

HOW WE ARE GOVERNED.

LONDON'S PARLIAMENT AT WORK

BY ROBERT DONALD.

*Illustrated by A. C. GOULD and RAYMOND
POTTER; and from photographs.*



SPRING GARDENS.

THE London County Council has been only seven years in existence, but during that short period it has raised more hopes and caused more fears than any other municipality ever did in half a century. Until recently the people of London—or those who paid any attention to public affairs—were divided into two classes. There were those who regarded the Council as a mighty engine for reform, and its members as men actuated by the highest feelings of municipal altruism. There were others who looked upon it as a dangerous institution, and called the councillors a collection of faddists and busybodies, doing things which they ought to leave alone, and leaving undone things which they ought to do. There were enthusiastic supporters on the one side, vehement enemies on the other. Eminent men had from the first been found in the Council, but they did not save it from the hostility of the people vaguely defined as “the classes.” At the last election some people, hitherto apathetic and indifferent, organised and voted, and “the masses” did not show such a lively sense of services rendered and promised as formerly, so that all round there was a moderating and sobering effect. And now that the Council is more equally divided between parties, and has received the leavening influence of a dozen lords, it has become more respectable in the eyes of its former enemies. It may be less active, but that they think is an improvement. It may not

be so aggressive, but then it is considered less dangerous.

The County Council has many distinguishing features, and is in some respects unique. It is the only County Council of its kind—the only so-called county authority exercising functions of a purely municipal character in an urban area. And while London's Parliament carries on greater municipal undertakings than any town council in the country, it has not the status of the Corporations of such towns as Guildford, the enterprising and public-spirited capital of Surrey, or Sandwich, with a few hundred inhabitants. It has none of the outward and visible signs or emblems of corporate existence. Its chairman has no chain of office, its members no official robes. The Council has no mace, and not even arms. Everything at Spring Gardens is severely plain, and the Council glories in its democratic simplicity. It sighs not for insignia or the symbols of authority, but resolutely resents any departure from its simple ways. When a year or two ago it was proposed that the Council should obtain arms, the idea was laughed out of court, and Mr. Walter Crane designed a seal, which, if not recognised by the Heralds' College, serves the purpose of armorial bearings. Only a few months ago a committee, heedless of this dangerous precedent, recklessly suggested that the Council's messenger—a Crimean hero, who acts as sergent-at-arms, without arms or uniform on Council meeting-days—should be decorated with a medal. The suggestion was ridiculed as the thin edge of the wedge which would lead councillors to aspire to such splendours as gold badges and cocked hats. One witty member was shocked to think that the councillors should aspire to wear anything more expensive than the white

flower of a blameless life. So the messenger did not get his medal.

The Council is peculiar in another matter: it has a pious regard for the ratepayers' pockets—so far as the councillors are concerned. Not a twopenny sandwich do they eat, or drink a cup of tea at the public expense. Whether they are on committees for hours at Spring Gardens, spending a day down the river in the congenial task of examining the deodorisation of sewage, or visiting the parks or building works, they have always the privilege of paying for their own refreshments. When in the discharge of their duty they spend a day in the country at a lunatic asylum or an industrial school, the Council generously permits them to lunch at these establishments—on payment of the cost of the victuals consumed.

The greatest municipality in the country, and the one which attracts most attention in the world, is, we see, the least particular about its appearance. Democratic in its customs and constitution, it is equally democratic in its *personnel*. Its members represent all phases of society: the premier Duke of England, present and past Ministers of the Crown, lords of various degrees, bankers, barristers, doctors, retired Government officials, engineers, merchants, manufacturers, authors, journalists, military and naval men, shopkeepers, tradesmen, publicans and preachers, mechanics and labourers—all are found working together in London's Parliament. Their opinions are as varied as their social positions—graduating from high old Toryism to the Radical socialism of the Independent Labour Party. The House of Commons does not equal the Council in its varied and representative composition, and does not excel it in debating power and administrative ability. "This assembly," as Lord Rosebery once said when chairman of the Council, "is not merely not afraid to meet a comparison with the House of

Commons, but it sets an example to the House of Commons."

Before I notice some of the special features of London's Parliament, and describe it at work, I will refer briefly to its creation and to its predecessor. The Council bulks so largely in the eyes of the public that people are apt to forget that it is not the first central municipal authority which London possessed. Up to 1856 London had no organised central government. There was the old City with its grand traditions and its special privileges—a municipal oasis in the centre of the ever-growing metropolis. Outside the City all was chaos. There was a collection of overgrown villages, without homogeneity, without system, without the rudiments of good government. A tangle of over 300 petty parochial authorities and commissions, some having the semblance of representative institutions, others self-appointed, all more or less irresponsible, bungled at trying to govern, and neglected everyone's interest except their own. Parliament now and then felt the disgrace of leaving the capital of the empire in this deplorable condition, and there were spasmodic efforts at

reform. At last, in 1855, Parliament was moved to pass the Metropolis Management Act. This measure, in addition to introducing organised management of public affairs, incidentally defined the metropolis. It created a central metropolitan authority—the Board of Works—and placed local affairs in the hands of the Vestries, or groups of small Vestries, known as District Boards, as they still exist. The Board of Works was constituted by delegates nominated from the Vestries and the City Corporation. This new body was not intended to do a great deal. It was primarily created to look after main drains, and to carry out street improvements. Its future development was unexpected. As the members showed a



THE SEAL OF THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.
(Designed by Walter Crane.)

readiness to take up new duties the Board's functions constantly expanded and during its thirty-three years' existence it carried out many important street improvements, built the Thames Embankment, cleared insanitary areas, provided new parks, and transformed the appearance of the metropolis in many ways. But after all its good work it died under a cloud, "unwept, unhonoured and unsung." The peculations of a few officers, the nepotism and corruption of a few members, led to its timely extinction during a period of awakening civic spirit and the reform of county government. History will never give the Board the credit which it deserves for the good works it did or the part which it played in shaping the future government of the metropolis.

As the development of the Metropolitan Board, from a body intended to concern itself with one or two specific duties to a great central administrative authority, was accidental, so also was the creation of the County Council. It was purely a coincidence that the inquiry into the affairs of the Board happened at the time when Parliament was considering a scheme for the reform of county



RIGHT HON. C. T. RITCHIE, M.P.

(Who pioneered the Local Government Bill, 1888, through the House of Commons, and was for a few months in 1895 an alderman of the London County Council.)



THE EARL OF ROSEBERY, K.G.

(First Chairman of the London County Council, 1889-1891.)

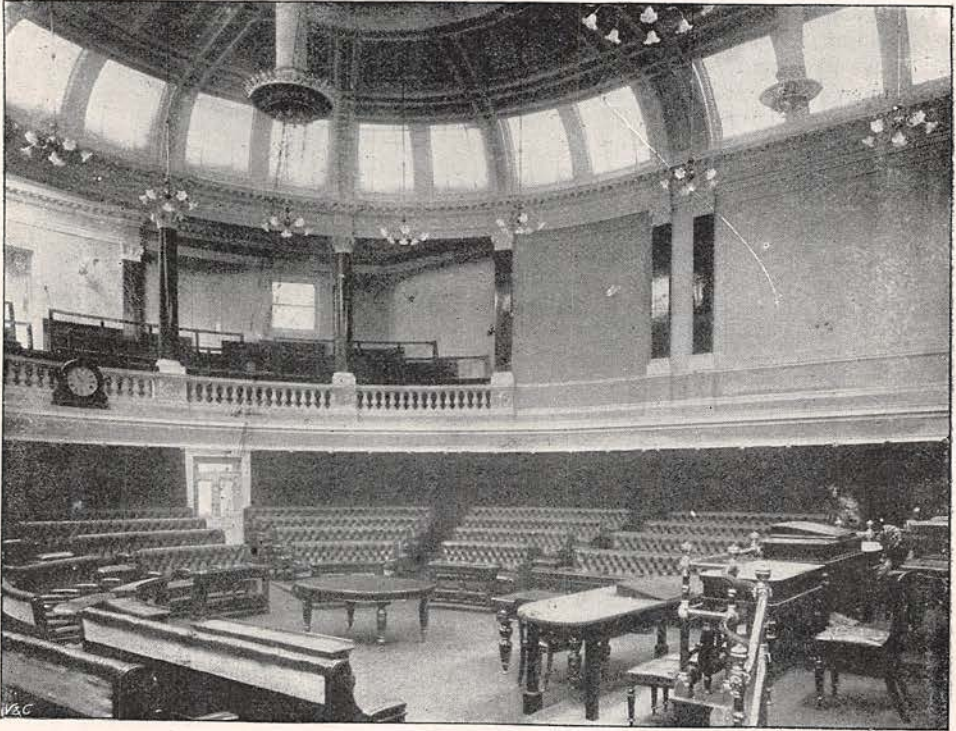
government. The problem of London and its anomalous position could not be left untouched. Before Mr. Ritchie—then at the head of the Local Government Board—could deal with London as a county he had to create it. The metropolis, as defined in 1855, was in three counties. Middlesex claimed all that was north of the Thames, except the City, which was a county in itself, while Surrey and Kent shared the south side. The new county was carved out of these old counties, which formerly exercised county jurisdiction over the whole area, so that rates and methods of government were different on the north and south side of the Thames. In place of the indefinite and shadowy metropolis—which meant a different area if the name was applied to police purposes, postal arrangements, municipal and poor law purposes, or the work of the Registrar-General—a new London was created. The common interests and unity of the four-and-a-half million people who lived in three counties were recognised by Parliament for the first time. Instead of having as a central authority a nominated, glorified vestry, London was at last given a democratic Parliament.

The Corporation of the old City still remained—somewhat shorn of its former powers—having all the privileges, all the dignities, and all that is picturesque in civic life. In some respects there was and is dual jurisdiction, and no one accepted the establishment of the County Council as the final settlement of the London problem. But that is another question.

The creation of the County Council worked a revolution among the people of London. It awoke new enthusiasms; it called forth new talent, which might have

nineteen aldermen chosen by the new Council were such notable men as Lord Lingen, Lord Hobhouse, Lord (then Sir Thomas) Farrer, the Earl of Meath, Sir (then Mr.) Arthur Arnold, Mr. Frederic Harrison and Mr. G. E. W. Russell.

There were some initial disadvantages in bringing together 137 men—mostly strangers to each other and strangers to public work—as Lord Rosebery found when he took the chair. All the members were bursting with a desire to do something, but they knew not what. No one who had witnessed the



From a photo by)

THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBER.

[Bedford Lemere, Strand.]

lain latent and dormant but for its stimulating influences; it developed a new type of municipal statesmen. Lord Rosebery set the leading example, and was returned at the head of the poll, with Sir John Lubbock for the City. Men like Sir John Hutton, Mr. Chas. Harrison, Mr. W. H. Dickinson, Mr. J. Williams Benn, Mr. Melvill Beachcroft, Mr. Antrobus, Mr. John McDougall, Mr. B. F. C. Costelloe, Mr. John Burns and Sir Arthur Arnold, who were new to municipal work, showed a wonderful adaptability to their new life, and an equally wonderful capacity to serve their city. Amongst the

turbulent first meetings in the Council room of the Guildhall—lent for the purpose—would have thought that the effervescence then shown would soon disappear, and the new Council become a businesslike assembly. There were preliminary matters to settle, such as the standing orders, the arrangements for business, the distribution of committee work, which the new members lacked the experience to deal with, but nevertheless wished to arrange. Under the able and tactful chairmanship of Lord Rosebery the Council was soon piloted through the breakers into smooth waters. Not that

the Council settled down to the humdrum routine of business. It did the business, to be sure, but it did not settle down. So much stored-up enthusiasm and energy as the Progressives (as the majority called themselves)



RIGHT HON. SIR
JOHN LUBBOCK, BART., M.P.
(Alderman of the Council; Chair-
man, 1891, 1892.)

represented was not likely to be satisfied with the work prepared for them. They were bursting with schemes for reform. There was a feverish anxiety to go forward; to enlarge the sphere of municipal activity; to initiate great undertakings; to obtain new legislative powers.

There was, and still is, much misunderstanding in the public mind as to the duties of the Council. It has been the custom of the man who grumbles to blame the Council for everything which

goes wrong. If the streets are dirty, the drains wrong, the light bad—in the absence of any knowledge to the contrary the Council is held responsible. The distribution of governmental authority in London still remains in such a muddle that the average citizen cannot be expected to grasp its intricacies. It is as well to know, however, that the Council is not responsible for the condition of the streets, or the drains. Most things which come under everyone's notice—the cleaning of streets, the removal of refuse, the lighting arrangements, and the enforcement of sanitary laws, are matters of local concern attended to by the Vestries or District Boards. The Council, roughly speaking, attends to things which are common to the whole of London, but the dividing line is arbitrary, and jurisdiction sometimes overlaps. Its main duties are as follows:—It manages the fire brigade; it has charge of the main drainage system, which involves the maintenance of numerous pumping stations, of great works at Barking and

Crossness for the treatment of sewage, and of a fleet of ships to carry sludge to sea; it keeps the parks and recreation grounds; it is responsible for means of communication over the Thames (outside the City), and in this department keeps many bridges in order, provides a free ferry at Woolwich by which five million passengers cross the Thames every year, and is carrying out the Blackwall Tunnel—a stupendous engineering work constructed on new principles and at a cost of about a million pounds. Then it executes street improvements which are metropolitan in character, and builds artisans' dwellings and municipal lodging-houses. It is the central authority for tramways, and is acquiring the lines as fast as the law gives opportunity. It carries out the building laws, which means that it sanctions the erection of new houses and the making of new streets, and employs surveyors in every district, who deal with dangerous structures and other matters. All the music halls and some of the theatres are licensed by the Council. It takes care of the insane in five huge asylums, and manages two industrial schools. As a licensing authority it controls cowsheds and slaughterhouses; as an inspecting authority it has multifarious duties to discharge; tests all weights and measures; sees that coal is sold just weight; passes gas and electric light meters before they come into use, and enforces the Shop Hours Regulation Act. As a supervising authority it sees



From a photo by]

[G. Jervard, Regent Street.

SIR JOHN HUTTON.

(Member for South St. Pancras and Chairman of the Council, 1892-1895.)

that the local administrators carry out the public health laws, and makes numerous by-laws for their guidance. It is the central authority for technical education, and in this department carries on a great educational work. Then there is the municipal contractor—the works department—which has more responsible duties than any other branch. These are only the great departments of the Council's work.

This mere catalogue of its principal duties perhaps does not convey very much to the reader, but to execute them involves an outlay of two millions a year and the employment of 7500 officials and employes, and the 137 councillors have all the responsibility of seeing that the work is well done and the money economically spent.

Turning now to the internal organisation of the Council, we find, to start with, that it is well provided with chairmen. It has a chairman, a vice-chairman and a deputy-chairman. Until now the deputy-chairman has been the head of the administrative staff and a paid official. The pay and the official work has been abolished, but the position remains. The vice-chairman's duty, as vice-chairman, is to sit on the right of the chairman at the Council meetings and to take the chair in his absence. The deputy-chairman keeps the chairman company on the left and replaces him when he and the vice-chairman are both absent. All the three are members of all committees, and are supposed to devote a large amount of time to the work in return for the honour which the Council confers upon them.

The chairman is expected to give most attention to the duties and to keep in touch with all departments. The Council has had four chairmen—all exceedingly able men and representative of the new type of municipal statesmen which the Council has developed. There was Lord Rosebery, who served an apprenticeship on the Council for the higher place in the State which he was called upon to fill. Next came Sir John Lubbock, banker and scientist, another

legislator, who was succeeded by Sir John Hutton, retired from business as a newspaper proprietor, who served three years, and the third Council took as its first chairman Sir Arthur Arnold, author and publicist. To Lord Rosebery fell the difficult task of breaking in the first Council and doing the serious work of organisation. He threw himself into the task with the greatest energy, and was soon on the best possible terms with the Council. His tact, his ready wit, his keen intellect stood him in good stead in the chair. He loved the work, tiring as it was, and his splendid example stimulated the rank and



From a photo by

SIR ARTHUR ARNOLD.

(Chairman of the London County Council since 1895.)

[Jerrard.]

file. Lord Rosebery was elected to the Council for the second term by East Finsbury, practically without his consent, as he never appeared as a candidate. He accepted the position, and returned for a brief period to the chair and started the second Council on its career. Lord Rosebery continued his membership of the Council when he was Foreign Minister, and even after he was Premier. He has said that he looks back on the days he spent at Spring



From a photo by [Elliott & Fry.
MR. W. H. DICKINSON.
(Alderman; Deputy-Chairman of the Council, 1891-1895.)

Gardens with the greatest pride; and Londoners will ever feel grateful to him for the good work he did.

Sir John Lubbock was about a year and a half in the chair. He was a mild, genial and moderate chairman, and for a man of so varied interests, did his work exceedingly well.

Sir John Hutton has had the longest experience as chairman of the Council. He held the position for three years. Sir John was a discovery—one of the new municipal statesmen whom the Council brought to light. For three years he had been concealing his ability in the comparative secrecy of the committee room, and he turned out to be as eminently fitted for the chair as he had been for committee work. Sir John was a stickler for order. He handled the Council fairly and firmly, and got through the business with despatch. It was said that he knew the many standing orders which regulate business by heart; at any rate no councillor could wander from the track or waste the time of the Council with Sir John in the chair. Sometimes the Council sits the whole afternoon or evening, but whether it sat three hours or six it never wearied the chairman, who seemed to be as keen and energetic at the end of the meeting as at the beginning. During the whole time of his chairmanship Sir John Hutton was only absent from one meeting, and that was

owing to a bereavement. Taking the chair on Tuesdays is however only a small part of the chairman's duties. Sir John Hutton's sole occupation was his chairmanship. He was in his room daily, and was so much at hand that he became known as the resident chairman. His literature during his chairmanship seemed to consist of only County Council reports and agenda papers. The chairman of the Council has more invitations for public functions than he has time to fulfil, although Sir John Hutton, during his last year of office, appeared at nearly a hundred public functions of one kind or another.

Sir Arthur Arnold, the first chairman of the third Council, has occupied a difficult position with dignity and with credit to the Council. He was placed in the chair by a party vote in a Council almost equally divided between parties. Any false step or indiscretion on his part would have led to serious trouble. Sir Arthur, although elected by a party vote, has not been a party chairman. He has taken neutral ground, and has earned the respect of all. He has not, like his predecessors, attended committee



From a photo by [Jerrard.
MR. J. WILLIAMS BENN.
(Member for East Finsbury; Vice-Chairman since 1895.)



From a photo by] [Bassano.

MR. H. P. HARRIS.

(Member for North Paddington; ex-Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee.)

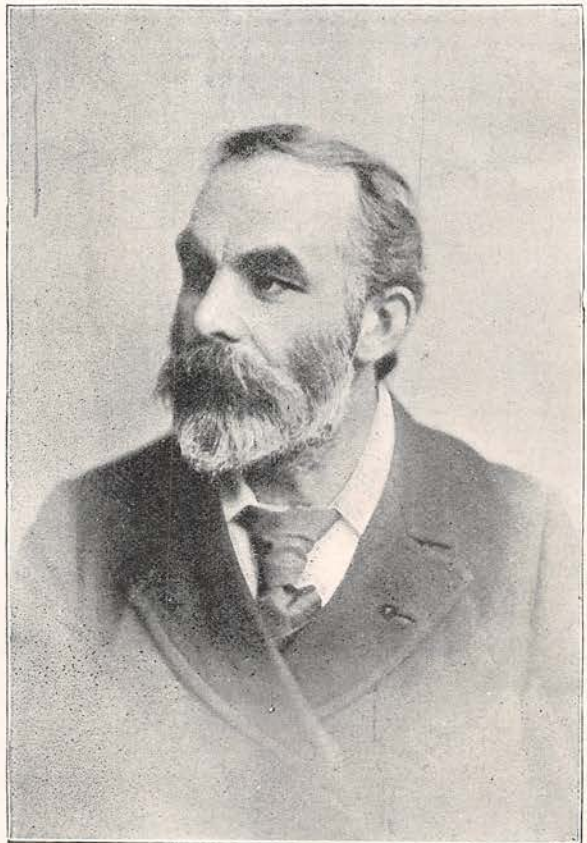
meetings, where his presence or his vote might exercise a controlling influence. His scrupulous desire to be impartial and maintain the dignity of his office has induced him to abstain. As many of the members of the third Council were new to the work, and as party feeling ran high, it wanted a level head and a firm hand to hold the balance in the chair.

The work of two vice-chairmen and of the deputy chairman deserves special notice. Mr. W. H. Dickinson has just retired from the position of deputy chairman, which he has held for four years. On him has fallen the duty of drawing up new schemes, developing lines of policy, and acting as a general source of information for all committees. As the head of the staff he was in constant communication with chiefs of departments, who looked to the deputy for assistance. He was most zealous in the discharge of his duties, and during his official career did a prodigious amount of valuable work which will be permanent in its effect.

An older worker in municipal life is Mr. Charles Harrison, who was for several years vice-chairman, and for six years chairman of the Parliamen-

tary Committee. He is a man of tireless energy, an expert on many subjects, and the leading worker on the Council in connection with new legislation. Mr. J. Williams Benn, another vice-chairman, has played many parts in the Council. He was the first whip of the Progressive party, is a witty speaker and a clever caricaturist. Mr. Benn has livened up many a debate with his bright sallies, but has a mind for serious work as well, and has held some of the most important chairmanships.

Before making the acquaintance of the Council at work we will note some of its administrative characteristics. The work is carried on by twenty-eight standing and special committees, and by a variable number of sub-committees—rarely less than a hundred. The committees meet fortnightly, but the sub-committees more frequently. There are at least fifty meetings a week, at which a thousand subjects are considered. Energetic members, like Mr. John McDougall, Mr.



From a photo by]

MR. JOHN BURNS, M.P.

(Member of the Council for Battersea.)

[Char. F. Treb'e.



From a photo by [J. Hawke, Plymouth.
MR. CHARLES HARRISON, M.P.
(Member for South-West Bethnal Green, and formerly
Vice-Chairman of the Council.)



From a photo by [Morgan & Kidd, Greenwich.
MR. JOHN McDOUGALL.
(Member for Poplar; Chairman of the Asylums Committee.)



From a photo by [A. E. Coe, Norwich.
MR. JAMES STUART, M.P.
(Alderman of the Council.)



From a photo by [Jerrard, Regent Street.
LORD TWEEDMOUTH.
(Alderman of the Council.)

Henry Ward and Mr. Leon, each attend 400 meetings a year. The Council delegates work to committees, but retains responsibility. It seems to be haunted with a vague suspicion and distrust of committees, and of officers as well, which is not met with in older Corporations. The Corporations of the large provincial cities delegate all routine administrative work to committees, and do not ask for reports, except quarterly, and in some cases only annually. The County Council, however, craves for details. Its committees report fortnightly with a multi-



SIR J. BLUNDELL MAPLE, M.P.
(Member for South St. Pancras.)

licity of petty details which generally pass without notice; but sometimes debates are raised on such important questions as the food supply of guinea-pigs in the parks, or the disposal of the eggs which the ducks on the ornamental lakes lay. It is better however to err on the safe side. There is nothing like light to insure purity of administration, and we cannot complain of the Council's thirst for publicity.

London's Parliament has not a palatial meeting-place. The so-called County Hall in Spring Gardens would not be tolerated by

a third-rate provincial town, and even local Vestries would be ashamed of it. The headquarters of municipal life in London is a very commonplace house. It has been adapted and enlarged—several houses have been added from time to time—with the result that the office arrangements are about as inconvenient as possible. The Council's own housing question has been one of the most knotty problems it has tackled. There are offices distributed over several streets, and one department may have branches in three or four different places without any means of communication between them. The waste and delay resulting from these inconvenient arrangements are very great. The architect—Mr. Thomas Blashill—has very skilfully adapted the council chamber, which, as a meeting-place, serves its purpose well.

The chairman and his two colleagues sit on a dais, and behind them are a few seats which serve as a distinguished strangers' gallery, and where on occasions may be seen professors, economists, and public men from America, Germany and France, come to study the great municipality of London at work. The chairman promptly at three o'clock on Tuesdays calls the Council to order and attacks the business, which is set out on an agenda paper of from 40 to 80 pages. First, tenders for work must be opened



MR. EVAN SPICER.
(Alderman of the Council.)



REV. C. FLEMING WILLIAMS.
(Alderman of the Council.)

and contracts sealed, and then comes the report of the Finance Committee (chairman, Mr. Alfred Hoare, of the old and well-known Hoare's Bank in Fleet Street), which shows that the Council does considerable business as a banker by lending money, at a slight profit, to local authorities. This report, containing as it does technical matters which such financial experts on the committee as Sir John Lubbock, Sir Horace Farquhar, Sir Joseph Dimsdale (all bankers) and Lord Welby, formerly head of the Imperial Treasury, have carefully studied and sifted, passes as a rule unchallenged—except when it contains the unwelcome news that the rates are increased. Next comes the report of the General Purposes Committee, a sort of cabinet where the chairmen of all committees meet to discuss matters referred to them. The other committees report in the order in which they appear on the paper. Perhaps a contentious subject receives precedence, and a full-dress debate is expected. The report of the Parliamentary Committee—which of late has taken a different line to the Council on some leading matters—as likely as not raises hostilities, and a rattling debate of short and sharp speeches, each limited to 15 minutes, ensues. Mr. H. Percy Harris, till recently chairman of the committee, an able and genial member, temperate in tone, dignified in style, leads off. He will be followed on his side perhaps by the Earl of Onslow, the leader of the Moderates—who won't always be led as he wants—who states his case without much oratorical effect, but with vigour and conviction. He will be followed by a notable personality in the Council, Mr. Melvill Beachcroft, clever at speech, ready in argument, and possessing a wide knowledge of the Council's work. A Moderate in many things, Mr. Beachcroft takes a strong Progressive line in all matters which affect the health of the people. He has been of great service to the Council, particularly in connection with public health and housing questions. The other leading speakers on the Moderate side will include Mr. Westacott, with a loud voice, who finds emphasis in gesture, and is full of figures—an auctioneer on the rostrum. Mr. Westacott's arguments have a disturbing influence—sometimes on his own side. Sir John Lubbock may contribute a mild speech. Mr. Edmund Boulnois, M.P., seldom misses a debate. Sir Joseph Dimsdale will put the City point of view in City style, and some of the new men—the Hon. Lionel Holland, M.P., or Mr. E. A. Goulding, M.P., the Moderate

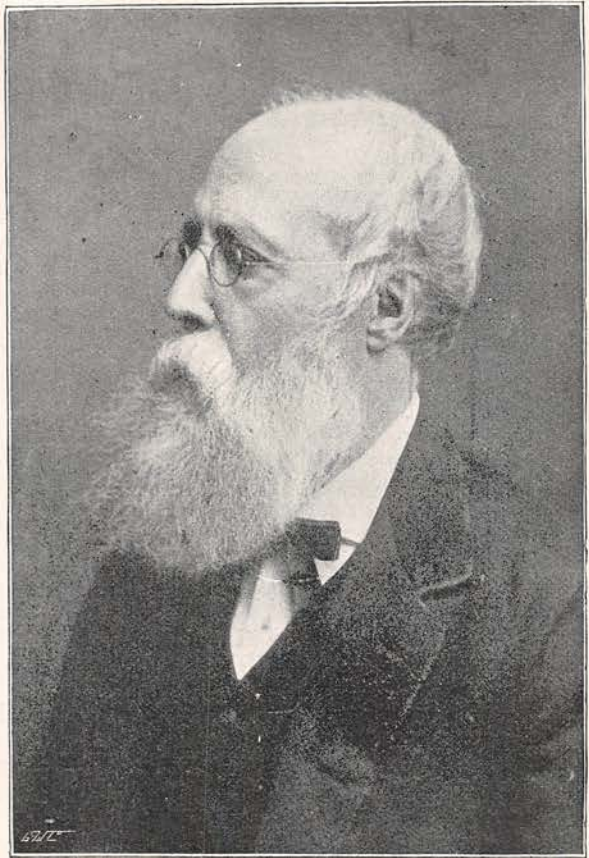
whip, or Sir Blundell Maple—will speak, but are not yet at home on all questions. The Duke of Norfolk rarely spoke, and he recently found that he could not add the work of a County Councillor to his responsibilities as Postmaster-General and his duties as Mayor of Sheffield. His retirement deprives the Council of its greatest social personality. The Earl of Dunraven has been so much at sea since he became a councillor that he is not often in his seat. The majority of the new men elected last March have remained listeners. Some old members have been listeners ever since they entered the Council, without apparently becoming any the wiser.

At such a field-day debate as I describe Progressive speeches would alternate with the Moderate utterances. Mr. Charles Harrison will probably lead off on this side, and have his wallet well stocked with facts. Mr. Harrison has to wrestle with physical difficulties when speaking, and a section of the Council do not show that consideration for him which common courtesy demands. It may be that Mr. McKinnon Wood, a fluent speaker, is put up to lead an attack or make a defence. He will be followed probably by Dr. W. J. Collins, a keen and polished debater; Mr. B. F. C. Costelloe, always alert to pick holes in the enemy's armour, will score points if anyone can, and Mr. James Stuart, M.P., who has been leading spokesman for the Council in the House of Commons for six years, will receive marked attention to a convincing speech in Parliamentary style. Mr. Benn's smart and witty sallies, which used to add piquancy to debates, have not been heard so frequently since he became vice-chairman, and Sir John Hutton, since he was relieved of official duties, has taken a modest attitude. He speaks seldom, although always with effect. Lord Tweedmouth speaks with point, and Mr. Dickinson throws in well-balanced arguments from his place on the dais; Mr. Sidney Webb follows with well-chosen sentences and forcible arguments, and the deep voice of the Rev. Alderman Fleming Williams rolls out strong and sonorous periods at his opponents. These are some of the chief characteristic speakers on both sides when matters of policy are discussed and when party lines hold more or less good. On committee work party considerations are not as a rule the dividing line.

There are many divisions of opinion and incidental discussions during the meetings, but the reports pass rapidly through. Earl Carrington brings up the report of the Fire Brigade Committee; Dr. Collins that of the

department of varied usefulness comprehensively called Public Control. Mr. Fletcher is chairman of the Parks Committee, which has done so much to brighten the lives of the people and provide healthy recreation for young London. Mr. E. A. Cornwall, the Progressive whip, is responsible for the Main Drainage Committee's report, which spends more than any other department, but does a beneficent work in purifying the Thames. Mr. W. Wallace Bruce, chairman of the Public Health and Housing Committee, tells of the progress being made with the great Boundary street scheme, of artisans' dwellings and similar undertakings, and of work done in clearing insanitary areas. Dr. Longstaff, head of the Building Act Committee, brings up a report with a multitude of details which few dare to dispute, and so on through all the reports from the various committees.

The Works Committee, of which Mr. Henry Ward—a civil engineer who has been connected with huge engineering enterprises—is chairman, is one of the most likely to provoke discussion. It is vigilantly watched from within and without, now and then severely attacked, and as vigorously defended. On these



From a photo by]

[Russell.

LORD FARRER.

(Alderman; formerly Vice-Chairman of the Council.)



From a photo by]

[J. Thomson.

SIR HORACE FARQUHAR, BART., M.P.
(Member for East Margate.)

occasions Mr. John Burns shines with distinction. Mr. Burns, who has moulded the labour policy of the Council and taken an active part in several branches of the work, sits with his colleagues of the labour bench under the gallery. He speaks seldom, but always with force. He usually rises towards the close of a discussion to pulverise the opposition. Speeches at the Council on contentious subjects must be as full of facts and figures as a member can get into a fifteen minutes' speech if they are to carry weight. Mr. Burns comes armed with awesome tables of figures, chunks of mortar, brickbats, dried paint, screws, nails and other articles. These are not all to hurl at the opposition members; the brickbats, mortar and other items of material are produced with dramatic effect at opportune moments to demonstrate the worthlessness of contractors' material or the superiority of the Council's own workmanship. Mr. Burns on such occasions raises quite a dust among the members. In the

middle of his impassioned utterances he will whip out of a capacious pocket a sheet of something which looks like leather. "That's contractors' paint," says Mr. Burns, "torn off Westminster Bridge." He throws something in the passage: "That's a contractor's 'brick,'" he explains, as the missile disappears in dust by the fall. These are Mr. Burns's pleasant little ways of relieving the monotony of debate at Spring Gardens. But it should not be supposed that Mr.

Burns's work is all of this picturesque kind. He is not a frequent speaker, as I have said—and the Council has often let him exceed the fifteen minutes' limit by an hour—but he is an arduous worker. He is not content with attending committee meetings; he rushes all over London inspecting works in progress, and is most anxious to see an honest labour policy honestly carried out. His interest in the Council's work is universal, and his influence is often felt where his hand is not seen or his voice heard. The best speeches which he has ever made were those delivered in defence of the Works Department, but his services in this connection are now less necessary, as the success of that department is becoming more and more assured.

After the reports at a Council meeting are all disposed of notices of motion are discussed, provided they are reached before seven o'clock, as a salutary rule stops opposed business after that hour. The motions are occasionally important, but as a rule they represent the hobbies of members.

Two great departments of the Council's

work are seldom heard of at the meetings. The Asylums Committee is a statutory body, which only reports when capital expenditure is involved. It does an immense and a beneficent work in maintaining 10,000 insane in five great asylums. The members spend days in visiting the institutions under their care, and show a laudable desire to alleviate the condition of the patients. Mr. John McDougall, the chairman of the committee, has set a noble example by his devoted zeal in this work.

Another department which only reports quarterly is the Technical Education Board, constituted by the Council, but containing a few representatives of educational interests outside the Council. Mr. Sidney Webb is the chairman of this important authority, which has its own committees and sub-departments. It has reorganised the whole agencies for technical instruction in London, subsidising many, harmonising all. It has instituted classes, maintained schools, and made scholarship ladders by which the poorest child in the Board school may climb up to the University.

To give, however, a superficial account of the Technical Education Board's work would require an article in itself.

We have not yet exhausted the spheres of County Councillors' operations. Some members serve on the Thames and the Lea Conservancy Boards, which look after the condition of our rivers, others are members of the governing bodies of charities and poly-technical institutions. The County Councillor who takes a fair share of all these labours must be a busy man. It is very trying,



From a photo by]

[Bassano.

THE EARL OF ONSLOW, K.C.M.G.
(Alderman, and leader of the Moderate Party.)



From a photo by]

MR. R. MELVILL BEACHCROFT.
(Alderman of the Council.)

[Russell.

exhausting and responsible, all this municipal work, and the councillors enjoy little relief from the monotony of committee meetings. There are no festivities, no banquets, balls or functions at Spring Gardens. There have been only four social functions in seven years, and these were organised by the chairmen. Lord Rosebery, in his second year of office, invited the members to his beautiful country seat of Mentmore to meet as a happy family at his table. The Council were provided with a special train, and everything was done by their genial host to make them welcome. The fine pictures and curios at Mentmore were inspected with much interest, and Lord Rosebery's hospitality on that occasion has often been recalled by his guests with the greatest pleasure. Just after his lordship had assumed the Premiership he attended a meeting of the London County Council—a graceful tribute to the importance which its work held in his mind. Sir John and Lady Hutton were "at home" on two occasions to councillors and representative men in London municipal life at the art rooms in Suffolk Street, when pleasant social gatherings took place. Sir Arthur and Lady Arnold have given one

reception at the County Hall. These are the only recreations which the councillors, as such, have enjoyed. It is a pity that there are not more of such functions, which are a happy relief to the conflicts and asperities of public life. It may be the good fortune of a future chairman to select some appropriate date in the history of London as the occasion of an annual reunion of past and present municipal workers.

Much of what the County Council has done for London and its four and a half million people has been underrated or misunderstood. Little things, or the fads of a section, which did not interfere with the main drift of its policy, have been distorted and magnified, but there is now reason to believe that the work of London's Parliament is better appreciated. If I were asked to state what has been the leading note which the London County Council as a municipality has struck I would not say its careful and painstaking administration, nor its municipalising enterprises—ambitious as they have been—nor its institution of municipal workshops—far as this departure might lead; rather would I seek it in the energising influences which the Council has started, and in the elevating tendencies of its work on social life. A municipality should be judged, not by its colossal undertakings, which strike the imagination, but by the effect of



EARL CARRINGTON, G.C.M.G.
(Member for West St. Pancras; Chairman of the Fire Brigade Committee.)

its policy on the poorest of the people. The social service which the London County Council has rendered is found in small things rather than in great works. We find it in the humane impulses which led the Council to insure the men working under compressed air at the Blackwall tunnel against accident or death; we see it in the gentle care shown the insane inmates of asylums; in the establishment of a minimum living wage for every man, woman and boy in public employment; in the erection of a model lodging-house for the poorest nomads of the great city; in suppressing the one-roomed family home in

its artisans' dwellings; in studying the special needs of women; in erecting gymnasia for girls; in conveying sand from the seaside for children to play on in the parks; and in watching that the charwoman of White-chapel gets her full weight of coal for her penny. These things are not mere accidents of administrative development; they represent a continuity of policy and a directness of purpose which has been felt in all departments of civic life. And whatever the future of the Council may be, by whatever party it may be controlled, the mighty social forces which it has started will endure and will make for a brighter and better city.



THE HEAD PORTER AT SPRING GARDENS.