranged under the Liberal instead of the Conservative flag the case would be different. Mr. Gladstone came into power in 1880 with a majority not much less overpowering than that which acclaimed Lord Salisbury in 1895. Ere the preliminary formality of swearing-in members had been completed the process of disintegration germinated in the Ministerial camp. Before the Session was far advanced Mr. Gladstone several times found himself in a minority, pathetically surrendering the Leadership of the House to Sir Stafford Northcote when motions relating to Mr. Bradlaugh were submitted.

That was the result of instinct and training. Before and since, Mr. Gladstone suffered melancholy experience of their joint influence. In the Conservative breast, instinct and training work in directly opposite directions. With a majority of 130 there is sore temptation for an able, ambitious man to achieve a reputation for honest independence by occasionally going into the lobby against his leaders. Steps in that direction were, early in the history of the present Parliament, taken by Mr. Bartley, whose cup of bitterness at

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seeing Mr. Hanbury on the Treasury Bench, himself overlooked, was filled by the withholding of a card of invitation for a State concert—or was it a State ball? Mr. Gedge is not sound on the question of the Lord Chancellor. More than once he has revolted against Mr. Arthur Balfour's connivance with that eminent person's alleged misdoing in the matter of judicial patronage. As for Mr. Tommy Bowles, he is one of the acutest and most unsparing critics of the Government whether in individual capacity, as vendors of private property at good prices to the State, or as a Cabinet dealing with public affairs at home and abroad.

The revolt of the Pigtail party at the opening of the Session of 1898 seemed really threatening. If it had been Mr. Gladstone who had let Talienwan slip through his fingers

MR. YERBURGH. MR. MACDONA. LORD CHARLES BERESFORD.
THE PIGTAIL PARTY.

into the grasp of Russia, and if Mr. Yerburgh had, with equal force and authority, voiced the sentiments of a section of the Liberal party, even a majority of 130 would not have saved the Premier from a damaging blow. As it was, the storm blew over. Lord Salisbury went his own way, Russia got hers, and when the Opposition, perceiving an opportunity for doing a little business, took a division on a resolution challenging Lord Salisbury's policy in the Far East, lo! Mr. Yerburgh and his merry men "were not"—at least, they were not in the Opposition Lobby.

This condition of things, the knowledge that there is no hope in any circumstances of varying it, acts like a wet blanket on the smouldering fires of the House of Commons. It is, I think, the main reason for the state of things Lord Rosebery recognised at Westminster.

GRIEVOUS GAPS.

A powerful contributory is the great gap created by the disappearance from the lists of Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Bright can scarcely be said to be known to the present generation of the House of Commons. His mark upon its record was cut bold and deep, before his retirement from office in 1870 on the breakdown of his health. Nevertheless, even his silent presence on the Front Bench did much to ennoble the scene.

It is impossible to overrate the declension of interest in the proceedings of the House of Commons consequent on the withdrawal first of Mr. Disraeli, then, long after, of Mr. Gladstone. It was not only because of their commanding position. They were always on view, as much a part and parcel of the proceedings as the Mace on the Table or the Speaker in the Chair. Both, brought up in an old Parliamentary school whose traditions are now disregarded, observed the injunction that a Leader of the House, whether in office or Opposition, should sit out a debate, however immaterial its issue or inconsiderable the class of speakers carrying it on. The influence of this personal habit was widely marked. Colleagues on either Front Bench were ashamed to spend the evening in their room or on the Terrace when the chief was patiently keeping watch and ward. Above and below the gangway on either side the example had its influence. However dreary might be the current debate, there was Disraeli to watch, with his right leg crossed over his knee, his arms folded, his head bent, his eyes, bright to the last, closely watching the benches before him, especially that on which Mr. Gladstone sat.

Since he went away there was Mr.

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Gladstone, a much more animated object. The essential difference between the two statesmen was nowhere more strongly marked than in their bearing in the House of Commons. For hours Disraeli sat motionless as the Sphinx. The only colleague he habitually conversed with on the Treasury Bench was a Junior Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Barrington, whose agreeable duties in the way of conversation were rewarded by an English peerage. Mr. Gladstone, bubbling over with vitality, talked to whomsoever might chance to sit on his right hand or his left, often emphasizing conversation with quick gesture of nervous hands.

Whether silent or conversing, these two were the cynosure of all eyes. Their presence denoted possibility of their at any moment interposing and lifting drear debate to the level of their own stature. There are in the present Parliament no two men—there is not any one man—who possesses this personal fascination. It necessarily follows that, field nights apart, the House of Commons is from hour to hour through its nightly sittings less interesting than it was when both or one of these historic figures was still above the horizon.

SURVIVORS OF THE QUEEN'S FIRST PARLIAMENT.

How many members of the House of Commons elected in the first year of the Queen's reign survive to-day? Having occasion in the Diamond Jubilee year to look the matter up, I found there were at that date six.

Of the half-dozen one was Mr. Leader, who represented Westminster in the first Parliament of the Queen, and distinguished himself by being one of the minority of twenty who supported that once well-known, now forgotten, statesman, Mr. Coroner Wakley, in an amendment to the Address. The Ministry, avowedly Liberal, had omitted from the Queen's Speech promise to undertake Parliamentary reform. The Coroner with professional energy forthwith proceeded to sit upon the Government. He found only eighteen members to follow the lead of himself and co-teller in what might be construed as a rudeness to the young Queen whose first Speech was nominally the subject of debate.

"WHAT! AREN'T YOU DEAD YET?"

Other of the six relics of this House of more than sixty years ago were Mr. Hurst, in 1837 member for Horsham; Mr. Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, member for Malton, now Earl Fitzwilliam; Sir Thomas Acland, member for West Somerset, whose family name was up to a recent date honourably represented in the House of Commons by the ex-Vice-President of the Council; Mr. Villiers, in 1897 as he was in 1837 member for Wolverhampton; and Mr. Gladstone, at the Jubilee period in busy seclusion at Hawarden, in 1837 member for Newark, hearing his days before him and the tumult of his life.

Three of these veterans—Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Villiers, and Sir Thomas Acland—have since gone over to the majority, and I fancy I have seen record of the passing away of one other.

NOVEMBER AND FEBRUARY: ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

A passage from "Behind the Speaker's Chair" appearing in the February Number has brought me a host of surprised inquiries. The following will serve as sample:—

"I have often read with interest your articles 'From Behind the Speaker's Chair,' and beg to call your attention to the following passage in the current number of THE STRAND: 'Early in the present Session Lord Salisbury in one House and Mr. Arthur Balfour in the other will be able to announce a peace not only with honour, but with substantial profit.' As this deliverance is made with a certain air of authority, I assume that you have information as to the prospects of peace which the public have not. Or is it that you are expressing the hopes and wishes of the Government rather than their confident anticipations? I know that it is the opinion of many that the campaign in South Africa will be more prolonged than your forecast indicates."

I daresay. But my unknown friend has the advantage of writing on the 5th of February, 1900, whereas my article was written in the last week of November, 1899.

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I trust the Editor will not think I am wantonly disclosing the secrets of the prison-house if I mention that, owing to the phenomenal circulation of the Magazine, and the consequent prolonged work of printing, necessity is imposed upon contributors of sending in their manuscript at least two months in advance of the date of publication.

I allude to the matter less in explanation of a pronouncement that has proved so puzzling, than because the incident forcibly illustrates a historical position. So much happened between the end of November and the beginning of February that it had become difficult for the public to recur to their earlier frame of mind in view of the war in South Africa. In the February Number of THE STRAND it was, by accident, brought to light again, a sort of mummy dug out of a chance catacomb. When in April next these lines are printed, the whole aspect of affairs may be again changed. Meanwhile it is interesting to note how the British public, talked to in February in the mood in which it complacently dwelt in November, starts with surprise, and asks whether its interlocutor is poking fun, is mad, or merely grossly ignorant.

HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF. At a time when the Government of the day lie under grave charges of mismanagement of a campaign, it is interesting to come upon some criticism of Lord Wolseley dealing with an analogous state of things. Some years ago there was issued a book, written by Colonel Campbell, entitled "Letters from Camp during the Siege of Sebastopol." Lord Wolseley wrote a preface in which, commenting on the sufferings of the troops in the Crimea, he declared that they "had their origin in the folly, criminal ignorance, parsimony, and inaptitude of the gentlemen who were Her Majesty's Ministers."

HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF.
From "Punch," August, 1856, after the Crimean War.

According to some authorities, it requires only to write the verb in the present tense in order to describe the earliest relations of Her Majesty's Ministers with the campaign in South Africa.

In a passage that has even fuller possibility of significance, the principal military adviser of Lord Salisbury's Government, alluding to "the crass ignorance of the Cabinet," protests it was "equalled only by the baseness with which it afterwards endeavoured to shift the blame from its own shoulders upon those of Sir R. Airey and other military authorities."

THREAT OF FULL DISCLOSURE. Lord Edward Pelham-Clinton, Master of the Queen's Household, bitterly resents this passage as a direct indictment of his father, the late Duke of Newcastle, whom history holds to be the Minister chiefly responsible for the conduct of the Crimean War. That is but a filial reflex of the frame of mind with which the Duke himself met charges and insinuations levelled against him. It is something more than a tradition in the Pelham-Clinton family that the Duke of Newcastle was deliberately made the scapegoat of the Cabinet. Whilst the storm raged he wrote a letter to Hayward, in which the following ominous passage occurs: "I do not know whether justice will be done me, but if not, I shall publish everything and spare nobody."

I believe the Duke's memoirs, upon which the labour of years has been bestowed, are in a forward state. This threat on the part of the aggravated Duke promises that they will cast a new, perhaps an amazing, light on the inner history of Ministerial direction for the Crimean War and the responsibility for its criminal blunders.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL'S MEMOIRS. There is another memoir of a much greater statesman the world would welcome. I am not thinking of the life of Disraeli, on the boxes containing the abundant materials for which Lord Rowton still sits contemplative. That is a pleasure past praying for, at least so far as the present generation are concerned. I allude to the life of Lord Randolph Churchill. That he contemplated its being undertaken appears on unquestioned authority. He made his will in the summer of 1883. No reference to the subject appears in the body of the document. Five years later, on the 22nd of September, 1888, he added a codicil whereby he bequeathed all his private papers, letters, and documents to his brother-in-law Viscount Curzon and his old friend Louis Jennings, M.P., "in trust to publish, retain all or any of them, as they in their absolute discretion may think proper."

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When the will was opened poor Louis Jennings. whose open rupture with his much-loved friend and leader was one of the most dramatic incidents ever witnessed in the House of Commons, lay in his grave. Had he survived his chief, there is little doubt the book would have been written. Lord Curzon's many gifts do not tend in the direction of literary effort. But there is obviously a substitute at hand. As a rule biographies written by sons or daughters are a failure. The nearness of the point of vision makes impossible the effect of perspective. Sir George Trevelyan's "Life of Lord Macaulay" appears to suggest that the standpoint of a nephew is the nearest at which biographical faculty may be successfully undertaken. But Mr. Winston Churchill has on more than one occasion testified to possession of the gift of self-detachment which, as enabling one dispassionately to adjudge intimate friends or near relations, was a prominent endowment of his distinguished father.

BLACK ROD.

A skilful record of the career of Lord Randolph Churchill, a selection from his correspondence, and a study of his brilliant wayward personality would make a peerless book. To produce it is a duty the son owes to the memory of his father.

DOMESTIC DIFFERENCES IN HIGH QUARTERS.

Black Rod and the Serjeant-at-Arms in the House of Lords this Session tread the floor of the historic chamber with secret consciousness that they have achieved a great victory over that enemy of Ministerial mankind, the Treasury. Thirteen years ago an Act of Parliament was passed requiring that all Government officials should contribute 10 per cent. of their salary towards a superannuation fund. Up to a recent period the staff of both Houses of Parliament escaped this impost. The Treasury, beginning to feel the burden imposed upon them by the generosity of a Government who have devoted millions to the subvention of Church schools, the relief of the clergy, and the amelioration of the lot of rate-paying landlords, felt they must do something to raise the wind. A little more than a year ago a vacancy arose in the office of Serjeant-at-Arms in attendance on the Lord Chancellor at the House of Lords. Here was a chance of readjusting the balance.

Scarcely was General Sir Arthur Ellis installed in his new office, than he received intimation from the Treasury that his salary would be docked to the amount of 10 per cent. There happened to be sitting a Select Committee to consider the whole question of the officers of the House of Lords, whom jealous commoners had criticised as being in number far beyond the needs of the institution, and, therefore, entailing unnecessary expense. To this Committee General Ellis carried the Treasury communication. The Committee wrote to the Treasury promising to take the matter into consideration. That was in December, 1898, and there, in accordance with precedence, it seemed probable the matter would rest. The Committee would go on indefinitely "considering" the matter, and in the meanwhile the Serjeant-at-Arms would continue to draw his full salary.

Therein the Committee counted too confidently on human frailty, a weakness from which the Treasury is free. In June last My Lords woke up to recollection that no answer on the point had been forthcoming from the Select Committee. A note was accordingly written, referring to the correspondence in December, and stating that "My Lords would be glad to be favoured with the views of the Committee on the question." The Clerk of Parliaments replied that the office of Serjeant-at-Arms is a Royal Household appointment, and that no deduction is ever made from the salaries of such officers. By way of clincher it was added that Black Rod, also a Household appointment, had never had such claim made upon him. The Clerk of Parliaments was so delighted with this illustration of his case that he airily remarked: "It therefore seems hardly necessary to bring the matter before the House of Lords' Officers Committee."

A DANIEL COME TO JUDGMENT.

As on an historic occasion Lord Randolph Churchill "forgot Goschen," so, in this delightful domestic comedy, the Clerk of Parliaments "forgot Hanbury." Hitherto the correspondence on behalf of the Treasury was conducted by Lord Salisbury's friend, the Permanent Secretary, Sir Francis Mowatt. Now a greater than he stepped to the front. A burlier figure filled the breach. Mr.

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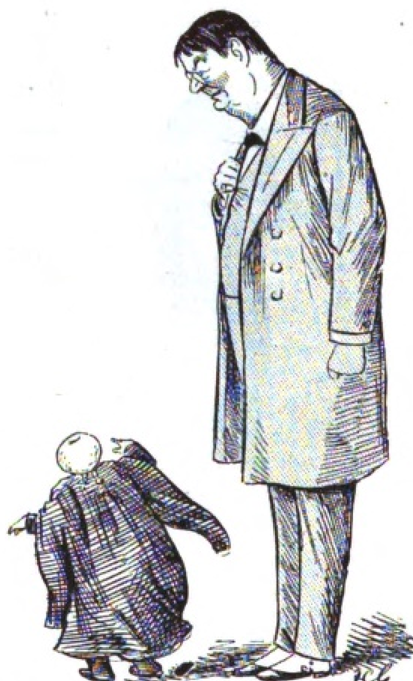
Hanbury himself took the business in hand, and dealt a blow which (of course, in a Parliamentary sense) doubled up the Clerk of Parliaments. The Serjeant-at-Arms, he pointed out, draws his salary from the House of Lords' Vote in the capacity of an officer serving in that House, and not as a Household officer paid from the Civil List. *Argal*, he must stump up a tithe of his salary.

That was very well as meeting the argument about the Serjeant-at-Arms. It was the next move that revealed the dangerous proclivities of Mr. Hanbury, trained, in company with Mr. "Tommy" Bowles and Mr. Christopher Trout, in the close conflict of Committee of Supply. "You point out," he blandly added, "that no such abatement has ever been made in the case of successive holders of the office of Black Rod, which is equally a Household appointment. But here, too, the emoluments are drawn not from the Civil List but from the House of Lords' Vote, and now that their attention has been drawn to the matter, My Lords cannot avoid the same conclusion as that reached with regard to the Serjeant-at-Arms."



MR. HANBURY TAKES THE BUSINESS IN HAND.

Here was a nice pickle! Not only was the Treasury implacable in the matter of 10 per cent. on the salary of the Serjeant-at-Arms, but was now full cry in pursuit of similar plunder from Black Rod. What that august functionary said when he heard of the Clerk of Parliaments' ingenious arguments on behalf of the Serjeant-at-Arms is happily withheld from public consideration.

As for the Clerk of Parliaments, he meekly replied that he would lay both cases before the Select Committee, as requested by Mr. Hanbury. Fortunately for Black Rod and the Serjeant-at-Arms, the Select Committee, being a corporate body, did not suffer from the personal apprehension that naturally took possession of the individual when the Clerk of Parliaments was temporarily deprived of breath in the circumstance described. You cannot frame an indictment against a whole nation, neither can a Financial Secretary to the Treasury, albeit 6in. 6in. in height, grind the faces of a whole Select Committee. The Lords' Committee accordingly, safely locked in their room, signed a sort of round-robin oracularly declaring that "as the Treasury Rules derive their validity from the Superannuation Act, which does not apply to the staff of either House of Parliament, the alleged statutory obligation to make the proposed reduction does not really exist."

PURSUED BY THE TREASURY.

Thus was a rapacious Treasury defeated, and thus it comes to pass that from this Session onward Black Rod and Serjeant-at-Arms will draw their full salary, none daring to make them afraid of a 10 per cent. reduction.

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From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

LVIII.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

HARD LINES FOR THE SPEAKER.

"THIS sitting up merely to adjourn the House and to put out the lights is not only useless as a matter of business, but it really impedes business, knocks up the Speaker, and renders him inefficient for the following day." Thus Speaker Denison, writing in his diary, under date Friday, 25th of March, 1870. The anguished words were wrung from him at the close of a hard week, chiefly spent in the Chair. The point is one I, some years ago, ventured to raise in these columns. To ordinary business people it seems necessary only to state the case to have the absurdity corrected.

When the House gets into Committee of Supply the Speaker leaves the Chair, the proceedings being thereafter presided over by the Chairman of Ways and Means, seated at the table. As a rule, on these occasions the Speaker is relieved between four and five o'clock, and, as the Committee will peg away till the hour of adjournment, the right hon. gentleman might reasonably count upon a restful evening, getting early to bed. It is, however, an ancient custom that the formality of adjourning the House shall be performed by the Speaker in person. The consequence is that, when at midnight Committee of Supply closes, the Speaker is routed out of his house, compelled to put on wig and gown, return to the Chair, and, having recited the list of orders on the paper, observes, "The House will now adjourn."

As a rule the performance does not take more than five minutes. But consider the inconvenience it imposes—imprisonment at home throughout the evening and compulsory sitting up to midnight.

That the Chairman of Ways and Means can accomplish the ceremony without weakening the foundations of the Empire is proved by the fact that on the occasional indisposition of the Speaker he is called upon to do so. On the very night this anguished cry was wrung from the soul of Mr. Speaker Denison he had settled with Mr. Dodson, then Chairman of Ways and Means, that he should take the Chair and adjourn the House. "He did so. No inconvenience arose to anyone. But the relief to me was very great. I got to bed and to sleep about eleven o'clock and had a good night, which quite restored my powers."

MR. J. W. LOWTHER, THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS.

Since John Evelyn Denison finally left the Chair of the House of Commons the deeply rooted prejudice against reform of Parliamentary procedure has been dug up with beneficial results. But this useless weed still cumbers the ground.

JOE COWEN.

Fourteen years have sped since Joseph Cowen shook the dust of the House of Commons from off his feet and retired to his hermitage at Blaydon-on-Tyne. The period is not long in history, but the effect of such lapse of time upon the *personnel* of the House of Commons is striking. There are few public bodies of equal number in which the outward drain is so strong and steady. I doubt whether there are in the present Parliament a hundred men who sat in the same House as Joseph Cowen. Yet his memory still lingers over the historic scene, and to the very few admitted to his close friendship the memory of his rare personality will ever smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

There is no position in public life Cowen might not have achieved had he devoted himself to the pursuit. His splendid intellectual gifts were trained by constant study. Endowed with a far-reaching and tenacious memory, he remembered most things he read, and he read everything. As an orator of the classic style he was unsurpassed in the House of Commons. His was the antique manner, which consisted of making speeches as contrasted with debating. He

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rarely took part in the give-and-take of Committee work. When the nation throbbed with excitement in face of a great political crisis Cowen rose to its height, his splendid oratory dominating a breathless House of Commons. His speech on the Empress of India Bill, and one in support of the Vote of Credit moved in 1878, when Russia was reported to be at the gates of Constantinople, will never be forgotten by those who heard them. They had undoubtedly been elaborately prepared, and were, I believe, actually recited from memory. But there was about them no smell of the midnight lamp. The picturesque figure with its strangely-fashioned garments, the strong Northumbrian burr into which his voice lapsed when he was deeply stirred, were adjuncts rather than drawbacks to the perfectness of the achievement.

JOE, MR. G., AND DIZZY.

Cowen was as gentle hearted as the tenderest of women, a feature which did not wholly comprise his kinship with the other sex. Oddly enough, in view of his ways of life, he was not free from personal vanity, and was implacable where it had once been affronted. Hereby hangs a tale, the basis of which had much to do in shaping his life, and even in affecting political parties in the House of Commons. As he told it me himself there can be no harm in quoting it in aid of an estimate of his character.

THE HERMIT OF BLAYDON-ON-TYNE.

On the eve of the General Election, 1868, Mr. Gladstone paid a visit to Tyneside and became the guest of Cowen's father, then Mayor of Newcastle. Sir Joseph Cowen's influence, locally predominant, was placed unreservedly at Mr. Gladstone's disposal, and undoubtedly did much to swell the wave of Liberal enthusiasm that spread through the north-east of England. The great statesman was quick to notice his host's shy son, and frequently conversed with him. Shortly after Cowen was, in 1873, returned to the House of Commons to represent Newcastle-on-Tyne he chanced to meet Mr. Gladstone in the division lobby. Naturally he expected some recognition. But the Premier, with his head in the clouds, probably troubled by the growing revolt that had foredoomed his Government, passed by unheeding. Cowen was not the man to run after him with reminder of former meetings. Probably he largely contributed to the unfortunate incident by shyly skirting the lobby wall and carefully refraining from challenging the great man's glance. However it be, the incident rankled in a sensitive mind, and was the beginning of the end of an estrangement that from first to last cost Mr. Gladstone dear.

Disraeli's procedure on this particular line was as characteristic as was Gladstone's. He early noted the strange-looking member for Newcastle, with his home-made clothes and his billycock hat. After his speech on the Vote of Credit, Dizzy, with sweet casualness, happed upon Cowen in the same division lobby where Gladstone had unconsciously snubbed him. He fell into conversation with him, extolled his speech, and made a valuable friend.

THE "NEWCASTLE CHRONICLE."

Though Cowen's manner was almost childlike in simplicity, and his shyness sometimes embarassing to others, as well as to himself, he was one of the keenest-sighted, shrewdest men of business born to canny Northumberland. His dealings with the *Newcastle Chronicle* illustrate two sides of his character. His proprietorial connection with the paper was purely accidental, and, to begin with, as unwelcome as it was unpremeditated. An earlier proprietor found difficulty in making both ends meet. In such circumstances he followed the not unfamiliar course of going for help and counsel to Joe Cowen. From time to time loans were made without leading to permanent re-establishment. In the end Cowen was obliged to take the paper on his own back. Having come into absolute possession he brought to bear upon the concern his intuitive knowledge of affairs, his shrewd common-sense, his trained business habits. In a very few years the *Newcastle Chronicle* reached the position it still deservedly holds as one of the most influential and, I should

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say, one of the wealthiest newspapers in the provinces.

During the greater part of the time he sat in the House of Commons Cowen nightly transmitted by telegraph to his journal a London Letter luminous with political insight and knowledge of affairs. He wrote nearly as well as he spoke, but in quite a different style. He was as severely simple when he had pen in hand as he was ornate when on his legs addressing crowded audiences either at Westminster or from a provincial platform.

A SHADOW OF THE PAST.

HIS PARTICULAR FRIENDS.

Wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice, I doubt whether Cowen spent £200 a year strictly on himself. His charities were boundless, though, so far as I know, his name never figured in the advertised list of public subscriptions. Struggling nationalities in any part of the world commanded not only his sympathy but his purse. One night in the lobby of the House of Commons Cowen was having what he dearly loved, a gossip with intimate friends. The conversation turned upon some severe process just instituted by order of the Czar against certain students in St. Petersburg. Cowen talked of them by name, and gave some particulars of their private history.

"I believe," said Sir Wilfrid Lawson, "that Cowen knows every conspirator in Europe."

"Yes," said A. M. Sullivan, with whose chivalrous nature Cowen had much in common, "and he keeps half of them."

A PUBLIC BENEFACTOR.

One mark Cowen left on procedure in the House of Commons, by which it nightly profits in the current Session. In the Disraeli Parliament, 1874–80, the Irish obstructionists, then in full vigour, made the most of the waste of time involved in putting questions. Night after night they crowded the paper with lengthy interrogations. In accordance with habit established in quieter times, when the Speaker running his eye down the list called members in succession, each as he got up read every word of his question. The consequence was that, the House then meeting for public business at half-past four, it was frequently six or half-past six before the Orders of the Day were reached.

One night Cowen quietly submitted to the Speaker the proposal that, the questions being printed on the paper, there was no necessity for reading their text. The member in charge of a question might indicate it by citing its number.

If this simple, business-like proposal had been made from the Treasury Bench, or

THE CONSPIRATORS OF EUROPE.

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from any member of the Opposition other than Joe Cowen, the Irish members would have cheerfully spent nights in resisting it. Cowen was their friend and ally. It would not do to publicly affront him. Thus it came to pass that in a few minutes, without formal resolution or debate, the Speaker promptly assenting, there was wrought a reform in procedure that in an ordinary Session saves the House of Commons an aggregate of time that may be measured by days.

"TRANQUIL INDIFFERENTISM." Under date Christmas Day, 1897, Cowen wrote to me a letter, in which there is an interesting personal note on his oratory.

"I am glad you were pleased with my remarks at the Jubilee banquet. My object in handing you the little pamphlet was to give you a synopsis of my views on national affairs and not a specimen of my mediocre gifts of expression. I think we agree generally on the trend of events, but your friendship leads you to overestimate my literary and speaking capacity. I have few of the attributes of a genuine orator—enthusiasm, imagination, and bursts of fiery words. All I aspire to is a clear and terse exposition of principles and facts. I am too imperfectly endowed with the ordinary incentives that move men in public life—the yearning for applause or the desire of power. A kind of tranquil indifferentism deprives me of the oratorical skill to please, conciliate, or persuade. But I have drifted into an unpardonably lugubrious and personal strain quite out of keeping with this festive season."

"THE SOUND OF A VOICE THAT IS STILL." The pamphlet alluded to is a reprint of a speech delivered by Cowen at the Diamond Jubilee celebration in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I quote a passage illustrating his oratorical style and testifying to the lofty spirit of sane Imperialism of which Cowen was an apostle long before it became the cult of to-day. As a piece of glowing eloquence it is worth preserving:—

"There have been empires which have covered a large area, and some which have possessed a greater population, but there have been none at once so dissimilar and yet so correlative, so scattered and yet so cohesive, as that of Great Britain. There have been races who have rivalled us in refinement, but none in practical ability. Greece excelled us in the arts of an elegant imagination. But she was more ingenious than profound, more brilliant than solid. Rome was great in war, in government, and in law. She intersected Europe with public works, and her eagled legions extorted universal obedience. But her wealth was the plunder of the world; ours is the product of industry.

"The city states of ancient, and the free towns of mediæval, times aimed more at commerce than conquest. Wherever a ship could sail or a colony be planted their adventurous citizens penetrated, but they sought trade more than territory. Phœnicia turned all the lines of current traffic towards herself. But she preferred the pleasant abodes of Lebanon and the sunlit quays of Tyre to organizing an empire. Arms had no part in her growth, war no share in her greatness. Carthage, which, for a time, counterbalanced Rome, robbed the ocean of half its mysteries and more than half its terrors, but she did little to melt down racial antipathies. Venice in the zenith of her strength gathered a halo round her name which the rolling ages cannot dissipate. Holland, by her alliance of commerce and liberty, sailed from obscurity into the world's regard. Spain and Portugal drew untold treasure within their coffers, but its possession did not conduce to national virtue.

"None of these States, with their diverse qualities and defects, had imperial aspirations, except Spain. Most of them were only magnified municipalities. But the volume and value of their trade, although large for the time, was meagre when compared with ours. British wealth is unparalleled in commercial history. Add Carthage to Tyre, or Amsterdam to Venice, and you would not make another London. All things precious and useful, amusing and intoxicating, are sucked into its markets. But mercantile success, although it implies the possession of self-reliance and self-control, of caution and daring, of discipline and enterprise, if unaccompanied by more elevated impulses, will not sustain a State. Wealth is essential. It must not, however, be wealth simply, but wealth plus patriotism. It is by the mingling of the material with the ideal, the aspiring with the utilitarian, that the British people have secured their influence and elasticity.

"These qualities have enabled them to dot the surface of the globe with their possessions, to rule with success old nations of every race and creed, and civilize new lands of every kind and clime."

THE QUEEN'S YACHTS. The Estimates of the year carry the charges for the Queen's yacht launched in January after earlier disaster. This brings the

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Queen's private "navee" up to five ships, for their tonnage and speed certainly the costliest fleet in the world. The Queen's first yacht, now reduced to the status of a tender, was built more than fifty years ago. She cost, to begin with, over £6,000. That does not seem much; but it was only to begin with. Some years ago, when the question was discussed in Committee of the House of Commons, it was stated that, taking into account repairs alone, not mentioning maintenance, the little *Elfin* had cost £500 a ton. Effective contrast was made by quotation of analogous expenditure upon one of the stateliest ironclads of the day. It was shown that after an equal term of public service in all seas the man-of-war had cost but £80 a ton.

DIES IRÆ.

Next in point of age comes the *Victoria and Albert*, built at Pembroke in 1855. Her original cost was £176,820. Again, apart from wages of the crew and supply of stores, she has, on the average, cost the nation £12,000 a year, which starts her, including original cost, well on the way to three-quarters of a million sterling. Third in seniority is the *Alberta*, built in 1863, followed by the *Osborne*, a fine ship of 1,850 tons. She cost £134,000, and expenditure upon her in the way of repairs and decorations is estimated at £8,000 a year—nearly as much as the Lord Chancellor costs.

DIES IRÆ.

Mr. Asquith was Secretary of State for the Home Department for a period of three years. It is, I believe, one of his most pleasant reminiscences that, dealing with successive cases, he took off an aggregate period of forty years' penal servitude allotted to prisoners by a single judge. Among friends and personal acquaintances the judge in question is known as a simple-mannered, kind-hearted man, brimming over with humour and loving-kindness. On the Bench, translated by the covering of wig and gown, he is pitiless.

I hear on unquestioned authority a striking illustration of this paradox. Frequently after having passed one of those sentences that call forth strong remonstrance in the Press, his lordship has been known privately to visit the convict, conversing with him or her in the most beautiful, brotherly manner, displaying the keenest interest in the spiritual opportunities of the prisoner.

That is nice and kind. On the whole, it may be presumed that the convict would prefer the conversation to have taken another turn on the Bench, reducing a term of penal servitude by from three to five years.

"HEY HO! AND A BOTTLE OF RUM."

To the casual observer Sir Grant Duff has neither the air nor the manner of a *raconteur.* The publication of his diary proves afresh how untrustworthy are appearances. His volumes—and we are only at the beginning of an illimitable series—are full of good things. I once heard him tell a story I do not find in his diary. He claimed for it the mark of respectability, as it is founded upon fact. During the First Napoleon's campaign in Egypt a Rear-

"THE ADMIRAL'S RUM."

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Admiral attached to the British Fleet, watching the General's operations, died at sea. With his last breath he expressed the wish that his body might be sent home for burial. Considering the appliances at command of the doctors that seemed an injunction impossible to obey. To someone occurred the happy thought that if the body were inclosed in a vessel containing spirits it might be safely transported.

The late Admiral was accordingly nailed up in a hogshead of rum, which was transhipped to a frigate going home with despatches. On arrival of the ship at Portsmouth the cask was broached, and with the exception of the corpse it was found to be empty.

Some of the crew, scenting rum and knowing of nothing else, brought a gimlet into play and, subtly inserting straws in the aperture, drank the Admiral dry.

A MATTER OF COURSE.

This suggested to Sir Wilfrid Lawson, seated at the same dinner table, another story. It is located in Westmorland, and must be true because Sir Wilfrid lives in the adjoining county. Two neighbours were talking over the recent death of a farmer slightly known to both.

"Did he die of drink?" asked one.

"Well," said the other, "I never heard to the contrary."

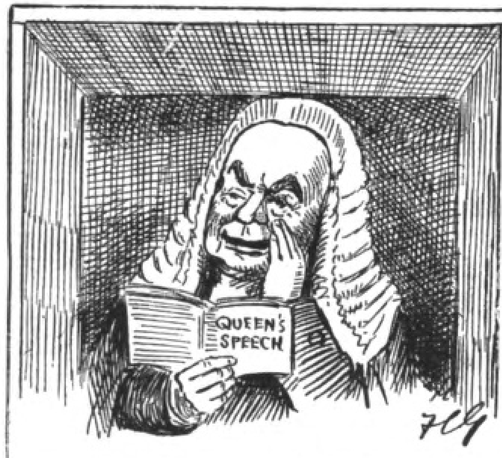
PROMPTING MAJESTY.

In the Memoirs of a Foreign Minister accredited to the Court of Charles II. I find the following graphic description of the ceremony of the opening of Parliament. Those familiar with what takes place on the rare, now finally discontinued, appearances of the Sovereign at Westminster will perceive how closely precedent is preserved even to the incident of the rush of members to the House of Commons propelling the Speaker and the Mace to the Bar of the House of Lords:—

"The King of England performed yesterday the opening of Parliament in the Upper House. He was adorned with the Royal cloak and wore his crown; he was surrounded by his great officers of State; he took his seat; the lords and bishops did the same, and then he ordered the members of the Lower House to be called. They rushed tumultuously *(tumultuairement)* into the Upper House, as the mob does in the hall of audience at the Paris Parliament, when the ushers have been called. They remained on the other side of a barrier which closes the pit where the Lords sit, their Speaker standing in the middle.

"The King of England then began his harangue. This harangue lasted nearly a quarter of an hour, and was very well delivered by the King, near whom I happened to be, and was translated to me by Milord Beleze (Bellasys). One thing I did not like: he had it all ready written in his hand, and very often looked at his paper, almost as if he had read it. I was informed that such was the custom in England, the reason being that the King may not expose himself to the laughter of the people by stopping short through loss of memory. Preachers in the pulpit do the same. If the Chancellor, whom his gout prevented from being present, had been able to perform his duty, the King would have been prompted by him from behind."

The fancy lingers fondly over our Lord Halsbury in the prompter's box with "the book" of the Queen's Speech in his hand. That I must leave to the imagination of F. C. G.



LORD HALSBURY AS PROMPTER.

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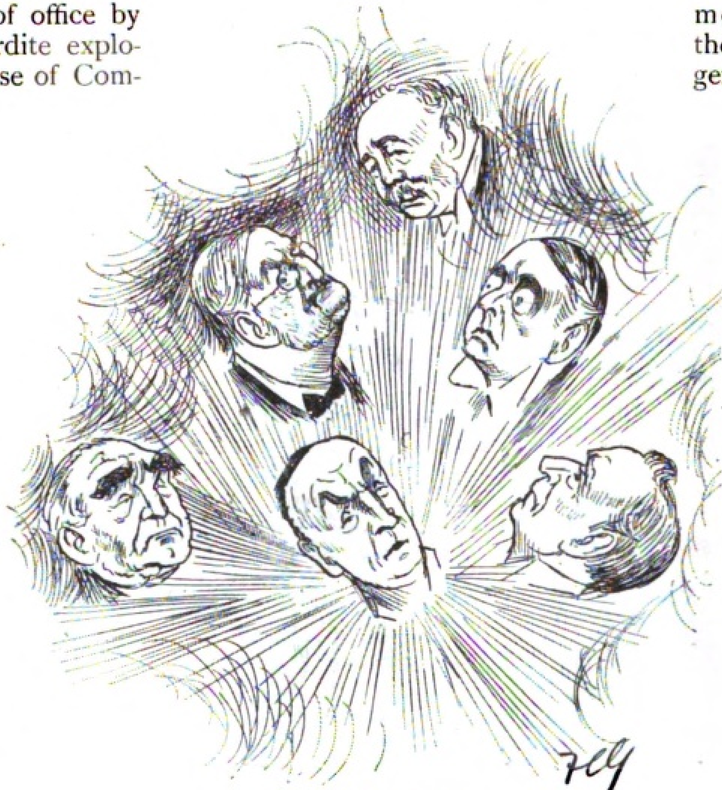
From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

LIX.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE NEWS TO GOTHENBURG.

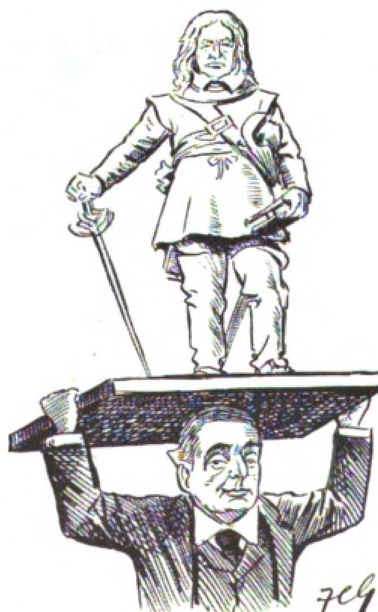
EHEU! fugaces. It is five years ago this very month of June that Lord Rosebery's Government was blown out of office by a cordite explosion in the House of Commons. It chanced that on the night this befell, Mr. Gladstone and a considerable number of members of the last Parliament in which he sat were far away from Westminster. They had gone to attend the opening of the Kiel Canal, and were homeward bound when the momentous news was flashed under sea. The *Tantallon Castle*, with Mr. Gladstone and other members of either House on board, was at Gothenburg when the telegram came. It was in fragmentary form, and so oddly mixed up with announcement made on the same evening by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman that the Duke of Cambridge had been induced to retire from the post of Commander-in-Chief, that defeat of the Government seemed a consequential event.



A CORDITE EXPLOSION.

That a Government having got rid of the Duke should straightway get rid of itself was explicable only on the principle of the Japanese hari-kari. However, that was all we could make out in Gothenburg, and had to possess our souls in patience till the *Tantallon Castle* slowed up off Gravesend, and Sir Donald Currie's agent came on board with an armful of newspapers.

There was a tremendous rush for them by the passengers, only Mr. Gladstone appearing indifferent. For more than sixty years he had lived in the vortex of public life. Now, whether Ministries stood or fell, whether Parliaments were dissolved or went their way, was a matter of minor interest to him. Of much more moment was his study of the Danish language undertaken since, ten days earlier, the *Tantallon Castle* slowly crept out of the foggy Thames into the open sea. It was with difficulty Mr. Gladstone could be made to select a journal from the heap. He walked off with it under his arm with an almost bored look upon his face. In the cabin men were thronging round any so fortunate to have an open newspaper in his hand. For Mr. Gladstone the news would keep till he got to his state cabin.



THE CROMWELL STATUE.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

Another echo from Westminster that reached the *Tantallon Castle*, this earlier time at anchor at Kiel, related to the statue of Oliver Cromwell, again in the current Session the subject of animated debate in the

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House of Commons. Mr. Herbert Gladstone, in 1895 First Commissioner of Works, submitted with the Civil Service Estimates a small sum on account of erecting a statue to the Lord Protector within the precincts of Parliament. It was hotly opposed by Mr. Justin McCarthy, then leading the Irish Nationalist Party.

As Mr. Arthur Balfour was reminded last February, when his own First Commissioner of Works was charged with having found a public site for a Cromwell statue, the Irish members five years ago received powerful support from the then Leader of the Opposition and his followers. So effective was the onslaught that, the vote having been carried by a bare majority, the Government hastily abandoned the project, not to be revived till Mr. Balfour and the gentlemen who conscientiously voted against it in 1895 came into power.

THE INFANT ROSCIUS—MR. W. REDMOND.

At Kiel the late Speaker, Lord Peel, came on board the *Tantallon Castle* to pay his respects to Mr. Gladstone. They had not met for some time. The air was electrical with the buzzing of great events at home and on the Continent.

"And what do you think he talked about?" Lord Peel asked me when he left the state room where Mr. Gladstone had for fully ten minutes been earnestly conversing. "Why! about Oliver Cromwell."

At the luncheon table the same day Mr. Gladstone was still full of the subject. "I am not sure," he said, "that if I had been in the House I should have voted with Herbert for the statue. I admit that Cromwell was one of the biggest men who wielded power in this country. Never actually King, no crowned monarch has exceeded the measure of his autocracy. The blot on his character I can never overlook or forgive was the Irish massacres. I hold that the Irish members were fully justified in their opposition to the vote."

An opposition, as we have seen, renewed five years later under those altered circumstances, recurrence of which endear the House of Commons to the mind of the student of mankind.

In the interesting speech in which Mr. Balfour this year justified what five years ago he had hotly and indignantly denounced he spoke disrespectfully of Carlyle's monumental work on Cromwell. In this view he was at one with Mr. Gladstone. "Carlyle's Cromwell," said the old man eloquent, "is a piece of pure fetichism."

TREES FOR THE TERRACE.

The Terrace of the House of Commons maintained this Session its favour in the eyes of London Society. It certainly has many claims to pre-eminence in that field. It is secluded, though accessible. The scene up and down the river, with Lambeth Palace flooded in the light of the setting sun, is exceedingly beautiful. Some of the men, sitting at tables, strolling about, or leaning on the wall of the Terrace, bear the best-known names in England. Moreover, for ladies, wives and daughters of members or their bosom friends, there is, whilst they sip tea and toy with strawberries, a certain subtle consciousness that they are, in degree, assisting at the making of laws and of history. At the very moment they, with tea-cup extended towards the hostess, are saying, "Thank you; only one piece, please," Mr. Caldwell may be addressing a crowded House from above the gangway, or that infant Roscius of the Parliamentary stage, Mr. W. Redmond, may be thundering defiance from below it.

For womankind the attractions of the situation are, quite unintentionally, increased by a certain stern, not to say aggressive, line of demarcation. Just as boating on the Thames you come at some quiet spot upon a half-submerged post (generally on the slant) displaying the legend "Danger," so at the eastward end of the Terrace, near the main entrance, upstands a board bearing the strange device, "For members only." No female footstep, however small the imprint, may pass the line marked by this symbol of man's exclusiveness. Here, in haughty solitude, sit the Benedicts of the House of Commons, Colonel Mark Lockwood, Colonel Saunderson, and the like—men who hold that there is a place for everything and that everybody, especially woman, should be in her place.

A NEW STAIRCASE.

It was this spirit of exclusiveness that led to the adoption of what is known as the new staircase. Visitors to Benares will remember how on walking down any of the passages

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to the Ganges leading to the ghats, the natives returning shrink back against the wall, lest by accident they should suffer contamination by touch even of the hem of the garment of the unbeliever. In unconscious development of this feeling, a section of members accustomed to frequent the guarded inclosure complained of obstruction on the staircase leading from the Terrace to the corridors and lobbies of the House. Going or coming about the business of the State they were, they complained, hampered by women, who always walked in the middle of the staircase, showing no inclination to "make a gangway."

It was hoped that this objection being pressed would result in the closing against women of this approach to the Terrace. So it did. But the authorities of the House, being all married men, were constrained to meet the difficulty with due regard to the rights of woman. This was done by the costly expedient of making a new staircase, by which cavalier members now escort the fair guests whom they have invited to tea on the Terrace.

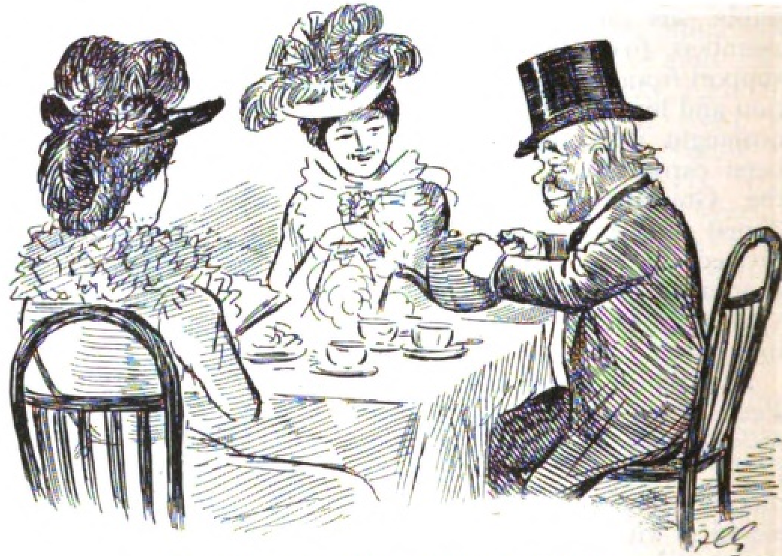
THE PEERS' PORTION.

This has an unforeseen advantage. Not only does it land the ladies on the scene at a spot distant from the male inclosure, which it is undesirable further to allude to, but it brings them in closer contiguity to the peers. There are, probably, many members of the House of Commons who are unaware of the fact that the House of Lords share with them the privilege of the Terrace. The western and bleaker end of the long promenade is the patrimony of the peers. They may an' they please—a few do—secure a table in advance, and take tea in solitary dignity. Or they may give little tea parties of their own, just as if they were commoners. As a matter of fact, noble lords frequenting the Terrace at tea-time prefer to join tables set at the liveliest end of the Terrace.

One exception to this rule made memorable the ordinary Session of last year. All of a summer afternoon the Lord High Chancellor was observed presiding at a tea-table round which clustered a dream of fair women. He did not wear his wig and gown, but nothing else was lacking to the grace and dignity with which he managed the large brown teapot necessitated by the breadth of his hospitality.

WHY NOT TREES?

There is one possible and appropriate addition to the attractiveness of the Terrace as a summer evening lounge for tired legislators so obvious, that it is a marvel it has been overlooked. Why should not the long, unlovely length of the flagged pavement be broken up by pots and tubs of flowering shrubs? The resources of Kew Gardens are not exhausted. At trifling expense Sir T. Thistleton Dyer, being duly authorized, could make the Terrace of the House of Commons blossom like the rose. The balustrade overlooking the river seems created for the special purpose of showing how fair are the flowers that bloom in Kew Gardens. On the terraces and by the hall doors of country houses it is a common thing to see masses of colour overtopping big vases. Why should the terrace of the town house of the legislator be left forlorn?



THE LORD CHANCELLOR WIELDING THE TEA-POT.

Like the quality of mercy, such a display of foliage and colour overlooking London's greatest highway would be twice blessed, blessing those privileged to frequent the Terrace and those who, passing up and down the river in penny steamers, longingly look on.

UNCONSIDERED TRIFLES.

There lie hidden to-day in a muniment room in Victoria Tower, Westminster, a collection of historical documents whose personal history is not less romantic

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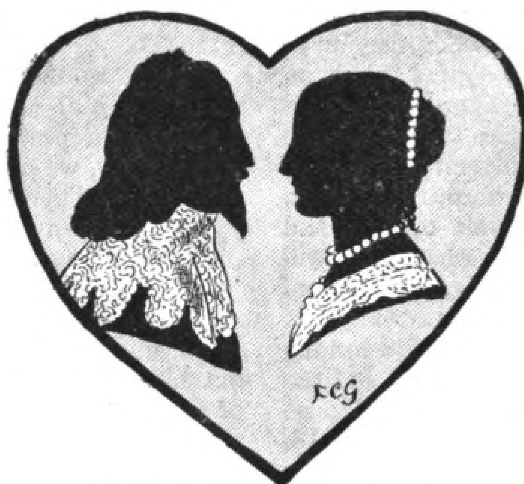
than the narratives they record. When, in 1834, fire broke out in the old Palace of Westminster, one of the officers of the House of Lords bethought him of certain bundles of musty papers dumped down in an ancient annex. Tradition had handed down to the staff the impression that these documents were exceedingly valuable, which to the official mind fully accounted for their being hidden away in a cellar. The officer made gallant and successful efforts to save them. Being rescued they straightway fell into their old condition of disregard. While the new Houses of Parliament were being built the bundles were shifted about from shed to shed to suit the convenience of the workmen. When the building was completed the hapless treasure-trove was carted into the basement story of the offices of the House of Lords, which, running parallel with the river at something below its level, was recognised as the very place in which to store precious papers.

More than a quarter of a century later a gentleman engaged upon an historical work asked permission to make search in the House of Lords for any papers bearing upon the subject. He was courteously let loose in this river cellar, and had not been there many days before he discovered a veritable Klondike of papers relating in intimate fashion to some of the most critical and interesting epochs in English history, dating from 1479 to 1664.



CHARLES I. AND HENRIETTA MARIA.

THE LOVE-LETTERS OF A KING AND QUEEN.

In his "History of the Rebellion"—meaning the establishment of the Commonwealth—Lord Clarendon, writing of Naseby fight, reports how "in the end the King was compelled to quit the field, and to leave Fairfax master of all his foot, cannons, and baggage, amongst which was his own cabinet, where his most secret papers were, and letters between the Queen and him." Here, among these unconsidered bundles, treated for centuries as if they had been dirty linen, lay perdue these love-letters passing between the hapless King and his wife Henrietta, whose portraits, limned by the hand of Vandyck, adorned through dark days of the past winter the walls of Burlington House.

The Puritans, with malicious intent, printed and circulated these letters, just as, after the Tuileries was sacked, the correspondence of Napoleon III. and the Empress, found in private chambers, was given to the greedy mob. The French Imperial fugitives did not come so well out of the ordeal as do their seventeenth century predecessors. Charles I. was a bad King, but these letters, lately rescued out of the abyss of centuries, show him in a gentle light. The Queen is equally tender in the dark hour of adversity. Both write in cipher, the secret of which was not withheld from the prying eyes of the Puritans, whose transcript of the letters now lies hidden from the world in the solitude of Victoria Tower.

Queen Henrietta uses the olden French familiar to the readers of Montaigne's Essays. Writing on the 16th of January, 1643, "au Roy Mon Seigneur," from an unnamed place, she says (being translated): "My dear Heart, I made an account to depart yesterday, but the winds were so boisterous that my goods and luggage could not be sent aboard to-day. Howsoever I hope it will be done to-morrow. If the wind serves I mean to be gone on Thursday, God willing. I have so much unexpected business now upon my departure, which causes me to be extremely troubled with the headache, and to make use of another which I would have done myself, but that I have many letters to write into France. Watt being come thence, I shall only tell you that he hath brought me all that I could desire from thence. Farewell, my dear Heart."

KING CHARLES.

"The King my lord," writing from Oxford, "To my Wyfe, 26 March, 1645, by Sakfield," thus discourses, with kingly variety of spelling: "Deare hart, I could not get thy Dispaches wch Petit brought before yesterday wch I red with wonder anufe to fynde thee interpret my letter, marked 16, as if I had not beene well satisfied with something in thy letter by Pooly. I confess that I expressed anger in that letter, but it was by

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complaining to thee not of thee, and indeed when I am accused of concealing my Affaires from thee either by negligence or worse I cannot bee well pleased and though I am behoulding to thy love for not believing I am not the more obliged to my accusers' goodwills; albeit the effects thereof (by thy kyndeness) is most welcome to mee, and certainly I know nothing less in thy power than to make me be displeased with thee: I have beene and am seldom other then angry with myselfe for not expressing my Affection to thee according to my intentions. So far have I alwais beene from taking anything vnkyndly of thee; as for my desyring thee to keepe my Dispaches it was in particular and not in generall conserning those of Irland, not knowing whether thou thought secrecy in that business so requiset as I know it to be, for many ar of that nature as ar fitt to be showen and wher they ar of an undouted kynde these I confess needs no items; but where I am not sure of thy concurring opinion there to give thee a causion may show my want of judgemt but not of confidence in thee: In a word, Sweet hart, I cannot be other than kynde to thee and confident of thee; and say what thou will thou must and does know this to be trew of him who is eternally Thyne."

A ROMANCE OF THE PRAYER-BOOK.

Another discovery made among precious lumber stowed in out-of-the-way chambers in the House of Lords was the long-lost MS. Prayer-book sent to the peers by Charles II., to assist them in compiling the Prayer-book. The volume has a curious history. During the Commonwealth an order was issued abolishing the Book of Common Prayer. One of the first proceedings of Charles II. on the restoration of the monarchy was to appoint a commission to "Review the Book of Common Prayer, comparing the same with the most ancient liturgies which have been used in the Church in the primitive and purest times, and to prepare such alterations and additions as they thought fit to offer." When Parliament passed an Act re-establishing the Church this MS. volume was ordered to be appended thereto.

This condition was observed, and up to the beginning of the century the documents remained intact. One day a clergyman asked and obtained permission to consult the MS. Prayer-book on a doctrinal point that perturbed his soul. The boon was granted by a sympathetic Black Rod. But, alack! the temptation, greater than any resisted by St. Anthony, proved too much for the holy man. Soon after he had departed it was found the precious volume had also gone. Nothing was heard of it for many years. Whether pricked by conscience the rev. gentleman voluntarily returned the book, or whether, tracked to his sanctum, it was rescued from his felonious grasp, does not appear in the loosely kept records of the day. It is, however, certain that by the year 1819 it was restored. There is record that it was seen and handled in 1824. After the burning of the Houses of Parliament ineffective search was made for it. Some twenty-seven years ago, it being found that the Old Tower at the back of Abingdon Street was inconveniently stuffed with old Acts of Parliament, they were removed to Victoria Tower. Amongst them was found this priceless MS., which has again relapsed into the condition of the forgotten.

Surely an honourable place might be found for it in the manuscript-room of the British Museum, where, albeit through a glass darkly, we might see its face.

KING EDWARD'S PRAYER-BOOK.

There is an elder, even more historic, Prayer-book still a-missing. When in the fifth and sixth year of his reign Edward VI. caused to be passed a statute establishing the Protestant religion throughout his realm, it was ordered that the Book of Common Prayer, concurrently compiled, should be "annexed and joined to this present statute." The precedent was, as we have seen, followed in the reign of Charles II. with equally calamitous results.

When, in 1661, Charles II.'s Commissioners came to look for this Prayer-book it was nowhere to be found. There was the original statute duly preserved, but the Prayer-book had disappeared. There is on record a letter from John Browne, the Clerk of the Parliament in 1683, addressed to one of his colleagues, wherein he writes: "In Q. Marie's tyme the Common Praier Booke which was annexed to the Act was taken away."

The first body of Royal Commissioners on historical MS. (amongst the few survivors are Lord Salisbury and Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice) were of opinion that this thrice-precious MS. would some day be found amongst the medley of MSS. judiciously housed in the basement story of the offices of the House of Lords. Has it been found, or has the matter been forgotten in the pressure of business that weighs upon the peers?

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