From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

LX.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

ONE of the characteristics of the House of Commons that endear it to the student of manners is its absolute freedom from snobbishness. It is no respecter of persons. Trojan and Tyrean are one to it. What it likes above all things is a man of capacity, of simple manner, with the gift of conveying information and argument in lucid speech. Whether he be born heir to a peerage or whether he passed some years of early life in a coal mine affects its judgment only in the direction of securing more indulgent attention to one of the latter class.

It is human and English to the extent that, at the bottom of its heart, it loves a lord. But if strained imagination may go the length of conjuring a stupid man bearing a lordly title, his attempts at engaging its favourable attention would not meet with greater success than if his father had been a tailor. The case of Lord Randolph Churchill illustrates the situation. Undoubtedly the fact that his father was a duke gave him a favourable opening. Had he failed to seize and make the most of it, an armful of dukes would not have helped him. Had he come of a line of tradesmen he would, perhaps a little more slowly but inevitably, have reached the position he eventually won in the House of Commons.

One of the most successful speeches of the present Session was delivered by a Welsh member who, according to his own modest record, set forth in the pages of "Dod," served as a schoolmaster in Wales, and, coming to London, became assistant master in a Board School, finally advancing to a tutorship at Oxford. Yet Mr. William Jones, unexpectedly interposing in debate on the question of the establishment of a Catholic University in Dublin, instantly commanded the attention of the House, which, filling as he went on, sat in the attitude of entranced attention familiar in moments when it was addressed by John Bright or Mr. Gladstone.

A WELSH ORATOR, MR. WILLIAM JONES, M.P.

The secret of this rare triumph is that Mr. Jones very rarely interposes in debate; that he knows what he is talking about; that his lips are touched with the fire of that eloquence possible only to the Celt; and that his manner is modest almost to the verge of timidity. There are men who would barter coronets or great wealth for the reception spontaneously accorded to the unassuming Welsh schoolmaster. In the House of Commons neither rank nor money could purchase it.

AN EARLY PORTRAIT AND A FORECAST.

Many people are familiar with a description of the personal appearance of Mr. Gladstone in his earliest days in the House of Commons without knowing the source of its origin. "Mr. Gladstone's appearance and manners," it was written in the Session of 1838, "are much in his favour. He is a fine-looking man. He is about the usual height and of good figure. His countenance is mild and pleasant, and has a highly intellectual expression. His eyes are clear and quick, his eyebrows are dark and rather prominent. There is not a dandy in the House but envies what Truefitt would call his fine head of jet-black hair. It is always carefully parted from the crown downwards to his brow, where it is tastefully shaded. His features are small and regular, and his complexion must be a very unworthy witness if he does not possess an abundant stock of health."

The quotation is from a work entitled "Random Recollections of the Lords and Commons." It was published in 1838 anonymously, a fortunate arrangement, since it permitted the author that freer scope of description and criticism that makes his work precious to succeeding generations. I have the good fortune to possess a copy of the first edition in its old-fashioned, paper-boarded covers. Looking up the familiar quotation, the only passage of the book that survives in current literature, it is amusing to find this shrewd observer's estimate of the possibilities of the young member for Newark.

"He is," wrote Mr. James Grant—there is no secret now about the authorship of the work—"a man of very considerable talent, but has nothing approaching to genius. His abilities are much more the result of an excellent education and of mature study than of any prodigality on the part of Nature in the distribution of her mental gifts. I have no idea that he will ever acquire the reputation of a great statesman. His views are not sufficiently profound or enlarged for that. . . . He is plausible even when most in error. When it suits himself or his party he can apply himself with the strictest closeness to the real point at issue; when to evade that point is deemed most politic no man can wander from it more widely."

That last passage is excellent. Written more than sixty years ago, it exactly describes Mr. Gladstone's Parliamentary practice up to the date of his final appearance at the table.

PITT'S MAIDEN SPEECH.

Mr. Grant, I believe, lived long enough to see his early judgment of Mr. Gladstone's capabilities falsified. Prophesying before he knew, he had, however, the satisfaction of erring in distinguished company. George Selwyn heard Pitt's first speech in the House of Commons, and, writing to Lord Carlisle, under date 13th June, 1781, he says, "I heard yesterday young Pitt; I came down into the House to judge for myself. He is a young man who will undoubtedly make his way in the world by his abilities. But to give him credit for being very extraordinary upon what I heard yesterday would be absurd. If the oration had been pronounced equally well by a young man whose name was not of the same renown, and if the matter and expression had come without that prejudice, all which could have been said was that he was a sensible and promising young man."

LORD ROSEBERY.

"The Earl of Rosebery has an aversion which nothing but some powerful consideration can overcome to take any active part in great national questions. He acquits himself in his addresses to the House in a very respectable manner. He speaks with great emphasis, as if every sentence he uttered were the result of deep conviction. The earnestness of his manner always insures him an attentive hearing, and adds much to the effect of what he says. His speeches usually indicate an acquaintance with their subject. His elocution would be considered good were it not that its effect is impaired by his very peculiar voice—so peculiar that I know not how to describe it. All I can say respecting it is that a person who has once heard it will never forget it.

"He always speaks with sufficient loudness to be audible in all parts of the House. He seldom falters, and still more rarely hesitates for want of suitable phraseology. His language is in good taste, without being polished. His addresses never extend to any length, but they are comprehensive. There is generally as much matter-of-fact or argument in them as a more wordy speaker would swell out to double the extent.

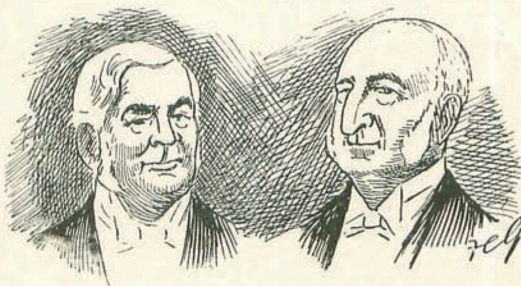
"His action requires but little notice. He is a quiet speaker. His body stands nearly as still as if he were transfixed. He now and then moves both hands at once just as if he were waving them to some friend he recognised at a distance.

"The noble Earl is slightly below the middle height, with a moderate inclination to corpulency. His complexion partakes more of sallowness than of any other quality I could name. His hair has something of a greyish colour. In the features of his face there is nothing peculiar. He looks a good-natured man, and I believe he is so in reality. He is in his fifty-fifth year."

If he were alive now he would be in his 117th. As the reader, misled by the opening sentence, would begin to suspect, this pen-and-ink sketch does not refer to the Earl of Rosebery who fills so large and luminous a space in the closing years of the Victorian era. It was his grandfather, the fourth Earl, who sat in the first Parliament of the Queen, and in succeeding ones up to the year 1868. The sketch, penned in 1838, is taken from the same lively volume that enshrines the more familiar portrait of young William Ewart Gladstone.

AN AFTER-DINNER SPEECH.

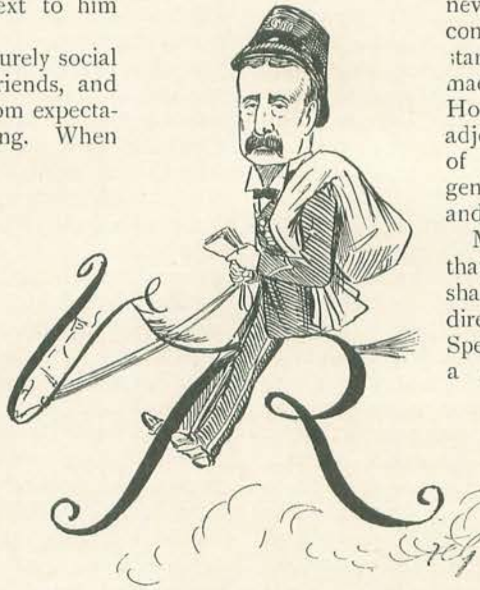
Lord Ashbourne is not only a charming after-dinner speaker himself, but was at least on one evening the cause of a *tour de*



POST-PRANDIAL HUMOUR.
LORD ASHBOURNE AND MR. CHAUNCEY DEPEW.

force in after-dinner speaking by another. On the occasion alluded to Lord Ashbourne was, as he often is, a host in himself. The dinner was given at the United Service Club, to welcome Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, on one of those not infrequent visits to London with which he tempers his exile as Her Majesty's Minister at Madrid. The Marquis of Londonderry sat on Lord Ashbourne's right, and next to him Mr. Chauncey Depew.

It was a small and purely social dinner amongst old friends, and nothing was remoter from expectation than speech-making. When the servants had left the room, to everyone's surprise the host rose to propose a toast to the health of the Marquis of Londonderry and Her Majesty's Minister at Madrid.



LORD LONDONDERRY (THE NEW POSTMASTER-GENERAL).

I never saw a man so annoyed as was Lord Londonderry. He had come out for a pleasant evening, and here was thrust upon him the burden of after-dinner speech-making. If coals had suddenly gone down half a crown in price his countenance could not have more nearly resembled their colour. Drummond Wolff, on the contrary, was quite elate. A charming after-dinner speaker, he welcomed this unexpected opportunity of displaying his talent.

Lord Ashbourne went on for some time, expatiating on the high qualities of Lord Londonderry, and extolling the diplomatic talent of Drummond Wolff. "With your permission," he added, in an abruptly concluding sentence, "I will call upon Mr. Chauncey Depew to respond to the toast."

The surprise was complete, not least for Chauncey Depew. But in a moment he was on his legs, and made response which for wit and appropriateness could not have been exceeded by an ordinary man with the advantage of a week's preparation.

PUTTING THE HOUSE IN ORDER.

Mr. Duncombe, with the courage and the authority of a still young member, has drafted a somewhat elaborate scheme for the further reform of procedure in the House of Commons. He has sat for Egremont long enough to have been present when the House was brought to the verge of a curious crisis. The Speaker being indisposed, the Chairman of Ways and Means took the chair. One day it was whispered that the Chairman had been attacked by the prevailing scourge. If he were laid up, the Speaker meanwhile confined to his room, chaos would come. Parliament, in its wisdom, never contemplated such concatenation of circumstance. No provision was made to meet it, and the House must needs stand adjourned till one or other of the right honourable gentlemen recovered health and strength.

Mr. Duncombe proposes that the Standing Order shall be amended in the direction of giving the Speaker power to nominate a member who, in the absence of the Chairman of Ways and Means, shall be authorized to perform his duties and exercise his full powers. Such action is to be taken by the Speaker upon receiving a written request from the Leader of the House.

Whilst the adaption of this new rule would avert what might possibly be a grave inconvenience to public business consequent on the simultaneous illness of the Speaker and his Deputy, Mr. Duncombe probably has in view another and more familiar hitch. At the commencement of every Session the Speaker nominates three members to serve upon occasion as Chairman of Ways and Means. The appointment does not carry with it authority to submit the closure. The consequence is that, when the Chairman of Ways and Means is temporarily absent, whether through illness or after an exceptionally long spell in the chair, the work of Committee must be carried on without the inestimable advantage of the once-contemned closure.

Such state of things frequently befalls in the effort to wind up a Session. The Chairman of Committees having sat through a dozen or sixteen hours at a stretch must take a rest. If the Prorogation is to be accomplished at a desired date, the Committee

of Supply must be kept pegging away at the Votes. There are temporary Chairmen at hand, but they may not put the question involving the closure. Obstruction is consequently for the time master of the situation.

REARRANGING THE WEEK'S WORK.

Another reform suggested by Mr. Duncombe affects the established order of business through the week. At present, Government business has absolute precedence on Mondays and Thursdays, whilst Friday is set apart for Committee of Supply. Tuesday nights, at least up to Easter, are the property of private members, who use the occasion to bring forward notices of motion on miscellaneous topics. Wednesdays also belong to the private member for the purpose of furthering Bills.

Mr. Duncombe has a really ingenious and, from some points of view, an attractive plan of rearranging business. He would have Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday allotted for Government business. Instead of meeting on Wednesday at noon and sitting till six he would have the arrangement transferred to Friday. Wednesday being transformed into an ordinary night sitting should take the place of Friday, inasmuch as it would be devoted to Supply.

This is an innocent-looking plan, but the private member is not so simple as in individual cases he looks. Greedy Governments have long poached on his domain with morning sittings and the like, leading up to the flat burglary of appropriating all his time after Whitsuntide. The adoption of Mr. Duncombe's plan would make a final end of the private member and his efforts at legislation. It would mean the practical adjournment of the House after Wednesday night's sitting. Members not personally interested in the motion set down for Thursday night, or the Bill having first place on the Orders for Friday, would compensate themselves for close attendance on the first three days of the week by making holiday from Thursday to Monday afternoon.

MR. CALDWELL, THE PRIVATE MEMBER FLY WHO WON'T WALK INTO THE PARLOUR.

Whether the country would be materially the worse for this hamstringing of amateur legislation is a delicate question that need not be here discussed. I believe Mr. Balfour is disposed to view the scheme with favour. It is quite certain that the private member, representing the fly, will not walk into the parlour the door of which is so invitingly opened by the ingenuous inheritor of a familiar Parliamentary name.

THE SPEAKER'S DINNERS.

Nothing has been heard in the present Parliament of a movement which was a source of some embarrassment to Mr. Gully's predecessor in the Chair. In accordance with immemorial usages members of the House of Commons invited to dine with the Speaker in the Session are required to wear Court dress. To some members this is, whether from inadequate means or conscientious objections, a bar to acceptance of the prized privilege. In the Parliament chosen at the General Election of 1880 there was a considerable accession of what are known as working-men members. These were invited in due turn, the Speaker judiciously handicapping personal preference by invoking alphabetical order.

In view of the essential condition of Court dress the Labour members were obliged to absent themselves from the hospitable board. A petition was got up, signed by many more than those personally concerned, begging the Speaker to permit variations from the rule. But the Speaker of the House of Commons is the custodian of great traditions. He might as reasonably be expected to appear in the Chair without wig and gown as to countenance at his official table guests who wore not the wedding garment.

FREE AND EASY.

Mr. Peel's kindly instincts and hospitable intent on one occasion got over the difficulty. In supplement to his Wednesday evening banquets, when members cluster round him in Court dress, he gave a non-official dinner at which—as in quite other circumstances at Lord Onslow's charming dinners in Richmond Terrace — it was optional for guests to present themselves either in morning or evening dress. There were thirty-six present, twelve representing in the House of Commons Labour constituencies. Each of these was sandwiched between

two other members of the House, and a most delightful evening was spent.

Among the Welsh members was the gentleman known in the Principality as "Mabon." Someone suggested that the honourable member could sing. "Mabon" blushed assent. The Speaker's pleasure being taken, "Mabon" rose to his feet and trolled forth a lightsome Welsh ditty.

In the dining-room at Speaker's House three centuries of Speakers look down from the walls on the more or less festive dinner-scene. What they thought of this particular occasion is, for obvious reasons, not recorded.

"MABON."

TAKING THE OATH.

Members of the present House of Commons observing the not infrequent occurrence of new members, unchallenged, electing to make declaration instead of taking the oath, find it difficult to realize the storm that raged round the question in the days of Mr. Bradlaugh. That devout men like the late Lord Randolph Churchill, the happily still living Sir Henry Wolff, and Sir John Gorst should have fought Mr. Bradlaugh's claim tooth and nail is not a matter of marvel, more especially as Mr. Gladstone was committed to its support. What is more significant of deeply-stirred feeling at the time is the fact that scores of Liberals, just returned at the General Election in the train of Mr. Gladstone, revolted, dealing the Government a blow on the very threshold of its career, from which it never recovered.

The question, in a different form, was earlier fought, with equal bitterness, in respect of the admission to Parliament of Jews and Roman Catholics. Now it is quite a common thing to see a newly-elected member standing at the Table wearing his hat as he takes the oath, in sign of his Jewish faith.

PROTESTANTS AND CATHOLICS.

I wonder how many members of the present House know that within the last half century there were two forms of oath, one for the Protestant, one for the Roman Catholic? Mr. Gladstone remembered the scene in the House of Commons on a November day in 1837, when the newly-elected Parliament was sworn in. Then, as now, the performance was hastened by carrying it on in batches. As many members as could manage clustering together to touch the Bible repeated the oath in chorus.

I gathered from Mr. Gladstone's story that in those days members repeated the oath aloud. When opposition to Roman Catholics enjoying full civil rights was overcome—and Pitt, it will be remembered, was, after strenuous effort, beaten on the point by that eminent statesman George III. — Protestants insisted upon retention of the privilege of denouncing Roman Catholics in the oath of allegiance taken at the Table of the House of Commons. It was, Mr. Gladstone said, a most uncompromising performance, Roman Catholics being described as idolaters destined to everlasting perdition.

What engraved the circumstance on the tablets of his memory, legible after an interval of sixty years, was that at a table adjoining that at which the young member for Newark and a dozen other stalwart Protestants were vigorously cursing their Catholic colleagues stood Daniel O'Connell, quietly taking the form of oath prepared for members of his faith.

"He could not fail," said Mr. Gladstone, "to have heard the chorus of our charitable performance."

SUB-EDITING QUESTIONS.

There are few things in a small way more irritating to members of the House of Commons than the censorship their questions undergo at the hands of the clerks at the Table. It is a wholesome restriction that the manuscript of all questions addressed to Ministers shall be handed in at the Table. They are read, usually by the second clerk, and sent on to the printer, sometimes with serious emendations. It is a common occurrence for members, especially gentlemen from Ireland, to make public complaint on submitting their question that its text has been so manipulated as to have lost its point. That is to say, in inquiring about delay in delivery of letters at Clonakilty or Ballyma-

hooly, the Clerk at the Table has struck out a broad hint that the Minister to whom the question is addressed was guiltily cognizant of the secret of the sudden death of a connexion on his wife's side.

So deeply rooted is the feeling of resentment at tampering with literary work to whose composition a full hour may have been devoted, that this Session a member so little given to revolt as Mr. Kimber came in contact with the authority of the Chair by insistence on the reinstatement of the original text of his question. In this case there was no wanton and groundless insinuation of foul play suffered by a mother-in-law. The Clerk at the Table thought some passages were irrelevant and struck them out. Mr. Kimber complained that the first intimation of the matter he received was when he opened his copy of the Orders and found his prize prose-poem of a question reduced to baldest limits. He attempted to graft upon the stem of his remarks the suppressed cutting, so that the House might judge between him and the Clerk at the Table. The Speaker was down on him like a thunderbolt, frustrating a familiar device.

In this particular case the Speaker admitted that he had not been made aware of drastic dealing with the manuscript. But, according to his constant ruling, he peremptorily declined to permit discussion of the procedure at the Table or repetition of the words struck out of the question. Mr. Kimber was compelled to accept the changeling which bore his name in the list of questions, though, as he dolefully said, he was not able to recognise it.

PREPARING FOR A SITTING.

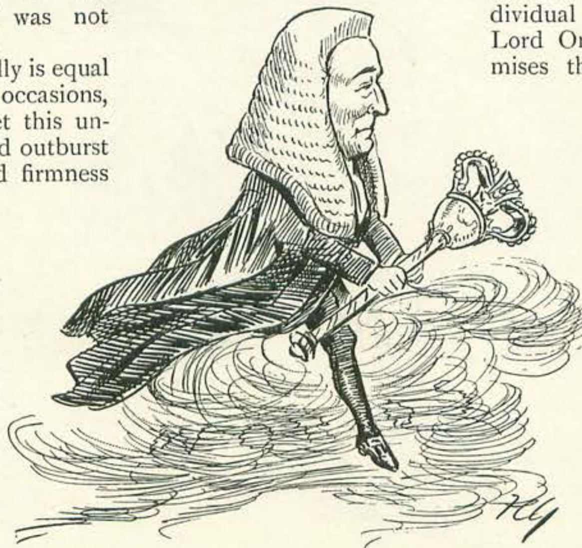
Mr. Gully is equal to all occasions, and met this unexpected outburst with his accustomed firmness and urbanity. As a rule he is warned beforehand of anything in the wind by the simple process of a conference which precedes each sitting of the House. On every day the House meets the clerks at the Table have an audience of the Speaker. They draw his attention to any point of order likely to be raised in the course of the forthcoming sitting. The situation is discussed, precedents are looked up, and when the whirlwind rises the Speaker is prepared to ride upon it.

DOUBLE HONOURS.

The Earl of Onslow holds exceptional position in Parliament by reason of the fact that two of his ancestors became Speakers of the House of Commons. That is a matter of public record. There is another, less familiar, fact which establishes the unique position of the Under Secretary for the India Office. Twice has he moved the Address in the House of Lords.

The first occasion was the 5th of February, 1880, the principal topics of the Queen's Speech having reference to the capture and deposition of Cetewayo and the Afghan invasion after the murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari. The second time was on the 19th of August, 1886, Parliament having met immediately after the General Election that smashed Home Rule and sent the Liberal Party into the wilderness. On that occasion the noble Earl was able to approve the decision announced in the Queen's Speech, that in view of the date Her Majesty abstained from recommending for the consideration of Parliament any measures save those essential to the conduct of the public service during the remainder of the year.

Invitation to move or second the Address in either House is a compliment highly prized. How it came about that it should be thus lavished upon an individual is not explained. Lord Onslow modestly surmises that Lord Salisbury forgot the honour had already been bestowed upon him. It is equally reasonable to suppose that the Premier cherished such pleased recollections of the glowing eloquence of the speech on the 5th February, 1880, that, like a person who shall here be nameless, he in August, 1886, "asked for more."



THE SPEAKER RIDING ON THE WHIRLWIND.

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

LXI.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

JORKINS IN THE COMMONS.

IT is not generally known that an institution which from time to time has loomed large and ominously in Parliamentary debate has ceased to exist. Whenever Sir John Gorst wanted to make flesh creep in the House of Commons he was accustomed to allude to the Committee of Council on Education. The mere writing or printing of the phrase will to the unaccustomed ear convey no idea of its effect when uttered by the Vice-President. It was generally evoked when any awkward question arose in debate or conversation on educational matters. The House learned to know when Sir John was coming to it. He leaned his elbow a little more heavily on the brass-bound box. His countenance was softened by a reverential look. His voice sank to the sort of whisper you sometimes hear in church. Then came the slowly accentuated syllables—the Committee of the Council on Education.

SIR JOHN GORST: "I WANT TO MAKE YOUR FLESH CREEP."

Nobody except Sir John knew of whom the Committee was composed, what it did, or where it sat. That only made its influence the greater, the citation of its name the more thrilling. Its function in connection with National Education was to shut up persistent inquirers and ward off inconvenient criticism or demand. It is an old device, certainly going as far back as the days of David Copperfield. The Committee of Council on Education played the part of Jorkins to the Vice-President's Spenlow. He would be ready—nay, was anxious—to concede anything demanded. But there was the Committee of the Council on Education. That, he was afraid, would prove inexorable, though at the same time he would not neglect an opportunity of bringing the matter under its notice.

The Committee of Council on Education is dead and buried. It ceased to exist by an amendment of the Education Act which, frivolous-minded people will recognise, appropriately came into operation on the 1st of April. But, as in the case of the grave of the faithful lovers, "out of his bosom there grew a wild briar and out of her bosom a rose," so from the sepulchre of the Committee of Council on Education has grown another body with another name. I believe it is actually composed of the same persons, including the President of the Council, the First Lord of the Treasury, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the principal Secretaries of State. Diligently following the example of its predecessor it never meets, nor is it ever consulted on matters connected with education.

By the wanton change of name the spell woven about its predecessor is broken. A potent influence for good is withdrawn from the House of Commons. The blow personally dealt at Sir John Gorst is in the worst sense of the word stunning. Mercifully the Act recognises the impossibility of the situation. Having abolished the Committee of Council on Education, it also makes an end of the Vice-President. Sir John will retain his title and his office through what remains of the life of the present Parliament. With its close a page will be turned over, and the House of Commons will know no more the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education.

THE LAY OF THE LAST V.-P.

THE JUDGE-ADVOCATE-GENERAL. This is another withdrawal of a prop of the Constitution following with alarming closeness on the ruling out of Ministerial ranks of the office of Judge-Advocate-General. Sir William Marriott was the last incumbent of the office who had a seat on the Treasury Bench. It was, as Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman put it at the time, "all owing to the exceeding devotion to his public duties" that extinction of the connection between the Judge-Advocate-General and the House of Commons was precipitated. When Mr. Gladstone's Government was formed in 1892 the office of Judge-Advocate-General was not filled up. After a while inquiries for reason of the abstention began to be made, and Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, then Secretary of State for War, was put up to reply. He explained how an arrangement had been made between the Treasury and the Judge-Advocate-General, whereby that official was to receive a sure and certain salary of £500 a year, with fees for business transacted up to the amount of another £500.

Early in the year 1892 the imminence of a General Election, with a prospect of rout of Ministers at the poll, overshadowed the House of Commons. No one knew what a day might bring forth in the shape of announcement of dissolution. Sir William Marriott resolved to make hay whilst the sun shone. Getting up early on the morning of the 1st of April, the opening day of the new financial year, he applied to the Treasury for his salary as Judge-Advocate-General, and received a cheque for £500. Pocketing this Sir William, according to the account of the Secretary of State for War, proceeded to attack the business of his office with such energy and public spirit that before August, when the Government were turned out, he had practically appropriated the £500 payable as fees for specific services. The consequence was that when the new Government came in they found that, for the rest of the financial year, closing on the 31st of March, 1893, there was no money at the Treasury available either as salary or fees for the Judge-Advocate-General. Sir William Marriott, lean kine among fat and slothful Ministers, had swallowed it all. Accordingly, no appointment to the office was made. Later Sir Francis Jeune undertook without additional salary to add the work to his duties as President of the Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Division of the High Court of Justice. This arrangement has been found to work so well that it has not been disturbed, and there has been a Minister the less on the Treasury Bench.

SIR WILLIAM MARRIOTT: "GUILELESSNESS."

AUDIENCE WITH THE QUEEN. An earlier distinguished Judge-Advocate-General was the late Mr. Cavendish Bentinck. His qualifications were negative, seeing that he was neither a judge, an advocate, nor a general. But he had voted straight ever since he was first returned for Taunton in 1865; had distinguished himself during debates on Irish Land and Church questions by howling at Mr. Gladstone; was a Bentinck, and must be provided for.

Sir George Osborne Morgan, who later filled the post in a Liberal Administration, was much impressed with its importance. He would find it difficult to understand how things muddle along since there is no Judge-Advocate-General in the House of Commons. The post certainly has a unique distinction, the history of which it would be curious to trace. All other of Her Majesty's Ministers desiring to have an interview with the Sovereign make humble application for permission to attend. The Judge-Advocate-General has the right to claim an audience whenever the business of his office makes one necessary or desirable.

MR. GLADSTONE'S EYES. Looking through Lewes's "Life of Goethe," I come upon a letter written by Thackeray forty-five years ago, in which he describes a visit to the Grand Old Man of Weimar. "His eyes," he writes, "were extraordinarily dark, piercing, and brilliant. I felt quite afraid before them, and recollect comparing them to the eyes of the hero of a certain romance, called 'Melnoth the Wanderer,' which used to alarm us boys thirty years ago—eyes of an individual who had made a bargain with a certain person, and at an extreme old age retained these eyes in all their awful splendour."

Not less a prominent feature in a striking countenance were Mr. Gladstone's eyes. They were the most deeply luminous, the

most fearfully flashing, I ever saw in a human face. Like everyone else who came in contact with him, Mr. Lecky was much struck by the phenomenon. In a notable passage written by way of preface to a new edition of his "Democracy and Liberty" he writes: "He had a wonderful eye—a bird-of-prey eye — fierce, luminous, and restless. 'When he differed from you,' a great friend and admirer of his once said to me, 'there were moments when he would give you a glance as if he would stab you to the heart.' There was something indeed in his eye in which more than one experienced judge saw dangerous symptoms of possible insanity. Its piercing glance added greatly to his eloquence, and was, no doubt, one of the chief elements of that strong personal magnetism which he undoubtedly possessed. Its power was, I believe, partly due to a rare physical peculiarity. Boehm, the sculptor, who was one of the best observers of the human face I have ever known, who saw much of Gladstone and carefully studied him for a bust, was convinced of this. He told me that he was once present when an altercation between him and a Scotch professor took place, and that the latter started up from the table to make an angry reply, when he suddenly stopped as if paralyzed or fascinated by the glance of Gladstone; and Boehm noticed that the pupil of Gladstone's eye was visibly dilating and the eyelid round the whole circle of the eye drawing back, as may be seen in a bird of prey."

A FLASHING EYE.

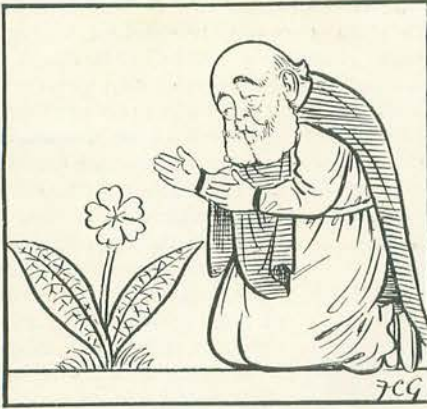
No one knowing Mr. Lecky, with his soft voice, his pathetic air of self-effacement, can imagine him saying these bitter things. He did not speak them, yet there they are, as he wrote them in the safe seclusion of his study. The picture is not drawn with effusively friendly hand. But no one familiar with Mr. Gladstone in his many moods can deny that there is much truth in the flaming picture.

MR. LECKY STRUCK BY A PHENOMENON.

I never but twice heard Mr. Gladstone speak with personal resentment of men opposed to him in the political arena. I forget the name of one of the subjects of his acrimony, though I have a clear impression that he was a person of no importance. The other is a noisy, frothy, self-seeking member of the present House of Commons. It was at Dalmeny, during one of the Midlothian campaigns, when the telegraph brought news of this gentleman's re-election, Mr. Gladstone offered an observation in those deep chest notes that marked his access of righteous indignation. Then I saw in his eye that flashing light which Mr. Boehm describes as having shrivelled up the Scotch professor. The expression was by no means uncommon whether he were on his legs in the House of Commons or seated at a dinner-table. But the awful lighting-up of his countenance invariably accompanied not reflections upon individuals but comment upon some outrage of the high principles, honour and obedience to which were infused in his blood.

THE PRIMROSE BUD.

In an extra-Parliamentary speech delivered in the course of the Session Lord Salisbury took the opportunity of extolling the Primrose League as an instrument of national good. In a gleam of hope he almost saw in it a means of amending and counteracting the inherent weaknesses of the British Constitution. This is interesting and amusing to those who remember the birth of the association. I recall a little dinner given at No. 2, Connaught Place, in the early eighties. The company numbered four, including the host, Sir Henry Wolff, and Sir John Gorst. Of the Fourth Party, Sir Henry Wolff was the only one who had associated himself in the promotion of the new Guild. To Lord Randolph Churchill it was an amusing enterprise. I well remember how he chaffed Sir Henry, being backed up by Sir John Gorst.



THE CULT OF THE PRIMROSE.

At that time neither Sir Henry Wolff nor Algernon Borthwick—now Lord Glenesk—had any idea to what proportions the grain of mustard seed they planted would grow. As for Lord Salisbury, who to-day almost drops into poetry in his adulation, it is more than probable that at this time he had never heard of it. If he had, "the image of the housemaid" would certainly have crossed his mind with an application disastrous to the new departure. At the dinner speaking Sir Henry Wolff laughingly defended himself from the attacks made by his colleagues deprecating serious intention in the matter. He and they lived long enough to see the Primrose League with all its — perhaps because of its—fantastic flummery grow into a political power, crystallizing the conservatism latent in the mind of woman, and cunningly directing her influence upon a certain order of male mind. If political services are to be crowned with meet reward, Lord Salisbury ought to make a duke of the man who invented the Primrose League.

MAIDEN SPEECHES.

There is a member of the Irish party in the present House of Commons who distinguished himself by delivering his maiden speech on the day he was sworn in and took his seat. It is a sound rule for the guidance of new members of commoner mould to sit silent through at least their first Session, profiting by opportunity of quietly studying the scene of future triumphs. It must be admitted that, in the case of three of the most illustrious commoners of the century, the rule was not observed. Pitt made his maiden speech within a month of taking his seat. Disraeli did not longer wait before he gave the House of Commons a taste of his quality. The first Parliament of Queen Victoria was opened on the 20th of November, 1837. On the 7th day of the following month the ringleted member for Maidstone, who came in at the General Election, delivered the historic speech with its angry, prophetic last words, "The time will come when you *shall* hear me."

By the way, Mr. Gladstone once told me—what I have never heard or seen stated on other authority—that he heard this speech. He distinctly remembered the bench on which Disraeli sat and the appearance of the new member. He did not say anything of the impression made upon him by the speech.

About Mr. Gladstone's maiden speech there long loomed misleading obscurity. It is generally believed, and Mr. Gladstone, supernaturally accurate on facts and figures, grew into acceptance of the belief, that he first addressed the House on the 3rd of June, 1833, on the subject of the emancipation of the West Indian slaves. The mistake doubtless arises from the circumstance that that particular speech involved a personal matter. Mr. Gladstone's father was a slave-owner in Demerara. His name was mentioned in debate, and his son defended him. In the compendious "Life of Gladstone," edited by Sir Wemyss Reid, Mr. Hurst conclusively shows, quoting passages from "The Mirror of Parliament," that Mr. Gladstone's maiden speech was delivered on the 21st of February, 1833, the subject-matter being a petition from Liverpool complaining of the bribery and corruption that marked the election of the previous year.

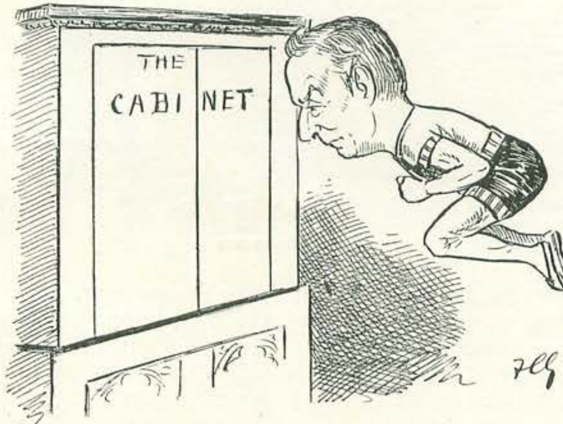
GLADSTONE'S AND PITT'S.

The circumstances attending Disraeli's first speech are matters of history. Mr. Gladstone's passed over apparently without exciting any attention. According to one of the reports, "the member for Newark spoke under the Gallery, and was almost entirely inaudible in the Press Gallery." The *Times*, whose columns were through more than sixty subsequent years to overflow with verbatim reports of his speeches, dismissed the young member with the line, "Mr. Gladstone made a few remarks, which were not audible in the Gallery."

Pitt, the youngest of the three, stands alone in the success that attended his maiden speech. Burke, who heard it, said, looking at young Pitt, "It is not a chip of the old block—it is the old block itself." Lord North protested it was the best maiden speech he had ever heard made by a young man. "Young Pitt will be one of the first men in Parliament," said a friend who met Fox immediately after the young member for

Appleby had resumed his seat. "He is so already," said Fox, possibly with prophetic instinct of the prolonged struggle with which he would presently be engaged with the newcomer.

FIRST RUNGS OF THE LADDER. There is an accidental point of resemblance and a striking difference in the outset of the careers of Pitt and Gladstone. Both entered the House of Commons as representatives of pocket boroughs—Pitt as member for Appleby, on the nomination of Sir James Lowther; Gladstone as member for Newark by favour of the Duke of Newcastle. Very early in their career each was offered office. Mr. Gladstone promptly accepted the Junior Lordship of the Treasury, the customary bottom step of the ladder, when in 1834 it was offered him by Sir Robert Peel. Rockingham, forming a Ministry in succession to Lord North, tempted Pitt with something better than that. The young man coolly thrust the prize aside, with the intimation that he was "resolved not to take a subordinate office." The next offer made to him, he being in his twenty-third year, was the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, with the Leadership of the House of Commons.



MR. ASQUITH JUMPS INTO THE CABINET.

The nearest parallel in modern times to this leap of a private member into Ministerial office of Cabinet rank is Mr. Asquith's appointment to the Home Office. But Mr. Asquith was in his fortieth year, and had been six years in the House of Commons before he made this great stride.

THE FRENCH HOUSE OF COMMONS. A member of the French Chamber of Deputies who visited the House of Commons the other day tells me some interesting things about the Chamber. The British Constitution is, among other things, buttressed about by the engagement of a rat-catcher, who cares for Buckingham Palace. His salary is duly set forth in the Civil Service Estimates, is year after year solemnly voted by the House of Commons, and is included in the gigantic amounts set forth in the Appropriation Bill. In France there is also a rat-catcher in the employment and pay of the State. But he is directly engaged in the service of the Chamber of Deputies. His salary is a trifle over £25 a year, which compares with that drawn quarterly by the rat-catcher of Buckingham Palace.

Another of the resources of civilization the Chamber of Deputies benefits by which finds no parallel in the House of Commons is an umbrella-mender. French legislators finding their umbrellas worn out or damaged by accident may take them to a particular room in the Chamber and have them repaired gratuitously. This institution dates back to the time of Louis Philippe. That amiable and apprehensive monarch never, even in settled summer weather, went out without an umbrella. He set the fashion of discarding walking-sticks and holding fast to the umbrella. This naturally led to increased mortality in the umbrella-stand, and members of Parliament, properly thinking that observance of a loyal custom should not incur personal charges, brought in the umbrella-mender and paid him out of taxes.

In the administration of affairs he is now the last link left with the *ancien régime*. Kings have gone. Emperors and Empresses have been *chassés*. The Tuileries is a ruin; the umbrella-mender, a legacy of the time of Louis Philippe, remains.

THE COST OF THE CHAMBER. The annual vote for the current expenses of the French Chamber is about £300,000. This compares with charges on the Civil Service Estimates on account of the House of Commons of £150,000. Probably on the principle which forbids a bird to foul its own nest the votes on account of the Chamber are usually passed without discussion. But my French friend remembers a variation from the rule. A keen-scented deputy noticed that not only was the charge for scented soap advancing by leaps and

bounds, but that the bill for eau-de-Cologne had in a particular Session beaten the record. The influence of temporizing friends induced this French Peter Rylands to refrain from opening the question of scented soap. But he was firm about eau-de-Cologne. He moved an amendment reducing the amount of the vote by thirty centimes. That was not much; but the moral rebuke was effective. The expenditure on eau-de-Cologne, a few years ago recklessly rising, forthwith stopped. It is now over £50 a year, but sturdy Republicans do not regard the amount as excessive.

Printing costs the French Chamber about £20,000 a year. The Library, a favourite lounge, spends nearly £1,000 a year on new books. It was upon a recent occasion stated in the Chamber, without contradiction, that the money was chiefly expended on works of fiction.

APT TO RETORT.

A ROMANCE OF THE VICEREGAL LODGE.

In his "Recollections," Sir Algernon West writes: "During Sir George Trevelyan's first visit to the Secretary's Lodge in Phœnix Park, he went to the window and pushed aside the curtain, and under its folds lay the blood-stained coat of poor Frederick Cavendish, which had never been removed from the room into which his body was first brought after the murder."

This is a story which with slight variations clings to the Viceregal Lodge, and will doubtless last as long as its walls stand. When I was there during the reign of Lord Houghton I heard it with a difference. The blood-stained coat had been found by Lady Trevelyan under the sofa on which the body of the newly-arrived Chief Secretary was laid when he was carried in from the slaughter-place immediately fronting the Viceregal Lodge. That is a detail that does not disturb the grimness of the story, which represents the wife of the successor to the murdered Chief Secretary suddenly coming upon a terrible reminder of the crime.

An opportunity offered itself shortly after my return from Ireland for asking Sir George Trevelyan whether there was any truth in the legend. He positively assured me there was none. All the same, it will never die.

"DOES YOUR MOTHER KNOW YOU'RE OUT?"

In debate in the House of Commons nothing is more effective than a happy retort made by a speaker who has been interrupted by what is designed as a harmful interjection. Mr. Goschen is a dangerous man to meddle with in that direction. Mr. Chamberlain is, at such crises, supremely ready. He, in fact, is not beyond suspicion of occasionally laying himself open to interruption, assured of the readiness of his own rapier not only to ward off the attack but to pink the assailant. One of the best, perhaps the best, known successes of this kind out of doors is credited to the present Duke of Leeds. When contesting Brixton, which constituency he represented in the House of Commons for some years, a man in the crowd, struck by his boyish face and bearing, called out, "Does your mother know you're out?"

"Yes," Lord Carmarthen quickly replied; "and soon after eight o'clock on Monday night (polling day) she'll know I'm in."

This retort was calculated to be worth hundreds of votes to the young lord.

FRANK LOCKWOOD.

A retort of graver humour by Sir Frank Lockwood is less well known. It flashed forth a year or two before his death, at a semi-private dinner of the Sheffield Press Club, whose hospitality I shared with the then Solicitor-General and Mr. Stuart Wortley. Responding to the toast of his health, Lockwood, referring to the period covering several years when he had presided over the local Criminal Court, said: "I hope that during the ten years I was connected with this city I gave satisfaction." Here the company broke into a loud cheer. "I was about to add," continued the ex-Recorder, in gravest tones, "satisfaction to those gentlemen who came before me in my judicial capacity. Till I heard that sudden spontaneous burst of applause I did not realize there were so many present here to-night."

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

LXII.

(VIEWED BY HENRY W. LUCY.)

IN THE DARK.

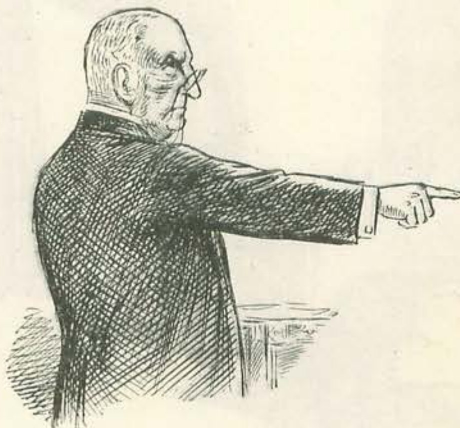
WHEN, in good time for grouse, Parliament was prorogued, the vast majority of members left Westminster with the conviction that as members of the Queen's fourteenth Parliament they would see its face no more. There was, in view of the Septennial Act, no reason why it should be dissolved in the year 1900. Having assembled for a brief Session on the 12th of August, 1895, it was still a few days short of its fifth year when it stood prorogued. As far as the Statute is concerned there is no reason why it should not sit through the first year of the new century, being dissolved in the early spring of 1902.

The condition of parties in the House of Commons suggested no reason for hastening the dissolution by a twelvemonth. For fighting purposes the Opposition was non-existent. With respect to the questions that absorbed public attention there was not a whisper of discontent with Ministerial policy in China. As to the war in South Africa, on a critical division the Opposition showed itself hopelessly rent. Something like forty walked out without voting. Another forty, including prominent members of the Front Opposition Bench, supported the Government. A section, comprehending the Radicals, following training and deeply-rooted habits, went out with the Irish members to vote "agin the Government."

There was certainly nothing here to drive the master of legions in the House of Commons to appeal to the country out of due course. All the same, members, like Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted. There would, they insisted, be dissolution either in October or September, and the cloth of hardly-earned holidays must be cut accordingly. It is interesting to record the state of mind prevalent in the House of Commons on the eve of the prorogation, and watching how it worked out regarded as a forecast.

RUSSELL OF KILLOWEN.

Did the late Lord Chief Justice pass any early portion of his journalistic career in the Press Gallery of the House of Commons? No mention of the circumstance is made in accessible biographical notes. I have reason to believe that the answer to the question is in the affirmative. Talking one day of his Parliamentary experience Lord Russell dropped the remark that his first acquaintance with the House of Commons was made from the Press Gallery. I asked when it happened, but he evidently did not desire to pursue a subject he had accidentally alluded to, and talked of something else. The Press Gallery of the House of Commons is one of the most exclusive places in the world. It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a man not duly authorized as a working journalist to cross its trebly-guarded portals. Since Russell was there he must have gone either to report speeches or to write leading articles.



SIR CHARLES RUSSELL, AFTERWARDS LORD RUSSELL OF KILLOWEN.
From a Sketch in the House of Commons.

One of Lord Russell's most distinguished contemporaries at the Bar certainly gained his earliest personal knowledge of the House of Commons as viewed from the Press Gallery. Forty years ago Sir Edward Clarke was on the regular reporting staff of the *Standard*, possibly not dreaming that in days to come he would give his successors in the old box many an hour's work reporting his Parliamentary speeches.

LAWYERS IN THE HOUSE.

The great advocate and judge who in August last suddenly passed away, followed by a rare burst of national lamentation, was a striking example of the familiar Parliamentary truism that a successful lawyer is not necessarily, is indeed rarely, a power in

Parliamentary debate. When twenty years ago Charles Russell in the prime of vigorous life, with high reputation as leader of the Northern Circuit, took his seat for Dundalk, if anyone had been asked what his chances were of making a position in the House of Commons the answer would have been that they were assured. So it proved; Russell, from the position of private member, rising through the Attorney-Generalship to the highest seat on the judicial Bench. But the prize was won by sheer force of personal character, not by oratorical art or debating facility.

Yet Russell was equipped by Nature with all the gifts that ordinarily go to make Parliamentary reputation. A great lawyer, he was not tied and bound by the manner or tradition of the Courts. In addition to a piercing intellect, long training, a ready wit and gift of speech that occasionally rose to height of genuine eloquence, he was a many-sided man of the world. He loved cards and horses, was a constant diner-out, was even frequently seen at the "at homes" which in some big houses follow upon little State dinners. His sympathies were essentially human. He resembled Mr. Gladstone in the quick interest he took in any topic started in conversation. In short, he seemed to be just the man who would captivate and command the House of Commons. Yet, with one exception, I do not remember his ever attaining a position to reach which was a desire perhaps more warmly cherished than that of presiding over the Queen's Bench Division. The exception was the delivery of a speech in support of the second reading of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill.

MR. MATTHEWS, NOW LORD LLANDAFF.

MRS. MAYBRICK.

The most remarkable episode in Charles Russell's career at the Bar undoubtedly was his defence of Mrs. Maybrick. I happened to find myself in the same hotel with him at Liverpool on the morning of the day set down for the opening of the trial. At breakfast he spoke in confident terms of his client's innocence and of the surety of her acquittal. He did not take into account the passing mood of the judge who tried the case, and so found himself out of his reckoning. But the verdict of the jury, still less the summing-up of Fitzjames Stephen, did not shake his conviction that, whatever other sins might lie to her charge, the unhappy woman was guiltless of murder.

It was chiefly out of respect for the conclusion formed by this judicial mind, illumined by the keenest intellect, that led two successive Home Secretaries on accession to office to devote days and nights to patient reconsideration of the evidence. Lord Llandaff told me that when the matter came before him as Home Secretary he approached it with an absolutely impartial mind, biased only by natural desire to find a loophole through which the hapless woman might crawl back to liberty. He read and weighed every scrap of evidence, shutting himself up with the papers for three days. At the end of that time he, slowly but surely drifting, was landed in unshakable conviction of Mrs. Maybrick's guilt. When Sir Matthew White Ridley went to the Home Office he, in the same impartial frame of mind, moved by the same impulse towards mercy, arrived at the same conclusion.

It is impossible to conceive two men more widely differing in constitution and training than the Home Secretary who was best known as Henry Matthews and the present incumbent of the office. Yet, travelling by varying ways, they arrived at the same spot. On the other hand, Charles Russell, of all men least likely to be misled by appearances or deliberate deception, having probed the case to the bottom, having turned his piercing eyes on the frail creature in the dock, having talked to her in private and studied her in public, was convinced of her innocence. He was not the kind of man to abandon man or woman because the universe had deserted them. He paid Mrs. Maybrick regular visits in her prison house, a custom not intermitted when he put on the ermine and the dignity of Lord Chief Justice of England.

17TH CENTURY LONDON CORRESPONDENT.

Lord Mostyn is the proud possessor of the earliest, most comprehensive, and on the whole the most valuable collection of what in these days are widely popular in the provincial

Press as London Letters. The London Correspondent, as all who read his contributions suspect, was not born yesterday. The Letters bound in ten volumes that have an honoured place in the library at Mostyn Hall are dated from 1673 to 1692.

At that epoch, whilst as yet newspapers were few, the news-letter-writer was an important person. He attended the coffee-houses, where he picked up the gossip of the day. For Parliamentary news he suborned the clerks, who gave him an inkling of what happened in the House, sometimes even supplied him with extracts from its journal. This practice became so common that there will be found in the journals themselves an account of how certain coffee-house-keepers were summoned to the Bar of the House and reprimanded for the heinous offence of adding to the attractions of their parlour by publicly reading minutes of the proceedings.

The more enterprising of these early fathers among London correspondents forestalled Baron Reuter. They had correspondents in some of the capitals of Europe who sent them scraps of gossip, which they embodied in their letters. Each letter-writer had his list of subscribers, who, I trust, made up a handsome aggregate of fee. Of the varied topics dealt with in the Mostyn news-letters it will suffice to quote notices of Titus Oates standing in the pillory of Tyburn; of Nell Gwynne at the height of her fame; of the execution in Pall Mall of the murderers of Edward Thynne; of the arrest of the Duke of Monmouth; of the trial of the Seven Bishops; of the birth of the Prince of Wales, son of James II.; of the fee of 500 guineas paid to the fortunate midwife, one Mrs. Wilkins; of King James's going, and of the Prince of Orange's coming.

NELL GWYNNE.

A WAGGISH SPEAKER.

The stern forbidding of the Clerks of Parliaments to furnish to the outside world information of what took place within the barred doors of the House of Commons did not extend to members. Stored in ancient houses throughout the country are innumerable more or less graphic panels from Pictures in Parliament. One, in the possession of Sir John Trelawney, recalls a curious scene in the House early in the Session of 1753. "Your countryman Sydenham, member for Exeter," writes a fellow-member addressing his uncle in the country, "wanted a tax on swords and full-bottomed wigs, which last do not amount to forty in the kingdom. The Speaker and the Attorney-General, who were the only wearers of them in the House, made him due reverence."

As the visitor to the Strangers' Gallery knows, the Speaker of the House of Commons to this day wears a full-bottomed wig. The Attorney-General long ago finally took off his.

THE ELDER PITT.

At Dunster Castle, in Somersetshire, there is a bundle of letters written 140 years ago by Henry Chiffner, M.P. for Minehead. He has long ago answered to the cry, "Who goes home?" and we may look in vain for Minehead in the list of Parliamentary boroughs. The letters remain, including one giving lengthy account of the opening of Parliament by the King, George III., in the Session of 1762. In the same year, under date 11th of December, the Parliamentary summary-writer gives an account of Pitt's speech in opposition to what is known in history as The Peace of Paris. "The speech," Mr. Chiffner reports, "occupied three hours and twenty-six minutes, and was the worst I ever heard." It certainly did not capture the House, for on a division whilst 319 declared for peace only sixty-five followed Pitt into the division lobby.

A FIVE HOURS' SPEECH.

The letter-writer mentions that "by leave of the House Pitt delivered this speech alternately standing and sitting." In later days, as all the world knows, Mr. Gladstone on one occasion occupied five hours in the exposition of an historic Budget. It was his first Budget speech, delivered on the 18th April, 1853. The late Sir John Mowbray, one of the few members of the last Parliament who heard the speech, vividly recalled the occasion. He told me how surprised he was when it was over to find that five hours had sped. Mr. Gladstone, then in the prime of a magnificent physique, showed no sign of fatigue or of failing voice. It was long

before the epoch of the pomatum-pot, and his sole refreshment was a tumbler of water.

TWO CORNETS.

It was, of course, the elder Pitt who is described as having occasion from time to time to sit down during delivery of a three hours' speech. He was at the date only in his fifty-fourth year. Whence it would appear that he was either temporarily indisposed or constitutionally frail. Possibly he was recovering from an attack of his constant enemy, the gout. Not quite sixteen years later he—in the meantime having become Earl of Chatham—fell back in a faint whilst passionately addressing the House of Lords, was carried out, driven to his Kentish home, and a month later died.

I always think of the elder Pitt when my eye falls on the flexible figure of the member for the Wellington Division of Shropshire. Mr. Brown, it is true, though he is reaching the status of one of the oldest members of the House of Commons—he took his seat thirty-two years ago—has not, either as a statesman or an orator, yet made his mark in equal measure with the Great Commoner. But like the elder Pitt he, before he turned his attention to politics, held the rank of cornet in the Army. Cornet Pitt was in the Horse Guards Blue; Cornet Brown favoured the 5th Dragoon Guards.

A PRECIOUS LITTLE FAT BOOK.

A PRE-HISTORIC "DOD."

I have been looking up Minehead, the borough represented a century and a half ago by Mr. Chiffner. I have the good fortune to find all about it in a precious little fat book presented to me some time ago by a kindly prejudiced reader of these pages, who came upon it on a top shelf of his grandfather's library, and thought it would be "just the thing I should like." His intuition was unerring. "Biographical Memoirs of the Members of the Present House of Commons" is the title of the work. Price, in boards, 12s. It is carefully compiled by Joshua Wilson, M.A., and is corrected to February, 1808.

At that time George III. was King. In October of the following year he celebrated the jubilee of his accession. Pitt was two years later followed to the grave, after an interval of eight months, by his great adversary, Fox. The Duke of Portland was Prime Minister; Lord Eldon sat on the Woolsack; Spencer Perceval was Chancellor of the Exchequer, unconscious of the dark shadow that haunted and followed him in the lobby of the House of Commons; Sir Arthur Wellesley was Irish Secretary, and —greatest of all in a mediocre Ministry—Canning was Foreign Secretary.

The book is the precursor of the familiar "Dod" of the later half of the century, but is fuller of the charm of personal narrative than is permissible in the frigid pages of a work where the only glowing period flashes forth in the autobiography of Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, with its picturesque background of the Pilgrim Fathers.

OLD SARUM.

On page 454 we come upon Old Sarum, in the flesh as it were. To us of post-Reform days Old Sarum is a kind of myth. In this volume, with the dust of nearly a century on its brown paper boards and its uncut leaves, we find Old Sarum sedately flourishing as Manchester, Birmingham, or Glasgow loom large in "Dod" of to-day. To the imaginative mind the name suggests the idea of a prim old lady in grey silk, with mittens on her hands, her grey hair peeping from under a spotless white cap. That is only imagination. Even at the beginning of the century, when pocket boroughs were as common adjuncts of a landed estate as were pheasant coverts, they were "saying things" about Old Sarum. "The right of election in Old Sarum," Mr. Joshua Wilson, M.A., delicately remarks, "is in the freeholders, being burgage-holders of the borough, which, on account of its decayed state, has been occasionally a subject of animadversion." Animadversion! Word more blessed than Mesopotamia.

In dealing with the constituencies the compiler of the Memoirs is accustomed to set forth the total number of electors, and marvellous they are. Thus, on the page preceding the record of Old Sarum stands Okehampton, Devonshire, with 240 electors. On the page following it is Orford, in Suffolk, which returned two members to Parliament by the favour of exactly twenty portsmen, burgesses, and freemen. When Mr. Joshua

Wilson, M.A., comes to Old Sarum he is suspiciously silent as to the number of free and independent electors on the register. The sole machinery of election to the two seats representing Old Sarum appears to be the returning officer, a bailiff appointed at the Court-leet of Lord Caledon, who is now Lord of the Manor.

A STORY FOR THE PSYCHICAL SOCIETY.

In 1808 Old Sarum had for one of its members Nicholas Vansittart, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Liverpool's Ministry formed four years later. About this gentleman's family Mr. Joshua Wilson, M.A., relates an anecdote communicated to him by "a person of condition." Mr. Vansittart's father was in the service of the East India Company. He was sent out with two others on an important mission. The ship is supposed to have foundered at sea. Howbeit, after leaving the English Channel she was heard of never more. One night Mrs. Vansittart dreamt that her husband appeared to her, sitting naked on a barren rock. He told her that whatever rumours she might hear of his death she was to pay no attention to them.

His situation, as described, does not appear to have been altogether comfortable or conformable with usage. But, though naked and homeless, save for the barren rock, he was certainly alive. When, in due time, announcement was made of the foundering of the East Indiaman, and the loss of all on board, Mrs. Vansittart stoutly declined to believe it. As Mr. Wilson puts it, "the lady was so deeply affected with what had occurred, and so prepossessed with the authenticity of the supposed communication, that she refused to put on mourning for the space of two whole years." She lived to an advanced age, with a suit of clothes always ready for the return of the unclad husband. They were never claimed.

IN THE WRONG BOX.

An awkward accident befell a well-known member of the House of Commons in the closing days of the Session. A friend having anticipated the holidays and gone on a long journey, wrote to ask if he would be so good as to rummage through his locker in the corridor leading to the Library, tear up and clear away his papers. "We shall have a General Election in October," he wrote; "and as I don't mean to stand again you can make a clean sweep of my papers. There is nothing of any importance there, but it's just as well not to have them lying about."

Thus adjured, the hon. member went to work with a will. He was much surprised on glancing at the books and papers as he tore them up to find how almost exclusively they related to military matters. One set in particular contained what looked like an elaborate estimate of the value of cordite produced under divers conditions. The absent member had never shown himself interested in military affairs. When he had spoken upon them in Committee he had ever deprecated growing expenditure on the Army. However, every man knows his own business best. The M.P.'s instructions were to clear out the locker, and this was done effectively.

FANCY PORTRAIT OF THE COLONEL EXPLODING.

Two hours later one of the messengers, pale to the lips, trembling as though a thunderbolt had narrowly missed him in its flight, came up and said, "I beg your pardon, sir, but have you been clearing out Colonel Blank's locker?"

He had. Muddling up numbers, he had gone to the wrong locker, and destroyed the accumulated notes a high military authority had made through the Session. Colonel Blank being a particularly irascible gentleman, and the prorogation being certain to take place on the following Wednesday, the M.P. thought he might as well leave town at once. This he did, gaining five clear days' holiday.