A black silhouette of the Houses of Parliament in London, including the Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben), is positioned behind the large letter 'P'.

P  
ARLIAMENT

ITS ROMANCE

ITS COMEDY

ITS PATHOS



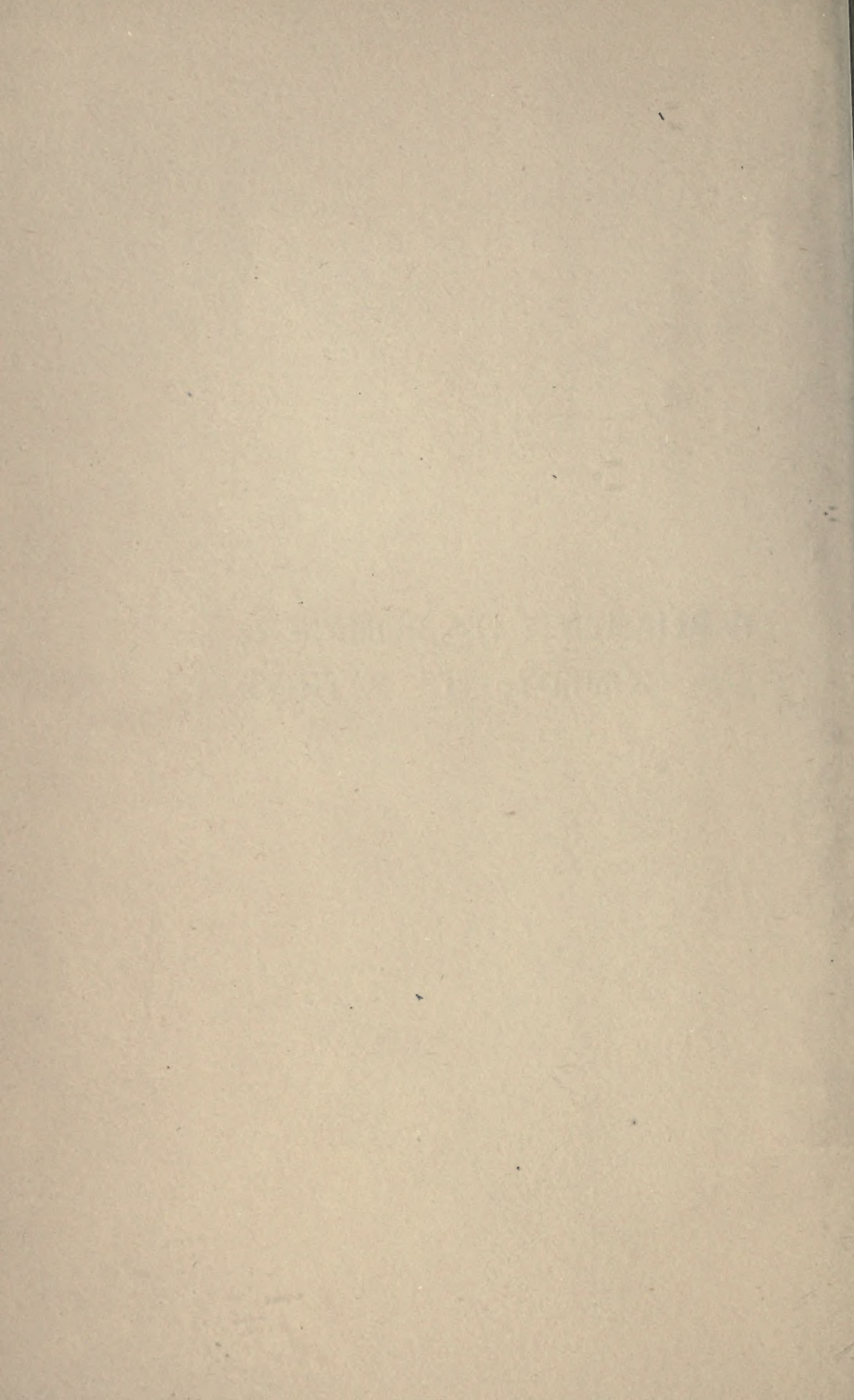
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PARLIAMENT: ITS ROMANCE;  
ITS COMEDY; ITS PATHOS.



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# PARLIAMENT:

ITS ROMANCE  
ITS COMEDY  
ITS PATHOS.



BY

MICHAEL MacDONAGH,

AUTHOR OF "THE BOOK OF PARLIAMENT,"  
AND "IRISH LIFE AND CHARACTER."

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## PREFACE.

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IN "The Book of Parliament," published in 1897, I have endeavoured to describe the two Houses of Parliament engaged in the work of law-making, dwelling particularly on the human element of the operation. In this volume I deal with phases of Parliament—still keeping to its human, rather than to its historical, side—which have hitherto not been noticed in books on the Constitution.

The chapters originally appeared as articles in various magazines. In *Good Words* were published "THE KING: HIS PREROGATIVES AND DISABILITIES," "THE OLD HOUSE OF COMMONS AND THE NEW," "THE OLD HOUSE OF LORDS AND THE NEW," and "PRIVILEGE! PRIVILEGE!"; in *Temple Bar*, "THE GREAT SEAL OF ENGLAND"; in *The Fortnightly Review*, "THE FIRST OF OUR CONSTITUTIONAL SOVEREIGNS" (under the title of "QUEEN VICTORIA AS A STATESMAN"); in *The Nineteenth Century*, "THE EVOLUTION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY OATH," "THE QUAIN'T SIDE OF PARLIAMENT," and "UNPARLIAMENTARY EXPRESSIONS"; in *Macmillan's Magazine*, "MAIDEN SPEECHES," "CURRENT COIN OF THE POLITICIANS," and "THE HUMOURS OF PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING"; in *Literature*, "HANSARD"

(included in the series "Among My Books"); and in *The New Liberal Review*, "LAST SPEECHES OF GREAT PARLIAMENTARIANS." My most grateful acknowledgments are due to the editors of these magazines for their kind permission to republish the articles. Some of the Chapters have been rewritten, and much new matter has been added.

It was the favour with which the articles were received on their original publication that induced me to think that they may be acceptable in collected form.

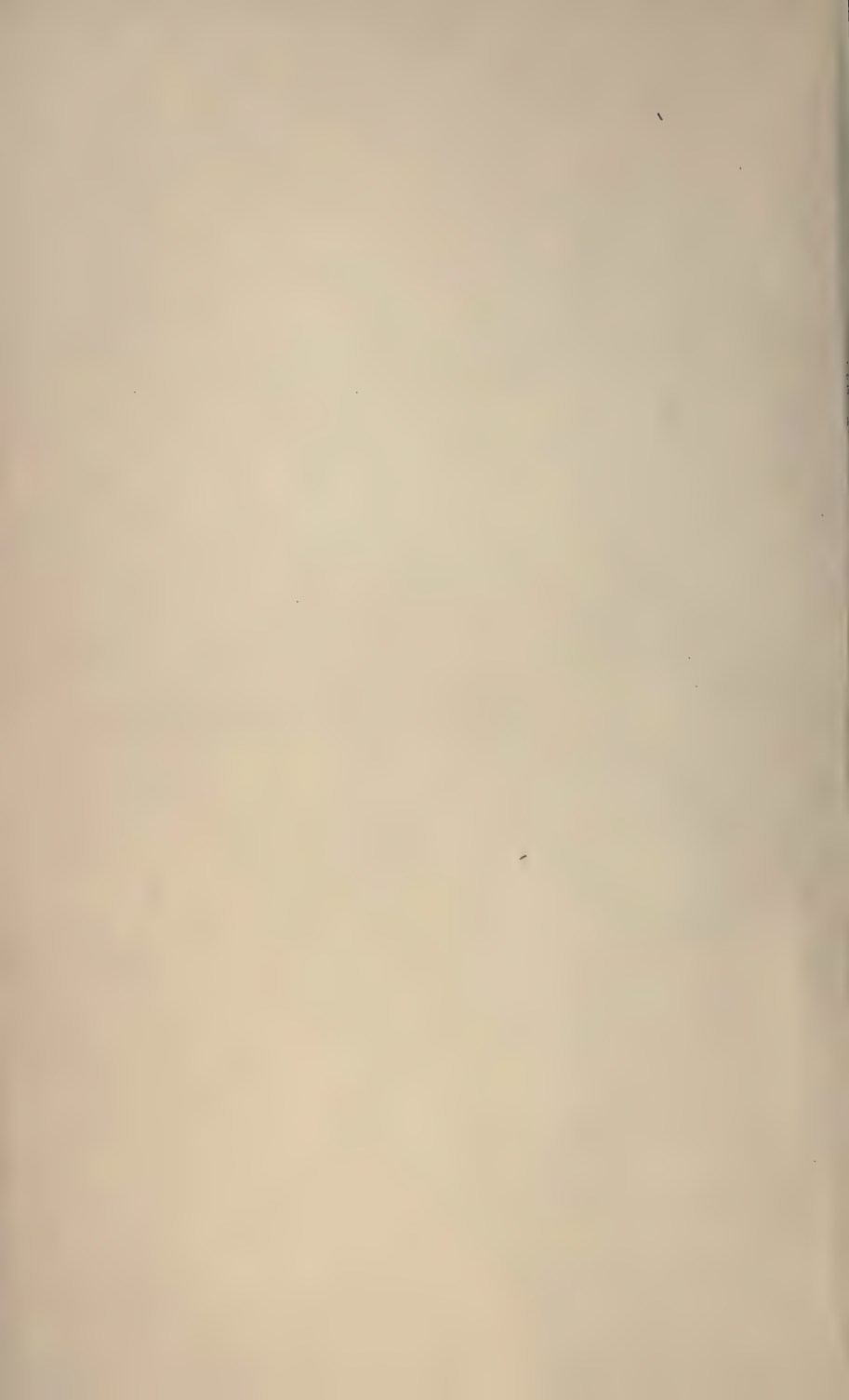
I hope my book will prove not only a recreation to while away a leisure hour for the general reader, but a help to serious students of Constitutional history, and the development of Parliamentary institutions.

MICHAEL MACDONAGH.

LONDON,  
*April, 1902.*

## CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE KING: HIS PREROGATIVES AND DISABILITIES .	I
II. THE FIRST OF OUR CONSTITUTIONAL SOVEREIGNS .	25
III. HOW EDWARD VII. OPENED HIS FIRST PARLIAMENT .	84
IV. THE OLD HOUSE OF COMMONS AND THE NEW . .	108
V. THE OLD HOUSE OF LORDS AND THE NEW . . .	127
VI. "PRIVILEGE! PRIVILEGE!" . . . . .	145
VII. THE GREAT SEAL OF ENGLAND . . . . .	159
VIII. THE EVOLUTION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY OATH .	179
IX. MAIDEN SPEECHES . . . . .	213
X. THE QUAIN'T SIDE OF PARLIAMENT . . . . .	252
XI. THE CURRENT COIN OF THE POLITICIANS . . .	278
XII. UNPARLIAMENTARY EXPRESSIONS . . . . .	308
XIII. "HANSARD" . . . . .	343
XIV. HUMOURS OF PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING . .	364
XV. LAST SPEECHES OF GREAT PARLIAMENTARIANS .	379



# PARLIAMENT:

ITS ROMANCE, ITS COMEDY, AND ITS  
PATHOS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE KING: HIS PREROGATIVES AND DISABILITIES.

THE King stands at the head of Parliament, the three constituent parts of which are the Sovereign, the Lords, and the Commons. According to the theory of the Constitution, Parliament is the King's Great Council summoned to deliberate with him on the affairs of the nation, to advise him as to the condition, the wants, and the wishes of his subjects; and a Bill does not become an Act of Parliament, or, in other words, the law of the land, even though it has passed through the House of Commons and the House of Lords, until it has received his Royal assent. The first clause—"the enacting clause," as it is termed—of every Act of Parliament runs—"Be it enacted by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the consent of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and the Commons, in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows." But beyond this legislative power which the King possesses as a separate and independent part of the Legislature, his Majesty, by right of the Prerogative of the Crown,

is the supreme executive authority of the State in all matters, civil and military.

And what are the exclusive rights, privileges, and powers which the Prerogative confers upon the King? Mr. Pickwick, it will be remembered, was arrested at Ipswich for contemplating a breach of the peace by fighting a duel. "I believe duelling is one of his Majesty's most undoubted prerogatives, Mr. Jinks?" said the mayor of the town to his clerk, when the case came before his worship. "Expressly stipulated in Magna Charta, sir," replied Mr. Jinks. "One of the brightest jewels in the British Crown wrung from his Majesty by the barons, I believe, Mr. Jinks?" said the mayor. "Just so, sir," assented Mr. Jinks. "Very well," continued the mayor, drawing himself up proudly, "it shall not be violated in this portion of his Majesty's dominions." Now, though the privileges conferred by the Royal Prerogative do not include the exclusive right of fighting duels, they are, nevertheless, curiously varied and peculiar. Walter Bagehot, an acute thinker, attempts in his illuminative work "The English Constitution" to enumerate some of the powers of the Sovereign as the pre-eminent executive authority of the land. Writing of Queen Victoria he says:—

"She could disband the army (by law she cannot engage more than a certain number of men, but she is not obliged to engage any men); she could dismiss all the officers, from the general commanding-in-chief downwards; she could dismiss all the sailors too; she could sell off all our ships of war and all our naval stores; she could make a peace by the sacrifice of

Cornwall, and begin a war for the conquest of Brittany. She could make every citizen in the United Kingdom, male or female, a peer; she could make every parish in the United Kingdom a 'university'; she could dismiss most of the civil servants, and she could pardon all offenders. In a word, the Queen could by Prerogative upset all the action of civil government within the Government; could disgrace the nation by a bad war or peace, and could, by disbanding our forces, whether land or sea, leave us defenceless against foreign nations."

It would seem, therefore, that the King as the executive authority is omnipotent. Indeed, if his Majesty were to exercise the extreme, but undoubted, rights of his Prerogative, a monstrous and grinding despotism would be established in this ancient home of freedom without violating the letter, at least, of the law. But extraordinary as are the powers of the King, as set forth by Bagehot, he possesses other rights and privileges of which few of his subjects, perhaps, are aware; and possibly not even his Majesty himself fully realises the rare and wonderful attributes with which he has been endowed by the Constitution.

The law, for instance, declares that the Sovereign can never be under age. In other words, the law does not recognise the incapacity of an infant King or Queen to exercise the functions of the Sovereignty. Lord Eldon, explaining this dictum of the law during a debate in the House of Lords in 1830, on the question of appointing a Regency in the event of King William's death, until the Princess Victoria, the heir to the Throne, was eighteen years of age, said:

“If an infant Sovereign were to be on the Throne whose head could not be seen over the integument which covers the head of my noble and learned friend on the Woolsack he would be supposed to have as much sense, knowledge, and experience as if he had reached the years of three score and ten.” Nevertheless, should it happen that an infant King or Queen succeeded to the Throne, a Regent would be appointed by Parliament, vested with the executive authority of the Crown until the King or Queen came of age; just as during the long years of the mental incapacity of George III. the Prince of Wales was authorised by Parliament to exercise, as Regent, all the powers of the Royal Prerogative necessary to the government of the Realm. The law also seems to ascribe immortality to the Sovereign. “Kings should disdain to die, and only disappear.” So sang a poet named Flatman on the death of Charles II. But “The King never dies” is a very ancient maxim of the Constitution. “The King never dies,” writes Sir William Blackstone, the eminent commentator on English law. “Henry, Edward, or George may die; but the King survives them all.” Thus we find that it is to the Sovereign as ruler, and not to the Sovereign as human being, that the law denies the privilege of death. Not for an instant is the Throne vacant. The moment the Sovereign dies, that moment the reign of his successor begins. “The King is dead! Long live the King!” Immediately after the death of George III., which took place at Windsor, at 8 o'clock in the evening of January 29, 1820, a herald appeared at one of the windows of the castle overlooking the town, and, after a fanfare by two State trumpeters to arrest



the attention of wayfarers, he cried aloud: "The King is dead! Long live the King!" This ceremony was dispensed with at the deaths of George IV., William IV., and Victoria.

The succession to the Throne is not, however, a matter of indefeasible hereditary right. There are conditions attached to the tenure of the Crown. The succession is limited by the Act of Settlement, passed in 1700, to the House of Hanover, and the hereditary right with regard even to the members of that House may be set aside by Parliament. With all the apparently limitless power of the Prerogative, there is one thing the Sovereign is absolutely prohibited from doing, and that is, marrying a Roman Catholic. Not only must the King or Queen of this Realm be a Protestant, but if the Sovereign were to contract a matrimonial alliance with a member of the Roman Catholic Church he or she would forfeit the Crown. The Bill of Rights, passed in 1689, in the first Parliament after the Revolution, thus lays down the law on this point:—

"That all and every person or persons that is, are, or shall be reconciled to, or shall hold communion with the See or Church of Rome, or shall profess the Popish religion, or shall marry a Papist, shall be excluded, and be for ever incapable to inherit, possess, or enjoy the Crown and Government of this Realm and Ireland, and the dominions thereunto belonging, or any part of the same, or to have, use or exercise any regal power, authority, or jurisdiction within the same; and in all and every such case or cases the people of these Realms shall be and are hereby absolved of their allegiance; and the said Crown and

Government shall, from time to time, descend to and be enjoyed by such person or persons, being Protestants, as should have inherited and enjoyed the same, in case the said person or persons so reconciled, holding communion, or professing, or marrying as aforesaid, were naturally dead."

The law also ascribes to the King perfection in thought and deed. One of the most ancient maxims of our Constitution is: "The King can do no wrong;" and Blackstone, commenting on it, writes: "The King is not only incapable of doing wrong, but even of thinking wrong; he can never mean to do an improper thing; in him is no folly or weakness." Incredible as it may appear in these days of limited monarchy there was a time in our history when the literal meaning of the phrase "The King can do no wrong," was accepted almost universally. Every act of the Sovereign, no matter how unrighteous and oppressive, was regarded—save, perhaps, by those who suffered from it—as necessarily right and just. As in theory the King has never been supposed capable of committing any crime or misdeed whatever, should he, in practice—being human—do a wrongful act there is no proceeding known to the law by which he can be brought to account and made personally responsible. He cannot be sued in any Court, either civilly or criminally, for any act of personal misconduct. "We are therefore," says the courtly Blackstone, "out of reverence and decency to forbear any idle inquiries of what would be the consequence if the King were to act thus and thus, since the law deems so highly of his wisdom and virtue, as not even to presume it possible for him

to do anything inconsistent with his station and dignity, and therefore has made no provision to remedy such a grievance." So that if the Sovereign were, we will say, to forge a cheque he could not be brought to trial, or if he were to defame any of his subjects he would not be liable to an action for damages. He is amenable to no earthly tribunal; and his Royal person is, by law, sacred and inviolable. "The erring Prince," an ancient writer on the Constitution says, "must be left to the rebukes of his own conscience, and to his personal accountability to God alone."

The law says that the wrong-doing of a servant is the wrong-doing of the master. But there is an exception made in the case of the King. As his Majesty can do no wrong it is assumed that no wrong either can be done by his servants in the employment of the State. This is true, at least, to the extent that if a merchant-vessel were wrecked or damaged by the negligent management of a King's ship, or a man-of-war, there is no redress. In the case of *Tobin v. The Queen*, damages were sought for the loss of a schooner which was burned by the captain of a man-of-war under the mistaken impression that it was engaged in the slave trade. The Court dismissed the action on the ground that the maxim "The King can do wrong" was true in the sense that the Sovereign is not liable to be sued, civilly or criminally, for a supposed injury. But this immunity is not extended to those who may do wrong by the King's direct command. No one can plead the orders of the King in defence of any act not otherwise justifiable by law. The person who executes the unlawful orders of a

Sovereign is amenable to punishment. This arises out of the abolition, by the Bill of Rights, of the power of the Crown to dispense with or suspend laws, which, under the Stuarts, was made the cover of all sorts of injustices. There is no power in the Crown, that Statute declares, to dispense with the obligation to obey the law. The law, in other words, is above the King; and he is bound to govern according to the law. Therefore, though the King himself cannot be brought to trial as a criminal or a misdemeanant, any person who acted illegally at his command would be liable to criminal or civil proceedings, according to the legal maxim that all persons engaged in an outrage are individually responsible.

“A subject, so long as he continues a subject, has no way to oblige his Prince to give him his due, when he refuses it; though no wise Prince will ever refuse to stand to a lawful contract.” So writes Samuel Puffendorf, the great Saxon jurist, in his “Law of Nature and Nations.” However, though there is no means at the disposal of a subject to oblige the King to meet his liabilities, should he choose to repudiate them—as the personal acts of the King are not under the cognisance of the law—there is a procedure known as “Petition of Right,” by which, with the gracious consent of the King, the matter in dispute may be investigated, should it be thought that his Majesty was in wrongful possession of real or personal property, or of money due by him to a subject, either by way of debt, or damages on breach of contract. The first step taken by the subject in such a matter is to present a petition to the Home Secretary setting forth the

alleged cause of action. The Secretary of State then informs the King, and if his Majesty orders the petition to be endorsed with the fiat, "Let right be done," the suit proceeds in the Courts in the ordinary way, as between subject and subject, not upon compulsion, however, but as a matter of grace. Another disability of the King is that he cannot appear as a witness in a Court of law. He is, therefore, unable to give evidence in any cause in which he is a party. But even if judgment be obtained against the King under a "Petition of Right," his goods cannot be distrained or taken in execution. Should he refuse to pay the debt, the creditor has absolutely no remedy whatever.

His Majesty is not burdened by any taxes or rates. He is never troubled with the formidable yellow form issued annually by the Inland Revenue Department asking searching questions about the amount of one's income, with a view to taxation; and he is in blissful ignorance of the demands of the parish overseers for local rates in respect of his palaces. The Sovereign is exempt from taxation, because the revenue of the Realm being his—in theory, now; formerly in reality—it would be useless and ridiculous for him to tax himself. His Majesty is also exempt from toll. In the reign of George III. a toll was charged for crossing Hampton Bridge. One day there was a Royal hunt on Hounslow Heath. The stag swam across the river, and the Royal hunting party followed by Hampton Bridge. Seeing them approaching at a furious canter, and being unaware that the King was with them, the toll-collector closed the gates. "The King!

the King!" shouted the hunters angrily, and the collector at once opened the gates and allowed them to pass. A few minutes later another party appeared, and the gates being again shut they also cried out: "The King! the King!" But the collector this time was determined to have his toll. "I've let King George through, God bless him," he said, "and I know no other King in England. If you have brought out the King of France, hang me if I let him through without the blunt." Suddenly the King himself appeared in the party; and the toll-collector with many humble apologies flung the gates open. Owing to the delay the stag was lost, and the King in high dudgeon sent an attendant to the collector for an explanation of his conduct. The collector stated that a guinea had always been paid when the Royal hunt passed over the bridge, and that he had allowed the first party to cross without question, thinking that the King was with them. His Majesty, satisfied with the explanation, directed that toll should be paid for forty of his attendants. Driving over the bridge a few days later George let down the carriage window, and laughing heartily, cried out to the toll-keeper: "No fear of the King of France coming to-day."

The King does not pay probate duty or death duty on legacies that may fall to him, or property which he may inherit. The will of Prince Albert, who left considerable property, was never lodged—as the wills of all subjects must be lodged—in Somerset House. Whether her Majesty Queen Victoria was within her rights in withholding the will is a question upon which jurists are divided.

This leads to the consideration of the rights of the Sovereign's Consort. Prince Albert was Queen Victoria's husband, but he was also her subject. Before their marriage her Majesty desired to have him made King Consort. "For God's sake let's hear no more of it, Ma'am," said Lord Melbourne, who was Prime Minister at the time. "If you once get the English people into the habit of making kings you may get them into the habit of unmaking them." Such was the hostility with which the Prince, as a foreigner, was regarded that the House of Lords, on the motion of no less a personage than the Duke of Wellington, rejected a proposal, submitted to them before the marriage took place, that his Royal Highness should rank in precedence next to the Queen; but by a decree of the Queen—a remarkable illustration of the power of the Prerogative—this distinction was conferred upon the Prince subsequently. It was not, however, until 1857—four years before his death—that the title of "Prince Consort" was bestowed on him by Royal Letters Patent, with the concurrence of the leaders of both political Parties. The Prince also enjoyed freedom from arrest, as the Consort of the Sovereign, but he could have been sued in any Court of justice. At that time, which, of course, was before the Married Women's Property Act was passed, the property of a wife was the property of her husband. From this law the estate of the Queen was exempt. The Queen Consort is also a subject of the King. The chief privilege conferred on her by her position is freedom from arrest.

None of the King's household or menial officers or servants employed in waiting or attending on the Royal presence can be arrested, or taken in execution in civil actions, unless the permission of the Board of Green Cloth, which regulates the duties of Royal officials and servants, is first obtained. This privilege was not instituted for the personal benefit of these servants, but in order that the Sovereign may not be put to inconvenience by being deprived of the services of an attendant, and also as a mark of respect to the Throne. There is a case in which a warrant for the arrest of a Royal servant who was also in trade, and contracted in the course of his business a debt which he declined to pay, was refused by a Court of law on the ground that he was privileged from arrest. Royal servants are also exempted from serving on juries. Exemptions of a similar character apply to the palaces. No arrest or anything in the nature of a judicial process can be executed within a Royal residence unless by consent of the Board of Green Cloth. To strike a person in the King's palace, and to draw blood, was formerly punishable by the loss of the offender's right hand and imprisonment for life.

Another privilege of the King is that his consent must be obtained before a member of the Royal family can marry. Formerly it was high treason for any man to contract marriage, without the approval of the Sovereign, with the Sovereign's children, or reputed children, his sisters, or aunts, or the children of his brothers and sisters. Under the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, passed in the time of George III., a marriage with any of the King's near relations, unless



with his Majesty's consent and approbation, is null and void. This statute was passed because of the marriages of the Duke of Gloucester with the widow of Lord Waldegrave, and the Duke of Cumberland with the widow of Colonel Horton. Before that time, however, it had been decided by the judges that the King's sanction was necessary to a marriage with one of the Blood Royal. In the year 1718, George I. commanded the Lord Chancellor to obtain the judgment of the judges of the High Court upon the following question: "Whether the care and approbation of his Majesty's grandchildren when grown up did belong of right to his Majesty as King of the Realm or not?" Six of the twelve judges answered the question in the affirmative. Charles II. had obliged his brother, the Duke of York (afterwards James II.), to allow the young Princesses, his daughters, to be brought up in the Protestant Faith; and arranged the marriage between the eldest, Princess Mary, and the Prince of Orange. "Happy it was for two nations that the King in the marriages of Mary, Queen to William III., and of Queen Anne had his Prerogative," said Baron Aland Fortescue in his judgment, "for had the pretended paternal right prevailed the English nation had been for ever undone and our religion destroyed; and we had never seen the many and great blessings we enjoy and are like to enjoy by this family sitting on the Throne of Great Britain."

But the matrimonial alliances of the children of the Sovereign must now be approved by the Ministry. In the matter of the disposal by Queen Victoria of the hand of the Princess Louise on the Marquis of Lorne

in 1871 the Administration of the time were consulted. Gladstone, the Prime Minister, speaking in the House of Commons on February 13, 1871, on the motion that an annuity of £6,000 be settled on the Princess for life, said: "In the resolution which the Queen has taken that the absence of Royal rank shall not of itself, and in every case, form an insuperable bar to the suit for the hand of one of her daughters, she is not acting without the advice of responsible Ministers." This statement was interpreted, in some quarters, as meaning that the marriage had really been arranged by the Liberal Government, in which the bridegroom's father, the Duke of Argyll, held office; but, of course, the suggestion was absolutely unfounded. "What I stated," said Gladstone, in a subsequent speech, "was that upon the important question of the deviation from what had recently been the established rule her Majesty had taken the advice of her confidential advisers; and I may as well state that she did so about eighteen months ago, and long anterior to the period when the present arrangement was contemplated."

The King's authority over his subjects also raises some curious points. Under the Common Law a subject may leave the country when he chooses or for any reason he pleases, but as it is the duty of every subject "to defend the King and his Realm" his Majesty has power to prevent any subject leaving the kingdom, and to command the immediate return of any subject from abroad. But the King cannot compel a subject to quit the Realm. This disability does not cease to operate even in time of war. It is, of course, the duty of every able-bodied man to assist

in the defence of the country, but no subject can be forced on active service in a war abroad. There is no power either in the King to compel an alien to leave the kingdom.

The King has the power of remission of punishment for any crime. This prerogative is based upon the legal dictum that inasmuch as it is the "King's Peace" that is broken by every violation of the law, the King, being himself the offended party, may pardon the criminal. More than that, a pardon from the Crown can be pleaded when the prisoner is arraigned, and is a complete bar to the indictment. There is only one exception to the exercise of this prerogative. It is provided by the Act of Settlement that no pardon from the Crown is pleadable to an impeachment instituted by the Commons in Parliament. But if, when the impeachment is concluded, a sentence is imposed, the King can exercise the prerogative of pardon. His Majesty, however, cannot interfere in a case of private, as opposed to public, wrong. At the beginning of her reign, Queen Victoria attached her signature to warrants for the execution of condemned criminals; but she soon relegated this unpleasant duty to the Home Secretary. The Queen had the power, of course, to reprieve any and every murderer. She did, in fact, reprieve the first person sentenced to death after her accession to the Throne. The culprit was a soldier, upon whom a court-martial had imposed the death penalty as an incorrigible deserter—three times he had absconded—but as he had a fine record for bravery on active service, her Majesty wrote "pardoned" across the warrant of execution. Queen Victoria, however, rarely, if ever, acted on her

own initiative in the exercise of the prerogative of mercy, being content to leave a free hand to the Home Secretary, the Minister responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the Realm. The King, nevertheless, could to-morrow, on his own authority, issue a general amnesty pardoning and releasing every prisoner in the gaols.

It is improbable, however, that any Sovereign would now exercise the prerogative of mercy without having first taken his Ministers into his confidence and obtained their approval. A curious case occurred in 1830. In Ireland a gentleman of good family and position, named Comyn, was convicted of arson, and sentenced to death. George IV., influenced by a petition presented to him on behalf of the unfortunate man, wrote to the Lord Lieutenant, without any previous consultation with his Ministers, signifying his pleasure that the criminal should be reprieved. In the meantime the Viceroy, with the advice of the law officers in Ireland, had decided that the law should take its course, and this determination was supported by Wellington, the Prime Minister, and Peel, the Home Secretary. Peel, on being informed of the action of the King, addressed a strong remonstrance to his Majesty for having exercised the prerogative of mercy unknown to his Ministers, and Wellington had an immediate personal interview with the King, which resulted in the withdrawal of the order of reprieve. Comyn was accordingly hanged. He would have had to be released, of course, had the King refused to accede to the request of his Ministers to revoke the order.

“ It is impossible for a man to be in two places at

one time, unless he is a bird," said Sir Boyle Roche in the Irish House of Commons. The law of the Constitution attributes to the King the magic gift of being in a hundred Courts of justice at the same time. The *Court Circular* may state that yesterday his Majesty was at Windsor ; but the Constitution insists that he was at the Law Courts in the Strand, and with every judge holding a Court of assize throughout the kingdom. If either of the parties in any action fails to appear when the case is called he is nonsuited, or, in other words, the case is dismissed. But the King, in whose name many causes and prosecutions are instituted, can never be nonsuited, because, even if he be a thousand miles away, he is in Court, nevertheless. Yet, though he is presumed by the Constitution to be present in every Court of law, he cannot, according to that same authority, strangely enough, appear personally in any of the Courts or personally decide any case, civil or criminal. The same contradictory theories apply in Parliament. The King is understood to be present at every sitting of the Legislature. But, as a matter of fact, he cannot constitutionally appear in Parliament except when he comes in state to the House of Lords for the exercise of his prerogative of opening or proroguing Parliament. He may also attend during a session for the purpose of giving the Royal Assent to Bills. But his presence on any other occasion would be regarded as an unconstitutional attempt to influence debates by overawing the assembly. Queen Victoria, therefore, was never present in the House of Commons during the whole course of her long reign of sixty-three years ; and the King will never

again occupy the seat over the clock in the Peers' Gallery, from which, as Prince of Wales, he so often listened to the debates of the Lower Chamber.

Walter Bagehot, who declares in "The English Constitution," as already quoted, that the Sovereign by the exercise of his Prerogative could break the might of Great Britain, and bring about irretrievable disaster while the Ministers look helplessly on, asserts nevertheless that the Sovereign has long ceased to possess any legislative authority, inasmuch as he is really powerless to veto any Bill which has passed through both Houses of Parliament. Writing of Queen Victoria, Bagehot says: "She must sign her own death warrant if the two Houses unanimously send it up to her." This assertion has been controverted by some authorities. They say that while the King cannot amend or alter a Bill, he would be within his right in declining to assent to any measure to which he personally objected. It is true that the Royal Assent has not been refused since Queen Anne declined to sign a Scotch Militia Bill; but the legislative veto still, undoubtedly, rests in the Sovereign and may be exercised at any time. It can, however, be exercised only on the advice of the Ministers. Were it otherwise, the King could render futile the work of both Houses of Parliament by simply withholding his signature to Bills.

No act of the Crown as the executive authority, however trifling, can be completed without the Royal Sign Manual—as the signature of the Sovereign is called—and the King cannot, without the consent of Parliament, delegate this duty of signing papers to another. In May, 1830, during the last illness of

George IV., an Act was hurriedly passed to relieve the dying monarch from the painful task of signing State papers with his own hand. It was provided that a stamp should be affixed to every document, in place of the Royal signature, in the presence of the King and in obedience to his command, given by word of mouth, and the document thus stamped was to be further indorsed by three members of the Privy Council. Not to speak of important State papers, the purely formal documents which the King has to sign are very numerous. Mr. Balfour in his affecting tribute to Queen Victoria in the House of Commons, on January 26th, 1901, referred to the vast mass of untouched documents which he saw at Osborne, awaiting the Sign Manual. "Short," said he, "as was the interval between the last trembling signature affixed to a public document, and the final rest, it was yet long enough to clog and hamper the wheels of administration." This work of drudgery has, of late years, been somewhat lightened for the Sovereign. For instance, the King now only indorses all fresh commissions in the army. Formerly, all military commissions, of every kind, had to be signed by the Sovereign, with the result that when in 1862 an Act was passed by Parliament to enable the Queen, by Order in Council, to free herself from the duty of signing all such documents there was an accumulation of 15,000 commissions in arrear. Indeed, it often happened that an officer received his warrant of promotion only after he had left the army. Yet, despite this relief, Queen Victoria had to attach her signature to more than 50,000 documents every year. While the Court was at Balmoral or Osborne, six

Queen's messengers were continually travelling between the capital and the palace with bags and boxes containing these papers.

Considerable as are the prerogatives of the King, his Majesty is subject to some curious restrictions or disabilities, besides those already mentioned. He cannot, for instance, on his own personal responsibility, send a communication to or receive a communication from any other Sovereign on a question of State. In 1829 the Duke of Wellington, being then Prime Minister, indirectly heard that the King, George IV., had received a letter from the King of Prussia requesting his Majesty to vote for Prince Charles of Mecklenburg to be King of Greece, which had just wrested its independence from the Turks, and that King George had agreed to do so. The Prime Minister wrote to his Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Aberdeen, indignantly complaining of the action of King George. "It is not usual for the King of England," he said, "to receive from other Sovereigns letters which do not pass through the hands of his Ministers. Indeed, I have known instances of letters having been returned because copies were not sent with the sealed letter, the copy being intended for the information of the Minister. But it is still more unusual and improper for the King to answer a letter from another Sovereign without the advice of his Minister who, whether he advises or does not, is responsible if he knows of the letter being written." Wellington urged Aberdeen to at once "entreat" the King not to answer the letter until he had heard from him again. It then transpired that the letter in question was really from the Grand Duke



of Mecklenburg-Strelitz to the Duke of Cumberland, written at the request of the King of Prussia, desiring that King George might be asked to support the candidature of Prince Charles. The King also promised the Foreign Secretary that he would not commit himself on behalf of Prince Charles in his reply to the note from Prussia. But the Ministers were not satisfied. The Foreign Secretary wrote to the British Minister at Berlin desiring him to convey to the King of Prussia the intention of his Britannic Majesty to act in the matter solely on the advice of his responsible Minister.

“Her Majesty cannot be supposed to have a private opinion apart from that of her responsible advisers.” So we are gravely told by Sir Erskine May, the erudite Clerk of the House of Commons, referring to Queen Victoria, in his standard work on “Parliamentary Practice.” The sentence is curiously phrased; but what, of course, it means is that the Sovereign must not be influenced by his personal predilections in his attitude towards public affairs, at least to the extent of opposing, or refusing to act upon, the advice of his Ministers. In like manner, it is a breach of order in both Houses of Parliament to mention the name of the Sovereign with a view to affect the course of legislation. On December 17th, 1783, the House of Commons adopted the following resolution:—

“Resolved—That it is now necessary to declare that to report any opinion, or pretended opinion, of his Majesty upon any Bill, or other proceeding depending in either House of Parliament, with a

view to influence the votes of Members, is a high crime and misdemeanour, derogatory to the honour of the Crown, a breach of the fundamental privileges of Parliament, and subversive of the Constitution of the country."

On February 26th, 1808, Tierney speaking in the House of Commons said of Canning: "The right hon. gentleman has forfeited the good opinion of the country, of the House, and as I believe of his Sovereign." The Speaker at once interposed and called Tierney to order for having introduced the personal opinion of the Sovereign into the debate.

The Crown has, in theory, been shorn of none of its ancient rights and privileges. All the executive powers involved in the Prerogative are still vested in the Sovereign alone, as in the days of the absolute monarchy of the Stuarts, and still can be exercised only by the Sovereign. But under the unwritten laws and customs of the Constitution, which have gradually grown up since the Revolution of 1688, silently, as it were, and almost imperceptibly, the executive powers that are necessary to the smooth working of the Constitution are now put into operation solely on the advice and through the instrumentality of the Ministers. The old constitutional maxim, "The King can do no wrong," which has come down to us from the far-off days when the "Divine right of Kings" was an article of religious belief, therefore obtains in the twentieth century, not in the sense that the King is personally infallible, or humanly incapable of doing wrong, but in the sense that if any evil or injustice is wrought by the executive acts of Govern-

ment which are done in the Sovereign's name, it is not the Sovereign that is to blame, but the Minister on whose advice his Majesty exercises his Royal Prerogative.

Thus have the old theories of the Constitution been brought, in practice, into harmony with modern ideas. The King can do no wrong as part of the Legislature, or as the supreme executive authority, because everything he may do in either capacity is done, not on his own personal initiative and responsibility, but on the advice of his Ministers. It is the Ministers, therefore, who are answerable to Parliament, and to the law of the land, for every legislative or executive act of the Sovereign.

Of course the extent to which the King influences his Ministers, or is himself controlled by them, depends upon his strength of will and obstinacy, and the weakness and pliancy of his advisers. George III. generally succeeded in having his own way in policy and legislation. A plain, blunt, and rather narrow-minded man, he could not understand the subtleties of a Constitution which told him in black and white that he was an absolute ruler incapable of ill-doing; and yet insisted by its unwritten laws and customs that, in practice, he must do nothing on his own responsibility, but everything he is told by his Ministers. In 1799 he informed Henry Dundas how pleased he was to learn that a union between Ireland and Great Britain was in contemplation. "But," he added, "I hope it is not true that the Government is pledged to emancipate the Roman Catholics?" "No," replied the Minister, "that will be a matter

for future consideration." The King protested that he could never consent to the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, as it would be a violation of his Coronation Oath, which bound him to uphold the Protestant supremacy. Dundas endeavoured to explain that his oath applied to the King in his executive capacity and not as part of the Legislature. "None of your Scotch metaphysics, Mr. Dundas," cried the monarch angrily. "None of your d—— Scotch metaphysics." The inconsistency between legal theory and actual practice in the Constitution is, indeed, somewhat bewildering. It is also amusing.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FIRST OF OUR CONSTITUTIONAL SOVEREIGNS.

WILLIAM PITT in 1783, three years after the House of Commons had agreed to Dunning's celebrated motion, "That the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished," was asked by a French Abbé—during a visit to France—in what part the British Constitution might be first expected to decay. The statesman, after musing for a moment, answered, "That part of our Constitution which will first perish is the Prerogative of the King, and the authority of the House of Lords."

I have endeavoured to show in the preceding chapter the mutations through which the ancient conception of the Royal Prerogative has passed—the wide divergence which now prevails between its theory and its practice—owing to the changes in popular opinion and belief and the consequent political revolutions of our national life. In truth the exercise of the once absolute prerogatives of the Crown is to-day limited and restrained by law, by constitutional precept and by common sense. It was said of Victoria, in a most interesting article on the personal character of the Queen, which appeared in "The Quarterly Review"

after her death, that she regarded herself as "a consecrated Monarch by Divine right," who construed the word "loyal" in the mediæval sense, as implying the duty of obedience to her, as Sovereign, irrespective of her personal character. Thus she cultivated "a deep and almost superstitious reverence for Charles I., who was never anything less than 'the Royal martyr' in her eyes; and no disparagement of James II. was ever permitted in her presence." If Queen Victoria entertained these old-fashioned Royalist notions she certainly never displayed them in her relations, as Sovereign, with the various Ministers chosen by the people to conduct the affairs of the State in the course of her long reign. On the contrary, she had a most enlightened sense and appreciation of the changed position of the Sovereign which the advance of democracy has produced. She never exercised any of the prerogatives which are still, in fact, vested in the Crown, except on the advice of her Ministers; and under her rule Parliamentary Government was placed on a broad, unshakable, and enduring basis. Queen Victoria may, in truth, be described absolutely as the first of our constitutional Sovereigns.

"Why are Princes alone to be denied the credit of having political opinions based upon an anxiety for the national interests, their country's honour, and the welfare of mankind? Are they not more independently placed than any other politician in the State? Are their interests not more intimately bound up with those of their country? Is the Sovereign not the natural guardian of the honour of

his country? Is he not necessarily a politician?" These reflections are contained in a private memorandum written by Prince Albert in 1852.

If Queen Victoria had any political opinions on her accession to the Throne in 1837, they were certainly Whig. The influences of her home tended to give her mind a bias in that direction. Her father, the Duke of Kent, was a Whig, like his brother, the Duke of Sussex, while the other sons of George III.—the Prince of Wales, who as George IV. abjured the Whig principles of his youth, the Duke of York, the Duke of Clarence (afterwards William IV.), and the Duke of Cumberland—entertained high Protestant and Tory opinions. The Duke of Kent was associated with the Whig Opposition during the Regency of his brother, the Prince of Wales. At a political banquet in London he made a public declaration of his political creed. "I am a friend of civil and religious liberty all the world over," said his Royal Highness; "I am an enemy to all religious tests. I am a supporter of a general system of education. All men are my brethren, and I hold that power is only delegated for the benefit of the people. Those are the principles of myself and of my beloved brother, the Duke of Sussex. They are not popular principles just now; that is, they do not conduct to place or office. All the members of the Royal Family do not hold the same principles. For this I do not blame them. But we claim for ourselves the right of thinking and acting as we deem best, and we proclaim ourselves, with our friend Mr. Tierney, 'members of his Majesty's loyal Opposition.'" He died a few months after the birth of the Princess

Victoria, and therefore cannot be said to have personally influenced the mind of his daughter in political affairs; but the Duchess of Kent, who had the sole direction of the training of the future Queen, shared the Whig principles of her husband, and the society which she favoured after his death was Whig.

The fact that a Whig Administration was in office when the Queen ascended the Throne also tended naturally to colour the political views of the young Sovereign. From Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister of that Administration, to whom she was indebted for tuition and training in her constitutional duties as Queen, she must have inevitably imbibed Whig principles, if she had not adopted them already. During the progress of the General Election, which, according to the law, followed within a few months of her accession, she evinced the greatest interest in the success of the Whig candidates, and was delighted that the result confirmed the Melbourne Administration in office. The Whigs, indeed, did not scruple to make use of the Queen's name as a party cry during the election. They boldly declared that she was on their side. "The Queen," said Sir Henry Parnell, a member of the Administration, "has definite and firm opinions on all the questions of the day." "What!" exclaimed young William Ewart Gladstone, in a speech at Manchester, "does Sir Henry Parnell conceive that amidst the shades of Kensington Gardens the Princess Victoria has been studying the question of Irish Municipal Corporations; that she has taken her morning walks with the division list in her hand; and has over her evening tea discussed



the probability of Tory or Whig ascendancy?" But, despite these jaunty words, the Tories well knew, to their mortification, that the Sovereign regarded them with disfavour and suspicion.

Lord Melbourne exercised in the development of her fresh young mind all the influence of a parent. That always interesting gossip, Charles Greville, records in his "Journal" that the Queen and the Prime Minister passed, "if not in *tête-à-tête* yet in intimate communication," six hours every day. "If Melbourne should be compelled to resign," Greville adds, "her privation will be the more bitter on account of the exclusiveness of her intimacy with him. Accordingly her terror when any danger menaces the Government, her nervous apprehension at any appearance of change, affects her health, and upon one occasion during the last session (1838) she actually fretted herself into an illness at the notion of their going out." The Whigs sustained a defeat in the House of Commons in May, 1839, and decided to resign. "The Queen had not been prepared for this catastrophe, and was completely upset by it," writes Greville. "Her agitation and grief were very great. In her interview with Lord John Russell she was all the time dissolved in tears, and she dined in her own room and never appeared on that evening."

Sir Robert Peel was sent for by the Queen and commanded to form an Administration. The Tory leader pointed out to the Queen that according to custom the ladies of the Court, who had been appointed by Melbourne, and were, indeed, near relatives of some of the outgoing Ministers, must

resign. The Queen declared she could not part with the ladies of her household. "I regard them," said she, "as personal friends, and not as party politicians." Peel protested that if her Majesty adhered to that opinion he must abandon the undertaking to construct a Government. He mentioned particularly that Irish affairs would constitute one of his principal difficulties as Prime Minister, and that it could scarcely be felt that he had fair-play regarding these questions so long as the wife of the late Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (the Marchioness of Normanby) and the sister of the late Chief Secretary (the Duchess of Sutherland) retained their posts as Ladies of the Bedchamber, which would bring them into intimate daily intercourse with the Sovereign. But the Queen was obdurate; and Peel left Buckingham Palace, where the interview took place, in a state of perplexity.

That night a meeting of the outcoming Ministers was held at Melbourne House. The Prime Minister laid before his colleagues a letter he had received from the Queen, describing her colloquy with Peel. "It was written," remarks Greville, truly enough, "in a bitter spirit, and in a strain such as Elizabeth might have used." In it Victoria said: "Do not fear that I was not calm and composed. They wanted to deprive me of my ladies, and I suppose they would deprive me next of my dressers and my housemaids. They wished to treat me like a girl, but I will show them that I am Queen of England." The Whig Ministers, animated by a natural chivalrousness to save the young and sensitive Sovereign from a painful situation, decided to remain in office. The next

morning the Queen, on Melbourne's advice, sent Peel the following note:—

“The Queen, having considered the proposals made to her yesterday by Sir Robert Peel to remove the Ladies of her Bedchamber, cannot consent to a course which she considers to be contrary to usage and is repugnant to her feelings.”

No doubt the Queen's more matured opinion of this interesting incident of her early years is expressed by Sir Theodore Martin, in his “Life of the Prince Consort,” when he says: “It cannot be denied that the young Queen's warm personal regard for Lord Melbourne and for the adherents of his Administration, who had surrounded her Majesty since her accession, had not unnaturally caused her to drift into political partisanship. . . . The continuance of the state of things to which this led must have been productive of consequences the most mischievous.”

We obtain another glimpse of the Queen's attitude towards the Tories at this time from an entry in the diary of Lord Ashley, afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury, who, having dined at Buckingham Palace, records: “She said the other night, when reading some attack on her in some low paper professing to be on our side, ‘the Tories do all in their power to make themselves odious to me.’ The fact is that from her earliest years she has been taught to regard us as her personal enemies. I am told that the language of Kensington was such as to inspire her with fear and hatred.” Many honest Whigs, indeed, were convinced that the Tories desired to set aside the right of the Princess Victoria to the Throne, and secure the accession of her uncle,

the Duke of Cumberland, then King of Hanover, a stout old Tory. On the arrangement of her marriage with Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, in 1839, the Queen was further alienated from the Tories by their action with regard to the allowance and status of the bridegroom. Lord John Russell moved in the House of Commons, on behalf of the Government, for a yearly grant of £50,000, but an amendment from the Tory Opposition, to reduce the sum to £30,000, was carried, after an acrimonious debate, by 262 votes against 158. Peel, writing to a friend, said: "This division will inform the Queen that she must not place too much reliance on the forbearance of the Conservative Party." In the House of Lords the Tory peers, headed by the Duke of Wellington—as I have mentioned in the preceding chapter—carried the omission from the Bill for the naturalisation of Prince Albert of a clause proposing that his Royal Highness should rank in precedence next to the Queen.

In 1841 the Melbourne Government were defeated in the House of Commons. They appealed to the country, but were beaten at the polls, and resigned. The Queen, writing to Lord John Russell on August 28th, said :—

"Long as the Queen was prepared for this event, she does not for that feel it the less painful. She is deeply grieved to have to part from those she has such confidence in. She trusts, however, that at no very distant period she will again see Lord John Russell in the office which he has filled so much to the satisfaction of both his Sovereign and his country."

There was no difficulty this time over the ladies of

the Royal Household. They resigned, with the willing consent of the Queen. Her Majesty also received her Tory Ministers most cordially. Peel, the Prime Minister, was able to write to a friend:—

“ My relations with the Queen are most satisfactory. The Queen has acted towards me not merely (as everyone who knew her Majesty’s character must have anticipated) with perfect fidelity and honour, but with great kindness and consideration. There is every facility for the dispatch of public business, a scrupulous and most punctual discharge of every public duty, and an exact understanding of the relation of a Constitutional Sovereign to her advisers.”

In September, 1841, Peel, after he had formed an Administration, received a significant note from the Queen. She wrote: “ The Queen is certain that toleration and forbearance will have the best effect upon the people of Ireland.” Her Majesty was clearly desirous that the ameliorative and pacific policy of the Melbourne Administration with respect to Ireland should be continued by the new Government. However, O’Connell, hopeless of obtaining any concession from the Tories, renewed the agitation for the Repeal of the Union, which he had allowed to slumber during the friendly Melbourne *régime*, and Peel endeavoured to crush it by imprisoning its leader and his principal lieutenants. In 1844 Peel adopted a more conciliatory policy towards Ireland. He proposed to increase the annual grant in aid of Maynooth College, for the education of the Roman Catholic priesthood of Ireland, from £9,000 to £26,000, and, by making it a permanent charge on the Consolidated Fund, withdraw it

altogether from the control and yearly criticism of the House of Commons. Owing to the scruples of Gladstone, who was a member of the Administration, Peel was unable for some time to lay his proposal before Parliament. At that stage he received the following encouraging communication from Prince Albert, dated February 16th, 1844: "I return the private memorandum respecting Maynooth, and repeat to you my regret that you were not enabled to carry out your wise intentions. The Queen joins with me in hoping that you may, in no distant time, overcome the difficulties which now stand in your way."

The Queen had in contemplation a visit to Ireland, which she reluctantly postponed owing to the disaffected and disturbed condition of the country. Early in the Session of 1844 the Whig Opposition moved for a Committee of Inquiry into the causes of Irish discontent. On February 23rd—the ninth night of a bitter and angry debate on the motion—Peel delivered a most able speech in defence of the Government, animated by a conciliatory spirit towards Ireland, in the course of which he expressed the desire to improve by legislation the social condition of the unhappy country. Referring to the Queen's wish to visit Ireland, he thus concluded:—

"I should rejoice—in whatever capacity I may fill I should consider it the happiest day of my life—when I see the beloved Sovereign of these realms fulfilling the fondest wishes of her heart—of that heart so full of affection to all her people, but mingling that affection with peculiar sympathy and tenderness to Ireland. I should hail the

dawning of that auspicious day when she could alight like some benign spirit on its shores and there lay the foundations of a Temple of Peace; when she could in accents which, proceeding from the heart, speak to the heart, rather than to the ear; when she could call on her Irish subjects of all classes and of all denominations, Protestant and Catholic, Saxon and Celt, to forget the differences of creed and race, and to hallow that holy Temple of Peace, of which she laid the foundation — to hallow it with sacrifices still holier than the sacrifices by which the temples of old were hallowed — to hallow it by the sacrifice of those evil passions which dishonour our common faith and prevent the union of heart and hand in defence of our common country.”

A few days later Peel received the following private letter of congratulation from her Majesty :—

“WINDSOR CASTLE, *February 25th*, 1844.

“The Queen cannot but write a line to Sir Robert Peel to express to him our extreme admiration of his speech, which we read entirely through last night.

“It is a most triumphant defence, and at the same time calculated to produce the best effect in Ireland.”

Peel, having obtained for the Maynooth Bill the unanimous support of his colleagues by the resignation of Gladstone, introduced the measure in the Session of 1845. It met with formidable opposition. It was objected to by some Members because it

proposed to subsidise a Church which disseminated religious error, and by others on the ground that they were opposed to all grants to Churches, whether corrupt or pure. Immediately after the introduction of the Bill the Queen wrote to Peel:—

*“April 9th, 1845.*

“We are very anxious to hear the effect which has been produced by the Maynooth Bill in Ireland. The Queen anxiously hopes Sir Robert does not feel uneasy about the result of the debate. The measure is so just and good a one that people must open their eyes and will not oppose it.”

The Bill was strenuously resisted through all its stages in the House of Commons. The Queen evidently read the debates with interest, and was pained by the religiously fanatical spirit which pervaded many of the speeches in opposition to the measure. Writing to Peel on April 15th, she said: “It is not honourable to Protestants to see the bad and violent and bigoted passions displayed at this moment.” However, the Third Reading was carried by 317 votes to 184. Her Majesty told Peel, on April 25th, she was much pleased with the result, and added: “We were most enthusiastically received last night, in the theatre and outside; and not one ‘No Popery’ observation was to be heard.”

On June 2nd the Duke of Wellington moved the Second Reading of the Bill in the House of Lords. He had spoken only a few sentences of his speech when, by a curious interruption, the Duke of Newcastle raised an interesting point as to the power



or authority exercised by the Crown in the initiation of legislation. Here is the extract from *Hansard*:—

“THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE—My Lords, I rise to order. I beg to apologise to the noble Duke and to the House for interrupting him, but as a preliminary to this discussion I think it right to put this question to the noble Duke, whether he has the Queen’s permission to make this proposition to the House. (Cries of Hear, hear, and Order.)

“LORD BROUGHAM—That is not in order. The noble Duke is not speaking to order; but, on the contrary, this is one of the most disorderly proceedings I ever witnessed in the whole course of my experience. The question of the noble Duke is one that should have been put, not as an interruption to, but after the noble Duke’s speech.

“THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE—I wish to put the question, as it affects the Act of Succession, as it affects the Nation, and as it affects individuals. (Cries of Order, order.)

“LORD BROUGHAM—My Lords, I rise to order. I will not sit here and allow any man to deny that we have a right to enter into, to continue, and to close any discussion of any nature. The leave of the Crown is required in one case only, but may be given at any period of the discussion, and that is on a measure affecting the revenues or the patrimonial interests of the Crown.”

The Duke of Wellington did not reply to the constitutional question thus irrelevantly raised by the Duke of Newcastle. On the conclusion of Lord Brougham’s emphatic declaration of the law on the

point, he simply said: "My Lords, I will now resume my speech, if your Lordships will permit me." The Bill also passed through the House of Lords; and we may be sure the Queen was delighted to give it the Royal Assent.

The failure of the potato crop in Ireland, in 1845, forced Peel to the conclusion that the Corn Laws, which he was pledged to maintain, could no longer be upheld. In this momentous change of attitude he had also the sympathy and support of the Queen. On informing her of the opposition which his proposal to repeal the duty on corn had aroused among his colleagues, she wrote to him:—

"OSBORNE, *November 28th, 1845.*

"The Queen is very sorry to hear that Sir Robert apprehends further differences of opinion in the Cabinet. At a moment of pending calamity it is more than ever necessary that the Government should be united.

"The Queen thinks the time is come when a removal of the restrictions upon the importation of food cannot be successfully resisted.

"Should this be Sir Robert's own opinion, the Queen very much hopes that none of his colleagues will prevent him from doing what it is right to do."

Peel, however, finding it hopeless to conciliate his divided Cabinet, resigned in December, and Lord John Russell attempted to form an Administration, but failed. The Duke of Wellington then carried the wavering leaders of the Tory Party to the side of Peel by his blunt declaration that, while he was in

favour of the Corn Laws, those laws, or any other laws, were a subordinate consideration to the necessity of providing the Queen with an efficient Government. The Duke also placed no limit to the authority of the Queen. A short time before, Lord Albemarle, as Master of the Horse, claimed an official right to travel in the State Coach with the Queen to prorogue Parliament. Her Majesty objected, and referred the question to Wellington. His reply to Albemarle was: "The Queen can make you go inside the coach, or outside the coach, or run behind it like a tinker's dog."

On January 27th, 1846, Peel brought in a Bill for the Repeal of the Corn Laws. He was fiercely assailed by Disraeli as a traitor to his party, and no doubt it was these bitter personal onslaughts that the Queen had especially in mind when she wrote, on February 4th, to Peel: "She is sure that Sir Robert will be rewarded in the end by the gratitude of the country. This will make up for the abuse he has to endure from so many of his party." On February 11th she sent him another sympathetic communication. "Sir Robert Peel has the confidence of the country;" she said, "and she need not add that he has hers, as he knows that well enough."

These letters of encouragement were, of course, strictly private. The Queen rarely, in the course of her long reign, gave any hint to the country of her personal opinion in a political crisis. Prince Albert, who shared the Queen's views as to the action of Peel, without showing in public the least bias, went to the House of Commons, on January 27th, to hear the Premier's speech. On the twelfth night of

the debate, Lord George Bentinck, the leader of the Protectionists, thus referred to the Prince :—

“ I cannot but think he listened to ill advice, when, on the first night of this great discussion, he allowed himself to be seduced by the First Minister of the Crown to come down to the House to usher in and to give *éclat*, and, as it were, reflection from the Queen, to give the semblance of a personal sanction of her Majesty to a measure which, be it for good or for evil, a great majority at least of the landed aristocracy of England, of Scotland, and of Ireland, imagine fraught with deep injury, if not ruin, to them.”

That was the last visit of Prince Albert to the House of Commons. Finding that his appearance in the Peers' Gallery of the Chamber was liable to misinterpretation, he decided to go there no more.

Peel successfully carried his measure through both Houses, and on the very day it received the Royal Assent, June 26th, he was defeated in the House of Commons on a Coercion Bill for Ireland, by a coalition of Protectionists, Whigs, and Irish Repealers. The Queen was much grieved by Peel's resignation. Amid the wreck of his political party and his friendships the great statesman was sustained by the sympathy of his Sovereign. How completely her first feelings of dislike for Peel had given way to affectionate regard, is shown by a letter she wrote to the King of the Belgians :—

“ Yesterday was a very hard day for me. I had to part with Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen,

who are irreparable losses to us and to the country. They were both so overcome that it quite upset me; and we have in them two devoted friends. We felt so safe with them. Never during the five years that they were with me did they ever recommend a person or thing that was not for my or the country's best, and never for the party's advantage only."

In foreign affairs the Queen exercised, unquestioned, a more direct personal influence than in home policy. "Personal and domestic relations with the ruling families abroad," Gladstone has written, "give openings, in delicate cases, for saying more, and saying it at once more gently and more efficiently, than could be ventured in the more formal correspondence and ruder contacts of Government." However, all letters received by the Queen from foreign potentates on matters of State, and all answers to them, were submitted by her Majesty to the Foreign Secretary or to the Prime Minister, according to usage. In 1847 the King of Prussia wrote a private letter to the Queen on European affairs, which he requested his ambassador to deliver at a private audience. The communication was so presented; but by the interposition of Prince Albert this irregularity was corrected. The letter was read by her Majesty in the presence of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, and the reply to it was approved by him. The Queen, on the other hand, insisted on being fully advised of the policy of her Ministers in foreign affairs, and on the terms of instructions to British plenipotentiaries abroad, all

official notes addressed to foreign diplomatists being first submitted in draft for her approval.

Lord Palmerston was Foreign Secretary in the Whig Administration, with Lord John Russell as Premier, which came into office on the defeat of Peel in 1846. His jauntiness and levity, his "ha-ha manner," as Monckton Milnes so well described it, grated on the nerves of the serious and formal Prince Albert. Besides, Palmerston had an airy and off-hand manner of dealing with foreign affairs without consulting the Queen, or, when he did consult her, of ignoring her recommendations, which was in violent conflict with the views of her Majesty as to the constitutional relations between the Sovereign and the Foreign Secretary. On April 2nd, 1850, Prince Albert, on the Queen's behalf, wrote a letter to Lord John Russell, from which the following is an extract:—

"As a Minister, the Sovereign has a right to demand from Lord Palmerston that she be made thoroughly acquainted with the whole object and tendency of the policy to which her consent is required; and, having given that consent, that the policy be not arbitrarily altered from the original line, that important steps be not concealed from her, nor her name used without her sanction. In all these respects Lord Palmerston has failed towards her; and not from oversight or negligence, but upon principle, and with astonishing pertinacity, against every effort of the Queen. Besides which, Lord Palmerston does not scruple to let it appear in public as if the Sovereign's negligence in attending

to the papers sent to her caused delays and complications."

Palmerston promised to mend his ways. His despatches would, in future, he said, pass through the hands of the Prime Minister and the Queen. But, on the very next occasion, in a matter affecting France, his impatience with the interposition of the Queen in foreign affairs again asserted itself, and the first intimation the Queen and the Prime Minister received of his action in the affair was a note of complaint from the French Government. "My dear Lord John," wrote Prince Albert to Russell on May 15th, 1850, "both the Queen and myself are exceedingly sorry at the news your letter conveyed to us. We are not surprised, however, that Lord Palmerston's mode of doing business should not be borne by a susceptible French Government with the same good humour and forbearance as by his colleagues." There is an obvious hint to the Premier in the last sentence to get rid of his masterful and obstreperous Foreign Secretary. But, however Palmerston's "spirited foreign policy" might be disapproved by the Court and regarded with concern by his colleagues, it was popular in the country, and Russell, bewildered by the contentions between the Sovereign and the Foreign Secretary, and vacillating as to the course he should pursue, was reluctant to weaken his Administration by dismissing so powerful a Minister. But the Queen, who now absolutely distrusted Palmerston, showed more decision of character. She drew up an important memorandum, stating

in clear and severe language the rules by which a Foreign Secretary must be bound in his relations with the Sovereign. It is as follows:—

“OSBORNE, *August 12th*, 1850.

“With reference to the conversation about Lord Palmerston, which the Queen had with Lord John Russell the other day, and Lord Palmerston’s disavowal that he ever intended any disrespect to her by the various neglects of which she has had so long and so often to complain, she thinks it right, in order to prevent any mistake for the future, to explain what it is she expects from the Foreign Secretary.

“She requires :

“1. That he will directly state what he proposes in a given case, in order that the Queen may know as distinctly to what she has given her Royal sanction.

“2. Having once given her sanction to a measure, that it be not arbitrarily altered or modified by the Minister. Such an act she must consider as a failure in sincerity towards the Crown, and justly to be visited by the exercise of her Constitutional right of dismissing that Minister. She expects to be kept informed of what passes between him and the Foreign Ministers, before important decisions are taken, based upon that intercourse; to receive the foreign despatches in good time, and to have the drafts for her approval sent to her in sufficient time to make herself acquainted with their contents before they must be sent off. The Queen thinks it best that Lord John Russell should show this letter to Lord Palmerston.”



Palmerston again promised "that he would punctually obey the directions contained in the memorandum," as Russell informed the Queen on August 13th. On that day also the Foreign Secretary wrote to Prince Albert requesting an interview, which was granted at Windsor the following day. According to a long memorandum written by the Prince, describing the interview, Palmerston was most repentant and sorrowful in his demeanour. His habitual good humour had deserted him. Not a trace of his exuberant "ha-ha manner" remained. "He was very much agitated," says the Prince, "shook, and had tears in his eyes, so as quite to move me, who never, under any circumstances, had known him otherwise than with a bland smile on his face." Differences of opinion as to his policy were, the statesman said, natural and to be expected. "But the accusation that he had been wanting in respect to the Queen, whom he had every reason to respect as his Sovereign, and as a woman whose virtues he admired, and to whom he was bound by every tie of duty and gratitude, was an imputation on his honour as a gentleman, and if he could have made himself guilty of it, he was almost no longer fit to be tolerated in society." So argued Palmerston, subdued and broken in spirits. The Prince then proceeds :—

"I purposely did not interrupt him, but when he had concluded I reminded him of the innumerable complaints and remonstrances which the Queen had had to make these last years.

"The Queen had often—I was sorry to say,

latterly almost invariably—differed from the line of policy pursued by Lord Palmerston. She had always openly stated her objections ; but when overruled by the Cabinet, or convinced that it would from political reasons be more prudent to waive her objection, she knew her Constitutional position too well not to give her full support to whatever was done on the part of the Government.

“ But what she had a right to require in return was, that before a line of policy was adopted or brought before her for her sanction, she should be in full possession of all the facts and all the motives operating. She felt that in this respect she was not dealt with as she ought to be. She never found a matter ‘ intact,’ nor a question in which we were not already compromised, when it was submitted to her. She had no means of knowing what passed in the Cabinet nor what passed between Lord Palmerston and the Foreign Ministers in their conferences, but what Lord Palmerston chose to tell her, or what she found in the newspapers.”

Prince Albert adds that when he told Lord John Russell of the grieved and agitated condition of Palmerston during the interview, the Prime Minister grimly answered, “ Oh, what has passed will do a great deal of good.”

For a time all went well, but only for a time. On December 2nd, 1851, Louis Napoleon overthrew the French Republic, of which he was President, with the aid of the army, and proclaimed himself Dictator. The Queen regarded the *coup d'état*—the news of which reached her at Osborne on December 4th—

as an outrage on constitutional government. She at once wrote the following letter to Lord John Russell, enjoining strict neutrality on the part of England :—

“ OSBORNE, *December 4th*, 1851.

“ The Queen has learnt with concern and astonishment of the extraordinary proceedings at Paris. She thinks it absolutely necessary that we should remain absolutely passive, and take no *part* either for or against what is going on. The Queen hopes, therefore, that Lord Normanby will be very cautious and keep entirely aloof, for a word from him at such a moment would be misconstrued.”

“ Your Majesty’s directions,” wrote the Prime Minister in reply, “ respecting affairs in Paris shall be followed.” A despatch to that effect was accordingly sent to the Marquis of Normanby, the British Ambassador at Paris; but when he called on the French Foreign Minister to state his instructions, he was informed that Lord Palmerston had personally expressed his approval of the *coup d’état* to the French Ambassador in London. The news, which was at once sent home by Lord Normanby, annoyed the Prime Minister and greatly angered the Queen. Her Majesty forwarded the following note to Lord John Russell :—

“ OSBORNE, *December 13th*, 1851.

“ The Queen sends the inclosed despatch from Lord Normanby to Lord John Russell, from which it appears that the French Government *pretend* to have received the entire approval of the late *coup*

*d'état* by the British Government as conveyed by Lord Palmerston to Count Walewski. The Queen cannot believe in the truth of this assertion, as such an approval given by Lord Palmerston would have been *in complete contradiction* to the line of strict neutrality and passiveness which the Queen had expressed her desire to see followed with regard to the late convulsions at Paris, and which was approved by the Cabinet, as stated in Lord John Russell's letter of the 6th inst. Does Lord John know anything about the alleged approval, which, if true, would again expose the honesty and dignity of the Queen's Government in the eyes of the world?"

The Prime Minister sent the Queen's note to Lord Palmerston with a request for an explanation, but the unrepentant and domineering Foreign Secretary took no notice of it. On December 16th, the day after he received this communication from his chief, he, with characteristic audacity, wrote a despatch to Lord Normanby, expressing in the strongest terms his satisfaction at the success of the *coup d'état*. This despatch was not submitted either to the Prime Minister or to the Queen. The long-suffering Russell was at last stung to action. "I am most reluctantly compelled to the conclusion," he wrote to the Foreign Secretary, "that the conduct of foreign affairs can no longer be left in your hands with advantage." Palmerston was, accordingly, dismissed. How the Queen regarded this unexpected display of decision of character on the part of Lord John Russell, and the good effect she expected to follow from it, is made

clear in the following interesting letter from Prince Albert to the Premier:—

“WINDSOR CASTLE, *December 20th*, 1851.

“MY DEAR LORD JOHN,—You will readily imagine that the news of the sudden termination of your difference with Lord Palmerston has taken us much by surprise, as we were wont to see such differences terminate in his carrying his points, and leaving the defence of them to his colleagues and the discredit to the Queen.

“It is quite clear to the Queen that we are entering upon most dangerous times, in which Military Despotism and Red Republicanism will for some time be the only Powers on the Continent, to both of which the Constitutional Monarchy of England will be equally hateful. That the calm influence of our institutions, however, should succeed in assuaging the contest abroad must be the anxious wish of every Englishman, and of every friend of liberty and progressive civilisation. This influence has been rendered null by Lord Palmerston’s personal manner of conducting the foreign affairs, and by the universal hatred which he has excited on the Continent. That you could hope to control him has long been doubted by us, and its impossibility is clearly proved by the last proceedings. I can, therefore, only congratulate you that the opportunity of the rupture should have been one on which all the right is on your side.”

The Crimean War, which had drawn France and England together on the battlefield as allies, led to a close friendship between the Sovereigns of the two countries. In a letter which Queen Victoria

subsequently wrote to Napoleon she thus describes in a few sentences the advantages of constitutional as compared with absolute monarchy:—

“Your policy runs the risk of remaining unsupported by the Nation, and you may be exposed to the dangerous alternative of either having to impose it upon them against their will, or of having suddenly to alter your course abroad, or even, perhaps, to encounter grave resistance. I, on the other hand, can allow my policy free scope to work out its own consequences, certain of the steady and consistent support of my people, who, having had a share in determining my policy, feel themselves to be identified with it.”

Meantime, a furious storm of religious passion had swept over the country. In September, 1850, Pope Pius IX. issued an “apostolic letter” re-establishing the Roman Catholic episcopacy in England, by appointing the Vicars-Apostolic, who had hitherto governed that Church, bishops to sees, not identical territorially with the sees filled by the hierarchy of the Church of England, but freshly created; and, on October 7th, Dr. Wiseman, the Vicar-Apostolic of the London district, who had been elevated to the “Archbishopric of Westminster,” with the dignity of Cardinal, issued from the Eternal City his first pastoral, which he grandiloquently described as “Given out of the Flaminian Gate of Rome.” The popular excitement against “No Popery” was further inflamed by a letter written by Lord John Russell to the Bishop of Durham, laying the blame for the advance of “Romanism” on the Puseyites or Tractarians in the Church of England. Protestant indignation meetings were held

all over the country, and Parliament was overwhelmed with petitions calling for legislation to protect the Protestant ascendancy. On December 10th numerous addresses from the Corporation of London, the Universities, and other important public bodies, were presented to the Queen in Windsor Castle, urging the most strenuous opposition on her part, as Sovereign, to the Papal pretensions. "You may be assured," she said in reply, "of my earnest desire and firm determination, under God's blessing, to maintain unimpaired the religious liberty which is justly prized by the people of this country, and to uphold as its surest safeguard the pure and scriptural worship of the Protestant faith which has long been happily established in this land." But the Queen, at the same time, deplored the agitation. With keener insight than her advisers, she saw that the dangers which, in the popular mind, seemed to threaten the Church of England, were hysterical exaggerations; and she saw also that the real evil to be apprehended was the spreading of the spirit of religious bigotry which the agitation had inevitably aroused. Her aunt, the Duchess of Gloucester, congratulated her on her replies to the addresses at Windsor. This her Majesty answered in a private letter, from which the following is an extract:—

"I would never have consented to say anything which breathed a spirit of intolerance. Sincerely Protestant as I always have been and always shall be, and indignant as I am at those who call themselves Protestants while they are in fact quite the contrary. I much regret the unchristian and intolerant spirit

exhibited by many people at the public meetings. I cannot bear to hear the violent abuse of the Catholic religion, which is so painful and so cruel towards the many good and innocent Roman Catholics. However, we must hope and trust this excitement will soon cease, and that the wholesome effect of it upon our own Church will be lasting."

We next see exhibited the Queen's sagacity and discernment in a complicated political crisis. Palmerston, writing to his brother on February 24th, 1852, two months after his dismissal from office, said: "I have had my tit-for-tat with Johnny Russell, and I turned him out on Friday last." Close on the heels of the panic about Papal aggression came the more terrible alarm that Napoleon III. meditated an invasion of England; and as Russell met the first terror with an inoperative Bill making the assumption by the Roman Catholic Bishops of their proposed English territorial titles illegal, he faced the second with a nondescript measure for the reorganisation of the local Militia. Palmerston, dissatisfied with the Militia Bill, carried an amendment to it by a majority of eleven; and Russell, regarding his defeat as a vote of want of confidence, resigned. Then came for a few months a Tory Administration, under the Earl of Derby, which was overthrown on the Budget introduced by Disraeli, its Chancellor of the Exchequer. Both the Whigs and Tories were at this time divided among themselves by personal rivalries and political differences. The Queen, in the circumstances, came to the conclusion that a Coalition Government, composed of leading statesmen without distinction of party, was the only



means of obtaining a stable Ministry, or a Ministry that would endure through more than one Session. To Lord Aberdeen, the leader of the Peelite section of the Tories, she entrusted the task of forming such an Administration, and at the same time she sent to Lord John Russell a letter announcing her intention, which thus ended:—

“The Queen thinks the moment to have arrived when a popular, efficient, and durable Government could be formed by the sincere and united efforts of all professing Conservative and Liberal opinions. The Queen, knowing that this can only be effected by the patriotic sacrifice of personal interests and feelings, trusts that Lord John Russell will, as far as he is able, give his valuable and powerful assistance to the realisation of this object.”

Macaulay states, in his Diary, that on December 20th, 1852, he went to Lansdowne House, on a hasty summons, to find Lord Lansdowne and Lord John Russell in consultation over the Queen's communication. “They asked me what I thought,” writes Macaulay. “I said that I could improve the Queen's letter neither in substance nor in language, and that she had expressed my sentiments to a tittle.” Lord Aberdeen successfully discharged the duty imposed upon him. The Cabinet, which included Lord John Russell as Foreign Secretary, and Lord Palmerston as Home Secretary, was regarded by the Queen “as the realisation of the country's and our own most ardent wishes.”

But much trouble was in store for the Aberdeen Administration, arising out of the war which had

been declared between Russia and Turkey, and the Crimean War, which, as a consequence, followed. The Queen had also to endure, at this period, probably the severest trial, apart from domestic bereavement, of her reign. An outcry was raised in the Press against Prince Albert, as ignorant and unreasoning as it was bitter. It was said that he was an influence behind the Throne hostile to this country. Palmerston, who, while Liberal abroad, was Conservative at home, had left the Government because he disagreed with a Reform Bill introduced by Lord John Russell. "The great Liberal braggart, who wanted to press free constitutions on every country, finds the Reform Measure, which Aberdeen approves, too liberal," wrote Prince Albert to his friend, Baron Stockmar, at Coburg. "What mischief that man has done us!" But it was freely stated in the newspapers that Palmerston had really resigned because he detected Prince Albert in the betrayal of State secrets to foreign Courts. "The stupidest trash is babbled to the public," wrote the Prince to Baron Stockmar, "so stupid that (as they say in Coburg) you would not give it to the pigs for litter." Two London morning papers actually announced that the Prince had been arrested for high treason, and was about to be sent to the Tower. An immense crowd assembled that day at Tower Hill to see the Prince in chains on his way to captivity. They were, of course, disappointed, but there was an explanation forthcoming. The Government, it was said, had relinquished their intention to send the Prince to the Tower because the Queen had declared her determination to share his prison cell. These absurd attacks naturally gave the

deepest pain to the Queen. Writing to Lord Aberdeen in January, 1854, she said :—

“ In attacking the Prince, who is one and the same with the Queen herself, the Throne is assailed ; and she must say she little expected that any portion of her subjects would thus requite the unceasing labours of the Prince.”

On January 31st Parliament was opened by the Queen in person, and in the debate on the Address, which followed, in both Houses the calumnies against the Prince were completely refuted by the Ministerial leaders—Lord Aberdeen in the Lords, and Lord John Russell in the Commons. Aberdeen in the course of his speech said :—

“ It is true that his Royal Highness often, very often—generally—is present in the conversations which take place when her Majesty’s Ministers find it necessary to make representations to her Majesty which it is their duty to do. I can only say that I extremely regret his absence when it takes place. But I appeal to noble Lords in this House, of whom there are several, who have had the means of knowing, of learning, of profiting by the wisdom and prudence and justice of his Royal Highness—I ask them to say whether, in all that they have ever seen or heard, a single syllable has ever been breathed that has not tended to the honour, and the interest, and the welfare of this country.”

Lord Derby, the leader of the Opposition, concurred in Lord Aberdeen’s testimony to the patriotism of Prince Albert. “ The advice and counsel given by

his Royal Highness," said he, "have been always, to the best of my belief, from an enlightened consideration of what was for the advantage of the Sovereign and the public good." Lord Campbell, as a constitutional lawyer, maintained the right of Prince Albert, as the Consort of a female Sovereign, to advise the Crown. If the advice were unconstitutional, the Ministers had the antidote to their hands by resigning. Both the Queen and Prince were extremely pleased with the result. "I write to you," said the Queen to Stockmar, "in the fulness of joy at the triumphant refutation of the calumnies in the two Houses of Parliament last night. The position of my beloved lord and master has been defined for *once and all*, and his merits have been acknowledged on all sides most duly." The Prince wrote to the same friend: "The impression has been excellent, and my political status and activity, which up to this time have been silently assumed, have now been asserted in Parliament, and vindicated without a dissentient voice."

After the declaration of war with Russia in 1854, Lord Aberdeen, replying to a question put by Lord Roden in the House of Lords, announced that it was intended to appoint a day of humiliation and prayer for the success of the British arms. The Queen immediately wrote to the Prime Minister reminding him that she had not been consulted in the matter, and strongly objecting to the "day of humiliation." She said:—

"She thinks we have recourse to them far too often, and they thereby lose all effect. Were the

services selected for those days of a different kind from what they are, the Queen would feel less strongly about it; but they always select chapters from the Old Testament and Psalms which are so totally inapplicable that the effect such occasions ought to have is entirely done away with."

Besides, as England was not to blame, she could not see why England should humiliate itself. Was it not all Russia's fault?

"To say (as we probably should) that the great sinfulness of the Nation has brought about this war, when it is the selfishness, and ambition, and want of honesty of one man and his servants which has done it, while our conduct throughout has been actuated by unselfishness and honesty, would be too manifestly repulsive to the feelings of every one, and would be a mere bit of hypocrisy. Let there be a prayer expressive of our great thankfulness for the immense benefits we have enjoyed, and for the immense prosperity of the country, and entreating God's help and protection in the coming struggle. In this the Queen would join heart and soul. If there is to be a day set apart, let it be for prayer in this sense."

The "day of humiliation" was, however, appointed, but though the title was not changed, the advice of the Queen as to the character of the service was adopted.

As the Queen had her own private opinions with respect to the varying policy and legislation of her different Ministers, so, too, she had, naturally, greater esteem for some of her advisers than for others.

But, both as regards her rival Ministers and their rival policies, she seems to have always pursued an absolutely straight course. There is not the slightest evidence of any intrigue to obtain her own ends, as "a consecrated Monarch by Divine right," in the records of her reign. She never tried to influence the judgment of the country on any political scheme or proposal by publicly hinting or suggesting her own individual views with regard to it; and she never endeavoured to secure a favourite Minister in office by any concealed devices in the exercise of the many sources of influence at her command as Queen. Her aim had always been to follow the law, custom, and etiquette of the Constitution, as regards both Ministers and legislation, with absolute rectitude and single-mindedness. She treated every one of her Ministers with scrupulous courtesy. Even Lord Palmerston, in the years he was Prime Minister, had never any reason to complain of any manifestation of suspicion or distrust in her relations with him. But, privately, she did not refrain from showing the deep regret, or sorrow, she felt on the departure of some of her Ministers. Lord Aberdeen was one of her favourites. On his resignation in 1855 he went to the Queen to say farewell and kiss her hand. "To his surprise," as he himself related, "when he took hold of it to lift it to his lips, he found his own hand squeezed with a strong and significant pressure." Her Majesty also sent him a letter, from which the following is an extract:—

"She wishes to say what a pang it is for her to separate from so kind, and dear, and valued a friend

as Lord Aberdeen has ever been to her since she has known him. The day he became her Prime Minister was a very happy one for her; and throughout his Ministry he has ever been the kindest and wisest adviser, one to whom she could apply for advice on all, and trifling occasions even. This she is sure he will still ever be, but the losing him as the first adviser in her Government is very painful."

After the suppression of the Indian Mutiny, the horrible stories of the savage atrocities of the mutineers led to a popular outcry for vengeance. Lord Canning, the Governor-General of India, writing privately to the Queen on September 25th, 1857, said: "There is a rabid and indiscriminate vindictiveness abroad, even amongst many who ought to set a better example, which it is impossible to contemplate without a feeling of shame for one's countrymen." To this her Majesty sent the following reply:—

"Lord Canning will easily believe how entirely the Queen shares his feelings of sorrow and indignation at the unchristian spirit shown, alas! to a great extent here by the public towards Indians in general, and towards Sepoys *without discrimination*. It is, however, not likely to last, and comes from the horror produced by the unspeakable atrocities perpetrated upon the innocent women and children, which makes one's blood run cold and one's heart bleed. For the perpetrators of these awful horrors no punishment can be severe enough, and, sad as it is, stern justice must be dealt out to all the guilty. But to the nation at large—to the peaceful inhabitants

—to the many kind and friendly natives who have assisted us, sheltered the fugitives, and been faithful and true, there should be shown the greatest kindness. They should know that there is no hatred to a brown skin—none; but the greatest wish on their Queen's part to see them happy, contented, and flourishing."

When the Act had been passed transferring the government of India from the East India Company to the Crown, a Royal Proclamation was prepared announcing the change in the situation and the new policy to the natives. The draft of the document reached the Queen while she was on her first visit to the home of her newly-married daughter, the Princess Royal, in Prussia. The vigorous reality of her Majesty's influence in State affairs and its beneficent results is shown by her action on this important occasion. She declared to Lord Malmesbury, the Minister in attendance, that she objected both to the spirit and the language of the Proclamation, and the following letter was sent by her to the Prime Minister, Lord Derby:—

BABELSBERG, *August 15th*, 1858.

"The Queen has asked Lord Malmesbury to explain in detail her objections to the draft of the Proclamation for India. The Queen would be glad if Lord Derby would write it himself in his excellent language, bearing in mind that it is a female Sovereign who speaks to more than a hundred millions of Eastern people on assuming the direct government of them, and after a bloody war, giving them pledges which her future reign is to redeem, and explaining the principles of her government. Such a document



should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence, and religious toleration, and point out the privileges which the Indians will receive on being placed on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown, and the prosperity following in the train of civilisation."

Lord Malmesbury's memorandum, which accompanied the Queen's letter, explains in more detail the nature of her Majesty's objections. She especially condemned the expression that she had the "power of undermining" the native religions and customs of India. "Her Majesty would prefer," Lord Malmesbury goes on to say, "that the subject should be introduced in a declaration in the sense that the deep attachment which her Majesty feels to her own religion and the comfort and happiness which she derives from its consolation, will preclude her from any attempt to interfere with the native religions, and that her servants will be directed to act scrupulously in accordance with her directions."

The Proclamation was re-written, "entirely in the spirit of your Majesty's observations," as Lord Derby informed the Queen. To the new document she added in her own handwriting, as its last sentence, the words—"May the God of all power grant to us, and those in authority under us, the strength to carry out these our wishes for the good of our people!" The amended Proclamation gave the greatest satisfaction to the Governor-General of India. "To the good effect of the words in which religion is spoken of in the Proclamation," he wrote, "Lord Canning looks forward with very sanguine hope. It is impossible that the justice, charity and kindness, as well as the

true wisdom which mark these words, should not be appreciated."

The Queen always used her powerful influence on behalf of peace and goodwill between nations. On one notable occasion the tact and discretion of her Majesty and the Prince Consort averted the terrible calamity of a war between Great Britain and the United States. In November, 1861, during the American Civil War, the British mail steamer *Trent* was boarded by the *San Jacinto*, a vessel of the Federal Navy, and Slidell and Mason, delegates from the revolted Southern States, who were on their way to England, were seized. The news of the outrage aroused the greatest indignation in England, and the Palmerston Administration, then in office, at once decided to send an ultimatum to the United States Government demanding the prompt release of the envoys. The despatch was, in the usual course, submitted for approval to the Queen. Her Majesty, shocked at the idea of the possibility of a war with America, took the despatch to the apartment of the Prince Consort, who was lying sick unto death, and asked him to soften down its dictatorial and menacing expressions. It was the last time the Prince used his busy pen in the service of the State. As he gave the memorandum he prepared for the Cabinet to the Queen, between seven and eight o'clock on the morning of December 1st, he said: "I am so weak I could hardly hold the pen." A facsimile of the document was subsequently published. It shows that in turn it was corrected by the Queen. The Prince, for instance, had written of the subject of the despatch as "a quarrel," which expression the Queen struck out and

substituted "a question of dispute." The despatch, thus modified in spirit and language, was sent to the British Ambassador at Washington for presentation. "Everything will depend on the tone of it," said Seward, the Secretary of State, as he received the document from Lord Lyons. Happily it was in such a form that a pacific settlement of the dispute was soon arranged.

When the final solution of the affair was communicated to the Queen, on January 6th, 1862, about three weeks after the death of the Prince Consort, her Majesty wrote to the Prime Minister:—

"Lord Palmerston cannot but look on this peaceful issue of the American quarrel as greatly owing to her beloved Prince, who wrote the observations on the draft to Lord Lyons in which Lord Palmerston so entirely concurred. It was the last thing he ever wrote."

The Prime Minister replied:—

"There can be no doubt that the alteration made in the despatch to Lord Lyons contributed essentially to the satisfactory settlement of the dispute. Those alterations were only one of innumerable instances of the tact and judgment, and the power of nice discrimination, which excited Lord Palmerston's constant and unbounded admiration."

The death of the Prince Consort changed the current of the Queen's life, to the extent that she retired from society, and shunned, as far as possible, the pomp and pageantry associated with her exalted position on her rare appearances in public. But

though deprived of the advice and aid of Prince Albert in the discharge of her constitutional duties, her Majesty's attention to State affairs continued to be unremitting, and her opinions and actions were guided by the same political wisdom. The Queen conscientiously disapproved the disestablishment of the Irish Church. Besides, the fifth article of the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland enacted that the "continuance and preservation" of the Established Church in Ireland "shall be deemed and be taken to be an essential and fundamental part of the Union"—which was expressly intended by the promoters of that measure to bind the action of future Parliaments—and in her Coronation Oath her Majesty had sworn to uphold the Establishment in Ireland. But in the grave political crisis which arose on Gladstone laying his scheme before Parliament her Majesty exhibited, in a most striking manner, a well-balanced mind, which enabled her to preserve her equanimity when her Prime Minister adopted a policy to which she was personally opposed; and a recognition of her duty as a Constitutional Sovereign to use her influence to moderate the violence of party passions, and secure that the will of the majority of her people, as expressed by her advisers, should prevail, however distasteful to herself personally, and however seemingly opposed to Coronation Oath and Parliamentary enactments.

In the General Election of 1868, the country, by returning Gladstone to power, with a majority of from 110 to 120, declared for the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. The new Parliament

opened on February 16th, 1869. On that morning Dr. Tait, the Archbishop of Canterbury, received the following autograph letter from her Majesty:—

“OSBORNE, 15th February, 1869.

“The Queen must write a few lines to the Archbishop of Canterbury on the subject of the Irish Church, which makes her very anxious. The Queen has seen Mr. Gladstone, who shows the most conciliatory disposition. He seems to be really moderate in his views, and anxious, as far as he can properly and consistently do so, to meet the objections of those who would maintain the Irish Church. He at once assured the Queen of his readiness—indeed, his anxiety—to meet the Archbishop, and to communicate freely with him on the subject of this important question, and the Queen must express her earnest hope that the Archbishop will meet him in the same spirit. The Government can do nothing that would tend to raise a suspicion of their sincerity in proposing to disestablish the Irish Church and to withdraw all State endowments from all religious communions in Ireland; but were these conditions accepted, all other matters connected with the question might, the Queen thinks, become the subject of discussion and negotiation. The Archbishop had best now communicate with Mr. Gladstone direct as to where he can see him.”

An interview between the Archbishop and the Prime Minister accordingly took place at Lambeth Palace; and Dr. Tait found that Gladstone's proposed policy with regard to the Irish Church was

in practical accord with the conditions which in the opinion of his Grace should accompany the proposed disestablishment. The Bill was introduced in the House of Commons. It passed triumphantly through all its stages in that Chamber before the end of May. Then arose the question, "What will the Lords do?" A dangerous struggle between the two Houses seemed impending. What the Queen thought the Peers ought to do is set forth in the following most interesting letter which she sent, through her Secretary, General Grey, to Archbishop Tait:—

"BALMORAL, *June 4th*, 1869.

"MY DEAR LORD ARCHBISHOP,—I write to your Grace by the Queen's command. You must be well aware from your former communication with her Majesty on the subject, of the great anxiety which the question of the Irish Church causes her, and will therefore not wonder at her desire to learn what your Grace thinks of the prospect of the question being settled during the progress through the House of Lords of the Bill which has just been sent up from the House of Commons.

"Mr. Gladstone is not ignorant (indeed the Queen has never concealed her feelings on the subject) how deeply her Majesty deplores the necessity under which he has conceived himself to lie of raising the question as he has done, or of the apprehensions of which she cannot divest herself as to the possible consequences of the measure which he has introduced. These apprehensions her Majesty is bound to say still exist in full force.

But considering the circumstances under which the measure has come to the House of Lords, the Queen cannot regard without the greatest alarm the probable effect of its absolute rejection in that House.

“Carried as it has been by an overwhelming and steady majority through a House of Commons chosen expressly to speak the feeling of the country on the question, there seems no reason to believe that any fresh appeal to the people could lead to a different result.

“The rejection of the Bill, therefore, on the second reading would only serve to bring the two Houses into collision and to prolong a dangerous agitation of the subject, while it would further tend to increase the difficulty of ultimately obtaining a measure so modified as to remove, or at least to mitigate, the fears of those who are conscientiously opposed to the present Bill as it stands.

“Her Majesty was consequently glad to hear, though she knows not whether it was on very good authority, that the leaders of the Opposition are disposed to advise acquiescence in the second reading rather than incur the greater dangers to which I have alluded, in the hope of being able in Committee to amend the Bill so as to make the measure less objectionable.

“The Queen well knows how anxious your Grace must be to assist in bringing about a settlement of the question, if not altogether such as you would have desired, at least the best possible under the circumstances, and she feels sure, therefore, that the great influence of your genius, high character,

and station, will be used on the side of prudence and moderation. Her Majesty desires me to add that she will be very glad to receive any communication which you may think is desirable to address to her direct.—I remain, my dear Lord, your Grace's very faithful servant,

“C. GREY.”

Through the skilful diplomacy of the Primate these prudent counsels prevailed; and the second reading, on June 18th, was carried by 179 votes against 146, or a majority of 33. But the Peers were determined to secure by amendments, in the Committee stage, a larger and better provision for the disestablished Irish Church than the Bill proposed. The measure, indeed, seemed still in danger of being wrecked in the Upper Chamber. “The friends of the Irish Church,” wrote Archbishop Tait to the Queen on July 8th, “feel that they cannot allow the Church to be despoiled beyond the point thus indicated; and that it would be wiser to take the chance of another year of agitation, however undesirable, than yield beyond this point.” To this communication the Queen replied on July 11th in the following autograph letter, urging a more conciliatory attitude on the part of the Peers:—

“The Queen thanks the Archbishop very much for his letter. She is very sensible of the prudence, and at the same time anxiety, for the welfare of the Irish Establishment which the Archbishop has manifested in his conduct throughout the debates, and she will be very glad if the amendments which have been adopted at his suggestion lead to the settlement of the question; but to effect this, concessions, the Queen believes, will



still have to be made on both sides. The Queen must say that she cannot view without alarm the possible consequences of another year of agitation on the Irish Church, and she would ask the Archbishop seriously to consider, in case the concessions to which the Government may agree should not go so far as he may himself wish, whether the postponement of the settlement for another year would not be likely to result in worse rather than in better terms for the Church. The Queen trusts therefore that the Archbishop will himself consider, and, as far as he can, endeavour to induce others to consider, any concessions that may be offered by the House of Commons in the most conciliatory spirit."

So in the matter of amendments in Committee, also, moderation prevailed. On Thursday, July 22nd, 1869, the Bill was safe in harbour. "We have made the best terms we could," the Primate wrote in his diary when the struggle was over; "and thanks to the Queen a collision between the two Houses has been averted." Such a conflict, with the firm and deliberate determination of the people on the subject of disestablishment and disendowment, would have led to a grave constitutional crisis.

During the reign of Queen Victoria it was constitutionally established that the Prerogative of the Crown gives to the Ministry large executive powers free of the control of Parliament. A striking illustration of the exercise of these powers is afforded by the manner in which purchase of commissions in the Army was abolished. In 1871 the House of Lords rejected a clause abolishing purchase from the Army

Regulation Bill introduced by the Liberal Government. On July 20th, three days after this action by the Lords, Gladstone, the Prime Minister, made the following momentous statement in the House of Commons:—

“The Government have resolved to advise her Majesty to take the decisive step of cancelling the Royal Warrant under which purchase was legal. That advice has been accepted and acted upon by her Majesty. A new Warrant has been framed in terms conformable with the law; and it is my duty on the part of the Government to state that at the present moment purchase in the Army no longer exists.”

Purchase of commissions in the Army was legalised by Royal Warrant, and by the withdrawal of that Royal Warrant the statute which prohibits the sale of offices under the Crown was extended to positions in the Army. The Lords declared by 162 votes to 82, or a majority of 80, that this exercise of the Royal Prerogative “is calculated to depreciate and neutralise the independent action of the Legislature, and is strongly to be condemned,”—a vote of censure, not, of course, upon the Queen, but upon the Ministers by whose advice her Majesty had acted.

The “Life of the Right Hon. Hugh Childers,” by his son, Lieut.-Col. Spencer Childers, throws light on the active interest of the Queen in Navy and Army questions. Childers was First Lord of the Admiralty in Gladstone’s Administration in 1869. At that time there was a rule in the Navy that the men should shave clean or grow whiskers only. In March, 1869, the Queen suggested to Childers the necessity for a

modification of the rule, on the ground of the difficulty and inconvenience of the operation of shaving at sea. Accompanying the communication was a letter in support of the suggestion from Prince Leiningen, the captain of the Royal yacht. "There is," he wrote, "more bad language made use of during the quarter of an hour devoted to shaving than during any other part of the day." The reason was not far to seek. The face of Jack, after hours of duty on deck, became as hard as iron. A bad razor, a small bit of broken looking-glass about the size of half-a-crown, very often a wet deck to stand on, the ship all the while rolling or pitching heavily. "Such," added Prince Leiningen, "are the difficulties under which the British seaman shaves." In the June following the Queen again wrote:—"Has Mr. Childers ascertained anything on the subject of beards? The old officers will certainly be against it. It should be referred to those now serving and who look to the comforts of the men more than formerly." But even the naval officers on service proved to be opponents of the suggested modification of the rule with regard to shaving. Childers consulted all the admirals in command, and all the naval members of the Board of Admiralty, and all, with two exceptions, objected to the growing of beards in the Navy. The First Lord, however, decided to issue an Order in conformity with the Queen's wishes. On submitting it to her Majesty for approval he received the following letter, dated June 17th, 1869:—

"The Queen thanks Mr. Childers very much for his communication on the subject of beards. She

thinks the Order will do extremely well. Her own personal feeling would be for the beards without the moustaches, as the latter have rather a soldier-like appearance; but then the object in view would not be obtained, viz., to prevent the necessity for shaving. Therefore, it had better be as proposed, the entire beard, only it should be kept short and very clean."

Her Majesty, evidently, was determined to secure to the Army the copyright in the moustache. On June 25th she wrote:—"The Queen wishes to make one additional observation respecting the beards, viz., that on no account should moustaches be allowed without the beards. That must be clearly understood."

In 1880, when the Liberals were again returned to power, Childers was appointed, by Gladstone, Secretary of State for War. In the previous Session—the last of the Conservative Parliament—flogging in the Army was abolished, except on active service. Feeling in the new Parliament was against corporal punishment under any circumstances; and on that point her Majesty thus conveyed her views to the Secretary of War, through Sir Henry Ponsonby:—

"The Queen commands me to let you know that I have by her Majesty's command communicated to Mr. Gladstone the Queen's hope that officers on service may not be deprived of the only power they possess of keeping young troops in order, viz., by inflicting corporal punishment in the extreme cases of cowardice, treachery, plundering, or neglect of duty on sentry.

“The Queen hates the system of flogging, but sees no alternative in extreme cases on active service.

“Her Majesty trusts you will listen to the opinion of officers recently returned from the war.”

Childers replied that it would be impossible to maintain the Regulation with respect to flogging against the opinion of the House of Commons. The Queen accepted the position without further comment.

At that time a scheme of Army Reform was in contemplation. Her Majesty's anxiety to have the opportunity of expressing her opinions with respect to the proposals is seen in the following letter, written at Balmoral, in September, 1880, on learning that the Secretary of State for War was unable, owing to illness, to obey the command to act as Minister in attendance :—

“The Queen regrets being deprived of the pleasure of seeing you here, and is also sorry at missing the opportunity of discussing personally with you the plans you are considering for the Army. Her Majesty hopes you will keep her well informed of what you think of doing, and that you will give her the power of communicating on any proposals before they are matured.”

Gladstone was never an especial favourite at Court. An absurd story was current some years ago that he was habitually uncivil to the Queen. It was also said that he talked to her Majesty as if she were a public meeting. As a matter of fact, no statesman more fully recognised the dignity and influence of the Sovereign's position. “Though decisions must ultimately conform to the sense of those who are to be responsible for them, yet their

business is to inform and persuade the Sovereign, not to overrule him," he has said. He has also written:—"There is no doubt that the aggregate of direct influence normally exercised by the Sovereign upon the counsels and proceedings of her Ministers is considerable in amount, tends to permanence and solidity of action, and confers much benefit on the country, without in the smallest degree relieving the advisers of the Crown from individual responsibility." His devotion to the person of the Queen was also unbounded. "I have no small talk and Peel has no manners," said the Duke of Wellington, ruefully speculating, after the fall of Melbourne, on the impression he and his colleagues would make upon the young Queen. Gladstone had manners, and exuberant powers of conversation, but no small talk, and it may have been that while his demeanour towards the Queen was perfect, the abstruse subjects which he generally delighted in discussing perplexed her Majesty and made his presence oppressive or uncomfortable. It was not, however, his personal qualities, but his political schemes that displeased the Queen. She distrusted the domestic policy of Gladstone as much as Palmerston's intervention in foreign affairs. Disraeli, for whom her Majesty entertained the deepest antipathy, in the days of his merciless attacks upon Peel, for whom she sent with reluctance and misgiving when he was first designated by the decision of the electorate as her chief adviser, became, of all her ten Prime Ministers, her Majesty's greatest favourite. For his death she mourned with the deepest sorrow. On April 30th, 1881, four days after the interment of the Earl of Beaconsfield in

Hughenden churchyard, the Queen paid a private visit to his tomb, to lay a wreath and cross upon his coffin, and take her last farewell of her devoted adviser. Her Majesty also erected a memorial tablet to the Earl on the wall of Hughenden Church. The inscription, which she herself wrote, runs:—

“To the dear and honoured memory of Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, this memorial is placed by his grateful and affectionate Sovereign and friend, Victoria, R.I. ‘Kings love him that speaketh right’—Prov. xvi. 13.”

Disraeli, it is said, always deferred to the opinion of the Queen in affairs of State. He unquestionably desired to exalt the influence of the Sovereign. “I am grieved, and greatly, that anything I should say, or do, should be displeasing to her Majesty,” he wrote in an interesting letter to a lady at Court, in September, 1879. “I love the Queen—perhaps the only person left to me in this world that I do love; and therefore you can understand how much it worries and disquiets me when there is a cloud between us. It is very foolish on my part, but my heart, unfortunately, has not withered like my frame, and when it is affected I am as harassed as I was fifty years ago. I received the Queen’s letter yesterday, and wrote to her Majesty last night. I wish to see the Queen dictatress of Europe; many things are preparing which for the sake of peace and civilisation render it most necessary that her Majesty should occupy that position. This unhappy African war has much interfered with my plans, and therefore some sense of annoyance on my part may be understood and perhaps pardoned.” But, no doubt, his popularity at Court was due as much

to the policies and schemes of his great political rival, as to his own qualities as a courtier.

Queen Victoria in the exercise of her duties as a constitutional Sovereign exhibited a complete detachment from political partisanship. She had the precious gift of being able to keep her personal wishes and opinions, her likes and dislikes—inevitable in the Sovereign as in the humblest subject—under the control of a well-balanced reason in the practical conduct of government. But if ever her perfect judgment, tact, and serenity failed her, it was in one or two of her public utterances which referred indirectly to the policy, legislative schemes, or actions of Gladstone. The silence which is imposed upon the Sovereign by the law and custom of the Constitution must sometimes prove exceedingly trying and irksome, especially when things go wrong which might have gone well if advice given by the Sovereign had been followed by the Ministers. The nation was profoundly moved, early in February, 1885, by the news of the death of General Gordon at Khartoum, which for ten months he had held against the siege of the Mahdi. Sir Charles Wilson, with a relief force, arrived within sight of the town on January 28th, to find himself two days too late, for on the 26th a traitor had opened the gates to the Mahdi, and all was over. The Government, of whom Gladstone was the head, was blamed for the death of Gordon, because of their dilatoriness in sending out the relief expedition; and in the height of the popular outcry against them the Queen, stirred by the tragedy and pathos of Gordon's end, wrote to his sister a letter of deep womanly sympathy, and womanly also in its



impulsive and passionate attack upon the Government, which was immediately made public :—

“ OSBORNE, *February 17th*, 1885.

“ DEAR MISS GORDON,—*How* shall I write to you, or how shall I attempt to express *what I feel*? To *think* of your dear, noble, heroic brother, who served his country and his Queen so truly, so heroically, with a self-sacrifice so edifying to the world, not having been rescued! That the promises of support were not fulfilled—which I so frequently and constantly pressed on those who asked him to go—is to me *grief inexpressible*! Indeed, it has made me ill. My heart bleeds for you, his sister, who have gone through so many anxieties on his account, and who loved the dear brother as he deserved to be. You are all so good and trustful, and have such strong faith that you will be sustained even now, when *real*, absolute evidence of your dear brother’s death does not exist—but I fear there cannot be much doubt of it. Some day I hope to see you again to tell you all I cannot express. My daughter Beatrice, who has felt quite as I do, wishes me to express her deepest sympathy from *abroad*; from my eldest daughter, the Crown Princess, and from my cousin, the King of the Belgians, the very warmest. Would you express to your other sisters and your elder brother my true sympathy, and what I do so keenly feel—the *stain* left upon England for your dear brother’s cruel, though heroic, fate.

“ Ever, dear Miss Gordon, yours sincerely and sympathisingly,

“ V. R. I.”

Again, on the death of W. E. Forster, the Queen sent his widow a gracious and kindly letter of condolence, which contained expressions indirectly bearing upon Forster's quarrel with Gladstone on the Irish policy of the Liberal Government of 1880-5, and especially upon the question of Home Rule, which at the time occupied the public mind. Forster died on April 5th, 1886. The Queen, writing to the widow of the dead statesman on the 7th—the day before Gladstone explained the clauses of his Home Rule Bill to the House of Commons—said in a letter intended, of course, for publication in the newspapers:—

“I purposely delayed writing at once to you, not wishing to intrude on your overwhelming grief for the loss of such a husband, so good and so devoted, fearing to add to the weight of your affliction; but to-day I trust I may venture to express not only the deep sympathy I feel for you, but also the true and sincere concern I feel at the loss of one for whom I had the greatest regard and respect, and who served his Queen and country bravely, truly, and loyally. We can ill afford to lose so honest, so useful and courageous a statesman as he was, in these days, and his public loss is very great.”

This veiled reference to the Home Rule controversy was the only public manifestation of the Queen's feelings on the question during the heated discussions and party and personal recriminations of the year 1886. But since then evidence has come to light of her Majesty's deep-seated hostility to Home Rule. In the biography of Lord Tennyson are letters which passed privately between the Queen and the Poet

Laureate, containing significant allusions to the question. The Queen, writing from Osborne on April 16th, 1886, to Lord Tennyson, expressed her sympathy with him in the illness of his son, who subsequently died in India. "I cannot in this letter allude to politics," she added, "but I know what your feelings must be." The Poet Laureate in his reply said: "Our latest telegram was from Colombo, 'No improvement'; but in this pause, as it were, between life and death, since your Majesty touches upon the disastrous policy of the day, I may say that I wish I may be in my grave beyond sight and hearing when an English army fire upon the loyalists of Ulster." But as early as 1882 the Queen was apprehensive that Gladstone intended to adopt the policy of Home Rule. Mr. Barry O'Brien, in his "Life of Parnell," publishes an interview he had with Gladstone on the subject of his relations with the leader of the Nationalists. In reply to a question as to when he first directed his attention to Home Rule, Gladstone said: "You will see by a speech which I made on the Address in 1882 that I then had the subject in my mind. I said then that a system of Local Government for Ireland should differ in some important respects from any system of Local Government introduced in England or Scotland. Plunket got up immediately, and said that I meant Home Rule. But I am bound to say that Gibson followed, and said that he did not put that construction upon my words. Well, I had to send an account of that speech to the Queen, and it led to a correspondence between us. More than this I cannot say on the subject." But in these few words Gladstone

said enough to make it clear that the Queen gave the same interpretation to his language as Mr. David Plunket, and that her Majesty wrote to her Prime Minister, as, constitutionally, she had every right to do, that she disapproved of Home Rule.

As a further illustration of the Queen's attitude towards Gladstone, it is instructive to contrast her message of condolence to Mrs. Gladstone with the letter of the same nature which she sent to Mrs. Forster. On May 28th, 1898, the day Gladstone was buried in Westminster Abbey, his widow received the following telegram from the Queen at Balmoral:—

“ My thoughts are much with you to-day, when your dear husband is laid to rest. To-day's ceremony will be most trying and painful to you ; but it will be at the same time gratifying to you to see the respect and regret evinced by the Nation for the memory of one whose character and intellectual abilities marked him as one of the most distinguished statesmen of my reign. I shall ever gratefully remember his devotion and zeal in all that concerned my personal welfare and that of my family.”

It will be noticed that while words of deep and heartfelt condolence and sympathy are there, no tribute is paid, as in the case of Forster, to the dead statesman's services to his country.

There may be in the Queen's letter to Miss Gordon expressions which perhaps it was indiscreet for a constitutional Sovereign to utter with regard to the statesmen chosen to advise her by the nation. But though there must have been numbers of Acts of Parliament passed, and many policies adopted, in the

course of her long reign, to which the Queen was utterly opposed, or which she did not entirely approve, she never publicly entered into the combat of politics, and never, so far as is known, tried to gain her ends by the secret and subtle influences of the Court. We learn from her private letters, set forth in this chapter, that she argued out with her Ministers questions with which she was out of sympathy; that she tried to turn them, by her advice and guidance, from policies she thought mistaken or ill-advised. She sometimes, as we have seen, had her way. But that was ever the limit to the exercise of that boundless personal influence, which she naturally had at command as a Sovereign of unexampled experience and prestige. She bowed to the will of her Ministers, when she saw they were determined to persevere with their policy, and however she might disagree with it, loyally aided them—as in the case of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church—in giving it legislative effect.

Lord Salisbury in the course of a eulogy on the Queen's career and character, delivered in the House of Lords on the occasion of her death, said :—

“ She always maintained and practised a rigorous supervision over public affairs, giving to her Ministers her frank advice, and warning them of danger if she saw there was danger ahead; and she certainly impressed many of us with a profound sense of the penetration, almost intuition, with which she saw the perils with which we might be threatened, in any course it was thought expedient to adopt. She left

upon my mind, she left upon our minds, the conviction that it was always a dangerous matter to press on her any course of the expediency of which she was not thoroughly convinced; and I may say with confidence that no Minister in her long reign ever disregarded her advice, or pressed her to disregard it, without afterwards feeling that he had incurred a dangerous responsibility. She had an extraordinary knowledge of what her people would think. I have said for years that I always thought that when I knew what the Queen thought I knew certainly what view her subjects would take, and especially the middle classes of her subjects. Such was the extraordinary penetration of her mind. Yet she never adhered to her own conceptions obstinately. On the contrary she was full of concession and consideration; and she spared no effort—I might almost say she shrank from no sacrifice—to make the task of conducting this difficult Government more easy to her advisers than it would otherwise have been.”

Queen Victoria’s guiding principle from the opening of her reign to its close was to do her duty as a constitutional Sovereign; and such is the enduring force of the example she set in that respect, that in a country so swayed as this is by precedent, there can never again be a return to even the modified personal rule of the Georges. But if the Throne has declined in political power—though, as I think I have shown, the legitimate influence and authority of the Sovereign, constitutionally exercised in affairs of State, is still very great—the Throne during the reign of Queen Victoria has enormously increased in popularity. The

Monarchy is stronger than it has ever been, despite the immense developments of democracy within the last fifty years. It was under a cloud at the opening of Victoria's reign. Even that astute statesman, Sir Robert Peel, was of opinion in 1830, when William IV. ascended the Throne, that the Monarchy could last only five or six years longer. It is now firmly rooted in the devotion of its subjects.

## CHAPTER III.

### HOW EDWARD VII. OPENED HIS FIRST PARLIAMENT.

WESTMINSTER has been the seat of Parliament for six centuries—indeed, ever since the first of the Kings Edward, “the great law-giver,” called together an assembly of the magnates and wise men of the Realm in 1295—and the scene enacted there on Thursday, February 14th, 1901, when Edward the Seventh, accompanied by Queen Alexandra, opened the first Parliament of his reign—the first Parliament also of the twentieth century—with all the pomp and circumstance of full State ceremonial, will long endure among the many great historic memories which cluster round the place.

There was a sharp sting of frost in the air, and a slight fog partially blurred the towers and spires and pinnacles of the Palace of Westminster, but did not detract from the imposing and picturesque stateliness of the noble building by the waters of the Thames, as, about 11.30 o'clock that morning, I passed over Westminster Bridge to witness the pageant—for this is the only word that adequately describes the ceremony—which was about to take place in the House of Lords. Traffic was stopped, but there was bustle and animation, nevertheless. An immense crowd was already gathering at that early hour to see the



Royal procession, which was not due until two o'clock. King Edward and Queen Alexandra were to drive in full state—in the ornate State coach, which had not been seen in public for many years, attended by the ladies and lords of the Royal Household in carriages, and escorted by mounted Life Guards, and the Yeomen of the Guard, on foot, in their Tudor garb—from Buckingham Palace, through the Mall, the Horse Guards' Parade, Whitehall and Parliament Street, to the Palace of Westminster. Foot Guards kept the line of route. The newly-formed Irish Guards were stationed about the Houses of Parliament—the place of honour—and tall, well-set-up, soldierly young fellows they looked in their big bearskins with hackles of St. Patrick's blue.

The House of Lords was not to be opened until twelve o'clock. At a quarter to the hour there was a crowd of peers and peeresses (with some journalists) around the portals of the building in Old Palace Yard, close to the huge equestrian statue of Richard the Lion-hearted. The wind, with its keen touch of frost, blew chillily across the wide space between the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey. The peers, clad in heavy, fur-lined overcoats—carrying, many of them, portmanteaus and jewel-cases containing their robes and decorations—probably did not feel the cold. But for the peeresses it must have been a most uncomfortable and tiresome quarter of an hour. They wore the low-cut bodices prescribed for the occasion; over their bare shoulders were flung fur wraps, while their heads were uncovered save for their coronets and tiaras of pearls and diamonds. "My feet feel like two lumps

of ice," I heard one lady say to another, as she stamped about in her thin, white satin slippers to obtain a little warmth.

At last twelve o'clock came. The four quarters of Big Ben rang out with the well-known air of the refrain—

" Lord, through this hour,  
Be Thou our Guide,  
So by Thy power  
No foot shall slide."

The doors were flung open, and we passed from the haze and the frost into the warm interior, bright with electric lights. Our tickets were closely scrutinised by two of the King's Marshals, picturesque-looking fellows in vivid scarlet-and-gold doublets and white plush knee-breeches and beaver shakoes. Then we proceeded—peeresses, peers, and journalists—through long corridors, and up wide marble staircases, to the House of Lords.

Viewed from the Press Gallery, it was seen that the customary arrangements of the Chamber were completely disturbed to meet the necessities of this great and most interesting occasion. The five rows of heavy benches with backs which rise from the floor on each side were removed, and in their places were seven rows of low crimson-covered forms. For the long Table in the centre of the floor, at which sit the three Clerks of the House, a small table was substituted. The cross-benches near the Bar, at the end of the Chamber, and the Woolsack of the Lord Chancellor—a broad crimson lounge—at the top, close to the Throne, had also disappeared, and the floor space thus obtained, above and below the table, was occupied by four rows of forms, covered also in red morocco. But the most

conspicuous innovation was presented by the Throne at the top of the Chamber. Formerly one chair of State alone occupied the canopied dais glowing in gold and colours. Now there are two State chairs, richly carved and gilded, and sparkling with large, egg-shaped pieces of crystal, with which they are lavishly studded—the old State chair (used by Queen Victoria on the occasions when she opened or prorogued Parliament) for the King ; and a new State chair, an exact replica of the old, for the Queen Consort. For the first time in English history, perhaps, a Queen Consort was to accompany the King in equal state for the opening of Parliament. William and Mary, no doubt, sat together on the Throne at the opening or prorogation of the Legislature. They, of course, were joint holders of the Sovereignty, although the sole exercise of the Royal Prerogative was vested in William. But the Consorts of the succeeding Kings, when present in Parliament, did not accompany their husbands in state to Westminster. Each preceded her lord, and sat during the ceremony on a low chair at the foot of the Throne.

As the Chamber filled it became evident that the peeresses would far outnumber the peers. It was also manifest that the order of precedence in the Peerage was to be observed as strictly as circumstances permitted. Under a statute of Henry VIII. each gradation of the Peerage has its special bench to the left of the Woolsack, or, as it is now called, the Opposition side of the House. There was not, consequently, the usual division of parties, and a peer by sitting to the right or to the left gave no indication of his political opinions. On the benches nearest to the

Throne on the Opposition side were seated the dukes, and lower down were the marquises and the earls, all in order according to the dates of their creation. The viscounts and the barons, who form the vast bulk of the Peerage, deposited themselves wherever they could get seats, without any regard for precedence. The three front rows of benches on each side, and the benches above and below the table, were allocated to the peers. Opposite to the dukes sat the spiritual peers, and behind the bishops were the foreign Ambassadors and Ministers. Two benches in the centre of the floor, immediately in front of the Throne, were for the Judges of the High Court, who on these occasions are summoned to appear in the House of Lords to give their advice if required. To the peeresses were given the four back rows of benches, behind the peers, at each side of the House. They also had the Strangers' Gallery, behind the Press Gallery, and the two smaller galleries to the right and left of the Press Gallery, to which, on ordinary occasions, the members of the House of Commons have access. Precedence, if loosely followed in the case of the peers, was rigidly observed in the allotting of places to the peeresses. The duchesses sat behind the dukes at the top of the Chamber, and nearest to the Throne. Then came the marchionesses, and the countesses, and the viscountesses, all, as far as possible, on the floor of the Chamber, while the ladies of the barons looked down on the peeresses of higher rank from the galleries. There are also side galleries running the entire length of the Chamber. The one to the right of the Throne was occupied by immediate friends, mostly ladies, of the King and Queen; and in the one

to the left—known as the Diplomatic Gallery—the ladies of the Ambassadors and foreign Ministers were accommodated. The mighty general public was represented in the Press Gallery, over the Bar, by the representatives of twenty-five newspapers, to which the Lord Great Chamberlain (who has control of the arrangements for the opening of Parliament by the Sovereign) issued tickets. So much for the arrangement of the large, the brilliant, and the representative company which was assembling to witness the great ceremonial of the day.

Two hours were yet to elapse before the arrival of the King and his Consort; but there was not a dull moment in the interval. During the filling-up of the Chamber the attention was always on the alert to note the arrival of celebrities. The canopied Throne stands between two doors. The door to the left was open, giving entrance to the floor of the Chamber. Through it—looking from the Press Gallery—could be seen a spacious anteroom, known as the Prince's Chamber, across which flitted the peers and peeresses. The company were received by the Master of the Ceremonies (Hon. Sir W. J. Colville) in a military uniform, wearing the badge of his office—a gold chain and medal; the Assistant-Master of the Ceremonies; and the Marshal of the Ceremonies, by whom the ladies were conducted to their places. The sombre dresses of the peeresses told of the national bereavement which, by bringing to a close the long and happy reign of Victoria, led to this rare and most impressive ceremony. These toilettes were of the deepest mourning—low-cut bodices, short sleeves, and flowing gowns of black materials, embroideries of black jet, black

gloves, black fans, black ostrich feathers in the hair, black veils of crêpe flowing behind—relieved only by coronets, or tiaras of pearls, and diamond or pearl necklaces. By a striking reversal of the customary appearances of the sexes at State ceremonies, it was the men who imparted colour to the spectacle. The peers were arrayed in all the glory of their ample robes of scarlet cloth, trimmed with ermine or white fur, with a tippet or hood of ermine over the shoulder. The robes are striped, back and front, with bars of white fur and gold, the number of bars denoting the wearer's rank in the Peerage—barons and viscounts having two, earls three, marquises three and a half, and dukes four.

The opportunities for the display of these quaint habiliments are rare. They are seen in the House of Lords on the introduction of a new peer, when they are worn only by the neophyte and by his two sponsors; at the giving of the Royal assent to Bills by Commission in the course of a Session; and at the opening and prorogation of Parliament by Commission, on which occasions the Royal Commissioners, or representatives of the Sovereign, are thus arrayed; but the only time the robes are donned by the general body of the peers is at the opening of Parliament by the Sovereign in person. The peers, perhaps, are thankful that they are not often required to wear this apparel. The robes can hardly be described as things of beauty; and it is not easy to recognise in them even the conspicuous and therefore familiar members of the hereditary Chamber. Some of the nobles wore this heavy, loose-fitting raiment nobly. Others seemed somewhat ill at ease in it. These had

a constrained look, as if they were haunted by the dreadful suspicion that they looked ludicrous in the eyes of the beholders. The robes, too, differed considerably in appearance. As a robe is often handed down from generation to generation, its condition often indicates the age of the wearer's peerage. In some the scarlet was vivid, and the sheen of the ermine was like driven snow; in others the white fur was yellow with age, and the red of the cloth dull and dingy. Many of the robes were also misfits. But this was apparent only with respect to old robes, some of which were too long, and others too short, showing, in each case, that the wearer was not made—so far as stature is concerned—in the same mould as the ancestor from whom he inherited his State apparel, as well as his title and acres.

Many of the peers also wore over their robes the collars and stars of various orders of knighthood. The Earl of Rosebery, sitting on a bench above the table facing the dukes, displayed the collar of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, the premier order of knighthood in the world—a circlet of pieces of gold, in the fashion of garters, from which depends a medallion in gold of St. George slaying the dragon. On the front bench, on the Government side of the House, was seen Earl Cadogan, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, with the collar of harps and shamrocks in gold, and the blue ribbon of the Knights of St. Patrick. Other peers wore collars of gold thistles, the badge of the Scottish Order of the Thistle. The gold circlet around the neck of Lord Aberdeen, who stood under the Press Gallery—for so packed was the Chamber that he was unable to

find a seat—is the collar of the Order of SS. Michael and George.

The spiritual peers assembled on their benches to the right of the Throne formed an interesting group. Over their flowing black gowns and ample lawn sleeves in which they are appalled at the ordinary meetings of the House of Lords, they, like the temporal peers, wore State robes of crimson, distinguished, however, not by bars of ermine, but by their tippets or hoods of ermine being fuller and flowing halfway down the back. On the front bench were to be seen the Archbishop of York and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Among the bishops, the Bishop of Winchester was recognisable by the blue ribbon and badge of the Garter, which he wore as the prelate of the Order. But perhaps the most picturesque corner of the Chamber was that in which the foreign Ambassadors and Ministers were assembled, immediately behind the bishops. The uniforms of the diplomatists are, like the nations and races they represent, marked by the widest divergences of style and colour. The Chinese Minister was resplendent in a blue silken robe, embroidered in front with a dragon in gold. The Persian Minister was also a notable figure in his red fez and uniform blazing with jewels and broad emerald-green sash. At the very back row, his brown face barely distinguishable from the dark oak panel of the wall, sat the representative of the negro Republic of Hayti in a uniform of black and gold braid and white gloves. On the first bench, in the very centre of a galaxy of rich uniforms and glittering Orders worn by the Ambassadors of Russia, Germany, and France, sat the American



Minister, the sole figure in that glowing diplomatic circle in the severe black coat and white shirt-front of civilian evening dress, without a star or a ribbon.

The Judges of the High Court, too—sitting on benches in the centre of the floor, near the Throne—contributed a feature to the gorgeous picture that stood out distinctly and apart. The Lords Justices wore their State robes of black silk heavily embroidered in gold, and their full-bottomed wigs, while the puisne Judges were arrayed in their judicial red robes, with white capes, and wigs. The three Clerks of the House, sitting at the Table—a conspicuous patch of black in a field of scarlet poppies—wearing their wigs and gowns, were also noticeable. Sitting beside them, the fresh, rubicund face of the Lord Chancellor of Ireland (Lord Ashbourne) was seen; and immediately behind, hardly distinguishable in a crowded group of peers, was the slight form of Earl Roberts. Over the canopy of the Throne, a young lad in Eton dress—no doubt a prince—greatly daring, occupied a very prominent position. Close to the youth, in the gallery to the left, was seen the Lord Mayor of London in his State robes. But the chief and enduring impression of the picture was the scarlet and white of the mass of peers on the floor, set in the encircling sombre frame of the mourning dresses of the peeresses.

Close on two o'clock the Duke of Connaught and the Duke of Cambridge arrived, wearing their robes as peers—the latter leaning heavily on the supporting arm of his son—and were escorted to two vacant seats at the top of the dukes' bench, nearest to the Throne. Immediately after them came the Royal Princesses, in deep mourning, relieved only by the

sash of the Victorian Order—pale blue with a white edge—which each lady wore across her shoulder. The assemblage respectfully rose to receive them. They were accommodated with chairs to the right and left of the Throne, and before taking their seats they bowed low to the company. On the right, close to the vacant chair of the Duke of York—for his Royal Highness being ill was unable to take part in the ceremonial—sat the Duchess of York, with, among others, Princess Victoria, Princess Christian, and the Duchess of Connaught. Prince Christian in uniform was also in the group. On the left were Princess Louise, Princess Henry of Battenberg, the Duchess of Albany, and other Royal ladies. Behind the chairs of the two groups stood several ladies-in-waiting, also in mourning attire.

The Chamber is now densely crowded, save that to the right and left of the Throne there is a narrow empty space for the great personages of State who are to accompany the King and Queen. A low murmur of conversation is heard, and occasionally a lady's musical laugh, but the great assembly is for the most part silent, eagerly awaiting the Royal procession. Look round the Chamber. It is not the eye alone that is delighted by the spectacle. The white light of day scarcely finds its way through the stained-glass windows, and a sort of dim, religious light prevails. Still, on every side may be seen something that appeals to the historical imagination, something that recalls thrilling memories from the storied past. Under the galleries the walls are lined with a carved-oak framing into which are set

shields bearing in colours and gold the arms of the Lord Chancellors. The windows at each side, above the galleries, are glowing with bright-hued figures of the Kings and Queens from the time of William the Conqueror. On pedestals, between the windows, are large bronze statues of the barons who wrested Magna Charta from King John; with bowed heads they stand, and hands resting on their grounded swords. Frescoes depicting incidents in English history are set in elaborate gilt mountings over the Throne—one being a representation of Edward III. conferring the Order of the Garter on Edward the Black Prince; while from the wall, at the back of the Strangers' Gallery, the figures of "Religion," "Chivalry," and "Love," look down upon the assemblage.

But with all the historic associations of this Chamber never before has it seen the spectacle which is about to be transacted now within its walls—the opening of Parliament by a King. Frequently since the present House of Lords was completed in 1847—after the old Palace of Westminster was burned down in 1834—had Queen Victoria sat on its Throne to open Parliament, the last occasion being in 1886. But it is sixty-five years since William IV. opened Parliament for the last time in the old temporary Chamber of the Lords, constructed after the disastrous fire of the 'Thirties.

Two o'clock was the hour their Majesties were expected, and a few minutes later, in the deep silence which prevailed in the Chamber, the guns firing the Royal salute in St. James's Park proclaiming that the King had arrived at the Palace of Westminster—a

fact which was signalled from the top of the Victoria Tower—could be heard distinctly. At ten minutes past two the doors to the right of the Throne were flung open. At the same moment the lights were turned on and the Chamber was flooded with a brilliant white radiance from the electric lamps in the groined and heraldic-decorated ceiling. Across the wide ante-room outside extended a line of Gentlemen-at-Arms in plumed helmets, scarlet-and-gold uniforms, and long white gauntlets. A few moments more and the head of the procession appeared at the doorway, and the vast assemblage on the floor and in the galleries stood up with a simultaneous movement, the ladies dropping to the benches their sable wraps, baring their white shoulders and arms; and diamonds and pearls sparkled and glowed in living lustre from brow and throat and bodice. First came four pursuivants, recalling by their old-world titles—Rouge Croix, Blue Mantle, Rouge Dragon, Portcullis—and by their quaint uniforms, or tabards (to speak by the card), embroidered back and front in gold and crimson with the Royal Arms, the age of chivalry, or at least the Middle Ages, with memories of jousts and tournaments. Then came six heralds—officers of a higher grade in the Heralds' College—again in tabards, but of richer material. As pursuivants and heralds reached the front of the Throne they stood, two by two, and made a low obeisance, bowed to the Princes and Princess to the right, again to the Princes and Princesses on the left, then passing on and ranging up in the open space on the left. They were followed by equerries-in-waiting, gentlemen ushers, and grooms-in-waiting, in Court costumes. After these were the

Comptroller of his Majesty's Household (Viscount Valentia), the Treasurer of his Majesty's Household (Mr. Victor Cavendish)—two political officers—each in Court dress and bearing a white wand; then came other permanent officials of the Royal Household—Sir Francis Knollys, Private Secretary to the King, and Sir Dighton Probyn, the Keeper of the Privy Purse, in dark blue uniforms with gold embroidery. These officials also passed the Throne with many an obeisance and grouped themselves on the left. Great officers of the State followed—the chief members of the Government who are Peers. Preceding them were two Sergeants-at-Arms, carrying maces. First was the Prime Minister, the Marquis of Salisbury (Lord Privy Seal), an impressive figure, with bent shoulders and heavy gait, in the scarlet and ermine robes of a peer. As he passed the Throne he bowed first to the Duchess of York and the Royal ladies on the right and then to Princess Henry of Battenberg and the Royal ladies on the left. The Lord Chancellor, who next appeared, wearing his robes as a peer, surmounted by his full-bottomed wig, and carrying the Great Seal in a gorgeous sachel, took up a position to the right of the Throne immediately before the chair of the Duke of York. Among others who quickly followed the Marquis of Salisbury to the left of the Throne were the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod (Sir Michael Biddulph), in the scarlet uniform of a general and carrying the black ebony staff from which he gets his name; and Norroy King of Arms (Mr. W. H. Weldon), representing Garter, the principal King of Arms of the Heralds' College, absent through ill-health. As Norroy swiftly passed

in front of the Throne in his gorgeous tabard, he seemed to be enveloped in a rich pattern of the Royal Standard. Next to appear were the hereditary holders of two of the great offices of the State—the Duke of Norfolk as Earl Marshal, and the Marquis of Cholmondeley as Lord Great Chamberlain—both in the scarlet and ermine of peers. The Lord Great Chamberlain passed across to the left of the Throne, and the Earl Marshal took up a position on the right.

Apart from the King and Queen—who were yet to come—three of the most interesting personages in the procession now appeared. They were three great noblemen carrying ancient symbols of authority and power. First was the Marquis of Londonderry (the Postmaster-General) in his robes, bearing the Sword of State—a long heavy weapon sheathed in a scabbard of crimson velvet encircled with gilt metal plates—which, grasping its pommel with his two hands, the noble marquis held aloft before him without a tremor as he walked in his heavy robes with slow and measured stride. It is customary for the Sword of State to be carried at this ceremony by the Prime Minister; and on the last occasion when Queen Victoria opened Parliament, in 1886, the Marquis of Salisbury as Premier exercised the right, but this time he was obliged to relinquish so fatiguing a task. Then came the Duke of Devonshire (Lord President of the Council) in his robes. On a cushion of crimson velvet with gold edgings, supported by a cord round his neck, reposed the Imperial Crown—its circles and arches of gold encrusted with diamonds and pearls, sur-

mounted by a globe and cross, enclosing a cap of purple. A thing alive it seemed, with its sparkling jewels, and withal it appeared but a tiny symbol of so mighty an Empire. Following the Duke of Devonshire was the Marquis of Winchester, who, by hereditary right as premier Marquis, carried the Cap of Maintenance on the top of a short white staff; for these emblems of Royal rank—the Crown and the Cap—may not be touched by any hands but the hands of the Sovereign. The Cap is a quaint low-crowned head-dress of crimson velvet, with a high peak in front and its turned-up brim lined with ermine. The Marquis of Londonderry took up a position on the steps of the Throne to the left, close to the Lord Chamberlain, while the Duke of Devonshire and the Marquis of Winchester joined the Earl Marshal and the Lord Chancellor on the right. As thus the Royal Procession clustered around the Throne not a sound was heard in the crowded Chamber. The feet of these brilliant figures were noiseless on the thick pile carpets, and the audience stood in breathless stillness.

Then entered King Edward and Queen Alexandra, walking side by side and hand in hand—the right hand of the Queen being clasped in the left of the King. The long trains of the State robes of their Majesties were held up by dapper young Pages of Honour in scarlet doublets and white knee-breeches, under the direction of the Groom of the Robes, in whom was recognised a figure familiar in the Commons, that of Mr. Erskine, the Sergeant-at-Arms. The robe of the King was a wide flowing garment of silk velvet of a deep crimson colour, edged with

rich gold lace and ermine, and hanging behind was a long deep mantle of ermine, the snowy whiteness of which was starred with innumerable tiny spots of black fur. His Majesty was bareheaded. In his right hand he carried his white-plumed Field-Marshal's hat. The robe of the Queen was also of deep crimson silk velvet edged with ermine, but not so ample or flowing as that of the King, nor was the train so long, nor the ermine cape, spotted with black fur, so deep. Over her hair, which curled about her forehead, her Majesty wore a miniature crown of diamonds. Arrived in front of the Throne, their Majesties bowed to it together, and, still hand in hand, ascended the three steps to the daïs. It was then seen that the Queen wore a long black veil flowing behind from her Crown. The King stood on the daïs, while the Queen took her seat on her Throne, and Gentlemen-in-Waiting brought her a footstool and adjusted her robe around the chair. Before she parted with the hand of her august spouse she stooped and kissed it. His Majesty then sat down on his Throne to the right of the Queen, and throwing back his robe disclosed the scarlet of the Field-Marshal's uniform which he wore beneath, its breast a blaze of jewels and orders, and across it over the left shoulder the broad blue sash of the Order of the Garter. By a slight wave of the King's hand the upstanding assemblage were commanded to resume their seats. All this time the personages composing the end of the procession were entering the Chamber. They were Ladies-in-Waiting, Gentlemen-in-Waiting, and other officers of the Royal Household, among them



being discerned Viscount Wolseley, in a Field-Marshal's uniform, as the Gold Stick, carrying a long wand. But the spectators had eyes only for the King and Queen, sitting in equal state on the Throne. And, if the King were the most splendid and imposing figure in the pageant, the Queen imparted to it exquisite grace and charm. "How young and beautiful she looks!" was the comment one heard on every side. Beneath her Royal robe her Majesty wore a black dress—an indication of the national sorrow that hung over this otherwise joyous occasion—across her left shoulder she displayed, for the first time, the blue ribbon of the Garter—a dignity conferred on her by the King immediately on his Accession—around her throat glowed a necklace of pearls, a rope of similar jewels hung almost to the hem of her dress, while the gold and jewelled insignia of many Orders sparkled on her breast, among them, conspicuous by its lustre, being the precious Koh-i-Noor. Her Majesty's stateliness of demeanour, her complete composure, her charming smile, and the interested glances which she cast around the Chamber were specially noted, even in the quick and fleeting impressions of the moment.

The rapid developments of this stage of the ceremony were watched with keen and deeply-interested attention by the assemblage. The picture, crowded though it was with figures, was not yet completed. The "faithful Commons" were still to come. Through the Lord Great Chamberlain the King's command was conveyed to Black Rod to summon the Commons to "attend his Majesty

immediately in the House of Peers," and Sir Michael Biddulph, his breast glittering with medals won on the fields of the Crimea, set out on his errand. He made a low obeisance at the foot of the Throne; and in strict etiquette he should have backed out of the Chamber, bowing as he went. But the floor was completely blocked. Black Rod, therefore, turned round, after his obeisance to the Throne, and, holding aloft his ebony staff, forced his way through the mass of ermine and scarlet. It was slow work and difficult, but at last he reached the Bar and disappeared. The doors leading to the lobby, directly facing the Throne, were now opened; so, too, were the doors of the House of Commons, after Black Rod had made the customary supplication for admission, and, as it is a straight line from the Throne in the Upper Chamber to the Speaker's Chair in the Lower, their Majesties were able to see from its start to finish the wild and surging rush of the Commons to the Royal presence. The King certainly whispered to the Queen at this time something which made her Majesty look with interest towards the House of Commons. A wait of a few minutes followed. It could only have been a few minutes, but it seemed intolerably long. Suddenly the intense silence which prevailed was broken by the clatter of many feet on the tessellated floor of the lobby outside. The noise grew in volume as the Speaker appeared at the Bar, attended by Black Rod, the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, and the Chaplain, followed close at heel by a tumultuous crowd of members hustling and jostling each other in their natural

eagerness to get standing room in the limited space allotted for their accommodation. The Bar proper is a sort of pen enclosed by carved oak barriers. Into this were packed, immediately behind the Speaker, the most prominent members of the Government and the Opposition. Mr. Balfour and Sir. H. Campbell-Bannerman were there. The tall forms of Sir William Harcourt and Sir. M. Hicks Beach were also prominent. For a minute or so there was considerable noise and confusion, and the gaze of the assemblage, which hitherto had been concentrated on the King and Queen, was turned to the struggling Commons. Their Majesties, too, watched the scene with evident concern. Cries of "Don't push," "Close the door," "There are too many in," were heard from the crowd massed at the Bar, and extending in lines five and six deep, from side to side of the Chamber. In the midst of the uproar Mr. Chamberlain was observed being pushed to the front row at the Bar. The Speaker in his gold embroidered robe and full-bottomed wig bowed reverently to the Throne. Then a deep silence fell once more upon the House.

And now were gathered together before the King all the Estates of the Realm, the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal, and the Commons. The Pageant in all its splendour was complete. The most impressive stage of the ceremonial had come. There was a movement among the brilliant and illustrious group which surrounded the Throne. The Lord Chancellor emerged from behind the Duke of Devonshire (carrying the Crown) and the Marquis of Winchester (bearing the Cap of Maintenance) to the right of the Throne, close beside the King, and bending

his right knee on the higher step of the daïs, presented to his Majesty a large square-shaped piece of stiff parchment containing printed matter.

When the Lord Chancellor rose again to his feet, it was seen that he held in his hands a similar document. Then, lifting his glasses to his eyes, the Lord Chancellor began reading from his parchment the declaration against transubstantiation, the Mass, and the invocation of Saints, and the King, seated but uncovered, repeated the words, following them on his own copy of the oath. The Bill of Rights provides that this declaration must be made and subscribed to by the Sovereign, either on the Throne in the House of Lords in the presence of both Houses, at the opening of Parliament, or at the Coronation, whichever shall happen first. The voice of the King was low and subdued as it mingled with the tones of the Lord Chancellor. It was not therefore possible to hear clearly all the words of the declaration throughout the Chamber. The terms of it, however, are as follows:—

“ I doe solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, professe, testifie, and declare, that I do believe that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there is not any transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ at or after the consecration thereof by any person whatsoever; and that the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary or any other saint, and the sacrifice of the masse, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous; and I doe solemnly, in the presence of God, professe, testifie, and declare, that I doe make this declaration, and

every part thereof, in the plaine and ordinary sence of the words read unto me, as they are commonly understood by English Protestants, without any evasion, equivocation, or mentall reservation whatsoever, and without any dispensation already granted me for this purpose by the Pope, or any other authority or person whatsoever, or without any hope of any such dispensation from any person or authority whatsoever, or without thinking that I am or can be acquitted before God or man, or absolved of this declaration, or any part thereof, although the Pope, or any other person or persons, or power whatsoever, should dispense with or annull the same, or declare that it was null and void from the beginning.”

Close behind the Lord Chancellor stood the Duke of Norfolk, looking down the Chamber with a fixed stare during the reading of the declaration. On its conclusion the Lord Chancellor handed the King a scarlet-bound copy of the New Testament, which his Majesty kissed. Then an ink-bottle was produced—of gold, apparently—the King was provided with a gold pen, and he signed the declaration—not the copy from which his Majesty had read, but the Lord Chancellor’s copy—which his lordship, again kneeling, held with both hands while his Majesty affixed his signature.

The Lord Chancellor next produced a black-bordered document, and, bending his right knee, as before, presented it to the King. It was the Speech from the Throne. His Majesty rose, and putting on his white-plumed hat—the assembly rising with him—read the terms of the Speech. But, if the voice of his Majesty was pitched in a subdued and almost

painful key while repeating the declaration, it now rang clear and distinct through the Chamber. Not a word of the Speech was lost to any ear, and, as its terms had been kept a profound secret until they were now disclosed by the King, the Speech was followed with intense interest. Two points in the Speech were especially noted. There was profound earnestness in his Majesty's utterance of the words, "My beloved mother, during her long and glorious reign, has set an example before the world of what a Monarch should be. It is my earnest desire to walk in her footsteps." There was deep emotion in his Majesty's voice as he said, "A separation from my son, especially at such a moment, cannot be otherwise than deeply painful," thereby expressing his decision that the proposed visit of the Duke of Cornwall and York to Australia not only should not be abandoned, but should be extended to New Zealand and to the Dominion of Canada. These were passages which, it was plain to see, deeply moved the assemblage.

At the conclusion of the Speech the King and Queen resumed their seats. Then came the closing scene of the great ceremonial. The Speaker, the Ministers and the ex-Ministers bowed themselves away from the Bar and disappeared. The personages who formed the head of the Royal procession quitted the Chamber by the door on the left near which they were grouped. The King, uncovering, rose and assisted the Queen from her chair, and their Majesties standing on the daïs, hand in hand, graciously acknowledged with many bows the homage of the still standing assemblage. This was the

episode which most of all in the ever-varying scene will linger longest in the memory of the spectators. Hand clasped in hand, their Majesties descended the steps of the Throne; and, turning to the left—their robes again lifted by the alert Pages of Honour—and preceded by the Cap of Maintenance, the Imperial Crown and the Sword of State, they disappeared into the Prince's Chamber. The Royal Princes and Princesses bowed to the House before following immediately behind. The group of famous statesmen, the brilliantly-attired officers of the Royal Household, the quaintly-garbed Heralds also disappeared. So the grandly-impressive ceremony was brought to an end. The gorgeous scene slowly dissolved amid animated conversation and merry laughter. To those who lingered in the Chamber came the enthusiastic shouts of the crowds outside, speeding the King and Queen on their way back to Buckingham Palace.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE OLD HOUSE OF COMMONS AND THE NEW.

As William Pitt lay dying at his villa on Putney Heath in January, 1806, the news of the complete rout of the Austrians and Russians by Napoleon at Austerlitz in December cast a shadow over the nation's rejoicing for the victory of Trafalgar. The success of the French Emperor preyed also upon the mind of the dying statesman. It counterbalanced, in his opinion, the destruction by Nelson of the combined French and Spanish fleets a month before. "Roll up that map," said he, pointing to a map of Europe, "it will not be wanted these ten years." The end came on January 23rd. "Oh, how I love my country!" he cried in anguish with his last breath.

So died Pitt of a patriot's broken heart. The Whigs averred at the time that he died of port wine. Half a century later Disraeli used to tell a humorous story which gives a different version of the last words of the dying statesman. "Late one night," said an old waiter at the House of Commons to Disraeli, shortly after he first entered Parliament, "I was called out of bed by a messenger in a post-chaise, shouting to me outside the window. 'What is it?' I said. 'You're to get up and dress and bring some



of your pork-pies down to Mr. Pitt at Putney.' So I went; and as we drove along the messenger told me that Mr. Pitt had not been able to take any food, but had suddenly said, 'I think I could eat one of Bellamy's pork-pies.' And so I was sent for post-haste. When we arrived Mr. Pitt was dead. These were his last words: 'I think I could eat one of Bellamy's pork-pies.'"

Bellamy was caterer to the Houses of Parliament for more than half a century, embracing the last decade of the eighteenth century, and the first forty years of the nineteenth. He kept a hostelry in Old Palace Yard (almost directly opposite St. Margaret's Church), to which a passage gave access from the old House of Commons; and made a huge fortune out of the chops and steaks and pork-pies, and bottles of port, which he served to hungry Peers and Commoners, when the Houses sat beyond the dinner hour.

St. Stephen's Chapel, in which the Commons held their conclaves for centuries (since 1327, to be precise), was consumed in the fire which in 1834 totally destroyed the ancient Houses of Parliament. It was an oblong building attached to Westminster Hall, at its south-east angle, and extending towards the river. St. Stephen's Hall, the public entrance to the present Palace of Westminster, with its splendid marble statues of famous Parliamentarians, occupies the exact site of the old House of Commons, and a brass plate set into the tessellated pavement close to the swing-doors leading to the Central Hall marks the place where stood the Speaker's Chair and the Clerk's Table. The old House was much smaller and

narrower than the present Chamber. Its ceiling and its sides were lined with wainscot of a dark brown hue, which gave it a gloomy appearance in the dim light provided in the day by high windows at each side, and at night by three chandeliers, filled with candles, hanging from the ceiling. The benches, as in the present Chamber, rose on each side, tier above tier, from the floor to the wall, and were divided by gangways. The Strangers' Gallery faced the Speaker's chair. Admission to this gallery was obtained on an order from a member, or by payment of 2s. 6*d.* to the attendants. The last of the five rows of seats in the Gallery was allotted to the reporters—when after a long struggle the right of the Press to admission was acknowledged—and each newspaper paid three guineas a session for its seat. These fees were also distributed among the officers of the House connected with the Gallery. Ladies were not admitted into the House, but they had access to a loft between the ceiling and the roof; and through a hole in the centre of the ceiling, for the purpose of ventilation, above the principal chandelier, a dozen might gaze with much inconvenience and discomfort upon the scene below, and as many more, while seeing nothing, could hear the speeches. It was not, however, an uncommon practice for ladies to frequent the Strangers' Gallery disguised as men. Sir Nathaniel Wraxall mentions in his "Memoirs" that he saw the Duchess of Gordon habited as a man in the Gallery. The story is also told that the beautiful Mrs. Brinsley Sheridan attended in a similar disguise in order to hear a speech by her husband.

Under the old House of Commons was St. Stephen's

Crypt, or, as it was first called, the Church of St. Mary's Undercroft. It happily survived the great conflagration of 1834. The crypt was, of course, a place of worship—like the old House of Commons—originally. But in modern times it was divided into two parts, in one of which was placed the apparatus for heating the legislative chamber, while the other was used by the Speaker as a State dining-room. The east windows, by which it was lighted, looked out over the Speaker's gardens to the river. The crypt was restored by Sir Charles Barry—the architect of the Palace of Westminster—and is now a beautiful chapel, in which there are services occasionally for residents within the palace. The ancient cloisters of St. Stephen's, which, like the Crypt and Westminster Hall, escaped the destruction of the old Houses of Parliament, have been used since the opening of the new House of Commons as a cloak-room for the members.

If the old Chamber was less imposing than the new, its members were more picturesque in their attire than the present representatives of the nation. It was the general custom until the last quarter of the eighteenth century for members to wear Court dress, lace ruffles, and swords. Till a still later day Ministers appeared in the House in *levée* costume, with their stars and ribbons. Members then wore cut-away coats, shirt frills, tights and riding-boots. Wigs and powdered hair were also common. Pitt wore a pigtail, and was always neat and precise in his attire. His great rival, Fox, on the contrary, was slovenly and untidy in his dress. His long hose often hung loosely between his tights and his

shoes. A sarcastic piece of fashionable intelligence of the time in Tory prints ran: "Mr. Fox appeared at St. Stephen's in a clean waistcoat."

The House of Commons, from the Union with Ireland in 1801, consisted of 658 members until the Reform Act of 1884, when the number was increased to 670, at which it at present stands. Not more than 400 members could be packed into the old Chamber. The accommodation outside was also very meagre. Besides the library, there were only two rooms—one for writing and the other for smoking—at the disposal of members.

We are indebted to Macaulay's letters to his sister Hannah, written in the early 'Thirties, for graphic glimpses of the smoking-room with passages from the conversations heard in its cloudy atmosphere. Writing from the smoking-room in 1831, Macaulay says: "A large wainscoted place with tables covered with green baize and writing materials. On a full night it is generally thronged towards twelve o'clock with smokers. It is then a perfect cloud of fume. There have I seen (tell it not to the West Indians) Buxton blowing fire out of his mouth. My father will not believe it. At present, however, all the doors and windows are open, and the room is pure enough from tobacco to suit my father himself." In another letter from the smoking-room, dated July 23rd, 1832, he says: "I am writing here at eleven at night in the filthiest of all filthy atmospheres, and in the vilest of all vile company, with the smell of tobacco in my nostrils, and the ugly, hypocritical face of Lieutenant —— before my eyes. There he sits writing opposite to me. To whom, for a ducat?"

To some Secretary of an Hibernian Bible Society, or to some old woman who gives cheap tracts instead of blankets to the starving peasantry of Connemara, or to some good Protestant Lord who bullies his Popish tenants." The letter thus concludes: "That confounded chattering — has just got into an argument about the Church with an Irish papist who has seated himself at my elbow, and they keep up such a din that I cannot tell what I am writing. There they go. The Lord Lieutenant—the Bishop of Derry—Magee—O'Connell—your Bible meetings—your Agitation meetings—the propagation of the Gospel—Maynooth College—the Seed of the Woman shall bruise the Serpent's head. My dear Lieutenant, you will not only bruise but break my head with your clatter. Mercy! Mercy! However, here I am at the end of my letter, and I shall leave the two demoniacs to tear each other to pieces."

For refreshments members had to resort to Bellamy's. A staircase from the lobby of the Chamber led to a corridor giving access to the tavern. Tea was served in the corridor, and here, also members sat and chatted over a bottle of wine. In what was known as "the kitchen" dinners and suppers were served. A few tables covered with damask tablecloths were scattered about its bare floor. A huge fire blazed in the grate, with a roasting-jack hanging before it for joints, and on it a gridiron for steaks. At the top of the staircase leading from the Chamber stood a waiter, who called out the name of each speaker addressing the House.

"Mr. Bumbleton upon his legs," cried the waiter;

and the eating and drinking went on undisturbed. But if it were "Mr. Pitt upon his legs"; or "Mr. Brinsley Sheridan upon his legs"; or—in times nearer to our own—"Sir Robert Peel upon his legs," or "Mr. Daniel O'Connell upon his legs," members hurriedly finished their steak, their bottle, or their pork-pie, and proceeded to the House. The division-bell created even more confusion in the kitchen of Bellamy's. At the first note of the bell members jumped up from their seats, leaving bottle and pie and steak unfinished, and rushed downstairs headlong into the House, fearful lest they might be shut out from giving their votes upon a question which they had not heard debated. But in those days, as in these, our representatives are guided as much by the Whips as by their own reason into the division lobbies.

Richard Lalor Sheil, the Irish politician and orator, who came to London to hear a debate on Catholic Emancipation, in 1825, wrote a sketch of his experiences for a magazine, in which he gives us an interesting description of Bellamy's. He writes:—

"The scene which Bellamy's presents to a stranger is striking enough. Two smart girls, whose briskness and neat attire made up for their want of beauty, and for the invasions of time, of which their cheeks showed the traces, helped out tea in a room in the corridor. It was pleasant to observe the sons of dukes and marquises and the possessors of twenties and thirties of thousands a year, gathered round those damsels, and soliciting a cup of that beverage which it was their office to administer.

Those Bellamy barmaids seemed so familiarised with their occupation that they went through it with perfect nonchalance, and would occasionally turn with petulance, in which they asserted the superiority of their sex to rank and opulence, from the noble and wealthy suitors for a draught of tea, by whom they were surrounded. The unfortunate Irish members were treated with a peculiar disdain, and were reminded of their provinciality by the look of these Parliamentary Hebes, who treated them as mere colonial deputies should be received in the purlieus of the State."

Writing of the scene in "the kitchen" he says:—

"Nearly opposite the door sat two English county members. They had disposed of a bottle each, and, just as the last glass was emptied, one of them called out to the annunciator at the end of the passage for intelligence. 'Mr. Foster on his legs!' was the formidable answer. 'Waiter, bring another bottle!' was the immediate effect of this information, which was followed by a similar injunction from every table in the room. I perceived that Mr. Bellamy owed great obligations to Mr. Foster. But the latter did not limit himself to a second bottle. Again and again the same question was asked, and again the same announcement returned—'Mr. Foster upon his legs!' The answer seemed to fasten men in inseparable adhesiveness to their seats. Thus two hours went by; when, at length, 'Mr. Plunket on his legs' was heard from the end of the passage, and the whole convocation of compotors rose together and returned to the House."

Charles Dickens, close on ten years after Sheil, refers to Bellamy's in one of his "Sketches by Boz." He tells us that "Nicholas," the chief butler, had been a reformer, but after the passing of the Reform Act of 1832 he became an inveterate Tory. The clauses of the Act which gave members to the metropolitan districts of London were especially obnoxious to the honest old servitor. "We discovered the secret at last," writes Dickens. "The metropolitan members always dined at home! The rascals! As for giving additional members to Ireland, it was even worse—decidedly unconstitutional. Why, sir, an Irish member would go up there and eat more dinner than three English members put together. He took no wine; drank table-beer by the half-gallon, and went home to Manchester Buildings or Millbank Street for his whisky and soda. And what was the consequence? Why, the concern lost—actually lost—by their patronage." Tea was still served by two waitresses. If they were not the same girls that Sheil saw ten years before, they certainly were quite as impudent. "That female in black—not the one whom that Lord's Day Bill Baronet has just chucked upon the chin, the shorter of the two—is 'Jane,' the Hebe of Bellamy's. Jane is as great a character as Nicholas in her way. Her leading features are a thorough contempt for the great majority of her visitors; her predominant quality, love of admiration, as you cannot fail to observe if you mark the way with which she listens to something the young member near her mutters somewhat unintelligibly in her ear (for his speech is rather thick from some cause or other), and how playfully she digs the handle of a fork into the arm by which he detains her, by way of reply."



Bellamy's was famous for its cellar of port. Pitt, who, as is well known, had a weakness for that wine, probably cracked many a bottle of it—like other members—in “the kitchen,” during the dull intervals of debate. An epigram of the time gives the following dialogue between Pitt and his colleague and boon companion, Henry Dundas, afterwards Viscount Melville :—

“PITT—I can't see the Speaker, Hal, can you?”

“DUNDAS—Not see the Speaker, Billy? I see two!”

On one occasion Pitt was so manifestly under the influence of wine as he sat on the Treasury Bench, that one of the clerks at the Table, in his distress at the spectacle, got a violent headache. “An excellent arrangement,” remarked Pitt, when he was told of the condition of the clerk, “I have the wine and he has the headache.”

But sometimes Pitt had the headache as well as the wine. On February 21st, 1783, he was assailed by Fox for the terms of peace arranged with France, Spain, Holland and the United States, who had been combined in war against England, on the ground that they were too favourable to the enemy. Unfortunately Pitt was that evening sick from over indulgence in port. Immediately behind the Speaker's Chair there was a door, known as Solomon's Porch, leading to the gardens of the Speaker's residence, laved by the waters of the Thames. In the midst of Fox's speech Pitt had to retire to the Porch. He held the door open with one hand, and while he vomited into the garden turned his ear to the House so that he might not miss any of the arguments of Fox. “Never,”

writes William Wilberforce, who witnessed the incident, "do I recollect to have witnessed such a triumph of mind over physical depression. When Fox sat down, he replied to him with great ability, though with less brilliancy than usual."

One or two passages in the speech of Fox, as recorded by *Hansard*, seem to point to Pitt's inebriation. "I do not envy him the triumph of his situation this day," said Fox. Pitt, too, in the course of his reply made some veiled allusions to his condition. He said, for instance :—

"I will never engage in political enmities without a public cause. I will never forge such enmities without the public approbation; nor will I be questioned and cast off, in the face of this House, by one virtuous and dissatisfied friend. These, sir, the sober and durable triumph of reason over the weak and profligate inconsistencies of party violence; these, sir, the steady triumphs of virtue over success itself, shall be mine, not only in my present situation, but through every future condition of my life, triumphs which no length of time shall diminish, which no change of principle shall ever sully."

Of course, in those days it was the custom of all classes of society to drink deeply rather than wisely. Still there can be no question that the greatest astonishment ever created in the House of Commons was when Sir George Rose turned in drunk one evening in the early years of the nineteenth century, and called upon Mr. Speaker for a comic song. The members, as well as the Speaker, were perfectly paralysed with astonishment. As soon as the Speaker

could collect his scattered senses, he ordered the Sergeant-at-Arms to take the honourable member into custody. Sir George Rose, who was a county gentleman of great influence and wealth, was consequently brought to the Bar—of the House, not Bellamy's—but the wine he had drunk had made him pugnacious and obstinate, and when he was called upon to beg the Speaker's pardon, he avowed hard and fast that he would beg no man's pardon, not even King George's, and certainly not that little chap's with the big wig. Sir George Rose was therefore committed to a room, called the lock-up of the House of Commons, to sleep off his debauch. Next day he was penitent and sober, begged the Speaker's pardon, was reprimanded, and discharged on payment of Sergeant-at-Arms' costs, which were very heavy.

However, these incidents notwithstanding, it was a common practice in the House of Commons for members to find in the sucking of an orange a sufficient stimulant. In the great days of Burke and Pitt, and Fox and Sheridan, members used to lie full length along the benches, amusing themselves sucking oranges and cracking nuts. On February 7th, 1828, Henry Brougham delivered a famous speech on law reform, which lasted over six hours, and filled ten columns of *The Times* and sixty pages of *Hansard*. On the bench beside the orator was his hat full of oranges, and to these he resorted for refreshment during the trying physical and mental ordeal of the speech. In the first reformed Parliament William Cobbett and Daniel O'Connell were probably the most intemperate members—as regards language. The speeches of both were invariably inebriated with

the exuberance of their fiery and combative temperaments. But O'Connell was noted for his abstemiousness at table, and Cobbett was a strict teetotaller. Probably Nicholas the butler was wroth with them because they never spent a crown on a bottle of Bellamy's port; but, at the same time, he could not complain as an additional grievance that they helped themselves to the free table-beer of "the kitchen." In the House they might be seen sitting together on the Opposition benches, sucking oranges and telling stories, discussing political questions, or rudely cheering or interjecting embarrassing comments during a speech by Peel. Their brother-in-arms, Joseph Hume, preferred pears. That stern financial reformer, that rigid stickler for economy in all branches of public expenditure, was never absent from a sitting of the House of Commons, from the moment the Speaker took the Chair, to the adjournment. No matter how dry or uninteresting the debate might be, Hume was to be seen at all times reclining against one of the posts supporting the gallery on the Opposition side. "There is Joseph, always at his post," was a common saying. He was never known to have a steak even in Bellamy's kitchen—not to speak of port or table-beer—but he came down to the House every day with his pockets stuffed with pears, and these he munched in the Chamber for dinner and supper.

Disraeli, writing to his sister, January 31st, 1840, describes a curious incident of the debate on the vote of non-confidence in the Melbourne Government, three nights earlier: "The Government put up Gisborne, who is sometimes a wonderful rhetorician and pro-

duces great effects in a crowded House, but uncertain. There had been a general rumour he was to make a great display, and when he got up, Freemantle came to me and asked me to reply to him. He began very well, but after some little time regularly broke down, was silent for some moments, sent for oranges, coughed, stuck again and again, and finally pleaded 'some physical inability,' which had suddenly deprived him of his voice, sank overwhelmed with his own exposure. We thought he was drunk, but the Whigs say the fault was that he was not, and that when he is tipsy, and is not prepared, he is very good." Oranges were sucked in the House at an even later date than this. Richard Cobden relates that in 1845, when Ferrand, the Member for Knaresborough, was making a ferocious attack upon him, "Colonel Sibthorpe plied the fellow with oranges to suck, in an affectionate way that resembled a monkey fondling a bear." The custom of thus taking refreshment in the Chamber disappeared, like many another quaint feature of Parliamentary life, with the old House of Commons.

In the noble pile of buildings erected on the site of the Old Palace, swept away by the fire of 1834, the accommodation for members, outside the Chamber, was greatly increased. There are now three dining-rooms. One of them is reserved, by custom, to the leading members of the Government and the Opposition. In this room there is a table for Cabinet Ministers, and another for ex-Cabinet Ministers. For a time the culinary department in the new palace was looked after by Bellamy, or his successors. Then the provision of meals to members was let out by contract.

But for several years now a special Committee of the House, known as "The Kitchen Committee," has supervised the department; and it enjoys a subsidy of £1,000 a year from the public funds. During the Session over £500 a week is paid by members for meals and refreshments. The amount of money spent by individual legislators of course varies considerably; but as a rule M.P.'s are now noted for their abstemiousness when dining in the House. They are able to obtain a two-shilling dinner, consisting of soup, joint and two vegetables, bread, butter, cheese, salad and biscuits, and this modest repast is in good demand throughout the Session. The wine-cellar of the House contains, it is said, something like £5,000 worth of wines; there is also an immense vat of Scotch whisky; and the cigar-room contains about £2,000 worth of stock, the prices of the weeds ranging from 3*d.* to 3*s.* each.

There are smoking-rooms, of course, and tea-rooms, in some of which the quiet games of chess and draughts and dominoes may be played to while away the dull hours between divisions when, as Disraeli says in "Sybil," "Wishy is down and Washy is up," and by means of "annunciators" in the smoking-rooms members can tell who is speaking in the Chamber. Mr. Herbert Gladstone signalled his filling of the office of First Commissioner of Works in the last Liberal Government—1892-95—by providing members with bath-rooms. Some time ago the division bell rang out its summons to the Chamber while a member was enjoying the luxury of the parliamentary tub. For a moment the hon. gentleman was dismayed to find that Mr. Herbert Gladstone

had neglected to provide dressing-gowns to meet an emergency such as this, but, being a faithful follower of the Government, he was determined to sustain their majority at all risks to his sense of propriety and dignity, and so, hastily donning a tall hat, a bath towel and his boots, he dashed for the division lobby, arriving just in time to record his vote. Then, his duty done, amid the laughing, cheers and good-humoured banter of his colleagues, he went back and finished his bath.

The report of the annual cost of the Chamber of Deputies of France shows that French representatives are not satisfied with hot and cold water, soap and towels for their toilets like the members of the House of Commons. The year's bill for eau de Cologne amounts to over 1,500 francs, and other toilet appliances cost yearly about the same.

But the appetite of our members for comforts and recreations at the Palace of Westminster apparently grows by what it feeds on. The House has lost its reputation as "the best Club in Europe." This, no doubt, is due to the fact that it is not now so exclusive as it was in the days of a restricted franchise, though the inclusion in its membership of all sorts and conditions of men, representative of the varied life and character of the nation, must have really made its social side more interesting and enjoyable. Anyway, members grumble often about the discomforts attending the discharge of their legislative duty—recording their votes in the division lobbies, for to that the functions of a private or unofficial member of Parliament are practically now reduced. There are several directions in which the amusements of M.P.'s at Westminster might be

developed. The public gardens near the Victoria Tower might, for instance, be appropriated, and laid out in tennis-courts, for members. Billiard rooms might also be provided for the long winter evenings. In the summer months, band performances on the terrace during "five o'clock tea" would be most enjoyable; and at night when the Palace is crowded with "strangers"—ladies and gentlemen who have come down to dine with members—a light variety entertainment on the terrace by artists from "the Halls" would relieve the tedium of making the laws of the land.

But while the old, frivolous members pine for tennis-courts and band performances, the young, serious representatives with political ambitions, and personal and professional interests to serve, are quite content with the excellent library of the House. The books are housed in a series of rooms, five in number, overlooking the Thames, and comprise a most useful collection of Parliamentary records, historical and political works, for a serious student of affairs. There are also a map-room for geographical references; and a newspaper room with a selection of the leading daily journals of the kingdom.

It is in the quiet rooms of the library, surrounded with books, rather than in the Chamber itself, with its languid, enervating atmosphere, and its oftentimes irrelevant and unprofitable talk, that members think out and prepare their speeches. Some members feel, like Richard Cobden, their reasoning powers in abeyance while in the Chamber. "I don't know whether you feel yourself similarly affected by the air of the House," Cobden wrote to a friend in 1857, "but after



sitting there for two or three hours I find my head useless for any other purpose but aching. I find my brain throbbing as though it were ready to burst, and the pain returns upon me as soon as I wake in the morning. It seems as if the air were dried and cooked to such an extent as to rob it of its vital properties."

Members of the two front benches on either side of the table, having note-paper and envelopes, and ink and pens close at hand, often occupy their idle time in the House with a blotting-pad on their knees writing their private correspondence. In the "Life and Times of W. H. Smith" (the leader of the House of Commons during the Conservative Government of 1886-92) by Sir Herbert Maxwell, there are many tender love-letters written by Smith to his wife from the Treasury Bench amid the clamour of party conflict which filled the Chamber. One night in 1887 he wrote to Mrs. Smith, who was at Greenlands, Henley: "I have had a very nice letter from the Queen, which I will show you to-morrow evening, if, as I hope, I am able to get down to you, and this must come to you as my first greeting on the anniversary of that happy day when we became one. . . . God has blessed us, and we do owe very much to Him, for all our trials have brought us closer to each other and to Him, and every day I realise more and more of the strength and guidance which you ask and help me to gain. . . . The debate is going on in a dull way, and Childers is now speaking, but our Irish Attorney-General, Mr. Holmes, made a very good speech indeed, in opening." On August 22nd, 1887, he wrote to his wife from the Treasury Bench: "As I grow

older I realise that I am getting nearer to the end myself, and while the close of life loses the terror it once had, the duty of being useful to all around me—of so using my powers and my life, as to do every day the very best I can under the circumstances in which I find myself—come home to me *every* day with greater strength, so I must not disable myself by fretting, or so entirely turn my thoughts in one direction, as to find myself diverted from the daily work of life."

On July 7th, 1888, Smith wrote: "Now Harcourt is mouthing, declaiming, and denouncing us in violent language, and the Attorney-General in particular. Good-night! God bless and keep you and my dear children. And pray for me every day that I may have wisdom and strength to do what is right. It is a hard and difficult task." On August 3rd, 1888, he wrote: "Here I am listening to Arthur Balfour, who is answering Mr. J. Morley, and I have ears for him and thoughts for my very dear one at home at the same time."

What a change in social habits is typified by the striking contrast between the leaders of the House of Commons at the ends of the last two centuries—William Pitt at the close of the eighteenth and William Henry Smith at the close of the nineteenth! The first is seen the worse for liquor on the Treasury Bench; the other writing from the same Bench epistles to his wife full of marital affection and religious devotion!

## CHAPTER V.

### THE OLD HOUSE OF LORDS AND THE NEW.

MOST visitors to St. Stephen's experience a sense of disappointment, if not of disillusionment, on seeing for the first time the House of Lords in session. As you pass down the corridor leading from the central hall to the Upper Chamber, memories of readings in English history in school days crowd upon the mind—memories rendered all the more vivid by the glowing frescoes of many stirring episodes in our country's story which adorn the walls of the corridor, so that on reaching the massive brass gates giving access to the House of Lords you expect in another moment to be dazzled by a vision of old-time regal splendour—the assembled peers, dignified and impressive in stature, arrayed in their robes of state, magnificently jewelled to their tapering finger-tips, and with flashing coronets of gold and pearls upon their noble brows. But how commonplace is the reality contrasted with one's expectations! What an outrage upon one's historical imagination! You find that the peers are ordinary-looking gentlemen, in prosaic every-day dress and silk hats, sitting on red benches in easy and indolent attitudes. They certainly do not frighten or overawe one, as somehow one had anticipated. Indeed, you feel yourself lifted to the level of these

great hereditary lords on noticing that many of them, careless of their dignity, are lolling back in their seats, with their hands thrust deeply into their trousers pockets—as if for all the world they were ordinary human beings—and seem listless or inattentive as regards the proceedings.

But if there is little or nothing that is imposing in the personal appearance of the peers, their new Chamber—now half a century old—with its frescoes, stained-glass windows, its heraldic devices in gold and colours, and its bronze statues of the Magna Charta barons and its majestic Throne, fully satisfies your sense of the fitness of things, and carries you back from this modern world into the Middle Ages. In the old House of Lords the situation was reversed. Contemporary prints show us an assemblage of peers with scarlet-and-ermine robes in a dingy and ill-lit Chamber. There is, for instance, Copley's well-known picture, "The Death of the Earl of Chatham," in the National Gallery. In the House of Lords on April 7th, 1778, the Duke of Richmond, as principal Secretary of State, moved an Address to the King urging the necessity of immediately recognising the independence of the revolted North American Colonies. On learning of the intention to make peace with America Chatham was filled with indignation, and, rising from his bed of sickness, went to the House of Lords to oppose the motion. He was in the midst of a powerful speech, depicting the humiliation and disgrace involved in the recognition by the mother-country of the independence of her rebellious colonies, when he fell back in a convulsive fit and was carried out to die. The Chamber—as we see it

in Copley's painting—is plain and unadorned, save for the dim tapestries which cover the dull wainscot of the walls at each side ; but the group of peers gathered around the dying Chatham are impressive in their flowing robes of scarlet and white, their powdered wigs, and their stars and decorations.

The old House of Lords was originally a banquet hall, when St. Stephen's was a Royal residence, and after the erection of Westminster Hall was converted into a Court of Requests, where the King sat in person to receive the petitions of his subjects, until it was finally converted into a Chamber for the peers. The tapestries on the walls represented the dispersal of the Spanish Armada in 1588, and also contained portraits of the English naval commanders. They were presented to Queen Elizabeth by the States of Holland "in testimony of their admiration of the skill and bravery of the English fleet." In the arrangement of the new Chamber the disposition of things in the old—destroyed by the fire of October 16th, 1834—was followed exactly. At the upper end of the old House stood the King's Throne, a gilded high-backed chair, on a daïs, under a canopy of crimson velvet, supported by gilded columns. In front of the Throne, separating it, as it were, from the Chamber, was, as now, a light brass railing, and in the space about the Throne Privy Councillors and sons of peers were admitted, as now, during the sittings of the House. There were four rows of benches, lined in crimson leather, at each side, and between them, on the floor, first the Woolsack, then the clerks' Table, and, nearer to the Bar, as now, four cross benches for peers of independent political views, who did not

care to sit either with the Government or the Opposition. At the Bar there was standing room for almost 150 persons, and here the Commons, and strangers introduced by the Commons, found accommodation. It was not until the trial of Queen Caroline, wife of George IV., for adultery, in the House of Lords in 1820, that a gallery was provided for the Press. Previous to that time—after the reluctant recognition of the right of the newspapers to publish the proceedings of Parliament—the reporters were permitted to take notes in the crowd at the Bar, provided they attended in evening dress. The front row of the gallery, erected in 1820, was allotted to the London newspapers. Behind the journalists sat the general public—there were about sixty seats for men and twenty for ladies—admitted on orders signed and issued by peers. As for the peeresses, how they fared in the old House is best explained by the following interesting extract from Greville's "Memoirs":—

“The House of Lords was very full to hear the Catholic Relief debates, particularly of women. The steps of the Throne have been crowded with ladies. Formerly, one or two got in who skulked behind the Throne, or were hid in the box of the Usher of the Black Rod; but now they fill the whole space, and put themselves in front with their large bonnets without either fear or shame. Lady Jersey is in a fury with Lord Anglesea, and goes about saying he insulted her in the House the other night. She was sitting on the lower step of the Throne, and the Duchess of Richmond on the step above. After

Lord Anglesea had spoken he came to talk to the Duchess, who said: 'How well you did speak!' when he said, 'Hush, you must take care what you say, for here is Lady Jersey, and she reports for the newspapers.' Lord Jersey, overhearing this, said: 'Lady Jersey is here for her own amusement. What do you mean by reporting for the newspapers?' This is his version. Hers, of course, is different."

The peers, like the Commons, dined in Bellamy's kitchen. In this plain, unpretending apartment, in which blazed an immense fire with hissing joints of beef, and chops and steaks spluttering on gridirons, the great hereditary peers, possessed of palaces and stately dining halls, with powdered attendants, would humbly eat their steak or chop, or cut from a joint, and drink their beer or claret or port, attended by two waiting-maids, on evenings when the House of Lords sat late. The drowsiness or listlessness which was a marked characteristic of noble lords in the old House, as it is in the new, on all but a few evenings of every Session, cannot have been due to these frugal repasts, eaten in the very room in which the food was cooked. The story goes that one evening in the early 'Twenties the Duke of Norfolk was sound asleep in the House and snoring loudly when a Bill was brought up from the House of Commons. "This, my lords," said Eldon, "is a bill relating to Great Snoring"—and the Lord Chancellor put immense emphasis on "Great Snoring"—"to which the Commons desire your lordships' concurrence." The loud laughter of the peers awoke the Duke of Norfolk from his slumbers, and when, on inquiry, he was told

the object of the measure was to enclose the commons of "Great Snoring"—a parish in Norfolk—he guessed the reason for the mirth and joined in it heartily.

Henry Brougham, in the House of Commons, was satisfied, as we have seen, with the refreshment afforded by an orange. But with his elevation to the peerage came, not unnaturally, expensive tastes. The spectacle of the Lord Chancellor sucking an orange on the Woolsack would no doubt have shocked the sense of propriety of the Upper Chamber. During Brougham's long and impassioned appeal to the Lords to refrain from rejecting the Reform Bill of 1832, five tumblers of mulled port, with a dash of brandy, were brought to him at intervals. At the fifth glass a Tory peer exclaimed: "There is another half-hour good for us, and be d—— to him." When the Lord Chancellor came to his final sentence—"I warn you, I implore you—yea, on my bended knees I supplicate you, reject not this Bill," he knelt on the Woolsack, whence he slipped to the floor, and his friends, rushing up to congratulate him, helped him to his feet again. But John Campbell, in his "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," makes an uncharitable suggestion in referring to the episode. "He continued some time as if in prayer," Campbell writes of Brougham kneeling on the floor; "but his friends, alarmed for him lest he should be suffering from the effects of mulled port, picked him up and placed him safely on the Woolsack."

Twelve years later Brougham told Father Mathew, the celebrated Irish temperance advocate, that he was extremely abstemious in the matter of wine. In 1844, Father Mathew amused a large party at the house



of an Irish nobleman in London by his attempts to convert the noble lord to teetotalism. "I drink very little wine," said Brougham; "only half a glass at luncheon, and two half glasses at dinner; and though my medical advisers told me I should increase the quantity I refused to do so." "They are wrong, my lord, for advising you to increase the quantity," said Father Mathew, playfully, "and you are wrong in taking even the small quantity you mention, but I have my hopes of you;" and despite the good-humoured resistance of Brougham he invested his lordship with the green ribbon and silver medal of the Total Abstinence Society. "I'll tell you what I'll do," said Brougham. "I'll take the ribbon to the House of Lords, where I shall be sure to meet old Lord —— the worse for liquor, and I will put it on him." This announcement was received with much laughter by the company, for the peer referred to was notorious for his deep potations. A few evenings later Brougham met him in the House of Lords. "Lord ——," said he, "I have a present from Father Mathew for you," and he passed the ribbon and medal rapidly over the old peer's head. "Then I'll tell you what it is, Brougham. By God, I'll keep sober from this night!" exclaimed the other, and to the great amazement of all his friends he remained faithful to his vow.

On the evening of July 17th, 1834, the indignation of Brougham was deeply stirred by the flinging of the quotation from Shakespeare, "potations pottle deep," at his head as he sat on the Woolsack. Differences had arisen in the Administration of Earl Grey as to the renewal of a Coercion Act for Ireland—many

of the Whigs being desirous for an alliance with Daniel O'Connell—and, the Prime Minister having resigned, a new Whig Administration was formed, with Lord Melbourne at its head. The Duke of Buckingham was a very prominent member of the House in those days, for he was a man mountain of immense girth, with a good-humoured, laughing face, and a voice so loud that the reporters used to say that in the noise of his speaking they could hardly hear his words. "The noble and learned lord on the Woolsack, and his colleagues, think they have buried the noble earl in his political sepulchre, and that he will no more disturb them," Buckingham roared. "But they will find themselves mistaken. The spirit of the noble earl will burst its cerements and will haunt them, and will disturb the noble and learned lord on the Woolsack in his festivities, when he may attempt to forget what has happened with 'potations pottle deep' to the health and prosperity of the new Administration." The Marquis of Lansdowne and the Lord Chancellor rose together. "Stop a minute," cried Brougham, waving his hand at Lansdowne, who at once resumed his seat; and then, turning on Buckingham, the irate Lord Chancellor said: "I am in the habit of meeting the noble duke elsewhere, but never have I had the honour of seeing him at the alehouse, where he must have visited often to pick up the slang terms to which he has treated the House." Several peers, fearing a personal conflict, tried to interpose. "Let the noble and learned lord go on; don't interrupt him," cried the Duke of Buckingham; "I shall take everything that may fall from him with perfect coolness." Cries of "Order, order!" now

arose, and someone was heard to shout "It's a joke." "Well," said Brougham, "if the noble duke's words were intended as a joke, I am ready to receive them in good humour. But if they were meant as a serious charge, then I do not hesitate to say of it that it is as gross and unwarrantable, as utterly and completely devoid of foundation, as any, the most untrue assertion or insinuation that has ever been made by any individual whatsoever." "I meant it in good humour," said Buckingham. "The allusion was from Shakespeare." The Lord Chancellor nodded and smiled to express his satisfaction with the explanation. Obviously he was distressed lest the mulled port with the *soupeçon* of brandy from Bellamy's should be regarded by noble lords as his favourite dissipation. But it is still more curious that Brougham, of whom Daniel O'Connell said, "He knows a little of everything—even of law," was ignorant of that Shakespearean quotation.

A strange peculiarity of the House of Lords, both new and old, is that the Lord Chancellor on the Woolsack has no authority over the proceedings, and is powerless to maintain the order and decorum of debate. If a peer is out of order, or is deemed to be out of order—for there are no rules on the subject—it is the House, and not the Chair—or, rather, not the Woolsack—which calls him to account. During the angry discussions on the Reform Bill, Earl Grey cried "Order, order!" during what he regarded as irrelevancies in the course of a speech by Lord Falmouth. After the debate, Lord Falmouth approached the Prime Minister with a menacing air and said, "My Lord Grey, I wish to inform you that

if upon any future occasion you transgress in the slightest degree the orders of the House I shall most certainly call you to order." Earl Grey was relieved immensely. He had anticipated from the clouded brow and frowning face of Lord Falmouth at least a challenge to a duel. "My lord," he replied, "your lordship will do perfectly right; and whenever I am out of order I hope you will."

Yet Earl Grey himself was annoyed because, while he was speaking on the Church Temporalities (Ireland) Bill on July 11th, 1833, the Duke of Cumberland shouted "No, no!" "I trust that the illustrious duke will have the decency not to interrupt me," said the testy Prime Minister. "The illustrious duke is right to maintain his opinion; he may, if he pleases, rise and defend it; but because he has an opinion he is not justified in interrupting those who differ from him." Lord Kenyon rose to a point of order. He appealed to their lordships—not, it will be noticed, to the Lord Chancellor—whether the dissent expressed by using the word "No" deserved the character of indecency which the noble earl had applied to it. Earl Grey explained that it was the interruption and not the word that was indecent. As for the Duke of Cumberland—that most unpopular son of George III., who subsequently became King of Hanover—he was accustomed to hear uncomplimentary things in the House of Lords. "Illustrious duke!" cried Lord Chancellor Brougham, with bitter sarcasm, a month later. "Wellington is a duke illustrious by his actions, but you are illustrious only by the courtesy of the House." On this evening of July 11th, 1833, the Duke of Cumberland made a modest reply to the

attack of Earl Grey. "I believe there is no man in this House," said he, "who would more unwillingly commit an act of indecency than myself, but if a noble lord were not to be allowed to call 'No, no,' when he felt inclined to dissent from a proposition, there would be an end to all liberty of speech."

In the House of Commons the police may be called in to assist the Sergeant-at-Arms in expelling obstreperous members directed to be removed by that supreme arbiter of order, Mr. Speaker. But in the House of Lords the only agency that exists for calming a heated discussion, for throwing oil on troubled waters, for quelling a riot, is the reading by the clerk of a pious Standing Order, or resolution, passed so long ago as 1626. The only modern instance at least of the application of this ancient Standing Order occurred in the new House of Lords on June 17th, 1872. The Ballot Bill, which the Peers had rejected contemptuously the year before, only to be again introduced by the Gladstonian Administration, then in power, was under consideration in Committee. The Conservative Opposition carried in the division lobbies amendments to the Bill which were opposed by the Government. Then came the Earl of Shaftesbury with an amendment extending from four o'clock to eight o'clock the time proposed in the Bill for the opening of the polling booths. The Ministers objected to the amendment in argument, but in the division they voted for it.

The Opposition were annoyed at being thus deprived of boasting of another defeat of the Government. "They have had an unfortunate night, and I suppose they desired to have something to their

credit," said that master of gibes, the Marquis of Salisbury. "Yes," replied Lord Chancellor Hatherley, "you want a monopoly of spoiling the Bill." Then the fun began. The Marquis of Bath declared that the Lord Chancellor never rose to address the House without showing acrimony and bitterness and imputing motives to his political opponents. Earl Granville accused the Conservative peers of exercising a "despotism" in the House of Lords, and, referring to the Duke of Richmond, the leader of the Opposition, he said: "If the noble duke had known more clearly than he seems to have done the line of voting we should take, he would have been able to exercise his influence on members of his own party in order to prevent them from voting in the way they thought right." Richmond was moved to righteous indignation by this attack. "The noble earl," he exclaimed, "has no right to make personal remarks, and to impute to me motives which, if I held them, would render me unworthy to sit in this House and to hold the position I have the honour to hold." Other peers, at each side of the House, jumped to their feet, eager to take part in the fray. But the Marquis of Clanricarde got in first, and said, simply enough: "I move that the clerk at the Table do read the Order of the House relating to asperity of speech." The clerk, accordingly, read the Standing Order, as follows:—

"To prevent misunderstanding and for avoiding of offensive speeches when matters are debating, either in the House or at Committees, it is, for honour sake, thought fit, and so ordered, that all personal,

sharp or taxing speeches be forborne, and whosoever answereth another man's speech shall apply his answer to the matter without wrong to the person; and as nothing offensive is to be spoken, so nothing is to be ill taken if the party that speaks it shall presently make a fair exposition or clear denial of the words that might bear any ill construction; and if any offence of that kind be given, as the House will be very sensible thereof, so it will sharply censure the offender, and give the party offended a fit reparation and full satisfaction."

The reading of the Order had the mollifying effect desired. It exorcised the spirit of dissension, and their lordships proceeded quietly to consider the other clauses of the Bill.

It will thus be seen that the House of Lords is not always the dull and decorous assembly it is popularly supposed to be. When Lord John Russell was elevated to the Peerage as Earl Russell in 1861, *Punch* published a cartoon showing old Lord Brougham meeting the new peer at the door of the Upper Chamber, with the exclamation: "Oh, Johnny, ye'll find it mighty dull here." As a matter of fact, Earl Russell's first greeting in the House of Lords was of the very opposite nature. The Earl of Derby, shaking hands with him warmly, cried: "Oh, Johnny, what fun we shall have here!" It would seem indeed that the proceedings of the House of Lords have never been lacking in amusing incident. On looking through Pepys' Diary, as far back as 1666, I found an interesting story. The Duke of Buckingham of that time digged his elbow rudely against the Marquis of

Dorchester, and the marquis as rudely shoved the duke aside. How the encounter ended, let Pepys tell in his own quaint way. "The Duke of Buckingham asked whether he was uneasy, and the marquis replied, Yes, and that he durst not do this anywhere else. The duke replied that he would, and that he was a better man than himself. Lord Dorchester exclaimed that he lied, and upon this the Duke of Buckingham struck his hat off, and took him by the periwig and pulled it aside and held him. My Lord Chamberlain and others interposed, and both were ordered to the Tower."

The long history of the proceedings of Parliament contains, so far as I have been able to discover, but a single instance of an open disagreement or quarrel between the spiritual peers, or the members of the episcopal bench. This did not occur in the old House of Lords, when manners were perhaps brusquer in all classes than they are in these days, and when, undoubtedly, there was less self-restraint, but in the new House, and as recently as 1880. On June 24th of that year, the third reading of the Burials Bill was under consideration in the Lords. The object of the bill was to allow Nonconformist services at the burial of the dead in churchyards. A clause had been inserted, at the suggestion of Dr. Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury, providing that the services should be "Christian"; but Dr. Magee, Bishop of Peterborough—subsequently better known as Archbishop of York—speaking in the debate on the third reading, as a Broad Churchman, thought the provision would prove illusory, and hinted that the measure would be just as well without it. The Archbishop of Canterbury,



annoyed at the reflection from such a quarter on the utility of his proposal, expressed the opinion that his "right reverend brother" was suggesting that secular services at the grave-side ought to be permitted. "No, no," cried Dr. Magee. Dr. Tait said he had understood his right reverend brother to contend that the introduction of the word "Christian" was in opposition to the principle of religious equality. Dr. Magee again asseverated that his Grace had misunderstood him. The Archbishop of Canterbury declared that he must be under a misapprehension, for he thought the Bishop of Peterborough had argued for the omission of the word "Christian." This for the third time brought up the strenuous and pugnacious Dr. Magee. "Such an accusation," said he, "is monstrous, perfectly monstrous."

The encounter between the two ecclesiastics was followed with much interest and amusement by the lay peers; and the Earl of Beaconsfield, speaking later, indulged in some of his cynical humour at the expense of both. Next day the newspapers affected in their leading articles to be scandalised or entertained by the "scene." But what followed privately between the two spiritual peers is more interesting, and of that the public never heard until the publication of the biography of Dr. Magee a few years ago. Writing to Dr. Cotter MacDonnell, his biographer, on June 26th, Dr. Magee says:—

"Late in the evening, when all had gone save myself (as I was delayed conferring with Spencer and others on other matters), I went to unrobe, and as I was doing so I heard behind me the Primate's voice

—low and pained, evidently—saying, ‘ It would never do for two Christian prelates to part in anger.’ I turned and said that of course I could not refuse his offered hand (which he was holding out to me), but I must point out to him that he was offering a private reconciliation after a public wrong, and that I felt some public reparation due to me for accusations so gross and injurious. I put this very gently, and after a little discussion, in which he attempted to excuse his language, he promised to put things right in the House by a few words last night. I need not say how fully I met him there, and so we parted. He never came near the House, but sent me a letter to say that on reading the papers he saw that his admission of ‘ misapprehension ’ appeared in all, and that it was, he thought, unwise to say any more.”

Dr. Magee was dissatisfied with this explanation. He wrote to the Primate pointing out that after the admission of ‘ misapprehension ’ his Grace had used “ utterances of a most wounding and injurious character,” which ought to be withdrawn as publicly as they had been made, and concluding with the expression of a hope that time and mutual charity would heal this breach in a friendship of long standing. The day after the despatch of this letter from Peterborough to Lambeth was Sunday. In the evening of the Sabbath Dr. Magee wrote the following letter to Dr. Tait :—

“ MY DEAR LORD ARCHBISHOP,

“ Since I wrote to your Grace yesterday, the night, which brings reflection and prayer, has passed, and I have knelt at the holy table, where feelings of peace and charity replace those of anger or of self-assertion.

“ I feel that I can no longer maintain, or even wish to maintain, that position of claiming debts or rights, real or assumed, which I asserted in my letter of yesterday. I feel, too, that it might be unwise to call again the attention of the Press to differences between ministers of that holy faith which many of them are perhaps already too little disposed to preserve.

“ I remember now, and wish only to remember, all that I owe to your Grace of kindness and courtesy abundantly shown in the past, and I trust entirely to your Grace’s desire to do me justice, as regards my motives and actions, in the time to come. I will therefore ask your Grace to accept, instead of my letter of yesterday, this, my assurance of affectionate friendship hereafter as heretofore.

“ Believe me,

“ Your Grace’s very sincerely,

“ W. C. PETERBOROUGH.”

The reply of A. C. Cantuar was as follows : —

“ MY DEAR BISHOP,

“ Most heartily do I thank you for your kind and Christian letter. In this busy world, with so many conflicts of opinion and duty, I feel I have much to regret in the manner in which I do what I feel right, but it is cheering to know that in you I have to deal with a friend who makes allowance for failures.

“ Yours ever,

“ A. C. C.”

The attitude of the lay peers towards the spiritual peers, according to Archbishop Magee, is one of indifference, if not of hostility. Writing to his friend

MacDonnell, in 1878, Dr. Magee said: "I am thoroughly sick of episcopal life in Parliament, where we are hated by the peers as a set of *parvenus* whom they would gladly rid themselves of if they dared, and only allowed on sufferance to speak now and then on Church questions after a timid and respectful sort." But no one can deny that the bishops, in their black and white gowns, contribute to the picturesqueness of the House of Lords. The wigs they wore in former times—not curled or with a pigtail, like the familiar bob-wig of the barrister, but puffed out at the sides—were discarded in the early years of the reign of Queen Victoria. Dr. Charles James Blomfield, who was Bishop of London from 1828 to 1857, was the last prelate who appeared with a wig in the House of Lords. Thackeray, in his essay on "Political Snobs," ridiculing pageantry of all kinds, says: "I respect my Bishop of London, my Right Reverend Charles James, just as much since he left off a wig as I did when he wore one." Long before that the wearing of pigtails and powdered hair by lay peers had become unfashionable. The Duke of Cleveland only clung to the old style of dress, and after he died, in 1842, the pigtail and powder were seen no more in the House of Lords. Since then the sway of the tall silk hat has been unquestioned. Gladstone, in conferring a peerage on Tennyson, expressed the fear, half jestingly, that the Poet Laureate might insist on wearing a wide-awake in the House; but Tennyson, on the few occasions he appeared there, laid his favourite Caroline aside. As for the Chamber—the Gilded Chamber, as Gladstone first styled it—that, indeed, is a fit dwelling-place for statesmen and sages.

## CHAPTER VI.

### “ PRIVILEGE ! PRIVILEGE ! ”

ON the second day of the assembling of a new Parliament, when the Speaker-elect receives, at the Bar of the House of Lords, from the five Lords Commissioners (the representatives of the Sovereign), in presence of the assembled members of both Houses, the Royal approval of his election to the Chair of the House of Commons, he claims from the Crown—in accordance with an ancient ceremony that dates from the reign of Henry VIII.—the rights and privileges of the representatives of the people, in the following prescribed words :—

“ It is my duty, in the name and on behalf of the Commons of the United Kingdom, to lay claim, by humble petition to his Majesty, to all their ancient and undoubted rights and privileges, particularly to freedom of speech in debate, to freedom of arrest to their persons and servants ; above all, to free access to his Majesty when occasion shall occur, and that the most favourable construction shall be put upon all their proceedings.”

This ceremony would be ludicrous, owing to its remoteness, nowadays, from the realities of things, if there were not great historic memories to invest it with a noble dignity. The words breathe the very

spirit of freedom, and no matter what manner of man may be the Speaker who utters them at the Bar of the hereditary Chamber, their notes of manly dignity and courteous firmness always ring out impressively. But as spoken by Mr. Speaker Peel they stirred the heart of the listener like a trumpet blast. This ceremony, at the opening of a new Parliament in 1892, was one of the finest things in its way that I have ever witnessed at Westminster. As I gazed from the Reporters' Gallery at the tall, striking personality of Mr. Peel standing below at the Bar of the House of Lords, with the Commons massed behind him, and saw the stern decorum in which his impressive countenance was set beneath his massive wig, and heard these words declaimed with a thrilling emphasis that made clear, and, as it were, brought up to date, their historic significance, the actualities of the situation vanished. I thought not of the gracious lady, Queen Victoria, to whom the claim was addressed—whose last thought indeed would be to deprive “her faithful Commons” of their rights and privileges; who would not if she could, and could not if she would; nor did I think of the five quaint figures in scarlet and ermine robes and black beaver hats, sitting so reposefully all in a row on a bench beneath the Throne, representing her Majesty. But I felt as if it were only the day before that Charles I. came down to the House of Commons with his musketeers, and imperiously demanded the five members that for freedom's sake braved his royal wrath; and I would not have been the least surprised had the bronze statues of the bold barons of Magna Charta, who stand on pedestals, like sentinels, around the Chamber, shook in their

heavy armour with the electric excitement of the moment, and with waving sword and lance made the rafters ring with their cries of exultation, even as they shouted on that famous June 15th, 1215, at Runnymede, on the banks of the Thames, within a few miles of the Palace of Westminster.

Needless to say, the claim thus so splendidly vindicated was acceded to at once. The Lord Chancellor, as the spokesman of the Royal Commissioners, replied as follows to Mr. Speaker :—

“ Her Majesty most readily confirms all the rights and privileges which have ever been granted to or conferred upon the Commons by her Majesty or any of her royal predecessors.”

But the ceremony, its historic associations notwithstanding, is now an empty form, and its words signify nothing. It but illustrates the national characteristic, which is exemplified in so many things at St. Stephen's, to adhere rigidly to the letter of the far-away past, although the spirit has been changed absolutely for centuries. The House of Commons holds its privileges independently of the Crown, and enjoys them irrespective of Mr. Speaker's vindication. The Crown, in point of fact, is constitutionally powerless in the matter. The privileges of Parliament are beyond its control. It could not constitutionally refuse to confirm these privileges, and by confirming them—as the Lord Chancellor says it “ readily ” does at the opening of every new Parliament—it gives to them no additional weight, force, or authority.

But apart from that, some of those very immunities claimed in the Speaker's petition have either been expressly abolished or limited by statute or tacitly

abandoned by desuetude. From the earliest time the servants of members of both Houses, as well as members themselves, enjoyed the privilege of freedom from arrest in all civil suits. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, two sheriffs' officers had to ride back to back on a barebacked horse, from Westminster to the Exchange, with placards on their breasts, inscribed: "For arresting a servant to a member of the House of Commons." This monstrous privilege was grossly abused. Not only did servants of members run heavily into debt, and then, relying on their immunity from arrest, and from the distraint of their goods, snap their fingers at their creditors; but members of both Houses frequently extricated a friend, sore pressed by duns, from his financial difficulty by giving him a "certificate of service" or a written declaration that he was a servant. The privilege, so far as it related to servants, was abolished by statute in 1770. Since then, nevertheless, the Speaker has, at the opening of every new Parliament, appealed to the Crown for freedom from arrest on behalf of servants of members of Parliament.

The privilege of freedom from arrest enjoyed by members of Parliament is confined to civil matters; but, since the abolition of imprisonment for debt, this immunity has been shorn of most of its utility. Formerly, it was a very useful privilege. Disraeli says of one of the characters in his first novel, "Vivian Grey," that "the only way to keep him out of the House of Correction, was to get him into the House of Commons." Parliament was then a convenient haven of refuge for "splendid paupers." There are three at least well-authenticated instances on record



of members who got elected to the House of Commons in order to escape the consequences of their heavy liabilities. In one case an English member named Mills, who owed £23,000, and for whose arrest a warrant was in the hands of the sheriff, avoided imprisonment by purchasing a seat for one of the old “rotten boroughs,” in 1807, for a sum of £1,000. In another case, an Irishman, named Bourke, was confined in the King’s Bench Prison, about seventy years ago, in execution for a considerable debt. His friends had him returned for an Irish constituency, but he never entered the House. On his release after election, he fled to the Continent, and remained there. Again, in 1825, the year before Disraeli published “Vivian Grey,” a man who was in prison for debt was returned for Beverley, a small English borough, and was forthwith released on a warrant issued by Mr. Speaker. It was a case, in real life, of from the House of Correction to the House of Commons.

Under the Act of 1770, which abolished the immunity of servants of members from arrest, the goods of a peer or a member of the House of Commons may be distrained for debt like the goods of any other citizen. He is also subject to the procedure of the Bankruptcy Act of 1883. An order of the Court declaring him a bankrupt cancels his writ of summons if a peer, and renders his seat vacant if a member of the House of Commons. It should also be noticed that this privilege of freedom from arrest in civil causes is, like all the other privileges, enjoyed by members of Parliament—a term which properly includes peers as well as commoners—only during the Session, when they are expected to be at Westminster, and for forty days

before and after the meeting of Parliament, so as to secure in the first instance their attendance at Westminster, and when discharged from duty their safe return home. These periods of forty days were fixed when railways were unknown and travelling was exceedingly slow. During the remainder of the year a member of Parliament is as an ordinary citizen. He has no special immunities.

The privilege of freedom from arrest is not allowed to interfere with the administration of criminal justice. But if a member is sent to prison on a criminal charge, the House must be informed, through the Speaker, by the judge or magistrate who sentenced him, of the cause for which he is detained from his service in Parliament. If the cause is a felony the member is expelled from the House.

The House does not allow the sanctuary of its walls to protect a member from the processes of the criminal law. But here, again, the service of a criminal process on a member within the precincts of the House while the House is sitting may be a breach of privilege. For instance, during the Session of 1889, a constable of the Royal Irish Constabulary served a summons under the Crimes Act, or "Coercion Act," as it is often called, on Mr. Sheehy, an Irish member, in the lobby of the House. Mr. Sheehy at once rushed into the House, and interrupting the proceedings, called the Speaker's attention to this breach of privilege. An angry debate ensued, and finally a Committee was appointed to inquire into the affair; but the result was a report which stated that, as the constable had acted in ignorance, the matter did not demand any action on the part of the House. In 1815, Lord Cochrane,

during his imprisonment in London for conspiracy in connection with a Chancery suit, was elected to the House of Commons. He escaped from the prison and made his way to Westminster, thinking, curiously enough, that as a law-maker he would find within the walls of the Legislature a refuge from the officers of the law. But the Marshal of the King's Bench with his myrmidons pursued the fugitive thither, and arrested him as he sat on one of the benches of the House of Commons, despite his protest that hands should not be laid upon him in that place. The House, however, was not sitting at the time. A Committee was appointed by the House to inquire whether the arrest was a breach of privilege, and it reported as follows: “That under the peculiar circumstances given in evidence, it does not appear that the privileges of Parliament have been violated so as to call for the interposition of the House by any proceedings against the Marshal of the King's Bench.”

Members representing English and Welsh constituencies are exempt during a Session from serving on juries, their duties to Parliament being held to supersede that obligation of the citizen. Curiously enough, Scotch or Irish representatives do not enjoy this privilege. All members, however, are required, during a Session, to attend as witnesses if summoned in any case, in order that the administration of justice may not be hindered.

The speech of a member of Parliament, delivered in Parliament, cannot be made the subject of a legal action. To take proceedings in a Court of law for libel against a member for a statement made by him in Parliament is a breach of privilege.

Indeed, the Court would refuse to hear any such action, on the ground that it has no jurisdiction.

But if a member should circulate his speech in pamphlet or newspaper, it is regarded as a separate publication, unconnected with Parliament, and he cannot claim privilege for any statement it may contain. There are two very interesting cases bearing on this point. In 1795, Lord Abingdon, in a speech delivered in the House of Lords, accused his attorney of improper professional conduct, and afterwards published the speech in the newspapers at his own expense. An action for libel was taken by the aggrieved attorney. Lord Abingdon, in conducting his own case before the Court of King's Bench, made the excellent point that he had the right to print that which, by law of Parliament, he had the right to speak. But Lord Kenyon replied that "a member of Parliament had certainly the right to publish his speech, but that speech should not be made a vehicle of slander against any individual. If it was so made, it was libel." The defendant was accordingly fined £100 and sent to prison for three months.

The other case bearing on the point comes from the House of Commons. In 1813, Mr. Creevy, a member of Parliament, made a charge against an individual in the course of a speech delivered in the House. Garbled versions of the speech having appeared, Mr. Creevy sent a correct report to the editor of a paper, with a request to publish it. The request was complied with, and on this report, which the Court held to be a separate publication, the individual attacked recovered £100 damages against Mr. Creevy for libel. Mr. Creevy complained to the

House of the Court of King’s Bench for fining him, but the House refused to condemn the Court as guilty of breach of privilege.

The latest legal decision on this interesting point was delivered in 1867, when Lord Chief Justice Cockburn declared :—

“If a member publish his own speech reflecting upon the character of any person, and omits to publish the rest of the debate, the publication would not be fair, and so would not be privileged. But a fair and faithful report of the whole debate, if it contained aspersions on character, would not be actionable.”

Parliamentary papers, or papers issued by order of either House, were not privileged until 1840. In 1837, on the eve of Queen Victoria’s accession to the Throne, Parliament decided for the first time to sell its papers, including blue-books, reports, and returns, to the public at the lowest possible rates; in fact, at rates much below the cost of production. One of the earliest reports sold to the public under the order was the means of getting Parliament into a very unpleasant and undignified conflict with the Law Courts, which lasted two years. The report was written by an inspector of prisons. In it he incidentally mentioned that a “disgusting and obscene” book published by Messrs. Stockdale, well-known publishers at the time, was supplied from the gaol library to prisoners in Newgate. An action for libel was at once instituted by Messrs. Stockdale against Messrs. Hansard, the Parliamentary printers, who printed the report; and although counsel, on behalf of

Parliament, urged the plea of privilege, a verdict for the plaintiff with £600 damages was entered.

Lord Chief Justice Denman, before whom the action was tried, said he was "not aware of the existence in this country of any body whatever that can privilege any servant of theirs to publish libels of any individual." The House, therefore, passed on May 31st, 1837, a resolution declaring that "the power of publishing such of its reports, votes and proceedings as it shall deem necessary or conducive to the public interests, is an essential incident to the Constitutional function of Parliament." But the decision of the Court of King's Bench was confirmed on appeal by the higher Court, with the result that in 1840 Parliament passed an Act—which is the most unimpeachable expression of authority in the Realm—giving protection against actions at law to the printers of its papers.

This protection was not, however, extended to private printers who might publish the same papers, nor to the newspapers for their reports of Parliamentary proceedings. Shortly afterwards, an action for libel was successfully brought against *The Times* for the publication of evidence reflecting on an individual, given before a Select Committee of the House of Lords on affairs in New Zealand. *The Times*, thereupon, petitioned Parliament for the extension to newspapers of the protection afforded to Messrs. Hansard; but the sense of both Houses was against the claim. However, without any statute having been passed, the Courts of law, properly interpreting public opinion on the subject, have since held that newspaper reports of speeches in

Parliament containing defamatory statements are privileged upon verification of their correctness. “A newspaper,” said Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, “is not liable to an action for libel for the publication of a fair and faithful report of a debate.”

The privilege that has practically fallen into desuetude is that of free access to the Sovereign, which the Speaker claims “above all” from the Crown. It was never enjoyed by individual members of the House of Commons (though it was, and according to the theory of the Constitution is at present, enjoyed by Peers), but by the House at large, with the Speaker at its head. The only occasion on which it can be exercised is when an Address is presented to the Sovereign by the whole House, as, for instance, in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Now, however, the Address is always presented by one of the officials of the Royal Household who are members of the Administration. Probably few members of Parliament know that in order to insure their “free access” to the Throne on the occasion of an Address being presented to the Sovereign by the whole House, the forms and ceremonies of the Court are dispensed with, and they may, if they please, enter the very presence of the Sovereign in ordinary attire—“in hoddin grey and a’ that,” as Burns would say—instead of in the regulation velvet coat, knee-breeches, ruffles and sword. But that is not all. Should they decide to drive to St. James’s or Buckingham Palace, by the Mall, they need not—as on ordinary occasions they and everybody else are bound to do—take the sideway close to Green Park, but they may use the central road of the boulevard

which, save when Drawing-rooms and Levées are held, is reserved exclusively for Royal personages.

Disraeli, who attended the presentation of the Address of the House of Commons congratulating the Queen on her marriage with Prince Albert, in Buckingham Palace, February 18th, 1840, thus describes the event in a letter to his sister:—

“I went up with our House very strong in numbers and very brilliant in costume, and it was generally agreed that *I* am never to wear any other but a Court costume, being, according to Ossulston, a very Charles II. The Peers preceding our procession by only half an hour the golden carriages of the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker were almost blended in the same crowd; and the quantity of personages of note, to say nothing of courtiers, gentlemen-at-arms, and beefeaters, was very fine. All our men were costumed; but Scholefield and Muntz and a few Rads, including, to my surprise, O’Connell, *en bourgeois*. The Speaker, with John Russell on his right and Peel on his left, both in Windsor uniform, marched up to the Throne in good style, we followed somewhat tumultuously. The Queen looked well; the Prince, on her left, in high military rig, very handsome, and the presence was altogether effective. Always having heard the Palace abused I was rather agreeably surprised. The hall is low, but the staircase is not ineffective, and I was amused, for the scene was busy and brilliant.”

Parliament is omnipotent. It can pass any law and alter any law it pleases, and when its word is spoken, when its fiat is issued, all heads, from the



lowest to the highest in the Realm, must bow in obedience. But it has placed—perhaps it would be more accurate to say attempted to place—a restriction upon its powers to create for itself new privileges. A resolution to that effect was drawn up by a Joint Committee of both Houses in 1704, and was then passed by the Lords and endorsed by the Commons. It declares :—

“That neither House of Parliament have power by any vote or declaration to create to themselves new privileges not warranted by the known law and custom of Parliament.”

The resolution, however, has not a permanently binding effect on either House. It is not irrevocable. It may be repealed at any time by the same authority that enacted it. The omnipotency of each Parliament does not extend beyond the period of its own existence. It cannot bind future Parliaments. Acts have been passed containing provisions which were declared to be fundamental and unalterable. But, nevertheless, they have been altered or repealed by subsequent legislation.

Either House of Parliament cannot abolish or limit any of the privileges of the other. Each is the sole arbiter in matters affecting the regulation of its own proceedings, the maintenance of its own dignities, and the immunities of its own members. At one time the two Houses were, in that respect, very jealous of each other. Each insisted on the punctilious observance by the other of that high respect for its dignity which its abnormal self-esteem considered its due. Edmund Burke once made a bitter complaint in the

House of Commons that on going up to the House of Lords with a Bill he had been kept three hours waiting at the doors. The Commons were so indignant at this disrespectful treatment of its distinguished member that when next a Bill was brought down from the Lords, they unanimously rejected it in a most ignominious fashion. That usually grave personage, Mr. Speaker, contemptuously tossed the Bill across the Table on to the floor, and a number of members rushed forward and kicked it out of the House.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE GREAT SEAL OF ENGLAND.

AT the opening and prorogation of every Session of Parliament, when the Sovereign is not present, a proclamation styled "the Royal Commission" is read in the House of Lords by one of the clerks to the assembled Peers and Commons. This proclamation, which is the Royal authority for the opening or prorogation of Parliament by the Lords Commissioners (the five Peers, including the Lord Chancellor, who sit, arrayed in scarlet robes, slashed with ermine, on a bench beneath the Throne), is engrossed on parchment, and attached to it by a plaited silken cord is a red seal, as round and as thick and as large as a muffin. This is the "Great Seal of England"—the specific emblem of sovereignty. A document to which the Great Seal is attached is the instrument by which the will of the Sovereign is declared. The Great Seal is therefore affixed to all proclamations of the Sovereign, summoning or dissolving Parliaments; and to all Royal mandates and important documents of State, such as charters to towns and institutions, treaties with foreign Powers, patents of nobility, credentials of ambassadors to foreign Sovereigns and States, and appointments of Colonial Governors. Green wax is used if the instrument be of a permanent

character; and red or yellow in cases of documents of limited duration.

The Great Seal itself—or the die from which this massive wax impression is obtained—consists of two heavy silver discs, hinged together so as to form a sort of mould into which the molten wax is poured by an official of the Lord Chancellor's department (comically known as "chaff-wax"), and allowed to harden, when a seal is required. The disc which forms the obverse of the Great Seal of Queen Victoria is engraved with a youthful figure of her Majesty enthroned, arrayed in her Coronation robes, crowned and jewelled, and holding the sceptre in her right hand. Classic figures of Religion and Justice stand on either side of the Throne. Justice in on the right, holding in her right hand a pair of scales, and resting her left hand upon the hilt of her sword, which is pointed downwards; Religion is on the left, supporting a cross with her right arm, and with her left hand a clasped Bible, on the corner of which is a triangle, the sacred symbol of the Blessed Trinity. The second disc, or the reverse of the Great Seal of Victoria, has another figure of the Queen in a long flowing State robe, with a crown on her head, and round her neck the collar and badge of the Garter, riding a horse richly caparisoned, and attended by a young Page of Honour. Each side has an exquisite border of roses, thistles, and shamrocks entwined. Indeed, the Great Seal, viewed as an artistic specimen of the engraver's art, is worthy of its great purpose.

A new Great Seal is made on the accession of every Sovereign to the Throne, after the Coronation. Wax seals are not very enduring. The material is prone

to melt or crumble away, and the impressions are liable to wear off. But, happily, well-preserved examples of the Great Seals of England since the time of William the Conqueror may be seen in the Grenville Library, British Museum, in wax of various colours—green, red, chocolate, yellow—and all, with the exception of those used during the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, have this in common, that on one side is the Sovereign enthroned, as the supreme authority of the Realm, and on the other, he sits on horseback, equipped for war, as the head of the Forces. The Lord Keeper of the Great Seal centuries ago was the ecclesiastic most noted for his learning and piety, who acted as chaplain and confessor to the Sovereign; or some powerful prelate like Cardinal Wolsey, around whose neck it was hung with the injunction that he was to “use it to the honour of God and his Sovereign.” The Lord Keeper also often used it to his own profit. No royal document which conferred a favour, such as a charter, a patent of nobility, or a pardon, was allowed to “pass the Great Seal”—as the Parliamentary phrase has it—until a big fee was paid to the Lord Keeper.

But by an Act passed in the reign of Elizabeth the hitherto separate offices of Lord Keeper of the Great Seal and Lord Chancellor were united. When the Lord Chancellor enters the House of Lords to preside over its deliberations, he is accompanied by his “Purse-bearer.” This functionary, however, does not carry the private purse of the Lord Chancellor. That would be a weighty responsibility, as his lordship draws a salary of £10,000 a year. The purse the “Purse-bearer” solemnly carries, as, attired in

Court dress, he precedes the Lord Chancellor to and from the House of Lords, is a gorgeous satchel, made of finest silk, richly embroidered with the Royal Arms, and other heraldic devices, in white and gold. It is supposed to contain the Great Seal. As a matter of fact, that sacred symbol of a mighty sovereignty is never in the satchel. If it were, the responsibility of the "Purse-bearer" would be great—much greater, indeed, than if he had to bear a purse that held a salary of £10,000 a year. But the Great Seal is too precious a thing to be carried about by an official, even in the House of Lords. It lies, in its morocco-covered box, in a strong safe, no doubt, at the residence of the Lord Chancellor, whence it is taken only when some important State document requires the *imprimatur* of the Sovereign. The ceremony of carrying the empty satchel in the House of Lords is but one of many venerable fictions which play a picturesque part in Parliamentary procedure. The purse is placed on the Woolsack immediately behind the Lord Chancellor, as he sits as Speaker of the House of Lords.

The Great Seal played an historic part in the long struggle between Parliament and the Stuart Kings. In 1642 Charles I. removed his Court to York, thinking he would be better able, out of London, to flout the demands of the Parliamentary leaders for constitutional government. Littleton, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal—who was supposed at first to be on the side of the Parliamentarians—joined the King, and to the great joy of Charles brought the Great Seal with him. The Parliamentarians were dismayed. The Great Seal was regarded as being really

invested with the Royal power and authority of which it was but the emblem. Indeed, the opinion seems to have been generally entertained that the Great Seal was a sort of wizard's charm. With it the King could do anything; without it he was powerless. Besides, the policy of the Parliamentarians, at this time, was to carry on the Government in the King's name, according to the forms of the Constitution; and therefore the unexpected flight of Lord Keeper Littleton, with the symbol of sovereignty, placed them in an awkward dilemma. Several meetings of the Commons were held to devise means to overcome the difficulty, and even public prayers were offered up to the Almighty to help them in their trouble. The first practical step taken was that early in 1643 Parliament passed an Act making void all patents and grants under the Great Seal since the time the Great Seal "ceased"—as the Act has it—"to attend the Parliament." But, of course, this did not remedy matters. The Parliamentarians continued to be seriously hampered in carrying on the Government by the absence of the Great Seal. The question of providing a new Great Seal was, therefore, brought before the House of Commons in May of the same year. Now, an old statute of Edward III. declared to be high treason, carrying with it the penalty of death (a crime, by the way, reduced to felony by an Act passed early in the late reign), any attempt at imitating, forging, or counterfeiting the Great Seal. Many of the Commons were, as was natural in the circumstances, very much perplexed. If the motion to provide a new Great Seal were carried, and the King ultimately came back, there would certainly be

a chopping off of heads, long imprisonments in the Tower, confiscations of property, and other unpleasant consequences. After a debate which was prolonged over four days, the motion was carried in one of the biggest divisions that had taken place for a long time—the numbers being: ayes 86, noes 74.

The Lords, however, refused their concurrence with the vote of the House of Commons. The King, hearing of this difference between the two Houses, issued a proclamation at Oxford, dated June, 1643, declaring that he would proceed with the utmost severity under the Act of Edward III. against any person whatsoever who should assist, vote, or concur in the proposed counterfeiting of his Great Seal. But the majority of the Commons at least were not to be intimidated by these Royal threats, and refusing to wait any longer for the Lords' concurrence, they issued the following order to Thomas Simonds, an eminent medallist often called Simon:—

“ Ordered, that Mr. Simonds be required and enjoined, forthwith to make a new Great Seal for England, and that he shall have £100 for his pains—£40 in hand and three score pounds as soon as he shall have finished the work.”

In order to mitigate, as much as possible, the gravity of this Constitutional departure, the new emblem of sovereignty was an exact facsimile of the Great Seal in the possession of the King. Charles was represented, on one side, enthroned and wearing the badge and collar of the Garter; and, on the other side, riding on horseback in a suit of armour. The Lords held out for a few months longer. They yielded their



concurrence with the use of the new Great Seal in October. "It must surely excite a smile," says Hallam in his "Constitutional History," "that men who had raised armies and fought battles against the King should be perplexed how to get over so technical a difficulty. But the Great Seal in the eyes of English lawyers has a sort of mysterious efficacy, and passes for the depository of Royal authority in a higher degree than the person of the King." However, a few years later those constitutional scruples had disappeared. On the capitulation of Oxford to the Parliamentary Army, in 1646, the Royal Seal was surrendered by Lord Keeper Lane (in whose possession it had been left by Charles I. when he rode away disguised from the city) and was forwarded by General Fairfax to the House of Commons. The House was overjoyed at the recovery of the emblem, and resolved that it should be defaced and broken. This curious ceremony took place on August 11th. Mr. Speaker Lenthall appeared at the Bar of the House of Lords at the head of the Commons, with the Great Seal of the King, when it was ignominiously broken to pieces with a hammer wielded by a brawny blacksmith, amid the exultant cheers of the members of both Chambers.

The Parliamentary Seal met with an exactly similar fate. It continued in use until the beginning of 1649. In January of that year, a few weeks before the execution of Charles I. at Whitehall, Parliament again ordered Simonds to make a fresh seal, and this time voted him £200 for the work. It was delivered early in February. On one side was shown, not the Sovereign enthroned, but a view of the House of

Commons in Session, with the inscription, "In the First Year of Freedom by God's Blessing Restored, 1648," and, on the other side, the King on horseback was replaced by a map of England, Ireland, Jersey, and Guernsey. The old Parliamentary Seal, which, it will be remembered, contained the name and insignia of the late Sovereign, was then broken to pieces by a blacksmith at the Bar of the Lower Chamber, before the assembled Commons, with the Speaker in the Chair.

Oliver Cromwell had a new Great Seal made by Simonds in 1653, when he established the Protectorate. It contained no representation of the Long Parliament. That had been rudely dispersed in 1653 by a file of musketeers acting under the orders of Cromwell. Instead of the map of England and Ireland there were emblems, representative of England, Scotland, and Ireland, surrounding the arms of the Cromwell family; and instead of the House of Commons there was an effigy of Cromwell on horseback, with head uncovered and sheathed sword, over which was the inscription "Oliver Lord Protector." A similar seal was also made by Simonds for Richard Cromwell, when he succeeded his father as head of the Protectorate in 1658. It contained a figure of Richard on horseback, with the inscription "Richard Lord Protector."

Meantime Charles II. possessed a Great Seal of his own in exile. He had one made in Holland on the news of his father's execution reaching him there in 1649. He brought it with him to Scotland, where he was crowned King at Scone, on June 1st, 1651, preparatory to a descent on England, but lost it in

his flight from the field of Worcester, where on September 3rd, 1651, his followers were utterly routed by the Parliamentarians. Charles escaped to France, and had another Great Seal made in Paris in 1652.

The Restoration was accompanied by other interesting Great Seal vicissitudes. The Long Parliament, which first met in November, 1640, and a portion of which, known as "the Rump," Oliver Cromwell ignominiously turned out in 1653, met again in May, 1659—or rather the forty-two members of it who survived,—and on the 14th of that month the Great Seal of Richard Cromwell was by their orders demolished by a blacksmith at the Bar. Eleven days later Richard Cromwell formally resigned the Lord Protectorate. But Parliament did not again requisition the services of Simonds to make a new Great Seal. The second Great Seal of the Commonwealth, in use before the Protectorate, had been preserved, and this was again brought into service, though it ignored the King and the Lords, by giving a representation of the House of Commons as the supreme power of the land. The restoration of Charles II. was, however, determined upon. The Long Parliament was at length dissolved in March, 1660, the new Parliament met in April, and on May 28th the now familiar spectacle of a blacksmith smashing a Great Seal was witnessed once more at the Bar of the House of Lords before the assembled members of both Chambers. It was the Great Seal of the Commonwealth that was then destroyed. The next day, May 29th, 1660, Charles II. came to Whitehall bringing with him the Great Seal he had made at Paris in 1652.

But the strange and curious adventures of the Great Seals of England were by no means at an end. That year so memorable in our history, 1688, arrived. William of Orange was in England, and the country, weary of the despotism of James II., was flocking to his standard. On the night of December 10th in that year the last of the Stuart Kings stole out of his palace at Whitehall, disguised, accompanied only by Sir Edward Hales, to fly to France. He had the Great Seal with him. He got it the day before from the Lord Chancellor, the notorious Jeffreys (whom, however, he did not apprise of his intention to fly from the country), intending at first to carry it with him to France, and so, as he fondly imagined, render difficult any exercise of the Royal authority by the adherents of the Prince of Orange. James, with his companion, went to the horse-ferry (where Lambeth Bridge now spans the river), and procuring a boat there, rowed up to Vauxhall, where he had arranged for horses to meet him to bring him to the coast. On the way down the Thames, fearing capture before he could reach the coast, he dropped the Great Seal into the river. He was no doubt delighted to think that the emblem was irrevocably lost, and that his opponents were thereby crippled in carrying on the Government of the country. It would probably have not mattered even if the wish of James had been realised. A way would have been found out of the difficulty. But the Great Seal was accidentally recovered shortly afterwards by the nets of some fishermen, who were plying their avocation in the river near Lambeth, and was handed over to the proper authorities.

History records the irrecoverable loss of only one Great Seal—the first of George III. This untoward event occurred when Lord Thurlow was Lord Chancellor, he of whom Fox wittily said, “I suppose no one was as wise as Thurlow looks—that is impossible.” One morning in March, 1784, his lordship’s residence in Great Ormond Street—at that time a rather rural suburb—was broken into by burglars, who carried off the Great Seal, along with a sum of money and two silver-hilted swords belonging to officers of the Lord Chancellor. In the morning Thurlow, in a very depressed condition of mind, went to Downing Street, to tell the unpleasant news to Pitt, who had just been appointed Prime Minister for the first time by George III., and both immediately repaired to the King at Buckingham Palace. By command of his Majesty the Privy Council was summoned within a few hours, to devise measures for coping with this great and most unexpected emergency; and in obedience to the urgent command of the Council the Royal engraver produced another Great Seal—a faithful replica of the one that had been stolen—in thirty-six hours, by working day and night. It was said the burglars were in the employ of the Whigs. On the 23rd of March, the day before the Great Seal was stolen, Pitt decided to appeal to the country, and as the Whigs desired to avert the General Election, they were charged with stealing the Great Seal, without which it was hoped—so the story ran—the Sovereign would be unable to dissolve Parliament. Pitt evidently believed this story. Writing to William Wilberforce, he said: “Parliament will be prorogued to-day, and dissolved

to-morrow. The latter operation has been in some danger of delay by a curious manœuvre, that of stealing the Great Seal from the Chancellor, but we shall have a new one ready in time." No doubt the emblem was cast into the melting-pot of some thieves' den. But it cannot have brought the burglars more than a couple of pence, for at that time the Great Seal was copper. It is only since 1815 that it has been made of silver. Lord Thurlow was extremely careful of the new Great Seal. He always slept with it under his pillow during the eight subsequent years he was Lord Chancellor.

The Great Seal which was made after the union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1800 is interesting for the fact that it did not contain the old title "Rex Franciæ." This was first assumed by Edward III., and was borne by all his successors. Even Charles II. used it on the Great Seal he had made in Paris while living there in exile, under the protection of the King of France. The Great Seal of 1800 also met with a misadventure. Lord Eldon was Lord Chancellor from 1801 to 1827 (except for a brief interval during the Greville Administration, which followed the death of Pitt in 1806), and thus was Lord Keeper of the Great Seal for twenty-five years, the longest time the office has ever been held. He relates in his "Diary" that when he waited on the King in 1801 to receive the Great Seal, the Sovereign, with whom he was a great favourite, produced it from between his coat and waistcoat on the left side, and handing it to him, said, "Here, I give it to you from my heart." Eldon, therefore, was anxious to prove himself a most careful Keeper of the Great Seal.

Before retiring every night, he saw that it was safe and secure in his bed-chamber. But with all his precaution he nearly lost the emblem. One night, in the year 1812, Eldon was aroused from his slumbers by the cry that the house was on fire. His first thought was for the Great Seal. Jumping from his bed, he snatched up the box containing the symbol, rushed down into the garden, and buried it in one of the flower-beds. Returning to the house, he was "so enchanted," as he confesses in his "Diary," "with the pretty sight of the maids who had turned out of their beds and were handing in buckets of water to the fire-engine in their shifts," but, it is only fair to mention, that he adds, "and so alarmed for the safety of Lady Eldon," that next morning he had quite forgotten the spot in which he had buried the Great Seal. It was only after a long search in the garden that it was discovered. "You never saw anything so ridiculous," he writes, "as seeing the whole family down the walks dibbling with bits of sticks until we found it."

But of all the Great Seals, that of William IV. had probably the most extraordinary adventure, at the time its Lord Keeper was the able but eccentric Brougham, the Lord Chancellor of the Grey Administration which carried Reform, and also of the Administration that succeeded it, the first formed by Lord Melbourne. In the autumn of 1834 Edinburgh decided to celebrate the victory of Reform by entertaining the ex-Premier, Earl Grey, to a banquet. Brougham had first intended "to go junketing on the Rhine with Mrs. P." (so says Greville, who never missed the opportunity of recording a bit of scandal

in his "Memoirs"), but this project was relinquished when he discovered that he could not leave the country without putting the Great Seal in Commission, at a cost to himself of £1,400, which was a larger price than he was disposed to pay for his trip. He then decided to go to Scotland instead, for the Grey festival, carrying with him the Great Seal, which, in accordance with the ancient law, must always be in the personal custody of the Lord Chancellor. His progress through his native country was triumphal, but his eccentric speeches and actions created consternation among his colleagues, and provided amazement and amusement for the country at large.

While staying at Rothiemurchus, then the residence of the Dowager Duchess of Bedford, the ladies of the party, in frolic, purloined the Great Seal from his bedroom and hid it. Brougham was in great distress of mind when he missed the Great Seal, fearing it was lost; so the ladies relieved him of his anxiety by telling him of their joke, and, blindfolding him, they sent him to search for the Great Seal in the drawing-room. At last, to his intense joy, he dragged it forth from a tea chest, and then, to appropriately celebrate its recovery, he allowed the ladies to make pancakes with it by pouring the ingredients between the discs. He subsequently put the Great Seal to the same culinary use at Taymouth to amuse the Marchioness of Breadalbane.

News of these strange doings reached the ears of King William, and he was greatly scandalised. "There could not, indeed, be a more revolting spectacle," wrote *The Times* on November 17th, 1834,



“than for the highest law officer of the empire to be travelling about like a quack doctor through the provinces, puffing himself and his little nostrums, and committing and degrading the Government of which he has the honour to be a member. His Majesty could not but be indignant with such conduct. And it is a fact, notwithstanding all the fulsome adulation heaped on his ‘Gracious Master’ at Inverness, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and elsewhere, the peripatetic keeper of the King’s conscience has not once been admitted since his return from his travels to the honour of an interview with Royalty, either at Windsor or Brighton.” The Whig Ministers were in that month of November dismissed by the King. Brougham, to mark his resentment of the treatment he received from William, sent him the Great Seal in a bag, instead of following the established custom of delivering it personally into the Sovereign’s own hands. It is said that when, in the following year, Melbourne was again commanded to form another Ministry, the King stipulated that Brougham should not be replaced in the office of Lord Chancellor. He lived until 1868, but never again was he Lord Keeper of the Great Seal.

The Great Seal cannot be legally taken out of the Kingdom. Cardinal Wolsey took the Great Seal of Henry VIII., of which he was Lord Keeper, with him on a visit to the Low Countries in 1521. Proud, imperious and masterful, a law unto himself in the period of his prosperity, he thought, no doubt, that he could ignore constitutional usages with impunity. But for this act he was never forgiven, and when the days of adversity came, it was one of the things remembered

against him that contributed to his ruin. That of Henry VIII. appears to have been the only Great Seal which has ever been taken outside the Realm. And as the Great Seal must remain within the borders of the Kingdom, so, too, must its Lord Keeper. The Sovereign may go abroad without any dislocation of the affairs of State, or any inconvenience to the high officials at the head of the Government. But there is no provision in the Constitution for the absence of the Lord Chancellor, as Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, except the cumbrous one of delegating the duties of the office to a Commission. His lordship has, therefore, to content himself in holiday time with the health and pleasure resorts of the United Kingdom.

The three attacks of mental derangement from which George III. suffered established the constitutional principle that every Royal mandate and every act of the Government, requiring the sign manual of the Sovereign, is rendered legal by the *imprimatur* of the Great Seal affixed by the Lord Keeper on the advice of the Cabinet, of which he himself, indeed, is always a member. During an illness of George II. in 1754, Lord Hardwicke affixed the Great Seal to the Commission for opening Parliament without, of course, the Royal authority, which the King was incapable of giving; and this rational common-sense precedent was followed by William Pitt, as Prime Minister, in 1788, when George III. was placed under restraint by order of his physicians. It was then that the famous constitutional question of the Regency led to a complete reversal of the traditional policies of the two great political parties. The Whigs became the

champions of the divine right of Kings; the Tories the advocates of the supremacy of Parliament. Fox advanced the opinion that the exercise of the Prerogatives of the Crown during the King's illness lay by right in the Prince of Wales, independent of any decision of Parliament. The views of the great Whig leader were coloured, no doubt, by the belief that the first act of the Prince, as Regent, would be to dismiss Pitt from office and appoint him Premier, for the Prince was then a Whig. Pitt, influenced, doubtless, by a natural desire to avert such a calamity, laid it down that, except with the approval of Parliament, the Prince of Wales had no more right—in a strict legal sense—to assume the powers of the headship of the State than any other subject. Before the question could be settled by a vote of the House of Commons the King recovered. This controversy between the Whigs and Tories affords remarkable evidence of the power of the Sovereign at that time to advance a political policy. If such a contingency were to arise in these days it would not be regarded, either from a Constitutional or a Party point of view, with concern. King George fell ill again in 1801 and 1804. It was not, however, till the attack of 1811, which terminated only with the old blind monarch's life in 1820, that it again became necessary to issue, without the Sovereign's sign manual, letters patent under the Great Seal for the opening of Parliament by Commission.

I have said that a fresh Great Seal is made on the accession of every Sovereign to the Throne. One of the first acts of a new Sovereign is to summon the Privy Council for the purpose of having a Great Seal provided. Designs are invited, and the one accepted is placed

in the hands of the engraver to the Mint. When the new Great Seal is made, the old undergoes a process called "demasking." The new Sovereign, in presence of the Privy Council, simply gives it a gentle blow with a hammer, which leaves a slight mark. It then becomes the perquisite of the Lord Chancellor of the time. His lordship had another quaint and curious perquisite in addition to his salary of £10,000 a year. The satchel—that splendid specimen of art-needlework—which is supposed to contain the Great Seal, used to be renewed every Session of Parliament, and the discarded purse went to the Lord Chancellor. Lady Thurlow was enabled to make several magnificent counterpanes and bed-hangings from the satchels which fell to her husband as perquisites during the many years he filled the office of Lord Keeper of the Great Seal.

On the accession of William IV. to the Throne in 1830, there was an interesting contention between Lord Lyndhurst and Lord Brougham for the possession of the Great Seal of George IV. Lyndhurst was Lord Chancellor at the death of George, but a change of Government having followed, Brougham occupied the office when the Great Seal of William was completed. The former argued that as the old Great Seal really belonged to the preceding reign, and that as it was vested in him at the death of the Sovereign, it was his by every right and title; while the latter contended, in support of his claim to the emblem, that, as provided by law, it continued in use until the Great Seal of the succeeding Sovereign was actually provided. William IV., to whom the dispute was referred for arbitration, settled it to the mutual satisfaction of both statesmen. He allotted to each of them one of the sides of the

Great Seal, and tossed up a coin to decide which should have the King on his Throne and which the King on horseback. But his Majesty's graciousness did not end there. He had the two sides set in superb silver salvers, and Brougham and Lyndhurst received, thus mounted, their respective portions of the Great Seal of George IV.

The action of William IV. may now be regarded as a well-established precedent. In 1860 a new Great Seal was ordered, as the one made at the accession of the Queen to the Throne had become somewhat defaced. Lord Chelmsford was Lord Chancellor at the time, but before the new Seal was completed he was succeeded, on a change of Government, by Lord Campbell. They decided that, with the consent of the Queen, they would be bound by the judgment of William IV. in the case of *Lyndhurst v. Brougham* as to the disposal of the old Great Seal. Campbell laid the matter before her Majesty, who readily consented to follow the precedent of her uncle, and accordingly Chelmsford and Campbell received each a side of the Great Seal set in a silver salver. The precedent was extended by Lord Chancellor Cairns in 1878, when it again became necessary to provide another Great Seal. The old Seal fell, as usual, to Lord Cairns; and, though he was under no obligation to do so, he gave one of the sides to his predecessor on the Woolsack, Lord Selborne, who was Lord Chancellor in 1873. The Great Seal made in 1878 was discarded in 1898. It fell to Lord Chancellor Halsbury, to whom also fell the last Great Seal of Victoria. The cost of a Great Seal, I may add, ranges from £400 to £500. Impressions of the Great Seals are of immense value

to the antiquary and the historian. For nearly seven hundred years the Royal armorial bearings have appeared upon them, and they furnish heraldic illustrations of the progress of the history of the country. They also supply students of armour and costume with exact and contemporaneous illustration of the dress worn by the Sovereigns throughout the many years of English history since the days of Edward III.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY OATH.

EVERY legislator, Peer and Commoner alike, must publicly take the following oath, or make an affirmation in equivalent terms, at the Table of the House of which he is a member, before he can participate in the deliberations of Parliament :—

“I, *A. B.*, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to his Majesty King Edward VII., his heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God.”

The history of the evolution of this concise and simple oath of fealty to the reigning Sovereign from the long and complex oaths of Allegiance, Supremacy and Abjuration, and declarations against certain doctrinal tenets of the Roman Catholic faith, which for centuries were administered at St. Stephen's, forms one of the most curious and interesting chapters in the annals of Parliament. In it are reflected the storm and stress in religious and political thought which attended the Reformation in the sixteenth, and the Revolution in the seventeenth, centuries. With a view to safeguard the Throne against the machinations of its foes, the nature of the oath was, as we shall see, altered from time to time, according as the enemy,

assuming different forms—it is the Pope at one period, and the Pretender at another—appeared or vanished from the public stage. In it we can also trace the slow progress of freedom of thought in the nineteenth century, until the final triumph of toleration in questions of belief was attained but a few years ago.

It was in 1563, the fifth year of the reign of Elizabeth, that members of the House of Commons were first obliged to take an oath as a condition precedent to the discharge of their legislative functions. Four years earlier an Act was passed by the first Parliament of Elizabeth, entitled “An Act restoring to the Crown the ancient jurisdiction over the State, ecclesiastical and spiritual, and abolishing all foreign power repugnant to the same”—popularly known as the Act of Supremacy—which, with the Act of Uniformity, passed by the same Parliament, was designed to begin afresh the work of the Reformation, interrupted by the reign of Mary. The Act of Uniformity restored the use of the English Prayer Book in the churches; and the Act of Supremacy required the taking of the following oath by ecclesiastics of every degree, the clergy, and all persons in the pay of the Crown:—

1563  
“I, *A. B.*, do utterly testify and declare in my conscience, that the Queen’s Highness is the only supreme governor of this realm, and of all other Her Highness’ dominions and countries, as well in all spiritual and ecclesiastical things or causes as temporal; and that no foreign prince, person, prelate, State or potentate hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this realm, and



therefore I do utterly renounce and forsake all foreign jurisdictions, powers, superiorities and authorities, and do promise that from henceforth I shall bear faith and true allegiance to the Queen's Highness, her heirs and lawful successors, and to my power shall assist and defend all jurisdictions, pre-eminences, privileges and authorities, granted or belonging to the Queen's Highness, her heirs and successors, or united or annexed to the Imperial Crown of this Realm. So help me God, and by the contents of this Book."

In 1563, during the second Parliament of Elizabeth, a statute entitled "An Act for the Assurance of the Queen's Majesty's royal power over all estates and subjects within Her Highness' dominions," extended the application of the test of taking this oath to all holders of office, lay and spiritual, with one exception. It was provided in the Act that every person elected a member of Parliament "shall from henceforth before he shall enter into the Parliamentary House, or have any voice there, openly receive and pronounce the said oath before the Lord Steward, for the time being, or his deputy, for the time to be appointed." But the Peers were excluded from the operation of the Act. "Provided always," says the statute, "that forasmuch as the Queen's Majesty is otherwise sufficiently assured of the faith and loyalty of the temporal lords of Her Highness' Court of Parliament, therefore this Act shall not extend to compel any temporal person, of or above the degree of a baron of this realm, to take the oath above-said."

So matters remained until 1610. In 1605 the

Catholic conspiracy to blow up the Houses of Parliament, or "the gunpowder plot," as it is popularly called, was discovered. When the Houses met in 1606 they quickly passed an Act (3 & 4 James I. cap. iv.) "for the better discovering and repressing of Popish Recusants," which provided that a new oath, consisting of a lengthy and vigorously worded declaration of allegiance to the King, James I., and of abjuration of the spiritual and temporal jurisdiction of the Pope, might be tendered by a justice of the peace or a judge of assize to any person above the age of eighteen years, and by the Lords of the Privy Council to any nobleman or noblewoman, suspected of being a Papist. By an Act passed in 1610 (7 James I. cap. vi.) members of the House of Commons were required to take this new oath of Allegiance with the old oath of Supremacy, before the Lord Steward. The following is the oath:—

"I, *A. B.*, do truly and sincerely acknowledge, profess, testify and declare, in my conscience before God and the world, that our Sovereign Lord, King James, is lawful and rightful King of this Realm and of all other his Majesty's dominions and countries; and that the Pope, neither of himself, nor by any authority of the Church or See of Rome, or by any other means with any other, hath any power or authority to depose the King, or to dispose any of His Majesty's kingdoms or dominions, or to authorize any foreign prince to invade or annoy him or his countries, or to discharge any of his subjects of their allegiance and obedience to his Majesty, or to give licence or leave to any of them to bear arms, raise

tumult, or to offer any violence or hurt to his Majesty's royal person, State or Government, or to any of his Majesty's subjects within his Majesty's dominions. Also I do swear from my heart that, notwithstanding any declaration or sentence of excommunication or deprivation made or granted, or to be made or granted, by the Pope, or his successors, or by any authority derived or pretended to be derived from him, or his See, against the said King, his heirs or successors, or any absolution of the said subjects from their obedience, I will bear faith and true allegiance to his Majesty, his heirs and successors, and him or them will defend to the uttermost of my power, against all conspiracies and attempts whatsoever, which shall be made against his or their persons, their Crown and dignity, by reason or colour of any such sentence or declaration or otherwise, and I will do my best endeavour to disclose and make known to his Majesty, his heirs and successors, all treasons and traitorous conspiracies, which I shall know or hear of to be against him or any of them."

The oath did not end there. The clause which follows—"that sulphurous document," as Dean Stanley once aptly described it—survived through several changes and through many years in the Parliamentary oath:—

"And I do further swear that I do from my heart abhor, detest and abjure, as impious and heretical, this damnable doctrine and position, that princes which be excommunicated, or deprived by the Pope, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects or any other whatsoever."

It then goes on, in a concluding clause, to introduce the words "upon the true faith of a Christian," which, though they were not then expressly intended to exclude Jews from office or Parliament—for persons of Jewish religion were at that time prohibited altogether from entering the Realm—did, as we shall see, prevent Jews from sitting and voting in Parliament as recently as the middle of the nineteenth century, when they were otherwise qualified for the position. The clause is as follows :—

"And I do believe, and in my conscience am resolved, that neither Pope, nor any person whatsoever, have power to absolve me of this oath, or any part thereof, which I acknowledge by good and full authority to be lawfully ministered unto me, and do renounce all pardons and dispensations to the contrary; and all these things I do plainly and sincerely acknowledge and swear, according to these express words by me spoken, and according to the plain and common sense and understanding of the same words, without any equivocation or mental evasion or secret reservation whatsoever; and I do make this recognition and acknowledgment heartily, willingly and truly upon the true faith of a Christian. So help me God."

In 1678 an important change in the procedure of the administration of the Parliamentary oaths took place. The oaths, as I have said, were taken by members of the House of Commons alone, not in the Chamber itself, but before the Lord Steward. We learn what the exact procedure was from the following interesting entry in the "Journals" of the House of Commons, dated the 4th June, 1660—the

third day after Charles the Second had met Parliament for the first time, following the Restoration:—

“The Commons were busy most of this day in taking the Oaths to the new Government, or rather to the old one re-established. The Right Hon. James, Marquis and Earl of Ormond, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and Lord Steward of his Majesty’s household, came into the lobby at the door of the House of Commons, where a table being set and a chair prepared, being attended by the Clerk of the Crown and the Clerk of the Commons House, with the Rolls of such members as were returned to serve in this Parliament, his lordship gave the oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance to several members, whom he had, by his Commission, deputed to administer the same to other members in his absence.”

In 1678 the country was driven into a panic by the story of Titus Oates—which was afterwards proved to be an invention—that a powerful and widespread conspiracy existed among the Catholics for the assassination of Charles the Second in order to clear the way to the Throne for the Papist Duke of York. A “Bill for the more effectual preserving the King’s Person and Government by disabling Papists from sitting in either House of Parliament” was rushed through the Legislature. Under this Act the Peers were for the first time required to take the Parliamentary oaths. The Act provided that both Peers and Commoners should have administered to them publicly, at the Table in their respective Houses, the old oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, and, as these oaths were evidently not

thought sufficiently drastic and comprehensive in their terms to exclude Catholics from Parliament, it was further enacted that both Peers and Commoners should, at the same time, "make, subscribe and audibly repeat" the following most stringent and searching declaration against transubstantiation, the invocation of saints, and the sacrifice of the Mass, taken from the Test Act, passed in 1672, with a view to excluding Roman Catholics from all offices, civil and military:—

"I, *A. B.*, do solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, profess, testify and declare that I do believe that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, there is not any transubstantiation of the elements of Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, at or after the Consecration thereof, by any person whatsoever. And that the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary, or any other saint, and the Sacrifice of the Mass, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous. And I do solemnly, in the presence of God, profess, testify and declare that I do make this declaration, and every part thereof, in the plain and ordinary sense of the words read unto me, as they are commonly understood by English Protestants, without any evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation whatever; and without any dispensation already granted me for this purpose by the Pope, or any other authority or person whatsoever, or without any hope of any such dispensation from any person or authority whatsoever, or without thinking that I am or can be acquitted before God or man, or absolved of this declaration,

or any part thereof, although the Pope, or any other person or persons or power whatsoever should dispense with or annul the same or declare that it was null and void from the beginning."

The oaths continued in this form until after the Revolution. In the first Parliament of William and Mary, in 1689, the very first year of their reign, "An Act for the abrogating of the oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance and appointing other oaths" was passed. The old oath of Supremacy passed in the fifth year of Elizabeth, and the old oath of Allegiance passed in the seventh year of James the First, were abolished, and the following shorter and simpler oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy were, with the declaration against transubstantiation, the invocation of saints and the sacrifice of the Mass, enjoined to be taken by Peers and Commoners:—

"I, *A. B.*, do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to their Majesties King William and Queen Mary. So help me God."

"I, *A. B.*, do swear that I do from my heart abhor, detest and abjure as impious and heretical that damnable doctrine and position that princes excommunicated or deprived by the Pope, or any other authority of the See of Rome, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects, or any other whatsoever. And I do declare that no foreign Prince, Person, Prelate, State or Potentate hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this Realm. So help me God."

Thirteen years after the adoption of these new

oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy—in the closing months of the reign of William the Third—a fresh national danger arose, against which it was thought needful to take full and stringent precautions in the Parliamentary oaths. In 1701 the deposed King, James the Second, died at St. Germain's. His son, James Frederick Edward, who was barred from the Crown by the Act of Settlement, was nevertheless proclaimed, by the adherents of the Stuart cause, King of England *de jure*, and was ostentatiously recognized as such by the French King, Louis the Fourteenth. An Act of Parliament—entitled “An Act for the further security of his Majesty's person and the succession of the Crown in the Protestant Line, and for extinguishing the hopes of the Pretended Prince of Wales and all other Pretenders, and their open and secret abettors”—was quickly passed to meet the exigencies of the new situation. It added to the Parliamentary oaths the following oath of special and particular abjuration of the Pretender's title:—

“I, A. B., do truly and sincerely acknowledge, profess, testify and declare in my conscience before God and the world that our Sovereign Lord, King William, is lawful and rightful King of this Realm and of all other his Majesty's dominions and countries thereunto belonging. And I do solemnly and sincerely declare that I do believe in my conscience that the person who pretended to be the Prince of Wales during the life of the late King James, and since his decease pretending to be and taking upon himself the style and title of King of England by the



name of James the Third, hath no right or title whatsoever to the Crown of this Realm or any other the dominion thereto belonging. And I do renounce, refuse and abjure any allegiance or obedience to him. And I do swear that I will bear faith and true allegiance to his Majesty King William, and him will defend to the utmost of my power against all traitorous conspiracies and attempts whatsoever which shall be made against his person, Crown or dignity. And I will do my best endeavour to disclose and make known to his Majesty and his successors all treasons and traitorous conspiracies which I shall know to be against him or any of them. And I do faithfully promise to the utmost of my power to support, maintain and defend the limitation and succession of the Crown against him, the said James, and all other persons whatsoever, as the same is and stands limited (by an Act intituled 'An Act declaring the rights and liberties of the Subject and settling the succession of the Crown') to his Majesty during his Majesty's life, and after his Majesty's decease to the Princess Ann of Denmark, and the heirs of her body, being Protestants, and for default of issue of the said Princess and of his Majesty respectively, to the Princess Sophia, Electress, and Duchess Dowager of Hanover and the heirs of her body, being Protestants. And all these things I do plainly and sincerely acknowledge and swear according to these express words by me spoken, and according to the plain meaning and common sense and understanding of the same words, without any equivocation, mental evasion, or secret reservation whatsoever. And I do make this recognition, acknowledgment, abjuration,

renunciation, and promise heartily, willingly and truly, upon the true faith of a Christian. So help me God."

These oaths underwent two slight verbal alterations during the eighteenth century, in addition, of course, to the insertion of the title of the reigning Sovereign. On the death of the Chevalier de St. George in 1765, when his son Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, succeeded to the hapless heritage of the Stuarts, the abjuration was directed against "the person who pretended to be Prince of Wales"—a phrase which was transformed into "any of the descendants of the person who pretended to be Prince of Wales," by an Act passed on the death of Charles Edward in 1788, during the reign of George the Third.

The amount of swearing—the solemn appeals to the Deity and professions of faith—which a representative returned to the House of Commons was compelled to undergo before he could take his seat within the Chamber was now certainly prodigious. He was first obliged to swear to the oath of Allegiance and the oath of Supremacy before the Lord Steward, even before he was allowed to cross the Bar of the Legislative Chamber; and, next, to take at the Table of the House the oath of Allegiance, the oath of Supremacy, the oath of Abjuration, and, in addition, to make the declaration against transubstantiation, the invocation of the saints, and the sacrifice of the Mass. The Lord Steward, before whom the "out-of-door" oaths, as they were called, were taken since the first imposition of an oath on members of Parliament in 1563, is an official of the Court. It has been a political appoint-

ment for many years, the holder of the office being a member of the existing Administration ; but in former times it was supposed to represent the Crown ; and the Crown, not content with the imposition of the oaths at the Table of the House of Commons, required of every representative of the people the further security of a special sworn declaration of his allegiance before its Lord Steward.

The next stage in the evolution of the Parliamentary oaths was reached in 1829, the year of Catholic emancipation. For twenty years previously Ireland was the scene of a mighty popular agitation, led by Daniel O'Connell, for the removal of the civil disabilities of Roman Catholics. The Penal Laws, which were passed after the Revolution, had been gradually repealed. Catholics had long enjoyed full freedom of worship. Only one civil disability existed, but it was a disability of great magnitude. No Catholic could become a member of either House of Parliament. Catholic forty-shilling freeholders had the franchise in Irish counties (though not in English counties), but they could not exercise it on behalf of a member of their own faith. Several Bills for the relief of the Catholics had since the Union of 1800 passed through the House of Commons, only to be rejected by the Lords. The King, George the Fourth, like his father George the Third, seemed invincibly determined to withhold his assent to any measure which would impair the Protestant character of Parliament. If he could possibly help it, no Catholic should cross the threshold of either the House of Lords or the House of Commons. In that resolve the King was supported by a large and powerful section of the Commons, by

an overwhelming majority of the Lords, and, it would seem, by popular opinion in Great Britain, although no appeal to the constituencies on the question had ever been directly made.

But in 1828 an event occurred in Ireland which brought matters to a crisis. O'Connell, the leader of the movement for Catholic emancipation, was triumphantly returned for county Clare, and the leading members of the Administration, Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington, who had hitherto been opposed to emancipation, were now convinced that the Catholics could no longer be safely denied admittance to Parliament. Accordingly the Catholic Relief Bill was introduced by Peel in the House of Commons on March 5th, 1829. It passed rapidly through both Houses, and a threat of resignation on the part of the Ministers induced the King, much against his will (Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst argued with him for five hours at Windsor Palace before he yielded), to give it the Royal Assent on April 13th, 1829.

The Act provided a special oath for Roman Catholic members. It was as follows:—

“I, *A. B.*, do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to his Majesty King George the Fourth, and will defend him to the utmost of my power against all conspiracies and attempts whatever, which shall be made against his person, Crown or dignity; and I will do my utmost endeavour to disclose and make known to his Majesty, his heirs and successors, all treasons and traitorous conspiracies which may be formed against him or them. And I do faithfully promise to maintain,

support and defend, to the utmost of my power, the succession of the Crown, which succession, by an Act intituled 'An Act for the further Limitation of the Crown and better securing the Rights and Liberties of the Subject,' is and stands limited to the Princess Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and the heirs of her body, being Protestants, hereby utterly renouncing and abjuring any obedience or obligation unto any other person claiming or pretending a right to the Crown of this Realm. And I do further declare that it is not an article of my faith, and that I do renounce, reject and abjure the opinion that Princes excommunicated or deprived by the Pope, or any other authority of the See of Rome, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects, or by any person whatever. And I do declare that I do not believe that the Pope of Rome, or any other foreign Prince, prelate, person, State or potentate hath, or ought to have, any temporal or civil jurisdiction, power, superiority or pre-eminence, directly or indirectly, within this Realm. I do swear that I will defend, to the utmost of my power, the settlement of property within this Realm, as established by the Laws; and I do hereby disclaim, disavow and solemnly abjure any intention to subvert the present Church Establishment, as settled by law within this Realm. And I do solemnly swear that I never will exercise any privileges to which I am or may become entitled, to disturb or weaken the Protestant Government in the United Kingdom, and I do solemnly, in the presence of God, profess, testify and declare that I do make this declaration, and every part thereof, in the plain and ordinary sense of the words of this oath, without

any evasion, equivocation or mental reservation whatsoever. So help me God."

It was also decided under the Act to abolish altogether the declaration against transubstantiation, the invocation of saints, and the sacrifice of the Mass. Sir Robert Peel, in the course of his speech introducing the Catholic Relief Bill, said:—

"I believe there are few Protestants who would not have rejoiced in being relieved from the necessity of making that declaration as qualification for the enjoyment of a merely civil privilege, even if it had been determined to continue Roman Catholic exclusion, and if other means of effecting it could be devised. But when exclusion is to cease let us be spared the pain of pronouncing an opinion, for mere temporal purposes, in regard to the mysteries of religion, and branding as idolatrous the belief of others."

O'Connell, as already stated, had been returned in July of the previous year for the county of Clare. He refrained from any attempt to take his seat until the promised Catholic Relief Bill was passed; but that measure was, in mere petty spite—the work really of the King—expressly framed so as to exclude him from its benefit. The new oath was restricted to members elected after the passing of the Act. O'Connell, however, determined to present himself at the Table and demand that the new oath be administered to him. Accordingly on May 15th, 1829, in the old House of Commons, which was on that occasion crowded to excess by Commons, Lords, and the general public, O'Connell appeared at the Bar, and was introduced by an English and an Irish Whig, Lord Ebrington, M.P.

for Tavistock, and Lord Duncannon, M.P. for Kilkenny, acting as his sponsors. All the spectators rose to their feet, and craned their necks to catch a glimpse of the famous Irish agitator. He, Charles Greville tells us in his "Memoirs," was in a great fright when he reached the Table.

Ley, the Clerk of the House, carefully examined O'Connell's credentials. At that time these consisted of the return to the writ, proof of the possession of the necessary property qualification, and a certificate from the Lord Steward that the new member had taken the "out-of-House" oaths. O'Connell had the required certificate from the Lord Steward along with the other credentials, but it transpired in the course of the subsequent debate that he had taken only the oath of Abjuration, having refused to subscribe to the oath of Supremacy, which denied the right of the Pope to ecclesiastical jurisdiction within the kingdom. Satisfied of the genuineness of these documents, the Clerk produced from the despatch-box on the Table cards containing the words of the three old oaths, and tendered them, with the New Testament, to O'Connell. "I claim," said O'Connell, "that the new oath under the Catholic Relief Act be administered to me." "If the hon. member will not take the old oaths he must withdraw," said the Speaker—Charles Manners Sutton. O'Connell bowed to the Speaker, but remained at the Table and looked around the House, as if he expected some one to come to his assistance. Brougham then rose. The Speaker, however, intercepted him with a cry of "Order, order," and again insisted that O'Connell must withdraw. O'Connell bowed once more to the Chair, and without a word retired below

the Bar. Brougham then moved that O'Connell be heard in support of his right of admission to his seat, which was agreed to; and accordingly on May 18th, in another crowded House, O'Connell delivered at the Bar an able and impressive speech on the point that he was legally entitled to subscribe to the new oath. His claim was refused by 190 votes to 116. He was then called in, and the Speaker asked if he would take the old oaths. "Let me see them," replied O'Connell. Amid the breathless attention of the crowded House O'Connell put on his spectacles and scrutinised for a minute the contents of the cards. "I cannot take the oath of Supremacy," said he. "Part of it I know to be false; another part I believe to be untrue." The House decided that a new writ for Clare must be issued. O'Connell was, however, again returned, this time without opposition, and he took his seat at the opening of the Session of 1830.

The old oaths continued to be taken by Protestant members. In 1833 Mr. Joseph Pease, the first Quaker who had been elected for 140 years, was permitted, under an Act passed that Session to enable Quakers and Moravians to affirm where an oath was required, to take his seat for South Durham on making a solemn affirmation or declaration in the same terms as the old oaths, but omitting the words "So help me God." Earlier in the same reign—that of William the Fourth—the "out-of-House" oaths, to which I have already referred, were abolished by statute. The Act was read the third time in the House of Commons on July 30th, 1831. That the House of Commons should have patiently endured for a century and a half the absurdity of the administration of the same oaths



outside and inside its doors is a curious illustration of the innate conservative temperament of our Parliament.

The Jews were now the only sectarian body against whom the doors of Parliament were closed. There was no positive enactment to prevent them entering Parliament. But the oath of Allegiance was required to be sworn upon the Evangelists, and the oath of Abjuration contained the expression: "Upon the true faith of a Christian"; and these words shut the doors of Parliament against the Jews as effectually as if Israelites were expressly disqualified by statute. The words, "Upon the true faith of a Christian," first appeared in the oath of Allegiance framed in the reign of James the First. They were revived in the oath of special abjuration against the Pretender, which was adopted in 1701. In both cases the words were introduced to further guard against the admission of a Roman Catholic to Parliament by strengthening the proviso against mental reservation or equivocation, and not in the slightest degree with a view to the exclusion of the Jews. In the seventeenth century the Jews formed an insignificant portion of the population; they were regarded by all as outcasts; outrage and oppression was their common lot, and the idea that they would at any time seek to enter Parliament was too preposterous to have been then thought by anybody worthy of suggestion or consideration. The feeling against them was purely theological. It would, indeed, be difficult to conceive any political reasons for denying to them the rights of citizenship. They were despised and oppressed for centuries simply on religious grounds, and it was for similar reasons that

several Bills for the removal of their civil disabilities introduced between 1830 and 1858 were, after passing through the Commons, rejected by the House of Lords.

In 1847 the Jews followed the example set by the Roman Catholics twenty years before in electing O'Connell for county Clare. A representative and influential member of their persuasion, Baron Lionel Nathan de Rothschild, was returned for the City of London. Lord John Russell, who was then Premier of a Whig Administration and leader of the House of Commons, brought in a Bill to remove the barrier which excluded his Jewish colleague in the representation of the City from the House of Commons. The Bill passed through the Commons, though strongly opposed by the Tories, but was thrown out by the House of Lords. Baron de Rothschild did not make any attempt for three years to take his seat in the House. As an object-lesson for the House of Lords he sat below the Bar in the House of Commons, a veritable stranger at the gates of the legislative Chamber to which he had been legally elected by the wealthiest and perhaps the most important constituency in the kingdom. But the Peers did not take the object-lesson to heart. If Baron de Rothschild would not swear "upon the true faith of a Christian"—which, of course, would be tantamount to a declaration that he was of the Christian faith—let him, their lordships said, be content with his seat below the Bar.

However, after four Sessions the member for the City of London got tired of acting the part of the Peri at the gate, and determined to make a bold effort to

obtain his seat within the Chamber. Accordingly, in 1850, he presented himself at the Table for the purpose of taking the oaths. He asked permission to be sworn on the Old Testament, and with his head covered, according to the Jewish rite. This, after some discussion, was allowed. He first took the oath of Allegiance, then the oath of Supremacy, but from the end of the third oath, or oath of Abjuration, he omitted the words "upon the true faith of a Christian," declaring that they were not binding on his conscience. But it was all of no avail. The House declared by resolution that Baron de Rothschild could not sit or vote until he had taken the oath of Abjuration in the form prescribed by the statute of William the Third. He had, therefore, to content himself once more with a seat below the Bar.

In the following year another Jew, Mr. Alderman Salomons, was returned for the borough of Greenwich. Like Baron de Rothschild, he presented himself at the Table, and took the three oaths according to the Jewish rite, but omitted from the oath of Abjuration the words to which as a Jew he could not conscientiously subscribe. He considered, however, that he had been legally sworn, and, unlike Baron de Rothschild, he sat within the House; he even spoke in the debate which arose on his case, and, what is more, voted in three divisions. These actions led to protracted legal proceedings against Mr. Salomons in the Court of Exchequer for the recovery of the penalties incurred for sitting and voting without having taken the oath. The judgment of the Court was against Mr. Salomons. It was a foregone conclusion. The Jewish disability was created by a statute, and only a

statute could remove it. Another ten years were to pass away before the melancholy controversy was brought to a close.

Meantime Alderman Salomons had retired from the Parliamentary field, and was elected Lord Mayor of London in 1855 and 1856; but Baron de Rothschild continued to be returned again and again for the City of London, and to sit below the Bar, awaiting the Act which would enable him to exercise his duties as a member of Parliament. It was a weary and disheartening waiting. Every year a Jewish Relief Bill passed through the Commons, only to be rejected by the Lords. It was not until 1858 that the Lords, at the persuasion of Lord Derby, who was then Premier, agreed to a compromise on the question in dispute between the two Houses. And an extraordinary compromise it was. Either House was empowered, by an Act introduced by the Earl of Lucan, and entitled, humorously enough, "An Act to provide for the relief of her Majesty's subjects professing the Jewish religion," to permit by resolution a person of the Jewish persuasion, otherwise entitled to sit and vote in the House, to omit the words "upon the true faith of a Christian" from the oath of Abjuration. The right of a Jew to a seat in either House was under this Act subject to the pleasure of that House. The Commons were at liberty to admit a Jewish member; the Lords were at liberty to exclude a Jewish peer. "It was as much as to say to the Commons," said Lord Campbell, very truly, if somewhat luridly, in the House of Lords, "we know that we should be damned if we agreed to admit a Jew to sit among us; but we give you authority to allow

Jews to sit among you, and if you please you may do so and be damned to you."

The Commons immediately after the passing of the Act adopted a resolution admitting Jews to their House, and at last, on July 28th, 1858, close on twelve years after his election to the House, Baron de Rothschild was allowed, on taking the oaths in the modified form, to exercise his privileges as a member of Parliament. In the following year Mr. Salomons (subsequently Sir David Salomons, Bart.) again entered the House, this time without let or hindrance, as member for Greenwich. The resolution under the Act was only sessional. It had to be renewed at the opening of every Session. By an Act passed in 1860 a Standing Order—that is, an order of a permanent character—was substituted for the sessional resolution; but not until six years later did the Jews hold their right of admission to Parliament under the ordinary law, like the members of all other religious persuasions.

Meanwhile the year 1858 witnessed a further transformation in the Parliamentary oaths. An Act was passed in that year substituting one oath to be taken by Protestants for the old oaths of Allegiance, Supremacy, and Abjuration. It was as follows:—

"I, *A. B.*, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to her Majesty Queen Victoria, and will defend her to the utmost of my power against all conspiracies and attempts whatever which shall be made against her person, Crown, or dignity, and I will do my utmost endeavour to disclose and make

1858

known to her Majesty, her heirs and successors, all treasons and traitorous conspiracies which may be formed against her or them, and I do faithfully promise to maintain, support and defend, to the utmost of my power, the succession of the Crown, which succession, by an Act intituled 'An Act for the further Limitation of the Crown, and better securing the Rights and Liberties of the Subject,' is and stands limited to the Princess Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and the heirs of her body, being Protestants, hereby utterly renouncing and abjuring any obedience or allegiance unto any other person claiming or pretending to a right to the Crown of this Realm, and I do declare that no foreign Prince, person, prelate, State, or potentate hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this Realm. And I make this declaration upon the true faith of a Christian. So help me God."

It will be noticed that this oath also contains the words to which the Jews objected—"upon the true faith of a Christian"—which, curiously enough, are not to be found in the special oath for Roman Catholics adopted by the Relief Act of 1829. In 1866 another Act dealing with the Parliamentary oath was passed. It repealed all former legislation on the subject, and by establishing a new form of oath, from which the words "upon the true faith of a Christian" and all reference to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Pope within the Realm were omitted, Parliament had at last evolved an oath which could be taken conscientiously by members of all religions, either in

the form of an oath or an affirmation. It was as follows:—

“I, *A. B.*, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to her Majesty Queen Victoria, and I do faithfully promise to maintain and support the succession to the Crown, as the same stands limited and settled by virtue of the Act passed in the reign of King William the Third, intituled ‘An Act for the further Limitation of the Crown, and better securing the Rights and Liberties of the Subject’: and of the subsequent Acts of Union with Scotland and Ireland. So help me God.”

The oath of Abjuration had, indeed, long been superfluous, for the descendants of the Pretender had long been extinct; and to require Protestants to deny on oath the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Pope in this Realm was surely an absurdity. But this new oath remained in force only for two years. By the Promissory Oaths Act in 1868—a statute which abolished about 600 oaths that had hitherto to be taken by various officials outside Parliament—the oath common to both Houses was compressed into the following brief declaration:—

“I, *A. B.*, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to her Majesty Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God.”

Such was all that was left of the formidable and elaborate bulwark of oaths with which Parliaments of long ago girt themselves round for protection against the dreaded machinations of the followers of Pope

and Pretender. No man was any longer excluded from citizenship and its full privileges because of his religious faith. It seemed, indeed, as if the Parliamentary oaths question, which had at many periods during three-quarters of a century profoundly stirred the *odium theologicum* of the kingdom, was, at last, happily laid to rest. A single oath or affirmation acceptable to members of all religious denominations was in use. What more was needed? Nothing more was needed for twelve years, from 1868 to 1880; but in 1880 the Parliamentary oaths question arose in a form more acute and embittered than probably it had ever assumed before. Provision had been made for persons of all religious beliefs, but persons of no religious beliefs had been overlooked.

Charles Bradlaugh was returned for Northampton at the General Election of 1880. He had been wooing the constituency for twelve years previously, and during that period had three times contested it before success at last crowned his ambition. But there yet remained a barrier to his taking his seat in the House of Commons. It was the Parliamentary oath. He was an avowed Atheist—indeed, an apostle of unbelief—and he felt that it would be a mockery, a sham, and a scandal, if he were to conclude the declaration of his allegiance with the words “So help me God.” Accordingly on presenting himself at the Table on May 3rd, 1880, Bradlaugh claimed to be allowed to make the affirmation Atheists were permitted to make in Courts of law under the Evidence Amendment Act. The Speaker (Henry Bouverie Brand), being in doubt, asked Mr. Bradlaugh to withdraw, and then referred the matter to the judgment



of the House. A Committee was appointed to consider the question. On May 20th the Committee reported—which report was carried only by the casting vote of the Chairman (Mr. Walpole)—that persons entitled to affirm in Courts of law under the Evidence Amendment Act (persons of no religious belief) were not entitled to affirm in the House.

Mr. Bradlaugh then publicly intimated that while the prescribed oath included words which to him were “idle and meaningless”—so that it would have been an act of hypocrisy on his part to take it voluntarily—as no other course was open to him he would subscribe to the oath, holding himself bound, not by the words of assertion, but by the explicit affirmation. On May 21st, therefore, he went to the Table, amid uproar, to be sworn. An objection having been raised to his action, Bradlaugh again withdrew below the Bar, at the request of the Speaker, who, however, admitted that he knew of no precedent for refusing the oath to a member offering to take it. The long and fierce debate which ensued ended, after several adjournments, in the appointment of another Committee to report whether Bradlaugh was entitled to take the oath. This question the Committee decided in the negative, recommending, however, that Bradlaugh be allowed to affirm at his own risk at law. But the House rejected a motion to that effect, and declared by resolution that the member for Northampton could neither take the oath nor make an affirmation.

All the same, Mr. Bradlaugh again presented himself in the House, and was grudgingly allowed to plead his case at the Bar. It was an able speech—a

speech the brilliancy of which the bitterest opponents of the outcast member admitted—but nevertheless a motion to rescind the resolution was defeated. He was requested to leave the House and refused, urging that the order was illegal, and on the motion of Sir Stafford Northcote, the leader of the Conservative Opposition (Mr. Gladstone, the Premier and leader of the House, having “washed his hands of the business” at an early stage), the member for Northampton was “committed to the Clock Tower,” from which, however, he was next day released unconditionally. Later on Mr. Gladstone moved as a Standing Order that members be allowed to take the oath or affirm, at their choice, which was carried on a division. Mr. Bradlaugh accordingly made affirmation of allegiance, took his seat in the House, and voted in various divisions.

In the following year he was sued in the Law Courts for penalties, for having voted illegally, and, the action having been decided against him, a new writ was issued for Northampton. Mr. Bradlaugh was again elected for the constituency after a desperate fight. Again he came to the Table to take the oath, and again a motion to prevent him was carried. Removed by the Sergeant-at-Arms again and again to the Bar, he again and again returned to the Table, demanding that the oath be administered to him, till the House put an end to a most embarrassing and painful situation by adjourning. Again next day he presented himself at the House, but was induced to refrain from further action by a promise that the Government would introduce a Bill to settle the difficulty. However, the Oaths Bill of the Government

made no progress owing to the determined opposition offered it, and Bradlaugh again, on August 3rd, 1881, went down to Westminster to demand admission to the House of Commons; but this time he was violently seized at the very door of the Chamber by fourteen policemen and ushers, hauled through the lobby and St. Stephen's Hall, and finally ejected (hatless and bedraggled, and panting with the exertion of resistance) into the Old Palace Yard, which was thronged by a host of his enthusiastic followers.

Again next year, on the assembling of a new Session, the indomitable member for Northampton presented himself and made his third speech at the Bar; and again the majority refused to let him swear or affirm. A few days later Bradlaugh took the strategic step of administering the oath to himself. He appeared suddenly at the Table, produced a New Testament out of his breast-pocket, repeated the words of the oath, kissed the book, and then signing his name on a slip of paper, which he deposited on the Table close to the Clerk, with a direction to add it to the Test Roll, he took a seat on one of the benches. Again he was expelled from the House; a new writ was again issued for Northampton, and again he was elected for the seat on the largest poll yet reached. Still the House decreed his exclusion, though over a thousand petitions, with a quarter of a million signatures, had been presented in his favour. On May 3rd, 1883, the anniversary of his appearance in the House, the Government's Oaths Act Amendment Bill was lost by three votes, and next day Bradlaugh was once more refused, by a majority of one hundred and six, the right to sit and vote as a member for Northampton.

For several years the battle over the oaths question was thus waged at the Bar of the House, in the Law Courts, and more especially throughout the country, where hundreds of meetings were held in favour of Bradlaugh's claim. On February 9th, 1884, at the opening of another Session, Bradlaugh again administered the oath to himself and voted, and was again expelled. He then accepted the Chiltern Hundreds, and was yet again triumphantly returned for Northampton; but the majority of the House of Commons was as obdurate as ever in refusing him admission to the Chamber. The end of this long and bitter controversy—this splendid fight for freedom of thought—was brought about in a very remarkable manner. Bradlaugh was again elected by Northampton in the General Election of 1885. On the assembling of the new Parliament of 1886 he was allowed to take the oath and his seat in the House, the new Speaker (Viscount Peel) firmly refusing to let any protest or question be interposed. The power and authority of the Speaker have never been so strikingly manifested as in that action.

Bradlaugh's Parliamentary career was brief, but he lived long enough to become one of the most respected and honoured members of the House. In 1888 he carried the Affirmation Act, which enacts that for all purposes an affirmation may be made in lieu of an oath by every person who states as the ground of such objection either that he has no religious belief or that the taking of an oath is contrary to his religious belief. In such a case "I do solemnly, sincerely, and truly declare and affirm" are substituted for the words "I swear," and the words "So help me God" are

omitted. The words "So help me God" had ceased to be regarded by Parliament as the bulwark of Christianity. But there still stood upon the "Journals" of the House the resolution passed in 1880 which declared him ineligible either to take the oath or make affirmation. As he lay in the shadow of death in February, 1891, a motion, of which he had given notice, to expunge this resolution from the records of the House was moved in his absence and carried unanimously. This final act of justice to Mr. Bradlaugh ended the long struggle to make the Parliamentary declaration of allegiance conformable to the views of persons of all religious beliefs and of no religious beliefs.

During the Bradlaugh controversy the question was often asked, "Why should there be a Parliamentary oath at all?" The oath is now intended solely as a test of loyalty. Its object is simply to secure the election to Parliament of men who are loyal to the reigning Sovereign. But, according to all jurists, allegiance to the Throne—which is all a member of Parliament promises on oath or by affirmation—is the common law duty of every subject. Lord Sherbrooke declared:—

"Every Peer who enters Parliament, every Commoner who enters the House of Commons, is already bound by the law of the land to be faithful and bear true allegiance to her Majesty Queen Victoria. All the execrations in the world cannot make it more binding; all the promises that can be uttered can add nothing to its force."

A member of Parliament found guilty of high treason, or of treason-felony, or sedition, has the

same punishment meted out to him, and no more, as is imposed on any other subject convicted of any of these crimes. William Smith O'Brien, M.P., the leader of the Irish insurrectionary movement of 1848, was, on conviction, sentenced to death after the old form in cases of high treason—to be hanged, beheaded and quartered; but the same sentence was pronounced on other leaders of the movement who were not members of Parliament, and Smith O'Brien was included in the subsequent reprieve of these prisoners. The proceedings in the House of Commons arising out of the case of Smith O'Brien also show that a member of Parliament adjudged guilty of high treason, or the violation of the oath of allegiance which he takes at the Table, is in a sense treated more considerately than a member convicted of a common felony. The latter is subjected to the degradation of being expelled by resolution from the House; the former is more compassionately regarded "as dead." Lord John Russell, in submitting to the House, on the 18th of March, 1849, a motion declaring that inasmuch as Smith O'Brien had been convicted of high treason, he had become incapable of sitting in Parliament, confessed that there was no absolute precedent for dealing with such a case. There was the case of a Mr. Forster, respecting whom the following entry appeared in the "Journals" under the date of the 10th of May, 1715, the time the Pretender made his abortive descent upon Scotland:—

"That T. Forster, Esq., a member of this House, having been taken in open rebellion bearing arms against his Majesty, be expelled this House. Ordered

that Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant, &c., to make out a new writ for electing, &c., for Northumberland, in the room of T. Forster, Esq., expelled this House."

A kindred entry occurred in the "Journals" thirteen months later, or on June 2nd, 1716:—

"The House being informed that J. Carnegie, Esq., member for Forfarshire, had been in arms in Scotland on the part of the rebels during the late rebellion, and that there were two persons at the door who could prove the same, they were called in and examined at the Bar, and gave the House an account that they had seen the said Mr. Carnegie in arms at Perth on the part of the rebels; and it was resolved *nem. con.* that the said Carnegie be expelled this House."

Lord John Russell pointed out, however, that in both these instances the House acted upon information only, and did not wait for trial, whereas the case of Smith O'Brien was that of a member who had been actually convicted of high treason. Smith O'Brien was, therefore, not expelled the House, but was regarded as dead in a civil sense; and a new writ for his seat for the city of Limerick was issued accordingly.

If, then, the oath is purely and simply a declaration of loyalty to the reigning Sovereign, an obligation which, oath or no oath, devolves upon every subject, and if its violation entails no additional punishment on a member of Parliament, it is little more than an idle function. No oath or affirmation is required of any member of the Legislature of either Germany or

France ; but there is a solemn declaration of fidelity to the Commonwealth. In the American Congress the declaration runs : " To the best of my knowledge and ability I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." In Italy there is a dramatic oath. The President of the Chamber of Deputies solemnly reads the words of the oath, which binds the members to labour " with a single view to the inseparable welfare of King and country," and the new deputy, extending his right arm above his head, says " I swear."



## CHAPTER IX.

### MAIDEN SPEECHES.

“SILENCE is the eternal duty of man,” said Carlyle, the loud-voiced and persistent railer at men and institutions. But if it be man’s duty to hold his tongue anywhere, it is certainly not so in the House of Commons. There, speech is golden. The gift of eloquence, or, at least, the knack of forcible exposition—cleverness in stating a case, and in exposing the weak points of an adversary—is essential if a member is to exercise any influence on legislation, and is the surest passport to the highest offices of the State. It is always interesting, therefore, to note the first efforts at speaking in that Assembly (awkward and halting struggles very often) of budding orators, statesmen, and politicians; to listen to the weak and uncertain voice of the young and obscure member, destined to rise to a position of predominance and power, and to shake with the thunders of his eloquence the House where now he is painfully stammering out a few disjointed and unintelligible sentences.

“The most peculiar audience in the world,” was Macaulay’s description of the House of Commons. “A place where Walpole succeeded and Addison failed; where Dundas succeeded and Burke failed;

where Peel now succeeds and where Mackintosh failed; where Erskine and Scarlett were dinner-bells; where Lawrence and Jekyll, the two wittiest men, or nearly so of their time, were thought bores, is surely," he added, "a very strange place." To stand up to address that Assembly, composed of men of various political views, passions, and prejudices, coldly critical and indifferent as a rule, is a feat requiring well-braced nerves. John Bright was always in deep distress on rising to speak, despite his outward aspect of self-possession and composure. "I suppose I ought to be ashamed of myself," he said, late in his career, "but the fact is that I never rise in the House without a trembling at the knees and a secret wish that somebody else would catch the Speaker's eye and enable me to sit down again." With what an agony of apprehension, then, must the young and inexperienced member of Parliament face the ordeal for the first time! It may be that only a few incoherent sentences of the able speech which he had repeated so glibly in his study comes to his parched lips. That is an old experience in Parliamentary annals. "My lords," said the Earl of Rochester in the reign of Charles II., rising to make his maiden speech in the House of Lords, "my lords, I rise this time for the first time—the very first time. My lords, I divide my speech into four branches." Here there was an embarrassing pause of some seconds. "My lords," the earl then ejaculated, "if ever I rise again in this House, you may cut me off root and branches and all for ever." The brightest wits as well as the dullest have lost the thread of their thoughts in an access of helpless consternation

on finding themselves on their feet for the first time, face to face with the House of Commons.

“The blare of trumpets, a thousand lookers-on, have induced men to lead a forlorn hope. Ambition, one’s constituents, or the hell of previous failure, have induced men to do a far more desperate thing—speak in the House of Commons.” So wrote Benjamin Disraeli. No one seemed more at ease when addressing the House of Commons than he. Yet he had his full share of those terrors of anticipation from which few orators are free on the eve of an important speech, and when he was face to face with the House of Commons—“the most chilling and nerve-destroying audience in the world,” as he called it—it was only by a desperate effort he could brace himself to get through the first sentences of his speech, until the cheers of his supporters and his opponents’ cries of dissent steadied his nerves and aroused within him the spirit of conflict and the resolve to triumph.

“Dizzy is the sweetest-tempered of men,” his wife used to say, “but he is always very irritable when he is going to speak.”

One night, early in 1833 (the year after he had failed in his contest as a Radical for the borough of High Wycombe), Disraeli, sitting in the Strangers’ Gallery of the House of Commons, listened to the debate on the Address in which Lord John Russell, Macaulay, Stanley, Bulwer, and other leading members of the House took part. Next day he wrote to his sister: “Was at the House of Commons yesterday during the whole of the debate—one of the finest we have had for years. Macaulay was admirable, but, between ourselves, I could floor them all. This *entre*

*nous*. I was never more confident of anything than that I could carry everything before me in that House. The time will come!" The time did come four years later, when on December 7th, 1837, Disraeli, having been returned as a Tory for Maidstone in the General Election of that year, stood up in the House of Commons to make his maiden speech. The story of that historic fiasco has never been fully told. What is generally known is that Disraeli was interrupted by bursts of ironical laughter almost from the beginning of his speech, and that at length, utterly unable to catch the ear of the House, he concluded by shouting to the utmost pitch of his voice the famous phrase: "Though I sit down now, the time will come when you will hear me." But the whole episode, what led up to it and what followed it, is most interesting. The subject of the debate was a motion by Mr. Smith O'Brien for a Select Committee to inquire into alleged practices of vexatious petitioning against Irish members elected in the popular interest. Daniel O'Connell supported the motion, and it had been arranged that Sir Robert Peel should reply, but the strongly-expressed wish of Disraeli that the duty might be given to him, backed as it was by many members of his party, induced the Tory leader to give way to his ardent young recruit. There had been an absurd, though very bitter, quarrel between O'Connell and Disraeli. O'Connell was one of Disraeli's sponsors when he carried the Radical flag on the hustings at High Wycombe in 1832. Three years later Disraeli, having turned Tory, attacked the Melbourne Administration, which was retained in power by the Irish Party, for having clasped, as he put it, "the bloody hand of O'Connell." O'Connell

retorted in a speech of savage vituperation in which he declared that Disraeli's life was "a living lie," and that he was "a descendant of the impenitent thief on the Cross." Disraeli challenged O'Connell, but the Irishman, after killing D'Esterre in 1815, had made a vow against duelling, and always wore a black kid glove on his right hand as a token of his life-long repentance for having shed another man's blood. "Then," wrote Disraeli, in a scathing letter to O'Connell, "we shall meet at Philippi." Now the two antagonists were face to face at Philippi—in the House of Commons, with, happily, the floor between.

Disraeli's failure on this occasion was not due to nervous timidity, but to the less amiable fault of over-confident fluency, to the young member's irritating self-assurance of manner, inspired, obviously, by the conviction that he was about to leap into Parliamentary fame at a single bound. This, with his foppish attire, his affected gestures, and the knowledge of his rapid change of political opinion, caused the British Radicals and the Irish Repealers, both led by the lusty lungs of O'Connell, to indulge in roars of ironical laughter, and other disconcerting cries. The conclusion of the speech was as follows:—

"If the honourable gentleman thought this treatment fair, he would submit. He would not do so to others. That was all. (Laughter.) Nothing was so easy as to laugh. He wished before he sat down to show the House clearly their position. When they remembered that in spite of the support of the honourable and learned member for Dublin and his well-disciplined band of patriots, there was a little

shyness exhibited by former supporters of her Majesty's Government; when they recollected the 'new loves' and the 'old loves' in which so much of passion and recrimination was mixed up between the noble Tityrus of the Treasury Bench and the learned Daphne of Liskeard (loud laughter), notwithstanding the *amantium ira* had resulted as he had always expected in the *amoris integratio* (renewed laughter),—notwithstanding that political duel had been fought, in which more than one shot was interchanged, but in which recourse was had to the secure arbitrament of blank cartridges (laughter), notwithstanding emancipated Ireland and enslaved England, the noble lord might wave in one hand the keys of St. Peter, and in the other—(the shouts that followed drowned the conclusion of the sentence). Let them see the philosophical prejudice of man. He would certainly gladly hear a cheer, even though it came from the lips of a political opponent. He was not at all surprised at the reception which he had experienced. He had begun several times many things and he had often succeeded at last. He would sit down now, but the time would come when they would hear him."

"The impatience of the House"—writes "Hansard," lapsing into the quaintly descriptive—"would not allow the honourable member to finish his speech, and during the greater part of the time the honourable member was on his legs he was so much interrupted that it was impossible to hear what the honourable member said."

Macaulay, writing to a friend in Paris, a few days

later, said, "Speaking of the House, D'Israeli nearly killed it on Thursday night. You have, of course, seen his speech in *Galignani*. Can you conceive the impudence of the Attorney-General not knowing him personally and going up to him in the Lobby, saying, 'A very pleasant speech of yours, Mr. D'Israeli. Will you be kind enough to tell me what Lord John held besides the keys of St. Peter?' 'The red cap of Liberty, sir.' During the performance, Peel quite screamed with laughter." Disraeli, however, in an account of his interview with the Attorney-General in the Lobby, states that Sir John Campbell was most complimentary about the speech. "A very good picture," was the remark when Disraeli, at his request, finished the interrupted sentence by describing Lord John Russell, secure on the pedestal of power, wielding in one hand the keys of St. Peter and in the other the red cap of Liberty. "Yes," said Disraeli, "but your friends will not allow me to finish my pictures." "I assure you," replied the Attorney-General, "there was the liveliest desire to hear you from us. It was a party at the Bar over whom we have no control. But you have nothing to be afraid of."

The next day Disraeli admitted his failure in a letter to his sister, attributing it, naturally enough, to no incompetence on his part, but to the physical powers of his adversaries. "I can give you no idea how bitter, how factious, how unfair they were," he wrote. "It was like my first *début* at Aylesbury, and perhaps in that sense may be auspicious of ultimate triumph in the same scene. I fought through it all with undaunted pluck and unruffled

temper, made occasionally good isolated hits, when there was silence, and finished with spirit when I found a formal display was ineffectual. My party backed me well, and no one with more zeal and kindness than Peel, cheering me repeatedly, which is not his custom. The uproar was all organised by the Rads and Repealers. They formed a compact body near the Bar of the House, and seemed determined to set me down, but that they did not do. I have given you a most impartial account, stated, indeed, against myself." He adds, "In the Lobby at the division, Chandos, who was not near me while speaking, came up and congratulated me. I replied that I thought there was no cause for congratulation, and muttered 'Failure!' 'No such thing,' said Chandos; 'you are quite wrong. I have just seen Peel, and I said to him, "Now tell me exactly what you think of D." Peel replied, "Some of my party were disappointed and talk of failure; I say *just the reverse*. He did all that he could do under the circumstances. I saw anything but failure; he must make his way."'"

A few days later Disraeli wrote to his sister again in a much more cheerful strain, quoting the very flattering testimony of Richard Lalor Sheil, the Irish orator, as to the merits of the maiden speech:—

"I dined with Bulwer on Saturday, and, strange enough, met Sheil. I should have been very much surprised had I not arrived first and been apprised. It thus arose: On Saturday Bulwer walked into the Athenæum. Sheil, who has just recovered from the gout, was lounging in an easy-chair, reading the news-



paper ; around him was a set of low Rads (we might guess them) abusing me and exulting in the discrimination of the House. Probably they thought they pleased Sheil. Bulwer drew near but stood apart.

“Suddenly Sheil threw down the paper and said in his shrill voice: ‘Now, gentlemen, I have heard all you have to say and what is more I heard this same speech of Mr. Disraeli, and I tell you this, if ever the spirit of oratory was in a man it is in that man ; nothing can prevent him from being one of the first speakers in the House of Commons. (Great confusion.) Ay ! and I know something about that place, I think ; and I tell you what besides, that if there had not been this interruption, Mr. Disraeli might have made a failure. I don’t call this a failure, it is a crush. My *début* was a failure, because I was heard ; but my reception was supercilious, his malignant. A *début* should be dull. The House will not allow a man to be a wit and an orator unless they have the credit of finding it out. There it is.’ You may conceive the sensation this speech made. I heard of it yesterday from Eaton, Winslow and several other quarters. The crowd dispersed, but Bulwer drew near and said to Sheil, ‘Di. dines with me to-day ; would you like to meet him ?’ ‘In spite of my gout,’ said Sheil, ‘I long to know him ; I long to tell him what I think.’ So we met.”

Sheil gave Disraeli some curious advice as to his future conduct in the House of Commons. “If you had been listened to,” said he, “what would have been the result ? You would have made the best

speech that you ever would have made. It would have been received frigidly, and you would have despaired of yourself. I did. As it is, you have shown to the House that you have a fine voice, that you have unlimited command of language, courage, temper, and readiness. Now get rid of your genius for a Session. Speak often, for you must not show yourself cowed, but speak shortly. Be very quiet. Try to be dull, only argue and reason imperfectly, for if you speak with precision they will think you are trying to be witty. Astonish them by speaking on subjects of detail. Quote figures, dates, calculations, and in a short time the House will sigh for the wit and eloquence which they all know are in you; they will encourage you to pour them forth, and then you will have the ear of the House and be a favourite." Disraeli followed the advice. Seven days after his fiasco, he spoke again on the Copyright Bill, contenting himself with a few sentences. In the following Session he addressed the House several times; but it was not until 1839 that he made any great impression by a sympathetic speech on the Chartists.

Perhaps a more remarkable display of confidence and self-assurance was that of William Cobbett. In the General Election which followed the passing of the Reform Act in 1832 he was elected member for Oldham. The new Parliament met on January 29th, 1833, and on the very first question which arose that evening (the choice of a Speaker) Cobbett, after a few of the leading members on each side had spoken, interposed with characteristic egotism and impudence. His opening sentence astounded the House. "It appears to me," said he, "that since I have been

sitting here I have heard a great deal of vain and unprofitable conversation." Daniel O'Connell, who, like Cobbett, always entertained a lofty disdain of the House of Commons, also made his maiden speech on the night he took his seat, February 4th, 1830. The speech was in support of an amendment to the Address moved by the Radicals. A stupendous oration was expected by the crowded House, but "the wild Irishman" spoke with tact and good sense, and on the whole made a favourable impression. Another irrepressible speaker was Henry Brougham, who entered the House as member for the borough of Camelford on February 5th, 1810. Everyone who knew him expected he would deliver his maiden speech on the same night, but he had made a vow of silence for a month, and kept it. On March 5th, exactly one month after he had taken his seat, he spoke in support of a vote of censure on Lord Chatham, a member of the Cabinet, for having written a narrative of the expedition to the Scheldt and delivered it to the King with a request that it should be kept secret even from his colleagues. The speech made no impression upon the House, Brougham, according to contemporary records, sitting down without a single cheer. He soon made up for his month's silence: "It was remarked," writes Campbell in his "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," "that for the future he never was in his place the whole evening in either House of Parliament, without, regularly or irregularly, more than once taking part in the discussion."

But examples of perfect self-confidence in addressing the House of Commons for the first time are the exception. It is a trying ordeal even for the most

practised speakers; to some members, indeed, it is attended by terrors which they can never brace up their nerves sufficiently to overcome. The maiden speech of Lord North's son, Frederic, afterwards Lord Guildford, was also his last. "I once attempted to speak in Parliament," he said, "and it was not unnatural when I rose that my family name should at once fix every eye upon me. I brought out two or three sentences, when a mist seemed to rise before my eyes. I then lost my recollection, and could see nothing but the Speaker's wig, which swelled, and swelled, and swelled, till it covered the whole House. I then sank back on my seat and never attempted another speech, but quickly accepted the Chiltern Hundreds, assured that Parliament was not my vocation."

Joseph Addison, the most charming and easy of writers, made but one attempt to speak, and that was an unredeemed and unredeemable failure. Yet his muteness was no bar to his promotion in office, for though his voice was never heard in the House of Commons he became a Secretary of State. In 1709 he went to Ireland as Chief Secretary and sat in the Irish House of Commons as member for Cavan, while, as was then the custom, retaining his seat in the British Parliament. His maiden speech in the Irish Legislature was even a more ludicrous failure. He began: "Mr. Speaker, I conceive," and then paused as if frightened by the sound of his own voice. "I conceive, Mr. Speaker," he said again in louder tones, as if to drown the still small voice of self-depreciation that spoke upbraidingly to him within. Again he stopped and stood silent, until aroused by the ironical

cries of "Hear him ! Hear him !" when he once more set out with, " Sir, I conceive." But power of further utterance was denied him, and he had, perforce, to resume his seat. A witty member rising immediately indulged in rather a broad joke. " Sir," said he, " the honourable member has conceived three times and brought forth nothing."

As a rule the House has always been noted for the encouragement it accords to a maiden speech, but Mr. Disraeli's is not the only exception to the rule ; to Addison's friend, Sir Richard Steele, that notoriety also belongs. Steele entered the House of Commons as member for Stockbridge and a stout literary champion of the Whigs, at the meeting of the new Parliament, the twelfth of Queen Anne, on February 16th, 1714, and on the same afternoon he joined in the compliments that were paid to Sir Thomas Hanmer on his re-election as Speaker. " I rise up," said Steele, " to do him honour in some measure and distinguish myself by saying I wish him our Speaker." The Tories, forming the overwhelming majority of the House, determined not to hear the man who had so often ridiculed them in his satirical political writings. " 'The Tatler!' 'The Tatler!'" they roared, and kept up the cry so persistently, that Steele had to sit down ; and as he walked out of the House they continued their attacks. " It is not so easy a thing to speak in the House," they said. " He fancies that because he can scribble he can address an assembly of gentlemen. Out upon him !" Steele's first Parliamentary career was exceedingly brief. Within a month of his maiden speech a motion was made to expel him from the House of Commons for

having accused the Tory Ministry in a pamphlet called "The Crisis" of an intention to prevent the Protestant succession in the House of Hanover by proclaiming the Chevalier St. George as King when the Queen died. On March 18th, 1714, during the debate on the motion, a remarkable maiden speech, which began as a failure and ended as a triumph, was delivered in defence of Steele by his young friend, Lord Finch, eldest son of the Earl of Nottingham. Shortly before, the sister of the young nobleman, Lady Charlotte Finch (afterwards Duchess of Somerset), had been attacked in *The Examiner* for alleged misbehaviour in church, and Steele had written in *The Guardian* a scathing exposure of the libel. Lord Finch, therefore, felt he could not remain silent when Steele in his turn was assailed, but on rising to address the House, his modesty, and his awe of the Assembly, struck him almost dumb. A few confused sentences were all he could utter. "It is strange," he cried aloud, as he sat down utterly discomfited, "that I cannot speak for this man when I would readily fight for him." The exclamation touched the chivalrous instinct of the House, bitterly hostile though it was against Steele, and in response to inviting cries of "Hear him! Hear him!" from both sides, the young speaker rose again, and this time made an eloquent appeal on behalf of his friend. It did not, however, save Steele, the motion for whose expulsion was carried by two hundred and forty-five votes to one hundred and fifty-two.

About a quarter of a century before, another breakdown in a maiden speech was, by a happy thought, turned into a telling rhetorical success. Lord Ashley

sat in the House of Commons as member for Poole for four years before he succeeded his father as third Earl of Shaftesbury in 1699 and became celebrated as the author of "Characteristics." He was a staunch supporter of a Bill to grant the services of counsel to prisoners indicted for high treason ; but when he rose to make his maiden speech in its behalf, he found himself devoid of language. The House encouraged him by their cheers to collect his thoughts and find words to give them expression ; but he was unable to proceed. One sentence only did he utter before sitting down. " If, sir," said he, " I, who now rise only to give my opinion on the Bill now pending, am so confounded that I am unable to express the least of what I proposed to say, what must the condition of that man be who, without any assistance, is pleading for his life, and is apprehensive of being deprived of it ?" The elaborate speech which Lord Ashley had probably prepared with exceeding care could hardly have been more effective than this happy inspiration of the moment.

In the early years of the nineteenth century a Mr. James Johnston was member for Sandwich. He carefully prepared his maiden speech, and committed it to memory ; but when he rose to address the House his utterance failed him completely. Again and again he essayed to speak, but in vain, for the words would not come, and he resumed his seat without having uttered a single syllable. An Irishman named Mark Supple, a celebrated Parliamentary reporter of the time, and a practical joker, had a squib in the form of a broad-sheet issued, and, as was then the fashion in London, cried through the streets of Westminster and the City. On the top of the broad-sheet appeared in

large type the words: "The maiden speech of James Johnston, Esq., M.P. for Sandwich, as delivered yesterday in Parliament." The rest of the paper was blank!

"Then there was a maiden speech so inaudible that it was doubted whether, after all, the young orator really did lose his virginity." So writes Disraeli in "The Young Duke." He had, no doubt, in his mind an amusing incident which occurred in the House of Commons on November 21st, 1837, when the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne was moved by Lord Leveson (subsequently the well-known peer, Lord Granville), and seconded by Gibson Craig. Disraeli, in a letter to his sister, thus describes what happened: "Gibson Craig, of whom the Whigs had hopes, rose, stared like a stuck pig, and said nothing. His friends cheered; he stammered; all cheered; then there was a dead and awful pause, and then he sat down, and that was his performance." Turning to "Hansard" for an account of this mute and inglorious maiden speech, I find that while two pages and a half are given to Lord Leveson, Craig's effort is dismissed in this fashion:—

"The hon. member appeared to have entertained the intention of addressing the House at great length, and referred to his notes, remaining a few minutes on his legs without speaking; but after some time he was understood to apologise for so far trespassing upon their indulgence, and sat down."

Among the famous statesmen whose first words in the House of Commons firmly established their reputation, William Pitt and Sir Robert Peel are the most



notable. Pitt entered the House as member for Appleby on January 23rd, 1780, in his twenty-first year. On February 26th following he made his maiden speech in support of a Bill introduced by Edmund Burke for the reduction of the Civil List. Lord Nugent was speaking against the Bill, when Pitt, as a member of the Opposition, was asked by some supporter of the measure to reply. He gave a doubtful answer to the request, and later on, while Lord Nugent continued his speech, decided that, as he thought he had nothing of importance to say, he would not interpose in the debate. But his friends, understanding that he had agreed to speak, called upon him the moment Lord Nugent sat down. Pitt was, therefore, forced to rise; but though somewhat unprepared, he was neither embarrassed nor disconcerted, and he spoke very effectively in favour of economical reform. The young member's first appearance is thus described in "The Parliamentary History" (which we now call "Hansard"): "The Honourable William Pitt, son of the late Earl of Chatham, now rose for the first time, and in his speech directly in answer to a matter that had fallen out in the course of the debate, displayed great and astonishing powers of eloquence. His voice is rich and striking; his manner easy and eloquent; his language beautiful and luxuriant. He gave, in this first essay, a specimen of eloquence not unworthy the son of his immortal parent." We learn from other sources that Burke was moved to tears. "It is not a chip of the old block," he exclaimed to those sitting near him, "it is the old block itself." Lord North, the Prime Minister, declared that it was the best first speech he had ever heard. "Young Pitt will

be one of the first men in Parliament," said a member of the Opposition to Charles James Fox. "He is already," was Fox's reply, and the moment Pitt resumed his seat Fox hastened to congratulate him on his success. While they were talking an old member named General Grant joined them. "Aye, Mr. Fox, you are praising young Pitt for his speech," said the new comer; "you may well do so, for except yourself there is not a man in the House can make such another, and old as I am I expect and hope to hear you both battling it within these walls, as I have heard your fathers before you." Fox was disconcerted by the awkward turn of the compliment; but Pitt with great readiness and wit answered, "I have no doubt, General, you would like to attain the age of Methuselah." Peel's father bought him the representation of the borough of Cashel, in Ireland, and he entered the House of Commons in April, 1809, at the age of twenty-one. On January 23rd, 1810, he seconded the Address to the King in reply to the Speech from the Throne. "The best first speech since that of Mr. Pitt," was the judgment of the Speaker, Charles Abbot.

There is no record of Edmund Burke's maiden speech in "Hansard" or in the newspapers of the time, but it would seem from the political gossip of the day to have been successful. He took his seat as member for the borough of Wendover on January 14th, 1766, at the opening of the Session, being then thirty-seven years old, and on the 27th of the same month he spoke on the complaints of the American Colonists, restless and discontented under the rule of the mother-country. The elder Pitt, who was still

the Great Commoner, honoured him by a complimentary notice of the speech. "The young member has proved himself a very able advocate," said he. "I congratulate him on his success, and his friends on the value of the acquisition they have made." Burke was told by his friends that the praise of Pitt alone was a sure passport to fame. Dr. Johnson wrote to his friend, Bennet Langton, that Burke had gained more reputation than any Parliamentarian at his first appearance had ever gained before, which, as Burke had preceded William Pitt, was probably true. It is curious that the maiden speech of Charles Fox should have been in censure of Burke, to whose influence he subsequently surrendered himself. In March, 1768, Fox was returned for the borough of Midhurst, in Sussex, and entered the House under age, being then just over nineteen years, thus exposing himself to a penalty of £500, if any "common informer"—as the legal phrase goes—took action for its recovery in the Law Courts. On March 9th in the following year he made his first speech during the debate on the Address. Lord North defended the Grafton Ministry against the charge of having alienated the affections of the American people from their Sovereign, and Burke rose to reply on behalf of the Opposition. Members usually left the House when Burke spoke, but if all his speeches were as full of eccentric humour and as empty of philosophy as his reply to Lord North it is probable that he never would have been given the disparaging nickname of "the dinner-bell." "Sir," he began, "the noble lord who spoke last, after extending his right leg a full yard before his left, rolling his flaming eyes, and moving his ponderous frame, has at length

opened his mouth. I was all attention. After these portents I expected something still more awful and tremendous. I expected that the Tower would have been threatened in articulated thunder, but I have heard only a feeble remonstrance against violence and passion. When I expected the powers of destruction to 'cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war,' an over-blown bladder has burst, and nobody has been hurt by the crack." Fox followed Burke. "He observed," "Hansard" records, "that from the license gentlemen had taken in their language that day, it seemed as if the old decent freedom of debate was at an end, and they were endeavouring to establish new forms." It was, perhaps, Burke's occasional display of bad taste, as in these passages, which excited the criticism of John Wilkes: "His oratory would sometimes make one suspect that he eats potatoes and drinks whiskey."

It is difficult to decide, so contradictory are the contemporary verdicts, how Sheridan fared in his maiden speech. Elected for Stafford in his twenty-ninth year, he took his seat on September 12th, 1780. In the account of his election expenses there is the following item: "Two hundred and forty-eight burgesses paid £5 5s. each." It is, therefore, not surprising that his first speech, on November 20th, should have been in reply to a charge of bribery and corruption brought against him and his colleague, Monckton, in a petition presented by their defeated opponent, Benjamin Whitworth. William Woodfall, the famous Parliamentary reporter of the *Morning Chronicle*, used to relate that Sheridan went up to the gallery where he sat taking notes, and asked him, with apparent anxiety, what he thought of the speech.

"I am sorry to say I do not think that this is your line," replied Woodfall. "You had much better have stuck to your former pursuits." Sheridan, much perturbed by this judgment, stroked his forehead with his hand, and then exclaimed: "It is in me, however, and by God it shall come out." On the other hand Sir Nathaniel Wraxall states in his "Historical Memoirs" that it was a successful speech and was well received. "Even while pronouncing the few sentences which he uttered," writes Wraxall, "the fame of the author of 'The Duenna,' 'The School for Scandal,' and 'The Critic,' was already so well established as to procure him the greatest attention." Another verdict was: "Nature never intended him for an orator." Yet he was destined to become, according to contemporary opinion, one of the greatest orators of his day.

The unspoken maiden speeches are, in their way, as interesting as the delivered. One of the most notable of these "might-have-beens" was that of Edward Gibbon. To what conjectures as to its character—never, alas! to be satisfied—does the unspoken maiden speech of the great historian of the Roman Empire give rise! Returned for the borough of Liskeard at the General Election of 1774, he sat in Parliament for eight Sessions until 1783, when he retired to Lausanne to devote himself entirely to "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." He never made a speech; yet he had intended to become a talking member. "If my confidence was equal to my eloquence, and my eloquence to my knowledge, perhaps I might make no very intolerable speaker," he says in his "Autobiography." "At all events I

shall try to expose myself." After some experience of the House he decided not to expose himself, but to remain in his seat "safe but inglorious." Timidity and want of readiness, he says, condemned him to silence. In a letter to a friend, years after he entered Parliament, he writes: "I am still a mute; it is more tremendous than I imagined; the great speakers fill me with despair; the bad ones with terror."

Sir Philip Francis is prominent among the literary men who have been failures in Parliament. In April, 1784, he was returned for the borough of Yarmouth, in the Isle of Wight. On July 2nd he delivered his maiden speech on the affairs of the East India Company, a subject on which he might certainly have been expected to succeed; but though he devoted great care to its preparation, the result was a dismal failure. Indeed, he never made his mark as a speaker. To account for his unreadiness, which was his greatest defect, he used to quote Lord Bacon's well-known axiom: "Reading makes a full man; writing an exact man; speaking a ready man." "I had enough and too much of the former and none of the latter in my youth," said he. "A vessel may be too full to part easily with its contents, and few orators are very exact men. Besides, I had too much sensibility and felt that the House was against me. The House was Pitt's, and Pitt could not despise me; but he tried to make it believe he did." Lady Francis advanced another and very curious reason for her husband's failure as a speaker: his over-caution lest he might say anything that would give corroboration to the popular suspicion that he was "Junius."

On the other hand, Lord Byron's *début* as a politician

in the House of Lords was, for a poet, a most promising performance. On February 27th, 1812, he made his maiden speech in opposition to a Bill which aimed at the suppression of the labour riots in Nottingham by extending the penalty of death to the breaking of the newly-invented stocking frames. Being *for* the people, though, as he was always careful to add, not *of* the people, he had espoused the Radical side in politics. In the course of his speech he said he was glad to think that the Bill would be ineffective. Two things were wanting to consign to the gallows a desperate weaver who wreaked his vengeance on the machinery which deprived him of employment—"twelve butchers for a jury and a Jeffreys for a judge." Writing to a friend on the speech, which he thought would be a good advertisement for "Childe Harold," just about to be published, Byron said: "I have had many marvellous eulogies repeated to me since, in person and by proxy, from divers persons, *Ministerial*—yea, *Ministerial*!—as well as Oppositionists; of them I shall only mention Sir F. Burdett. He says it is the best speech by a *lord* since the *Lord* knows when, probably from a fellow-feeling in the sentiments. Lord Holland tells me I shall beat them all if I persevere; and Lord Granville remarked that the construction of some of my periods are very like *Burke's*!! And so much for vanity. I spoke very violent sentences with a sort of modest impudence, abused everything and everybody, and put the Lord Chancellor (Eldon) very much out of humour, and, if I may believe what I hear, have not lost my character by the experiment. As to my delivery, loud and fluent and enough; perhaps a little theatrical." He adds

an adverse reflection upon the Parliamentary reporting of the time. "I could not recognise myself, or anyone else, in the newspapers." He, therefore, contributed a report in the first person to "Hansard" (a practice still prevailing), which, like all such contributions, reads more like an essay than a speech.

Probably the most eloquent speaker which the English Bar has produced was the great advocate Thomas Erskine, who became Lord Chancellor. Yet, like many another brilliant lawyer, he was a failure in Parliamentary debate. His maiden speech was disastrous. Entering the House of Commons in 1783 as member for Portsmouth when thirty-three years old, with a splendid reputation as a forensic orator, he made his maiden speech on November 20th on the first reading of Fox's East India Bill. He began with an attack on Pitt, who opposed the Bill, for his solicitude on behalf of the chartered rights of the East India Company. Pitt, providing himself with pen and paper, took notes for a speech in reply. But Erskine's address was strangely destitute of the force and animation which characterised his efforts at the Bar; and, as he proceeded, it was noticed that Pitt paid less attention to him and took fewer and fewer notes, till at last he dashed the pen through the paper and, with a contemptuous smile, flung them on the floor. Erskine, who witnessed this act of disdain, struggled dispiritedly through the remainder of his speech and sank into his seat shorn of much of his fame. Later on, Pitt rising to reply struck Erskine another cruel blow. "I will reply to both speeches," said Pitt, referring to Fox and Erskine; "but I shall make no mention of what was said by



the honourable gentleman who spoke last. He did no more than regularly repeat what was said by the honourable member who preceded him and regularly weaken all he repeated."

George Canning's first speech was remarkable neither way. He was twenty-four years old when he entered the House as member for Newport, in January, 1794. A few days later, on January 21st, he made his maiden speech in support of Pitt's proposal to grant a subsidy to the King of Sardinia. But far more interesting than the speech is the graphic narrative of his feelings during the ordeal which he gives in a letter to his friend Lord Boringdon:—

"I intended to have told you, at full length, what were my feelings at getting up and being pointed at by the Speaker and hearing my name called from all sides of the House; how I trembled lest I should hesitate or misplace a word in the first two or three sentences, while all was dead silence around me, and my own voice sounded to my ears like some other gentleman's—how, in about ten minutes or less, I got warmed in collision with Fox's arguments and did not even care twopence for anybody or anything; how I was roused, in about half an hour, from this pleasing state of self-sufficiency by accidentally casting my eyes towards the Opposition Bench, for the purposes of paying compliments to Fox, and assuring him of my respect and admiration, and there seeing certain members of the Opposition laughing (as I thought) and quizzing me; how the accident abashed me; and, together with my being out of breath,

rendered me incapable of uttering ; how those who sat below me on the Treasury Bench, seeing what it was that distressed me, cheered loudly and the House joined them ; and how, in less than a minute, straining every nerve in my body, and plucking up every bit of resolution in my heart, I went on more boldly than ever, and getting into a part of my subject that I liked, and having the House with me, got happily and triumphantly to the end."

Lord Palmerston was first returned to Parliament as member for Newport, Isle of Wight, at the General Election, 1807, being then twenty-three years old. He was appointed a Junior Lord of the Admiralty in the Duke of Portland's Administration, and on February 3rd he made his maiden speech. The Whigs moved for the production of papers to show on what grounds the Government had advised the expedition against Copenhagen. Palmerston displayed in his first speech on this motion (a vindication of the necessity of secrecy in diplomatic correspondence) the shrewdness, tact, and humour that characterised most of his Parliamentary addresses. Writing to his sister the next day in an unwarranted mood of self-depreciation, he said : " You will see by this day's paper that I was tempted by some evil spirit to make a fool of myself for the entertainment of the House last night ; however, I thought it was a good opportunity of breaking the ice, although one should founder a little in doing so, as it was impossible to talk any very egregious nonsense upon so good a case." On February 6th he wrote again to his sister : " Many thanks for your congratulations. I

certainly felt glad when the thing was over, though I began to fear I had exposed myself; but my friends were so obliging as to say I did not talk much nonsense, and I began in a few hours afterwards to be reconciled to my fate. . . . I was about half an hour on my legs; I did not feel so much alarmed as I expected."

The speech with which Lord John Russell opened a Parliamentary career that lasted for close on half a century escaped the attention of the reporters and has consequently passed into oblivion. In 1813, while he was still somewhat under age, he was returned to the House of Commons for the family borough of Tavistock. All that is known of his maiden speech is that it was in opposition to the union of Norway and Sweden, to which England and Russia had made themselves parties in 1814. His first important speech was delivered on February 26th, 1817, against the proposal of the Tory Government, under Lord Liverpool, to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act owing to the increasing outbreaks of crime among the distressed classes of the community. The speech, which "Hansard," with a view, perhaps, to make up for its neglect of his maiden effort, reports fully in the first person, contained an announcement of Lord John's intention to retire from public life on account of ill-health. "I am determined," he added, "for my own part that no weakness of frame, no indisposition of body, shall prevent my protesting against the establishment of the most dangerous precedent which this House ever made." Shortly afterwards he resigned his seat in the House of Commons, with the design of never re-entering the

Chamber again, so disappointed was he with the failure of the Whigs to make any headway in the country against the Tories. His friend Tom Moore published an eloquent remonstrance in verse. It began—

“What! thou, with thy genius, thy youth and thy name—  
 Thou born of a Russell whose instinct to run  
 The accustom'd career of thy sires is the same  
 As the eaglet's, to soar with his eyes on the sun!”

and ended—

“Like the boughs of that laurel of Delphi's decree,  
 Set apart for the fane and its service divine,  
 So the branches that spring from the old Russell tree,  
 Are by Liberty claim'd for the use of her shrine!”

This flattering appeal induced Lord John to consecrate to politics the leisure and talents he had intended to devote to travel and literature, and he was re-elected for Tavistock on June 18th, 1818.

“A more terrible audience there is not in the world,” said Macaulay of the House of Commons, but he was on good terms with it from the first. Before he was quite thirty he entered the House of Commons as member for Calne in 1830, and on April 5th of that year he made his maiden speech, which was a powerful appeal in support of a motion for the removal of the civil disabilities of the Jews. In the battle of Reform, which had just begun, he became a conspicuous fighter. Writing to his sister from the House of Commons in July, 1831, he makes some interesting comments on his style of oratory:—

“I said a few words the other night. They were merely in reply, and quite unpremeditated, and were not ill received. I feel that much practice will be

necessary to make me a good debater on points of detail ; but my friends tell me that I have raised my reputation by showing that I was quite equal to the work of extemporaneous reply. My manner, they say, is cold, and wants care. I feel this myself. Nothing but strong excitement and a great occasion overcomes a certain reserve and *mauvaise honte* which I have in public speaking ; not a *mauvaise honte* which in the least confuses one, or makes me hesitate for a word, but which keeps me from putting any fervour into my tone or my action. This is, perhaps, in some respects an advantage, for when I *do* warm, I am the most vehement speaker in the House, and nothing strikes an audience so much as the animation of an orator who is generally cold."

In the following August Macaulay, again writing to his sister of a dinner given by Lord Althorp, deals with the nervousness which seizes most members when they are about to address the House of Commons:—

"We talked about timidity in speaking. Lord Althorp said he had only just got over his apprehensions. 'I was as much afraid,' he said, 'last year as when I came into Parliament. But now I am forced to speak so often that I am quite hardened. Last Thursday I was up forty times.' I was not much surprised at this in Lord Althorp, as he is certainly one of the most modest men in existence. But I was surprised to hear Stanley say that he never rose without great uneasiness. 'My throat and lips,' he said, 'when I am going to speak, are as dry as those of a man who is going to be hanged.' Nothing

can be more composed and cool than Stanley's manner. His fault is on that side. A little hesitation at the beginning of a speech is graceful, and many eminent speakers have practised it, merely in order to give the appearance of unpremeditated reply to prepared speeches; but Stanley speaks like a man who never knew what fear, or even modesty, was. Tierney, it is remarkable, who was the most ready and fluent speaker almost ever known, made a confession similar to Stanley's. He never spoke, he said, without feeling his knees knock together when he rose."

Gladstone's first appearance as a speaker in the arena in which he was for so long a period the most eloquent and predominant personality, was obscure and disappointing. He took his seat as member for Newark on January 29th, 1833—the opening day of the first Session of the first Parliament elected under the Reform Act—being then twenty-three years old. Three weeks later, on February 21st, he made his maiden speech. A petition signed by 3,000 Whigs of Liverpool was presented, alleging bribery and corruption against the Tory representatives of the town, and in the discussion which followed, Gladstone said a few words on behalf of the electoral honour of his native place. "Every great orator from Demosthenes to Burke," Gladstone once said, "has suffered from nervousness on the eve of an important speech, and although I cannot claim to share their gift of golden speech, I can claim more than a fair share of their defect of nerves." Certainly he was extremely nervous on this occasion, as his indistinctness of

utterance and hesitancy of manner only too obviously showed. That voice which subsequently held so many thousands spellbound by its music was inaudible from the Gallery in which the reporters were taking notes. The *Times*' report began: "Mr. W. Gladstone was understood to protest against the statements made against the petitioners"; and the *Morning Chronicle* wrote: "Mr. Gladstone made a few remarks which were not audible in the Gallery." So little notice did this *début* attract, that a speech delivered in the House on May 17th by his brother Thomas Gladstone (member for Portarlington)—on presenting a petition in favour of the abolition of slavery, from his constituency—has been described in biographical sketches as Gladstone's maiden effort. But his first important speech was made on June 3rd in the same year on the Government's proposals for the emancipation of slaves within the British Empire.

Lord Howick, in the course of the debate, had said that the slaves employed in the production of sugar on the estate of Gladstone's father in Demerara had been cruelly overworked. The young member earnestly defended his father in the treatment of his slaves, and this concluded his speech:—

"If the labours of the House should be conducted to a satisfactory issue it would redound to the honour of the nation and to the reputation of his Majesty's Ministers, whilst it would be delightful to the West India planters themselves, for they must always feel that to hold in bondage their fellow-men must always involve the greatest responsibility. But let not any man think of carrying this measure by force. England

rested not her power upon physical force, but upon her principles, her intellect and virtue; and if this great measure were not placed on a fair basis, or were conducted by violence, he should lament it as a signal for the ruin of the Colonies and the downfall of the Empire."

Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, and the Minister who had charge of the Negro Emancipation Bill, paid a compliment to the young member, who he supposed had then addressed the House for the first time. "Whatever cause," he said, "shall have the good fortune of his advocacy will derive from it great support."

Lord Salisbury was twenty-four when, as Lord Robert Cecil, he took his seat in the House of Commons as member for Stamford, in February, 1854. Two months later, on April 7th, he delivered his first speech on Lord John Russell's University Bill. "Hansard" devotes only eighteen lines of its narrow columns to it, and the members who immediately followed in the debate made no reference to it; but Gladstone, speaking later in the evening, recognised in generous terms the abilities of the young man who was destined after the lapse of thirty years to become his chief political rival. "This first effort, rich with promise," said he, "indicates that there still issue forth from the maternal bosom of the University men who in the first days of their career give earnest of what they may afterwards accomplish for their country." The most successful maiden speech of recent times was that of Sir William Harcourt. He was forty-one years old when he took his seat as member for Oxford, on February 16th, 1869, and just a week



later addressed the House for the first time. The subject was happily one in which he was well versed. Viscount Bury asked for leave to introduce a measure entitled the Vacating of Seats Bill, to repeal the statute of Queen Anne, which makes it necessary for members of the House to seek re-election on accepting office in the Government, on the ground that it served no useful purpose. Mr. Vernon Harcourt (as he was then called) protested against leave being given even to bring in such a Bill. The speech, which occupies six columns in "Hansard," and was loudly applauded throughout, induced Viscount Bury to withdraw his motion. It thus concluded:—

"The principle involved in the Statute of Anne he regarded as part of the essential and living fabric of the Constitution. His noble friend, however, appeared to be dealing with it as if it were some old sword which, having been a long time in the family, was of no further use, and which might, therefore, be sold off to some old curiosity shop. But he, for one, did not look at the statute from that point of view. It had done great service, and he believed it might do great service again. It was the sword of our forefathers, and it was our duty to keep it bright and burnished as we had received it from our ancestors. While sailing on a calm and unruffled sea we ought not to confine our thoughts solely to the present because it seemed prosperous, but we should make provision also for the future when a political tempest might arise, and jealously preserve those safeguards which our forefathers had provided, those safeguards which had proved hitherto, and might prove hereafter, alike

a security for the stability of the Throne and for the liberties of the people."

The maiden speeches of Lord Rosebery and Mr. Chamberlain also gave promise of the pre-eminence they have both attained in Parliamentary debate. Lord Rosebery was twenty-four when he addressed the House of Lords for the first time, on the 10th February, 1871, at the opening of the Session. Dressed in the uniform of the Royal Scottish Archers, he seconded the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. "I would plead," said he, in his opening sentence, "that that favour and indulgence which your Lordships are accustomed to show to all who for the first time address this House may be extended to me in even a larger measure, on account of my extreme youth and inexperience"; and, in conclusion, after thanking their Lordships for "the patience and indulgence with which they had listened to him," he added, "I believe there is no more solemn moment in the life of an Englishman than that at which he is first privileged to take part in the deliberations of the National Senate." Speeches moving the Address in both Houses are usually jejune and commonplace, but, besides good elocution, there was a freshness of treatment and a touch of genuine eloquence in the maiden effort of the youthful peer which raised it far above its class. He referred to the terrible conflict between France and Germany, and paid the following sympathetic and graceful tribute to the defeated nation:—

"But, my Lords, what shall we say of France? I believe that to those who have faith in the great

destinies of that great country—and I confess that I am one of them—that faith will be not more unshaken, but rendered more profound by the events of the present war. I believe that the time will come when France will look back to these bitter calamities with even thankfulness, as being the trial—the crucial trial—from which she emerged to a higher and purer state of liberty than she had ever previously known. She may well be thankful if they have taught her to despise the empty love of military glory, the endless desire of territorial aggrandisement, the restless anxiety for supremacy in Europe, which have so long distinguished her policy. This miserable war is due, not so much to the Emperor and his advisers as to those quack orators who for four years preached to France that the aggrandisement of Prussia was an insult to France; that the establishment of a powerful nationality on her borders was a menace; that France should be an Empire surrounded by duchies and provinces. My Lords, I believe that we shall live to see France far greater in the Councils of Europe by her moral authority than she ever was by her armies.”

Mr. Chamberlain was forty years old when, after a successful municipal career as a Radical in Birmingham, he entered the House as member for Birmingham on the 17th July, 1876. On the 4th August, in the same Session, the Education Bill, introduced by Lord Sandon, was under discussion; and some attacks by the supporters of the measure on the Birmingham School Board induced its Chairman, Mr. Chamberlain, to break the resolution which he had formed, not

to speak until he was a complete master of Parliamentary rules and procedure. He began modestly and, therefore, well. "As he had so recently come into the House, he felt reluctant to trespass on its time, being of opinion that he should best show his respect for the Assembly he was so proud to enter by refraining from addressing it while inexperienced in its form and practices." Mr. Chamberlain was thoroughly self-possessed, yet not assertive, although he surveyed the House while addressing it through an eye-glass. The speech made a good impression. Disraeli, then Prime Minister, emerged from his private room on hearing that "Chamberlain, the Radical, is up."

Mr. Arthur James Balfour was two and a half years in the House of Commons before he ventured to address it. He was in his twenty-sixth year when, on August 10th, 1876, he delivered his maiden speech. It was in the debate on the Indian Budget, which is usually introduced at the fag end of the Session, and excites but little interest among members generally. The point at issue was the technical one of the depreciation in the value of silver, and its injurious effect on the Indian tax-payers. Mr. Balfour delivered a brief and technical speech on the subject, in the course of which he warned the Government against meeting the emergency, as had been suggested, by increasing the face value of the rupee. "The position of India towards us," said he, "was that of a country paying tribute to another. He believed the ultimate form the tribute took was not silver or gold currency, but goods." The first appearance of Mr. Balfour in debate attracted no special attention. Eleven or

twelve years were yet to elapse before he established firmly, while filling the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland, his conspicuous ability as debater, administrator, and statesman.

Richard Cobden and Charles Stewart Parnell, two of the most eminent Parliamentarians of the nineteenth century, seem to have been absolutely tongue-tied before they entered the House of Commons. In 1835 Cobden, then in his thirty-first year, made his first public speech at a meeting in support of the demand of Manchester for a Corporation. It was a humiliating failure. "He was nervous," says a contemporary newspaper account; "confused, and, in fact, practically broke down, and the Chairman had to apologise for him." At the General Election of 1841 he was returned for Stockport. He took his seat at the opening of the new Parliament on the 24th August of the same year, and two nights later delivered his maiden speech in opposition to the Tory amendment to the Address, which led to the defeat of the Melbourne Government and the return to power of the Tories, with Peel as Prime Minister. "My speech had one good effect," he wrote to his brother. "I called up a booby who let fly at the manufacturers, very much, I suspect, to the chagrin of the leader of his party." He added, "All my friends say I did well. But I feel it very necessary to be cautious in speaking too much. I shall be an observer for some time." Cobden was no longer devoid of words. His first speech was an eloquent appeal for the abolition of the Corn Laws. "It sounded a new key," writes Mr. John Morley, "and startled men by an accent that was strange in the House of Commons. The

thoughtful among them recognised the rare tone of reality, and the note of a man dealing with things and not words. He produced that singular and profound effect which is perceived in English deliberative assemblies when a speaker leaves party recriminations, abstract arguments, and commonplaces of sentiment in order to inform his hearers of telling facts in the condition of the Nation." Cobden's great common sense and his intuition in arriving early at an understanding of the House, are shown by a letter written a few nights subsequently to his brother: "I observe there are a great many busy men of our party who like to see their names in print, and who therefore take up small matters continually. They are very little attended to by the House."

When Parnell entered public life in 1874, at the age of twenty-eight, by contesting Dublin in the Home Rule interest, he struck most observers as having no political faculty, and as being utterly devoid of any capacity for speaking. A. M. Sullivan describes the scene at the public meeting where Parnell made his *début* as a politician. "The resolution which I had moved in his favour having been adopted with acclamation, he came forward to address the assemblage. To our dismay, he broke down utterly. He faltered, he paused, went on, got confused, and pale with intense but subdued nervous anxiety, which caused every one to feel deep sympathy for him. The audience saw it all, and cheered him kindly and heartily, but many on the platform shook their heads, sagely prophesying that if ever he got to Westminster, no matter how long he stayed there, he would either be a 'silent member' or be known as 'single speech

Parnell.'” Parnell was defeated in that contest. But on the 22nd April, 1875, he entered the House of Commons as member for Meath, and soon found his tongue. That night a Coercion Bill for Ireland was under discussion in Committee, and Joseph Gillies Biggar, who was as much at ease in addressing the House as Cobbett or O’Connell, inaugurated the policy of obstruction by speaking for four hours, ramblingly and irrelevantly, on an amendment to the measure. Four nights later, Parnell, joining in the discussion on the same Bill, made his maiden speech. He was obviously and painfully nervous. He could only stammer out a few barely intelligible sentences, in protest against a description of Ireland—applied in the course of the discussion—as a geographical fragment of England!

Nervousness is not commonly recognised as an Irish failing, but at least two celebrated Irishmen have in this century owned its mastery when up for the first time before the House of Commons. Eighty years or so ago a distinguished Irish member named Dogherty, who subsequently became Chief Justice of Ireland, asked Canning what he thought of his maiden speech. “The only fault I can find with it,” said Canning, “is that you called the Speaker *Sir* too often.” “My dear friend,” said Dogherty, “if you knew the mental state I was in while speaking, you would not wonder if I had called him *Ma’am*.” Whiteside, another Irish member who also became Chief Justice of Ireland, used to relate that on seeing, during his maiden speech, the Speaker’s wig surrounded by blue flames he knew it was time to sit down.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE QUAIN'T SIDE OF PARLIAMENT.

EVERY human institution, probably, has an element of the quaint or the ridiculous in its composition. Certainly, Parliament, solemn and majestic though it be, as befits the greatest and most powerful Legislature in the world, has its quaint side, without which the business of law-making at Westminster would often be dull and prosaic indeed.

The rules of procedure that for centuries have regulated the proceedings of the House of Commons are a fruitful source of embarrassment and confusion to new members. Some members, indeed, never master the usages of the House thoroughly, and they go through their Parliamentary life with a reproving cry of "Order, order!" from Mr. Speaker ringing perpetually in their ears.

Even old official members often betray their ignorance of the rules of procedure. Lord Palmerston was in the House many years before he became its leader on his first appointment as Prime Minister; but he then found that he was inadequately acquainted with the customs of the House, and with a grim determination he sat on the Treasury Bench from the opening of each sitting till its close, with only an hour's interval for dinner, for weeks, eagerly on the



watch for incidents illustrative of Parliamentary procedure. Again, W. H. Smith, while Leader of the House, was unaware, on being appointed Lord Warden of Walmer, that it was necessary for him to vacate his seat, having accepted an office of profit under the Crown; and as he actually entered the House and spoke after his appointment, without having first gone to his constituents for a renewal of their trust, he incurred penalties amounting to £1,500 if any one chose—and the choice was open to every citizen of the Kingdom—to bring an action against him in the courts of law. Mr. Smith did subsequently resign, and was returned again without delay as member for the Strand Division of Westminster.

“How can I learn the rules of the House?” was the question put by a newly-elected Irish member to Parnell. “By breaking them,” was the prompt reply of the Irish leader, who, as is well known, spoke from experience on the point. Few members, however, would care to adopt that heroic method of mastering the rules, and the task of obtaining the knowledge by study is complicated by the curious circumstance that many of these regulations are unwritten. Points of order and procedure are settled by the Standing Orders or permanent rules passed from time to time by the House to regulate its proceedings, but the rules of etiquette and decorum have not been officially recorded. Members are, nevertheless, expected to make themselves acquainted with these regulations, and every breach of etiquette, however slight—even if it be due solely to inexperience and ignorance—meets with a stern rebuke, not only from the Speaker, but from the House generally.

Every sitting of the House of Commons opens with prayers, which are recited by the Chaplain. It is a curious circumstance that the two front benches are always deserted at these devotions. Now, it is on the Treasury bench and on the front Opposition bench that the men who really control the destinies of the Empire sit, and surely they stand more in need of divine light and guidance in the discharge of their duties than the unofficial members of the House. Nevertheless, a Minister or an ex-Minister is rarely, if ever, seen in the Chamber at prayers.

It must not be inferred, however, that the great, wise, and eminent occupants of the front benches of the House of Commons in thus absenting themselves from devotions deem themselves so exalted above ordinary mortals that they stand not in need of prayers. Nor is it, even, that they think themselves past praying for. On the other hand, the regular attendants at devotions must not be regarded on that account as men of sincere piety. Probably some of the members who may be seen every evening listening devoutly to the invocations of the Chaplain never attend service elsewhere.

What, then, is the explanation? Well, the House consists of 670 members, but only about half that number can be accommodated with seats in the Chamber. Consequently, on important and interesting nights there is always a keen competition for seats, which is regulated by certain rules. A member present at prayers has a right to the place he then occupies until the rising of the House. Each evening stands absolutely independent and by itself, and, therefore, the title to a seat secured by attend-

ance at prayers lapses at the termination of the sitting.

On the Table, in a little box, is a supply of small white cards with the words "At prayers" in large old English letters. Obtaining one of these cards and writing his name on it under the words "At prayers," the member slips it into a receptacle in the bench at the back of the seat, and thus secures the place for the night against all comers. He may immediately leave the House, and remain away as long as he pleases. The place may be occupied by another member in the meantime, but whenever the master of the seat—the gentleman whose autograph is written on the card in the little brass slit—returns to the Chamber, the temporary occupant of the seat must give place to him.

Thus does piety in the House of Commons meet immediately with the substantial reward of a seat in which to listen in comfort to a great speech. The consequence is that at times of great excitement in the House there is a most edifying display of devotion on the part of members; while in the dull seasons the attendance at prayers is deplorably lax, and as the occupants of the front benches have their seats secured to them by custom—a custom which now possesses all the force of a law—they never lend the *éclat* of their superior presence to the daily devotions of the House. Old and respected unofficial members of the House, who are in the habit of using certain seats, are, by courtesy, also allowed to occupy these places without dispute or question.

No unoccupied seat can after prayers be retained, as a matter of right, by a member who has been

absent from devotions placing a card or a hat or gloves thereon; but it may be so secured as a matter of courtesy. But how is a member to retain a seat until he establishes a right to it for the evening by being present at prayers? Must he enter the Chamber early and sit in the seat until the Speaker takes the Chair? He is mercifully spared that ordeal. He may leave his hat on the seat, and then betake himself to the reading-room, or the dining-room, or to any other part of the Palace of Westminster he pleases. But the hat must be his own workaday hat. If it be discovered that he has brought with him a second hat and leaves the precincts of the House wearing that hat, he forfeits all right to the seat.

These two regulations have been the subjects of definite and specific rulings by the Speaker. When the personal relations between the rival sections of the Nationalist Party were strained after the split in 1891, an Irish member took possession of a seat on which another Irish member had placed his hat after prayers. The owner of the hat, finding his seat occupied, indignantly told the story of his eviction to the sympathetic House, and the Speaker declared that the action of the other member in thus taking forcible possession of the seat was a violation of the etiquette of the House. Again, a large crowd of members gathered at Westminster in the early morning of the evening on which Mr. Gladstone introduced the Home Rule Bill of 1893; and when, after hours of waiting, the door giving immediate entrance to the Chamber was opened at seven a.m., so mad was the rush to secure seats that several members were crushed, knocked down, and trampled upon.

Subsequently the Speaker was informed that an Irish member had brought down a dozen soft hats, with which he secured twelve seats for colleagues who did not appear in the House till the ordinary hour of meeting in the afternoon ; and the Speaker—repeating a rule made in 1880—laid it down that the only hat which can secure a seat is the real *bonâ fide* headgear of the member, and not any “colourable substitute” for it. However, during the influenza epidemic of 1893, the Speaker, in pity for the hatless wanderers through draughty corridors and lobbies, departed from the old usage so far as to recognise a card left on the bench instead of a hat, as a sentinel of a seat to be occupied later on. Curiously enough, the innovation, which is now one of the recognised unwritten rules, was a reversion to an ancient practice. On February 21st, 1766, according to the “Annual Register” for that year, “by eight o’clock the seats in the House of Commons were begun to be taken for the members by pinning down a ticket with their names in such seats as they chose, which was reserved for them till prayers began.” The reason for the unusual rush for seats on that occasion (422 members were present in the House) was the introduction of the Bill for the repeal of the famous Stamp Act of 1765, which, imposing certain obnoxious stamp duties on the American Colony, had met with the most strenuous resistance from the people of that country.

The hat, indeed, plays an important part in Parliamentary customs. It also contributes occasionally to the gaiety of life in the House of Commons. No incident is greeted with more hearty laughter than that of a member, after a magnificent peroration,

plumping down on his silk hat on the bench behind him. The bashful and awkward member generally figures in these accidents. But the misfortune of forgetfulness has befallen even a cool and collected Parliamentary hand, and the result—a misshapen hat—has completely spoiled the effect of his most eloquent speech. A few years ago a London member, after his maiden speech, sat upon a new silk hat which he had provided in honour of the auspicious occasion, and as he was ruefully surveying his battered headgear, to the amusement of the unfeeling spectators, an Irish representative rose and gravely said: “Mr. Speaker, permit me to congratulate the honourable member on the happy circumstance that when he sat on his hat his head was not in it.” The call of “Order, order!” from the Speaker was drowned in roars of laughter.

When men meet together in public assemblies or in social life—as in a theatre or at a reception—the ordinary custom is to uncover while they are seated, and to wear their hats as they enter or leave the place. In Parliamentary life that rule is reversed. Members have their heads covered as they flit about the Palace of Westminster, but in the Chamber they can wear their hats only when they are seated on the benches. As they walk to their seats or rise to leave the Chamber they must uncover. This custom is the source of much confusion to new members. The House never fails to show its resentment of a breach of etiquette, however trivial. It will, without distinction of party, unanimously shout indignantly at a new member who, ignorant or unmindful of the Parliamentary custom, wears his hat as he walks up and

down the floor of the Chamber. I saw, a few years ago, an amusing incident from the Reporters' Gallery. A new member, startled by the shout which greeted him as he was leaving the Chamber with his hat on his head instead of in his hand, paused in the middle of the floor and looked around with a mingled expression of fright and perplexity. "Hat, hat!" shouted the House. This only embarrassed him the more. He felt his trousers pockets and his coat tails for the offending article of attire. He even looked at his feet to see if he were wearing it at that extremity of his person. Then an Irish member, amid the loud laughter of the House, politely took off the hat of the confused legislator and handed it to him with a courtly bow.

But the story of the humours of the Parliamentary hat is not yet ended. When a member is alluded to in the course of a speech he raises his hat, and he performs a similar act of politeness when a Minister answers a question put by him. A member addressing the House stands, of course, uncovered. But that rule does not always prevail. There is an occasion when it is positively out of order for a member to speak on his feet and with his hat off. He must speak in his seat with his hat on his head. When a debate has terminated, and the question is put from the Chair, an interval of two minutes—during which the electric division-bells ring out their summons all over the precincts of St. Stephen's—is allowed to enable members to get to the Chamber. The time is taken by a sandglass on the Table, and when it has elapsed the doors of the Chamber are locked. At this particular juncture it is essential that a member who

desires to address the Chair on a point of order should retain his seat and wear his hat. If he were to follow the ordinary practice and stand up uncovered, he would be roared at and shouted at from all sides of the House for his breach of etiquette. Mr. Gladstone had occasion once to address the Chair just as a division was about to be taken, and, forgetful of the rule for the moment, he rose to his feet. A shout of "Order, order!" forced him to his seat again on the front Opposition bench; and as he never brought his own hat into the Chamber, he was obliged to put on that of one of his lieutenants who sat on the bench beside him. Now Mr. Gladstone's head was of an abnormal size. He had to get his own hats made to order. It is improbable that the hat of any other member in the House would have fitted him; but the hat available on the occasion of which I write only just covered his crown, and members roared with laughter at his comical efforts to balance it on his head during the few minutes he occupied in presenting his point of order.

An exception to the rule that a member must stand uncovered when addressing the House on all other occasions is made in cases of sickness or infirmity. I have seen the infirm Sir Charles Forster, member for Walsall, addressing the House of Commons from his seat, in the later years of his Parliamentary life; and during the debate on the Home Rule Bill of 1893, in the House of Lords, the Marquis of Waterford, who had met with an accident in the hunting field, speaking while he reclined on a bench propped up with air cushions.

Forty members constitute a quorum; but once



a House is made, it proceeds uninterrupted, even although there be one member only with the Speaker present. The Speaker himself cannot take notice of the absence of a quorum. His attention must be directed to it. This is done by a member rising in his place and saying: "Mr. Speaker, I beg to call your attention to the fact that there are not forty members present." That being said, the Speaker must proceed to count the House. He does not, however, simply count the members who are present in the Chamber at the moment. He rises and says: "Notice having been taken that there are not forty members present, strangers will withdraw," and then sets going the electric bells, which ring in every room of the vast building a summons to members to return to the House. The members come rushing in from all quarters, and after the lapse of two minutes the doors are locked. Then, but not till then, the Speaker, using as a pointer his black beaver three-cornered hat (which, by the way, he never wears over his huge wig), proceeds to count the number in the House. When he arrives at the fortieth member, he cries out "Forty!" in a loud voice, resumes his seat, and business again proceeds from the point at which it was interrupted by the motion for a count. But if there were not forty present, he would simply say "Order, order!" quit the Chair without another word, and thus bring the sitting to an end.

In these days there is not much danger of the absentees running the risk of being made to stand the fire of the severe displeasure of the Chair. But it was evidently different in the middle of the eighteenth century. Lord Southampton (then Colonel

Fitzroy) once fell under the censure of Mr. Speaker Onslow. He was acting as a Lord-in-Waiting, and entered the House just too late to complete a quorum, but time enough to receive from the Speaker, in a loud, hectoring voice, a severe reprimand. The hon. and gallant member excused himself by saying he had been "waiting upon His Majesty." Mr. Onslow at this thundered out: "Sir, don't tell me of waiting; this is your place to attend in—this is your first duty." Bold speaking, truly, for the days of George the Third.

It is a favourite device for a member who desires to secure an audience for a colleague, to move "a count." The object, however, is not always attained. Members rush out again when the Speaker announces "forty," and leave the benches as deserted as before. A few Sessions ago a London member, who was to have resumed a debate when the Speaker returned after the then brief adjournment for dinner at 8.30 o'clock, found no one in the House but himself, the Speaker, and the clerks at the Table. Not caring to waste his facts and figures upon empty benches, he gravely called the attention of the Speaker to the obvious fact that there were not forty members present. The division bells rang out their summons. Only thirty-six legislators responded to the call, and the unfortunate member, instead of obtaining the audience he desired, had the sitting suspended.

There is on record a still more amusing story of a member who unintentionally "counted out" the House to his own confusion. He was not an engaging speaker, so when he arose to "address the House" few were present to listen to him. He

began ironically. "Mr. Speaker," he said, "look at the condition of these benches. Is it not disgraceful that the weighty topic on which I propose to address the House has not attracted even the presence of a quorum?"

"Order, order!" cried the Speaker. "Notice having been taken that there are not forty members present, strangers will withdraw." The member murmured curses not loud but deep on his unlucky expression of indignation. The bells rang out their summons, but no one answered. In another minute the Speaker disappeared behind the Chair.

A rare and curious circumstance, worth recording, happened in the Session of 1882. A division disclosed the fact that there were only twenty-five members in the House, which accordingly stood adjourned.

Formerly it was the custom for a member who moved a count to go covertly behind the Chair and whisper in the Speaker's ear, "There are not forty members present," and then disappear through the doors which gave convenient access from the Chamber immediately at the Speaker's back. But for several years past there has been no secrecy in connection with the matter. Counts are now moved by members from their places. Two minutes are allowed, the same time as in the case of a division, to enable members to get to the Chamber; but in order to distinguish a count from a division, the bells ring three times for a division and once only for a count, so that those who have no sympathy with the business under consideration need not trouble themselves to quit the reading-room, the smoking-room, or the dinner-table, in order to "keep a House." The doors

are not locked as in the case of a division. When the two minutes are past, members, therefore, come in after the Speaker has begun counting. Oftentimes one man arriving breathless in the nick of time saves the situation. Without him there would have been only thirty-nine members present, and the Speaker would have left the Chair.

A speech can be interrupted at any moment, if there are not forty members present, by a motion to count the House. This leads occasionally to an amusing if not very edifying spectacle. Say it is a "private members' night"—that is, a night given over to the discussion of notices of motion by unofficial members. The Government do not trouble about "keeping a House" on such a night. In fact it is often their interest to have an awkward and troublesome motion quietly suppressed by a count-out. It therefore altogether depends on the interest of the motion on the paper, or on the popularity of the member in whose name it stands, whether or not a quorum is retained within the precincts of the House. But it invariably happens in the case of a motion of doubtful interest or importance that a count is demanded by an opponent, perhaps just as the mover has begun his speech, but certainly after he has concluded. Immediately all the opposers of the motion clear out into the Lobby and try to dissuade those who have turned up in reply to the summons of the bells to remain outside with them, instead of going into the Chamber to help to "keep a House." They crowd round the portals of the Chamber, eagerly watching the Speaker as he slowly—oh, with what exasperating slowness!—counts the members present.

“One, two . . . thirty-nine!” With a cry of “Order, order!” the Speaker has disappeared, to the great delight of the group in the Lobby, the bitter vexation of spirit of the honourable gentleman in charge of the motion, and the utter bewilderment of the strangers in the galleries. The visitors on such a night are indeed deserving of commiseration. They had come to see the great House of Commons at work; and, lo! just after the Speaker resumed possession of the Chair at nine o’clock, and the curtain was rung up, the play was most inexplicably ended, and a minute afterwards they found themselves puzzled and disconsolate in Palace Yard.

If the House is in Committee when a count is called and a quorum is not made up, an adjournment does not thereupon take place. The House can only be adjourned with the Speaker in the Chair. The Speaker is therefore sent for, and the state of affairs having been reported to him by the Chairman, he counts again. If forty members are not then present, the adjournment takes place; but if a sufficient number of members to form a quorum have meantime arrived, the proceedings in Committee are resumed.

The only occasion on which the Speaker can leave the Chair without a motion to that effect being carried is when a count has taken place. After midnight, when the “Orders of the Day” are gone through, a formal motion for the adjournment of the House is made by a Minister. Until this is done the Speaker must remain in the Chair. The same rule also applies in the House of Lords. On one occasion the Minister in charge of that House forgot to make the usual motion and left the Chamber with the other

Peers. But the Lord Chancellor could not follow their example. He had to remain on the Woolsack until one of the doorkeepers brought back a Peer to make the motion necessary to set his Lordship free.

“Strangers will withdraw.” This direction is always given by the Speaker when a division is challenged or a count moved. But all the same, strangers do not nowadays withdraw from the Chamber. They still remain in the galleries above, and look down with interest on the progress of a division, or the strange proceedings which attend a count. Formerly, however, the Chamber was entirely cleared of strangers during a count or a division. That custom originated in the days before the division lobbies were introduced, when the members were counted in the House (the numbers only, and not the names of members, being recorded), and when there was a possibility of strangers slipping into the Chamber unnoticed and being reckoned by the tellers on one side or the other. One of the last divisions under the old system took place on February 19th, 1835, when the last Speaker chosen from the Conservative Party, Mr. Manners Sutton, was driven by the Whigs from the Chair to give place to Mr. Abercrombie. The scene is described by McCullagh Torrens in his “Life of Lord Melbourne.” It took place in the temporary structure used by the Houses of Parliament between the destruction of the old buildings by fire and the erection of the present Palace of Westminster.

“The question was at length put by the Clerk at the table, Mr. Ley, who as bound” (writes Mr. Torrens) “in courtesy to the former Speaker, declared

him to have the majority. The galleries were cleared, and the counting began. It was customary then for both sides to remain in their places and then to be reckoned by the tellers, who stood between them with their wands of office. The Ministerialists were declared to be 306, and already those about him congratulated Sutton on having manifestly won. Then came the reckoning for his opponent (Abercrombie). Except the Opposition whips, few felt sure that so great a number could be beaten, but when 300 had been told, and some difficulty was found in seeing accurately into the last corner of the crowded gangway on the left, the suspense for the moment was breathless. 'Three hundred and five,' and then there was a slight pause. 'Three hundred and six'—a briefer pause—and then 'Three hundred and seven' called forth such a cheer as wholly drowned the rest of the announcements, which went on until the final numbers were declared to be for Abercrombie 'three hundred and sixteen.'"

In the following year, 1836, the present system, by which members voting on different sides of a question walk through separate division lobbies and have their names recorded, was introduced; but it was not till 1853 that the House came to the conclusion that strangers present in the galleries might be allowed to remain during a division without any embarrassment to the tellers. The Speaker's order, "Strangers will withdraw," is now enforced only in regard to visitors who occupy the two benches under the clock, which are level with the back benches of the House itself, whence it might be possible for a stranger, if allowed to remain, to pass into one of the division lobbies.

But that he could be counted—even if he succeeded in getting into the Lobby—is an utter impossibility, for the names of members voting are ticked off by division clerks as they pass through the Lobby. In the Session of 1888 I saw from the Reporters' Gallery Dr. Croke, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cashel, climb over the low barrier which divides these seats from the House, and thus enter, unobserved by the Sergeant-at-Arms or his attendants, the sacred precincts of the Chamber. Of course Dr. Croke did not know at the moment of his breach of order. Mr. Parnell, who sat at the other side of the barrier, conversing with the Archbishop, invited him to accompany him to the members' quarters; and his Grace, unaware that the proper way was out through the Lobby, stepped over the barrier before Mr. Parnell could stop him, and then quickly disappeared with the Irish leader through the side door giving access to one of the division lobbies.

The House, however, has the right to clear all the galleries, including the gallery in which the reporters work, and to go into secret session, with closed doors, when it pleases. Formerly any member could at any time have the galleries cleared by simply rising in his place and saying, "Mr. Speaker, I espy strangers." But after a curious incident which occurred on April 27th, 1875, this autocratic power was very properly removed from the hands of the irresponsible unofficial member. On that evening there was a debate on a motion by Mr. Chaplin in relation to the breeding of horses. It attracted a brilliant sporting audience. The Prince of Wales was a prominent spectator in the Royal seat of the Peers' Gallery over



the clock. Suddenly the thread of Mr. Chaplin's discourse was severed by Mr. Joseph Biggar, the well-known Irish member, who, to the amazement of the crowded House, informed the Speaker that he espied strangers. Of course all strangers were ordered out forthwith; and out the Heir to the Throne and the representatives of "the Fourth Estate" had to go, with the less distinguished occupants of the galleries. But the Standing Order regulating the admission of strangers was at once suspended on the motion of Mr. Disraeli, the then Leader of the House, and visitors and journalists were quickly re-admitted. It was also enacted then that for the future the galleries should only be cleared on a motion regularly moved, and, if necessary, carried on a division; power, however, being reserved to the Speaker, or the Chairman of Committees, to order the withdrawal of strangers whenever he thought it necessary. That order has been put in force only once—in 1879—when on the motion of Colonel King-Harman, which was carried on a division, the galleries were cleared for four or five hours during a debate on the murder of Lord Leitrim in Ireland.

Members are not allowed to refer to each other by name in debate. The only member who is properly addressed by name is the Chairman who presides over the deliberations of the House in Committee. On a member rising to speak in Committee he begins with "Mr. Lowther" and not with "Mr. Chairman," as at public meetings. When the Speaker is in the Chair the formula is, "Mr. Speaker, sir." In debate a member is distinguished by the office he holds, as "The Right Honourable Gentleman the Chancellor of

the Exchequer," or by the constituency he represents, as "The Honourable Gentleman the Member for York." Some make use of the terms "My Honourable Friend," or "My Right Honourable Friend." In case of family relations the same form is usually used. Occasionally "My Honourable Relative," or "My Right Honourable Relative," is heard; but "My Right Honourable Father," or "My Right Honourable Brother," though no doubt allowable, has not been hitherto used.

During the Session of 1879 Mr. James Lowther, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, rose from his seat and was hurriedly leaving the House just as Mr. Synan, an Irish representative with a very loud voice, began to call attention to some Irish grievance. Another Irish member, thinking it strange that the Chief Secretary should leave the Chamber when a question relating to Ireland was being brought forward, called out, "Hi, hi! Lowther! where are you going?" And turning as he reached the door, Mr. Lowther coolly replied, "I am going out on the terrace to hear Synan." But the Chair does not encourage these familiarities between members in the House.

The rule is in every case, when referring to a member, to use the word "Honourable" or "Right Honourable." This custom undoubtedly tends to keep the standard of debate on a high level of order, courtesy, and dignity, but it has sometimes led to odd results. During the Parliament of 1886-92 two members were ignominiously expelled from the House after their conviction for gross immoral offences; and yet in the discussion that took place on each occasion the criminal was still punctiliously described as "The Honourable Gentleman." Again, lawyers are

styled "Honourable and Learned," and officers of the army and the navy "Honourable and Gallant." Mr. W. H. Smith, who was not a lawyer, was once referred to in a speech as "The Right Honourable and Learned Gentleman." "No, no," exclaimed the simple old gentleman—not without a touch of humour—disclaiming the distinction amid the merriment of the House, "I beg the Honourable Gentleman's pardon; I am not learned."

A member on his feet must, as I have said, address "Mr. Speaker." But occasionally one may hear some amusing slips of the tongue in the course of a debate. Members who have had a civic training in public life begin by apostrophising "Mr. Mayor," and others who are largely in demand at public meetings, by "Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen." A good story went round the Press recently, that an Irish member who had been called to order by the Speaker saluted that august personage as "Your Reverence." But it was an amusing case of mishearing on the part of the journalists in the Press Gallery. The member in question wrote to the newspapers that what he actually said was, "With all due deference to your ruling, Mr. Speaker."

As the Speaker and not the House generally is addressed, it is considered a breach of propriety for any one to pass between the Chair and the member "in possession of the House." This violation of order is common for some time after the election of a new Parliament; but it is always reprimanded with a loud and angry cry of "Order, order!"—the cry that is most frequently heard in the House—which is very disconcerting to the blundering member against

whom it is directed. A member, therefore, has often to get to his seat by a long, circuitous route. But if it be impossible to do this without crossing the line between the Chair and the member addressing Mr. Speaker, he must wait until the speech is concluded, or if he cannot wait—if the getting to his place at once be imperative—he has to offer humble atonement for his act of impropriety by sacrificing his own native dignity of demeanour. He must cautiously and respectfully approach the sacred line, and then get over it quickly with a light step and a duck of the head, or with his back lowly bent. He is fortunate if the cry of "Order, order!" inspired by the breach of etiquette is not accompanied by ironical laughter over his grotesque antics.

It is a breach of order for a member to read a newspaper in the House. He may quote an extract from one in the course of a speech, but if he attempted to peruse it as he sat in his place, his ears would soon be assailed by a stern and reproving cry of "Order, order!" from the Chair. Some members resort to the deception practised by the young lady who had "Vanity Fair" bound like a New Testament and was observed reading it during service in St. Paul's Cathedral. Members often slip a newspaper or periodical into the "Orders of the Day" and read it while the Speaker imagines they are industriously studying the clause of a Bill or its amendments.

The House of Lords is less strict, oddly enough, in little matters of this kind than the House of Commons. The Peers allow the attendants to pass up and down their Chamber delivering messages; and they have a

reporter—the representative of the “Parliamentary Debates”—sitting on the floor of the House. But in the House of Commons, the clerks at the Table, and the Sergeant-at-Arms and his deputy, are the only officers of the House who are allowed within the technical limits or boundaries of the legislative Chamber, or, in other words, across the Bar, while the House is sitting. An attendant, even when he has letters and telegrams to deliver, dare not pass beyond the line of the Bar. He gives the messages to some member sitting near the Bar, and they are passed on from hand to hand till they reach the members to whom they are addressed.

Every member is under a constitutional obligation to attend the service of the House. The attendance, however, is not now compulsory. The House, probably, considers the force of public opinion in the constituencies sufficient to correct any laxity on the part of members in the discharge of their Parliamentary duties. But there is an old procedure known as “a call of the House,” for taking the full sense of the House on any question of great importance. Not less than a week or ten days is allowed to members to respond to the call, and any member not present in the House to answer to his name when the roll is read by the clerk, without due cause for his absence, may be sent for in the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms. This procedure would now be resorted to only on the occasion of some supreme crisis in the affairs of the nation—if even then—when it may be essential that every member should be at his post. The last time “a call of the House” was made was on April 19th, 1876, on the motion of Mr. Whittle Harvey,

who subsequently moved for the appointment of a select committee to revise the Pension List. The division on the latter motion (which was rejected by a majority of 122) showed that there were 414 members in the House. The last occasion on which a motion for "a call" was moved was on March 23rd, 1882, when Mr. Sexton, in accordance with notice, moved "That this House be called over on Thursday, the 30th of March." The House on that day was to enter on the consideration of the proposed new rules of procedure (including the closure of debate), and Mr. Sexton's object was to secure the attendance of Messrs. Parnell, Dillon, and O'Kelly, M.P.'s, who at the time were confined as "suspects" in Kilmainham Prison, Dublin. The motion, which was opposed by the Liberal Government, was defeated. It was pointed out that the procedure was useless for the purpose for which it was originally intended — namely, to take the full sense of the House on a Bill or motion, as there is no compulsory process in the procedure of the House by which members, even if they answered the "call," can be obliged to vote on the question at issue. The "call" to which members are most alive, nowadays, is "the crack of the party Whip."

That absenteeism was a dire offence in the time of the Stuart Kings is proved by the number and variety of "orders touching motion for leave into the country" to be found in the Journals during the seventeenth century. Here are a few of them: "13th of February, 1620. No member shall go out of town without open motion and licence in the House." By the next rule it will be seen that knights of the shire were ranked

much higher than the representatives of cities or boroughs: "25th of March, 1664. The penalty of £10 to be paid by every knight and £5 by every citizen, &c., who shall make default in attending." Absence evidently became a crying sin, and was visited accordingly: "16th of November, 1666. To be sent for in custody of the Sergeant." From the succeeding string of resolutions it is evident that under the restored Monarchy there was a marked inclination amongst members to "play the truant": "18th of December, 1666. Such members of the House as depart into the country without leave to be sent for in custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms." Even this terror does not seem to have effectually deterred "runaways," for two months later marks the imposition of a penalty which, in those days, must have seemed formidable indeed: "13th of February, 1667. That every defaulter in attendance, whose excuse shall not be allowed this day, be fined the sum of £40 and sent for in custody, and committed to the Tower till the fine be paid." A similar fine was at the same time imposed on "every member who should desert the service of the House for the space of three days," without special leave, incarceration in the Tower being part of the penalty. The stringency of this rule was relaxed by common consent in 1668, and a fine of £10 was substituted as sufficiently onerous; in all cases "the fines to be paid into the hands of the Sergeant-at-Arms, to be disposed of as the House shall direct."

The individual freedom of members in our times is not so much restricted; but that absenteeism is still an offence is proved by the fact that occasionally the

“Orders of the Day” contain a notice such as the following in the name of one of the Whips:—

“SIR WILLIAM WALROND.

“To move that leave of absence for two months be granted to Mr. J. R. Flemming.”

Such motions are made by the Whips on behalf of a member who desires to absent himself from the House of Commons on the ground of urgent business, ill-health, illness in his family, or domestic affliction, and the leave of absence applied for is always granted by the House. This, however, is only done when the member concerned is serving on a Private Bill Committee.

A member of the House of Commons cannot, according to the ancient law of Parliament, resign his seat. Once he is duly elected he must retain the trust confided in him by his constituents till the dissolution of Parliament, unless he is removed by death, or becomes a bankrupt or a lunatic, or is expelled the House, or accepts an office of honour or profit under the Crown. The latter condition, however, affords a practical, though rather ludicrous, means of escape for a member who desires to rid himself of his representative and legislative responsibilities. He accepts the office of “Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds.” It seems that centuries ago the Chiltern Hills—a portion of the high lands of Buckinghamshire—being covered with timber afforded protection to numerous banditti, and it was the duty of the Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds—an officer appointed by the Crown—to protect the inhabitants of the neighbouring districts from their depredations. The duties have,



of course, long since ceased, but the nominal office has been retained. By accepting it a member who wishes to resign vacates his seat, and a writ for a new election is, in consequence, issued on the application of the Whip of the Party to which the retiring member belonged. The office is resigned as soon as another member desires to escape from Westminster. It is in the gift of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It cannot be conferred twice in one day, but there are two other offices of a similar nature—"Steward of the Manors of Hendred, Northstead and Hempholme," or "Escheator of Munster"—at the disposal of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in case he should receive two or more applications from retiring members on the same day.

But there is nothing more amusing, perhaps, in all the quaint and curious customs of the House of Commons, than the strange ceremony which marks the termination of its every sitting. The moment the House is adjourned, stentorian-voiced messengers and policemen cry out in the lobbies and corridors, "Who goes home?" These mysterious words have sounded every night for centuries through the Palace of Westminster. The custom dates from a time when it was necessary for members to go home in parties accompanied by links-men for common protection against the footpads who infested the streets of London. But though that danger has long since passed away, the question "Who goes home?" is still asked, night after night, during the session of Parliament. No reply is given, and none is expected.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE CURRENT COIN OF THE POLITICIANS.

It is interesting and instructive to trace the origin of our party nomenclature and of those effective and picturesque phrases and familiar colloquial expressions which are the common property, or the current coin, of all politicians. Most of these striking sayings are associated with the names of eminent statesmen. Indeed it is one of the ironies of Parliamentary history that the memory of many a politician, distinguished and powerful in his day, lives mainly in his phrases. In some instances the sayings or catchwords were really coined by the speakers who first contributed them to our political currency; but in other cases they were not so much original expressions as apt quotations from obscure sources so strikingly applied as to fire the popular imagination. Take, for example, the phrase "a leap in the dark" which is generally associated with the name of Lord Derby in reference to the Act of 1867 establishing household suffrage in boroughs. Lord Derby was Prime Minister of a Conservative Government for the third and last time, and to this measure, introduced by his own Administration, he gave only a half-hearted support. The Franchise Bill was denounced by a distinguished member of the Conservative Party in the

House of Commons, Lord Cranborne (better known now as the Marquis of Salisbury) as "a leap in the dark." "No doubt," said Lord Derby, on the third reading of the Bill in the House of Lords, "no doubt we are making a great experiment and taking a leap in the dark, but I have the greatest confidence in the sound sense of my countrymen." The phrase was used eight years before by Lord Palmerston, in a private letter to Lord John Russell under, curiously enough, somewhat similar circumstances. Lord Russell had in contemplation certain proposals for electoral reform which included a £10 county franchise. "As to our county franchise," wrote Lord Palmerston, "we seem to be taking a leap in the dark." But we hear of the phrase having been used two hundred years earlier. Thomas Hobbes, the political writer of the seventeenth century, is reported to have said on his death-bed, "I am taking a frightful leap in the dark." "Meddle and muddle," one of the most expressive terms in our political currency, which is also associated with the name of Lord Derby, was really coined by that statesman. In 1864 Lord John Russell (or rather Earl Russell, for he was then a peer) was Premier and Foreign Secretary. He claimed that the policy of the Liberal Government in foreign affairs was a policy of non-intervention. "The foreign policy of the noble earl, so far as the principle of non-intervention is concerned, may be summed up," said Lord Derby, "in two short, homely, but expressive words—*meddle* and *muddle*. During the whole course of his diplomatic correspondence wherever he has interfered—and he has interfered everywhere—he has been lecturing, scolding, blustering and—retreating."

“Johnny’s upset the coach” is another happy political expression for which we are indebted to the imagination and humour of Lord Derby. In 1834, as Mr. Edward Stanley and subsequently Lord Stanley, he was Secretary of State for the Colonies in the famous Grey Administration which carried the great Reform Act of 1832. His tenure of that office was distinguished by the emancipation of the negro slaves in all the Colonies of Great Britain. The Cabinet was divided in opinion as to the wisdom or the justice of the alienation of the surplus revenues of the Irish Church to secular purposes; and when on the night of May 6th, 1834, Lord John Russell, speaking on the Irish Tithe Bill, supported the appropriation of the surplus revenues to educational purposes, Stanley wrote on a slip of paper, “Johnny’s upset the coach,” and passed it to Sir James Graham, another Minister on the Treasury Bench who, like himself, was opposed to the alienation of Church property. Stanley and others—including Graham—left the Whig Party. It was in reference to this secession that Daniel O’Connell quoted in the House of Commons the couplet from Canning’s “Loves of the Triangles” :—

“ Still down thy steep, romantic Ashbourne, glides  
The Derby Dilly, carrying six insides.”

“Cave,” the designation of a discontented section of a party which breaks away from their allegiance, arose out of a humorous sally made by Mr. John Bright during the debates on Mr. Gladstone’s abortive Reform Bill of 1866, basing the franchise in boroughs on a £6 rental. The measure was opposed

by a group of Liberals, including Mr. Horsman. "The right honourable gentleman," said Mr. Bright, in the course of a speech in the House of Commons "is the first of a new party who has expressed his great grief, who has retired into what may be called his political Cave of Adullam, and he has called about him everyone who is in distress, and everyone who is discontented." The phrase caught the popular fancy, and was accepted even by the malcontents. "No improper motive," said Lord Elcho (known in later years as Lord Wemyss), "has driven us into this cave, where we are a most happy family, daily—I may say hourly—increasing in number and strength, where we shall remain until we go forth to deliver Israel from oppression." The Bill was defeated and the Government resigned, only to be replaced by Lord Derby's Administration, which passed the Household Suffrage Act of 1867. A colleague expressed to Lord Derby the opinion that the Bill—"the leap in the dark"—went too far in a democratic direction. "Yes," said Derby, "but we have dished the Whigs," thereby making an important contribution to our political phraseology; and Mr. Robert Lowe (subsequently Lord Sherbrooke), who had joined Mr. Horsman in the Cave of Adullam, invented the happy phrase, "We must now, at least, educate our masters" (*à propos* of the new electorate) in a speech expressive of his amazement at this surrender of the Conservative Government on the question of Reform.

"The greatest happiness of the greatest number" first appeared (according to Jeremy Bentham, in his "Liberty of the People") in one of the innumerable

pamphlets written by Dr. Joseph Priestley, in reply to Edmund Burke's "Reflections on the French Revolution." "He rose like a rocket and fell like the stick" was first used by Tom Paine, the notorious Republican writer, in reference to Burke. "One half the world knows not how the other lives" will be found in "Holy Observations," by Dr. Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter and of Norwich in the seventeenth century. "The majesty of the people" was coined by Charles Fox. In 1798 a political dinner was given at the "Crown and Anchor" tavern in celebration of Fox's birthday, with the Duke of Norfolk in the chair. Concluding his speech in reply to the toast of his health, the great Whig leader said: "Give me leave, before I sit down, to call on you to drink our Sovereign's health,—the Majesty of the People." For this sentiment Fox was deprived of two offices he held under the Crown, the Lord-Lieutenancy of the West Riding of Yorkshire and the command of a militia regiment, and was also struck off the list of the Privy Council. Carlyle, on the other hand, thought the people were "mostly fools." It has been stated that this declaration occurs in Carlyle's appeal (printed in *The Spectator*) to Lord John Russell, then Premier, to do something for the industrial improvement of Ireland. In that appeal Carlyle merely speaks of his countrymen as "twenty-seven millions, many of whom are fools"; but in the "Latter-Day Pamphlets," in the chapter on Parliament, he says:—

"Consider in fact, a body of six hundred and fifty - eight miscellaneous persons set to consult

about business, with twenty-seven millions, mostly fools, assiduously listening to them, and checking and criticising them,—was there ever since the world began, will there ever be till the world ends, any business accomplished in these circumstances ?”

It is plain that it was from the latter, and not from the former, passage that the celebrated phrase came into popular use.

Among the political sayings for which we are indebted to Disraeli are: “Reaction is the consequence of a nation waking from its illusions” (1848); “*A tu quoque* should always be good-humoured, for it has nothing else to recommend it” (1855); “Finality is not the language of politics” (1859); “To assist progress, to resist revolution, is the policy of the Conservative Party” (1859); “Party is organised opinion” (1864). “England does not love coalitions” is another saying of that great political phrase-maker. On that night in 1852 when Lord Derby’s first Ministry, in which Disraeli filled the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, was defeated on an amendment by Gladstone to the Budget—an amendment which united Whigs, Radicals, and Peelites—Disraeli, in a defiant speech before the fatal division, said: “I know that I have to face a coalition. The combination may be successful—combination has before this been successful—but coalitions, though they may be successful, have always found that their triumphs have been brief. This I know, that England does not love coalitions.” That particular coalition under Lord Aberdeen and

Lord John Russell was certainly not successful. "There is one indisputable element of a Coalition Government," said Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, "and that is that its members should coalesce." In this case they drifted widely apart.

But Disraeli's most popular phrase was "Peace with Honour." The occasion on which the words were used is well known. On the return of the two British plenipotentiaries at the Berlin Congress in 1878, Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury, an enthusiastic reception was given them in London; and speaking on July 16th the former said: "Lord Salisbury and myself have brought you back peace, but peace I hope with honour, which may satisfy our Sovereign and tend to the welfare of the country." The phrase, however, like so many of his epigrammatic utterances, was not Lord Beaconsfield's own invention. It had been used before by two eminent statesmen, but it was Lord Beaconsfield's fine and apt application of it on a dramatic occasion that fixed it for ever on the public memory and made it a current coin of everyday political speech and writing. Lord John Russell, in the course of a speech at Dundee in 1865, said, "As Secretary for Foreign Affairs it has been my object to preserve peace with honour." The phrase is also to be found in one of the best known of Burke's speeches,—that imperishable oration on Conciliation with America delivered in the House of Commons March 22nd, 1775. "Great and acknowledged force," he said, "is not impaired either in effect or in opinion by an unwillingness to exert itself. The superior force may offer peace with honour, and with safety." Yet it is to poetry and not to politics that we are really



indebted for the phrase. Shakespeare uses it in "Coriolanus," iii. 2 :

"If it be honour in your wars to seem  
The same you are not, which, for your best ends,  
You adopt your policy, how is it less, or worse,  
That it shall hold companionship in peace  
With honour, as in war, since that to both  
It stands in like request ?"

An amusing story is told in connection with the phrase. In the course of a political lecture, illustrated by a magic-lantern, in a country village, portraits of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury, with the words "Peace with Honour," were thrown upon the screen. An old lady among the audience, whose head was full of recollections of a notorious criminal, innocently inquired, amid great laughter, "Which is Peace ?"

"Every man has his price." This cynical saying is generally ascribed to Sir Robert Walpole ; "yet," writes Mr. John Morley, "he never delivered himself of that famous slander on mankind." One night in the House of Commons he insisted that self-interest, or family-interest, was at the bottom of the fine and virtuous declamation of the Opposition. "All these men," he said, "have their price." It was, therefore, not a general, but a political proposition. "Mend it, or end it," was used by Mr. John Morley in reference to the House of Lords, in a speech made at St. James's Hall on July 30th, 1884. Mr. Morley was much praised by the Radical newspapers for his happy jingle. They did not know, though we may be sure so staunch a lover of good literature as Mr. Morley did not forget, that the speaker was only borrowing a phrase from Sir Walter Scott. "My fate calls me elsewhere," says

Halbert Glendinning in "The Monastery," "to scenes where I shall end it or mend it." "Property has its duties as well as its rights" appeared in a public letter addressed by Thomas Drummond, Under Secretary for Ireland in the Melbourne Administration, to the Tipperary landlords in 1838, in reply to their application to the Government for the aid of the military in the collection of their rents. Attempts have been made to deprive Drummond of the title to the authorship of this sentiment, which is engraved on the pedestal of his statue in the City Hall, Dublin. It is said that the letter was really written by the Chief Secretary, Lord Mulgrave, but no reason can be imagined why Mulgrave should not have put his name to the document were he its author. There is another statement that the phrase was used by Stephen Woulfe, an Irish lawyer, in a pamphlet entitled "The State of Ireland, Past and Present," which appeared in 1808. Woulfe's phrase is, "A landlord is not a land merchant, he has duties to perform as well as rents to receive."

One of the most quoted of all sayings, "The schoolmaster is abroad," we owe to Brougham. In a speech on education delivered in 1820 he used the following eloquent passage: "Let the soldier be abroad if he will; he can do nothing in this age. There is another personage abroad, a person less imposing, in the eyes of some, perhaps insignificant. The schoolmaster is abroad, and I trust to him, armed with his primer, against the soldier in full military array." Brougham was also the originator of the phrase "The pursuit of knowledge under difficulties." To him also we owe "The Bill, the whole Bill and nothing but the Bill," which became the battle-cry of the Reformers

in the contest with the Lords, in 1831, over the Reform Bill. "A revolution by due course of law" was Wellington's happy description of that measure when it became law in 1832. "I'll un-Whig that gentleman" is one of Pitt's most famous sayings. During the mental incapacity of George the Third, the Whigs maintained that the Prince of Wales had the absolute right to assume the Regency, having every reason to believe that one of his earliest actions in the exercise of the Royal Prerogative would be the substitution of a Whig for a Tory Administration. When Fox propounded in the House of Commons this theory, which, to say the least, was not quite in accord with Whig principles, Pitt slapped his thigh triumphantly and turning to a colleague who sat beside him on the Treasury Bench he exclaimed, "For this doctrine, I'll un-Whig the gentleman for the rest of his life." But there was an earlier use of the expression. In 1782 the Duke of Grafton threatened to leave the Rockingham Administration, and Lord Camden, in a letter deprecating such a step, said, "Your retreat would certainly be followed by other resignations and would totally un-Whig the Administration, if I may use the expression." In recent years Sir William Harcourt used the phrase in the House of Commons in reference to a prominent Liberal Unionist. He was comically made by one newspaper to say, "I'll unwig the gentleman for the rest of his life." Sir Francis Burdett began his fifty years of Parliamentary life as a Radical and ended it as a Conservative. In the course of an attack which he made on a Bill of the Liberal Government in his Conservative days, he stigmatised "the cant of patriotism." The phrase

was happy, but it left its author, the whilom patriot, open to as clever a retort as the House of Commons has ever heard. "There is something worse than the cant of patriotism," said Lord John Russell in reply, "and that is the recant of patriotism." The readiness of the retort, and its personal appositeness, greatly excited the House, which rang with cheers and laughter for several minutes. Mr. Gladstone is said to have declared that no cleverer retort than this was ever made. It has, however, transpired that the repartee had been given an earlier publication in "Fraser's Magazine" for June, 1845.

"It is impossible that the whisper of a faction should prevail against the voice of a nation." This phrase has an interesting history. During the struggle for Reform, after the Lords had thrown out the first Bill of 1831, a public meeting, held at Birmingham, the headquarters of the Radical organisation known as "The Political Union," and attended by 150,000 persons, adopted an address to the Crown, praying the King to create as many peers as might be necessary to carry the measure, and pledging themselves to pay no taxes if Reform were not carried. Lord John Russell, in a letter acknowledging a vote of thanks from the meeting, used the words, "It is impossible that the whisper of a faction should prevail against the voice of a nation." The King, William IV., expressed to Earl Grey, the Prime Minister, his strong objection to the phrase. Russell wrote to the King modifying the expression. "Although," he said, "not intended to apply to the majority of the House of Lords, it was certainly a phrase which, had he not written in the first moments

of disappointment at the rejection of a measure, the object of so much labour, and such protracted discussion, he would not have used." Attention having been also called in the House of Commons to the words, Russell sought to explain them away in a similar manner. He said, "There was a faction in the Lords which had swelled the majority, but the majority was not in itself a faction."

Mr. Gladstone himself has enriched our political colloquialisms with such useful and striking phrases as "The flowing tide is with us," "Advancing by leaps and bounds," "Within measurable distance," "Within the range of practical politics," "Our friends across the seas," "The ringing of the Chapel bell" (a reference to the attempt of the Fenians to blow up Clerkenwell prison), and "a Nation rightly struggling to be free" (applied to the Mahdists). At the opening dinner of the Palmerston Club, before his accession to office in 1880, he gave utterance to his definition of Liberalism and Conservatism—"Trust in the people qualified by prudence; distrust of the people qualified by fear." His also was the happy phrase, "Greater freedom and less responsibility," as a description of his state after quitting office. On being called to account in the Parliament of 1880-85 for some uncomplimentary expressions he had used towards Austria before he came into office, he pleaded in extenuation that when he uttered the words he occupied "a position of greater freedom and less responsibility." The famous watchword "the Masses against the Classes" was first uttered by Gladstone in a speech at Liverpool on June 28th, 1896. "I will venture to say," he cried, "that upon one great class of subjects, the

largest and most weighty of all, when the determining considerations that ought to lead to a conclusion are truth, justice, and humanity,—upon these, gentlemen, all the world over, I will back the Masses against the Classes.” The celebrated phrase, “an old Parliamentary Hand,” was happily applied by Mr. Gladstone to himself in the House of Commons, January 22nd, 1886, on the opening of a new Parliament. “I stand here,” he said, “as a member of the House where there are many who have taken their seats for the first time upon these benches, and where there may be some to whom, possibly, I may avail myself of the privilege of old age to offer a recommendation. I would tell them of my own intention to keep my counsel and reserve my own freedom, until I see the occasion when there may be a prospect of public benefit in endeavouring to make a movement forward, and I will venture to recommend them, as an old Parliamentary hand, to do the same.” The authorship of “bag and baggage” has also been imputed to Mr. Gladstone. But with him, in this case, it was simply the apt application of an old phrase, expressing what his followers wanted to express, with the utmost force and in a way that everybody could understand. In a pamphlet on the Bulgarian atrocities he called for the expulsion from Bulgaria of the official Turk “bag and baggage,” thus giving the phrase an extensive currency in the world of politics. The phrase has, however, been in existence for ages. Touchstone, for instance, says to Corin (“As You Like It,” iii. 2): “Come, shepherd, let us make an honourable retreat; though not with bag and baggage, yet with scrip and scrippage.” The description of Turkey as the Sick

Man was first used by the Emperor Nicholas of Russia when discussing Turkish affairs in January, 1853, with Sir Hamilton Seymour, the English ambassador. "We have on our hands," said Nicholas, "a sick man, a very sick man; it will be, I tell you frankly, a great misfortune if one of these days he should slip away from us, especially before all necessary arrangements are made." But perhaps the most striking phrase coined in this connection is Carlyle's "unspeakable Turk," of a later date.

"I may say that I have myself been credited with the invention of the phrase 'Home Rule,'" writes the Honble. George Brodrick (Warden of Merton College) in his "Memories and Impressions": "nor is it easy to find authority for it earlier than an article of mine speaking of a 'Home-Rule Party' which appeared in *The Times* on February 9th, 1871, and another article of mine on the past and future relations of Ireland to Great Britain which appeared in 'Macmillan's Magazine' for the following May." Mr. Brodrick, however, does not believe that he coined the phrase, the context of the aforesaid articles showing indeed that he was using a term "almost current" at the time.

The phrase "Home Rule" has also been attributed to Isaac Butt. It really owes its origin to the Rev. Joseph Allen Galbraith, a distinguished Fellow of Trinity College, and Professor in the University of Dublin, who was, with Butt, one of the founders of the Irish Home Government Association in 1871. Mr. Galbraith used the words at a meeting of that association in Wicklow Street, Dublin, for the first time in 1870. Butt, in a speech at the Home Rule Conference in Dublin, in November, 1873, referred to

the expression in terms which show that he made no claim to be its inventor. "Over a torn and distracted country," he said, "a country agitated with dissension, weakened by distrust, is raised the banner on which were emblazoned the magic words 'Home Rule.' Wherever the legend we had emblazoned in its folds was seen, the heart of the people moved to its words, and the soul of the nation felt their power and their spell." It is curious that the phrase has now become the accepted description of autonomy all over the world. "Found salvation" was used by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as a humorous explanation of his adoption of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule policy in 1885, on being offered the post of Secretary for War. He is also the author of the happy term "Ulsteria," as a description of the Orange demonstrations against Home Rule in the North of Ireland. The term "Nonconformist Conscience" was first used in the letter of "A Wesleyan Minister" to *The Times* on November 28th, 1890, demanding "the unconditional abdication of Mr. Parnell, and his immediate retirement from Parliamentary life. Nothing less will satisfy the Nonconformist Conscience now," said the writer. *The Times* in the same issue referred in its leading columns to "what a correspondent calls the Nonconformist Conscience," and afterwards repeated the phrase on many occasions. Other papers followed suit, and the expression soon passed into the list of current political colloquialisms. Another useful phrase, arising out of the Irish controversy, is the "Killing Home Rule with kindness" of Mr. Gerald Balfour. Speaking at Leeds on October 17th, 1895, Mr. Balfour, who was then Chief Secretary for



Ireland, said, in reference to the ameliorative policy of the Government: "We should be glad enough, no doubt, to kill Home Rule with kindness if we could; but whatever may be the result of our efforts, our intention is to do our utmost to introduce and pass such measures as will really promote the interests and moral prosperity of Ireland." Daniel O'Connell used to boast that he would "drive a coach and six through any Act of Parliament." The origin of the phrase is in the "Memoirs of Ireland," published anonymously in 1718, but commonly attributed to Oldmixon. In speaking of Stephen Rice, who was made Chief Baron of the Irish Exchequer by James the Second in 1686, and was removed by William in 1690, Oldmixon says: "He distinguished himself by his inveteracy against the Protestant interest and the settlement of Ireland, having been often heard to say, before he was a judge, that he would drive a coach and six horses through the Act of Settlement." "Popular agitation," which was happily described by Peel—the first English statesman to yield to its pressure—as "the marshalling of the conscience of a nation to mould its laws," was the invention of O'Connell; and here are three sayings of the great Irish tribune which contain practically his whole political philosophy as a constitutional agitator. "Nothing is politically right which is morally wrong" (I have seen this phrase erroneously ascribed to Gladstone). "He who commits a crime gives strength to the enemy." "No political change is worth a drop of human blood." It has been stated that the famous "three tailors of Tooley Street" were a mythical creation of O'Connell during the

agitation for the removal of Catholic disabilities, and it is certainly just such a phrase as the Irish agitator would send forth in a vein of sarcasm. It is also attributed to Canning. Others assert that the three tailors were real persons, who prepared a petition to the Houses of Parliament, commencing, "We, the people of England." It is, however, more probable that the legend of the three pretentious political nobodies is of considerable antiquity. "Repeal the Union! Restore the Heptarchy as soon!" exclaimed George Canning in the House of Commons in 1812.

"Measures, not men, have always been my mark," is a saying in Goldsmith's "Good-natured Man," published in 1768. Canning was for "men, not measures." He it was who sang—

"Pitt is to Addington  
As London is to Paddington,"

and in a speech attacking the Addington Government, and urging the national need of recalling Pitt to the head of affairs in 1801, he said: "Away with the cant of 'measures, not men'—the idle supposition that it is the harness and not the horses that draw the chariot along. No, sir, if the comparison must be made, if the distinction must be taken, men are everything, measures are comparatively nothing. I speak of times of difficulty and danger, when systems are shaken, when precedents and general rules of conduct fail. Then it is that not to that or to this measure—however prudently devised, however blameless in execution—but to the energy and character of individuals, a State must be indebted for its salvation." Brougham, on the other hand, was for "measures,

not men." Speaking in the House of Commons in 1830, he said: "I beg here to state that as a general principle my intention is to support measures which meet with my approbation, and to oppose those of contrary tendency, let the one or the other come from whom they may." Why he supported "measures, not men," he thus explained—"In a Monarchy it is the duty of Parliament to look at the men as well as the measures, because a set of men might make a treaty which would render war inevitable at some distant day, unless the honour and safety of the country were sacrificed. I say, therefore, as long as a set of men can act secretly, that we are imperatively called upon to look at them and their character, as well as at the measures they propose."

"Register! Register! Register!" was the cry of Sir Robert Peel. "It may be disagreeable, and indeed inconvenient, to attend to the registration of voters which annually takes place throughout the country," he said, addressing the electors of Tamworth in 1837. "All this may be revolting; but you may depend upon it that it is better that you should take that trouble, than that you should allow the Constitution to become the victim of false friends, or that you should be trampled under the hoof of a ruthless democracy. The advice which was given by some persons was 'Agitate! Agitate! Agitate!' The advice which I give you is this—Register! Register! Register!"

"The Judicious Bottle-holder" was given currency to by Lord Palmerston. The struggle for the independence of Hungary in 1849 was suppressed by Austria and Russia. Some of the Hungarian patriots, Kossuth among them, escaped across the

Turkish frontier, and the Porte, supported by Palmerston, who was Foreign Secretary at the time, refused the joint demand made by Austria and Russia that they should be delivered up. The Porte, however, detained the fugitives in prison, and it was not until September, 1851, that Palmerston succeeded in securing their release. In the course of his reply to a London deputation which tendered him congratulations on the event, Palmerston said—"During the struggle a good deal of judicious bottle-holding was obliged to be brought into play." This simile, borrowed from the prize-ring, appealed immensely to the people. "Punch" published a cartoon in which the Foreign Secretary figured as "The Judicious Bottle-holder."

The evolution of the word "Jingoism," to express strong warlike feelings or ultra-patriotic sentiments, for which "Chauvinism" does duty in France, is peculiarly interesting. The popular derivation of course is from a couplet in a song which was very popular at the music halls in 1877, when some trouble seemed likely to arise with Russia over her war with Turkey.

"We don't want to fight, but by Jingo, if we do,  
We have the men, we have the ships, we have the money too."

But according to an explanation in *The Times*, which appeared while this song was in vogue, "Jingo" was a direct descendant of the Persian "Jang," meaning "war," and that the phrase "By Jingo" was an equivalent for "By Mars." However to that erudite poet, Thomas Ingoldsby, "Jingo" is no more than a popular corruption of the name of the worthy saint

Gengulphus; but I have also seen it explained as the Basuto for "evil." The first political use of the phrase, however, was in a letter, with the heading "The Jingoës in the Park," written by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake and published in the *Daily News* of March 13th, 1878, while Professor Minto introduced the word "Jingoism" into a leading article in the same journal in 1879. The *Saturday Review* prophesied as early as 1880, when the term was beginning to be generally used, that it might become as widely known and as respectable as "Whig" and "Tory," and pointed out in an amusing passage the inappropriateness of the term for the purpose to which it was applied: "If we turn to the celebrated refrain which has given currency to the word, and which will be remembered longer than many verses of great lyrical value, we can find nothing more in it than the expression of a modest firmness and self-reliance. It breathes defence, not defiance. It affirms that we have no desire for war, but that should war arise we have the means to face it. This temperate affirmation is clinched with an oath, reprehensible, indeed, and by no means refined, but far less objectionable than many other such words that we unfortunately hear even from the Liberal working-man when we walk in the streets."

It was George Canning, of course, who, as Foreign Secretary in the Liverpool Administration, having recognised the South American republics, said in December, 1826: "I called in the New World to redress the balance of the Old"; and likewise, of course—though the conjunction may appear strange—"three acres and a cow," the Radical panacea for

the labour difficulty in agricultural districts, belongs to Mr. Jesse Collings. With regard to the first phrase, it is said that the use of the personal pronoun "I" was not at all relished by Canning's colleagues in the Cabinet. Then as to the second, there is a very old Scottish nursery song, which has this refrain :—

"Awa' to bed, e'en noo, e'en noo,  
An' sleep for silla to buy a coo ;  
Three yickers o' grass to feed her weel—  
Fear God, an' fecht the de'il."

I wonder whether Mr. Jesse Collings heard this lullaby as he lay in his cradle in the long ago? If so, what an illustration of the truth of the old saw, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world!"

"Defence, not defiance," was first suggested as the motto of the Manchester Volunteers in 1860 by Mr. John B. Marsh, a journalist, and a member of the Corps. At that time there was much jealousy in France at the existence of the Volunteers in England, but the Emperor Napoleon, in a speech on military questions soon afterwards, said: "We cannot find fault with a nation which has enrolled her citizens for defence, not defiance." The National Rifle Association afterwards adopted the motto. "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform" is the motto of the Cobden Club. "Peace and Reform" was the old Radical watchword, and to it Joseph Hume, the celebrated economist, added the middle word "retrenchment." It was Mr. John Bright who used the expression "the great bulk of the Nation do not live in mansions, they live in cottages;" and Lord Castlereagh who

gave us "ignorant impatience of taxation." The phrase "masterly inactivity," expressive of so much prudence and caution and advantageous inertness in political affairs, was coined by Sir James Mackintosh. "It is the duty of the Opposition to oppose," said Lord Randolph Churchill some twenty years ago; but sixty years before Lord Randolph, Tierney, the Whig leader, had said: "The duty of an Opposition is threefold: always to oppose, never to propose, and to turn out the Government,"—an excellent piece of advice, indeed, for the political Party which finds itself on the left of Mr. Speaker. "Jack Cade legislation" is Sir James Graham's. "A majority is always better than the best repartee," may be found in Disraeli's "Tancred." It was Major Cartwright, a famous Radical in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, who coined "One man, one vote." In recent years the Conservatives have added the tag, "One vote, one value." "The most valuable commercial asset of the Empire," is Mr. Cecil Rhodes' description of the Union Jack. "The balance of power in Europe" is a phrase for which we are indebted to Sir Robert Walpole.

"Thank God, there is a House of Lords!" Disraeli throws some light on the origin of this well-known phrase in a speech delivered at a meeting of Conservatives, in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, April, 1872, when there was an outcry against the House of Lords for their reluctance to pass Liberal measures. He first referred to the fruitless campaign which O'Connell, "the greatest popular orator that ever existed," conducted throughout England against the House of Lords in 1836 for rejecting the Irish measures of

the Melbourne Administration. "There was a dissolution of Parliament. The great Liberal majority vanished. The balance of parties was restored. It was discovered that the House of Lords had behind them at least half of the English people." He went on: "Such was the enthusiasm of the nation in favour of the Second Chamber that at every public meeting its health was drunk with the additional sentiment for which we are indebted to one of the most distinguished members that ever sat in the House of Commons—'Thank God, there is a House of Lords.'"

"Red Tape," as a description of Departmental pedantry and delay, was brought into circulation by Dickens. It was suggested to him, of course, by the red tape used in tying up packages in Government offices. In "Little Dorrit," published in 1855, Dickens refers to the "form-filling, corresponding, minuting, memorandum-making, signing, counter-signing, counter-counter-signing backwards and forwards, and referring sideways, crosswise and zig-zag" business done by the Circumlocution Office. As a result of this, "an ingenious gentleman connected with the Department" made the remarkable discovery that "the sheets of foolscap it had devoted to the public service would pave the footways on both sides of Oxford Street from end to end and leave nearly a quarter of a mile to spare for the Park (immense cheering and laughter), while of tape—red tape—it had used enough to stretch in graceful festoons from Hyde Park Corner to the General Post Office." This mention of red tape at the time of a Commission of Inquiry into the mismanagement of the Crimean War immortalised the phrase.



Carlyle's description of Government officials, as "doleful creatures in a jungle of red tape, deaf or nearly so to human reason," is well known. "Iron-bound in red tape" was an Irish member's description of the condition of the Chief Secretary. "Platform," as a description of the programme of a party or of a candidate, is often thought to be American, but it is really of very ancient and highly respectable English origin. It is a revival of the old verb, "platformed," meaning "to lay down principles." Milton, in his controversial work, "Reason of Church Government," says that some people "do not think it for the ease of their inconsequent opinions to grant that Church Discipline is platformed in the Bible."

"The policy of pin-pricks" is the most expressive and useful phrase that has for a long time been added to our political currency. It arose out of the difference between France and England with regard to Fashoda in 1898, and had a French origin. Mr. Chamberlain first drew attention to it in this country in a speech at Manchester on November 10th, 1898. He said: "Let me read you one short extract from *Le Matin*, a French paper published in Paris. They say: 'We [the French] have inaugurated the policy of playing tricks on Great Britain,—a policy which had no definite object, and which was bound to turn out badly. We now find ourselves confronted by a people who have at last been exasperated by the continual pin-pricks which we have given them.' I venture to say that that is absolutely true." The article in *Le Matin*, which was unsigned, appeared on November 8th. "The policy of pin-pricks" has since been frequently used in the newspapers and by speakers on public platforms, and is,

indeed, a striking contribution to the common stock of our political phrases. There is, however, a much earlier record of the use of the phrase. In the official account of the meeting between Napoleon and the Czar Alexander at Tilsit in June, 1807, the French Emperor said: "For the maintenance of peace, nations should avoid the pin-pricks which forerun cannon-shots."

Coming to party names, we find that most of them were originally terms of derision or abuse. "Whig" and "Tory," which for generations have been proudly borne by the two great and permanent political parties in the State, were at first contemptuous nicknames. "Tory" was first bestowed, according to Macaulay, on those who "refused to concur in excluding James the Second from the Throne." It was the most opprobrious term which Titus Oates could think of to apply to the disbelievers in his imaginary Popish Plot. But there had been an earlier application of it as a description of the Irish who remained faithful to the Stuarts during the Commonwealth. It is derived from the Gaelic words, *Tar a Ri*, meaning, "Come, O King!" and was constantly in the mouths of the Irish Loyalists; but in the years following the Revolution bands of outlaws who had fought for James, and were at large among the mountains, were called Rapparees or Tories, and hence the term was imported to England as a nickname for the adherents of the Stuarts. To return the compliment, the Tories borrowed another Gaelic word, "Whig," used in Scotland to describe, first, horse and cattle thieves, secondly, the adherents of the Presbyterian cause in the middle of the seventeenth century, and bestowed it upon their opponents. Gilbert

Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, the Whig politician and historian, writing of the period after the Revolution, says in reference to the term: "From Scotland the word was brought into England, where it is now one of our unhappy terms of disunion;" and Swift in 1725 wrote: "There is hardly a Whig in Ireland who would allow a potato and butter-milk to a reputed Tory," which could hardly be exceeded as a description of strong partisan feeling.

Some years ago a controversy rose in the newspapers as to the meaning of "Whig," and other ingenious derivations were suggested. One was that it was a Scottish term equivalent to "whey," and implied a taunt against the "sour-milk faces" of the Western lowlanders. Another writer traced it to the initials of the motto of the Scottish Covenanters, "We hope in God"; but dealing with the latter suggestion a Tory paper unkindly asserted that the motto of the Whig party was, "We believe in gold." According to Gilbert Burnet it was derived from a cant word, "whiggam," used by the Scotch peasants in driving their horses.

During the negotiations in 1852 between Lord John Russell and the moderate Whigs and Lord Aberdeen and the Peelites for the formation of a Coalition Administration—that coalition which Disraeli prophesied England would not love—interesting letters passed between the negotiators on the subject of the name by which the new Party was to be known. Lord John Russell thought the word "Whig" would best convey the principles of the proposed coalition; but the Duke of Newcastle, a supporter of Aberdeen, insisted that "Whig" was impossible, and

must be discarded. Lord Aberdeen then wrote the following letter to Lord John Russell:—

“HADDO HOUSE, *Sept. 16th, 1852.*

“MY DEAR LORD JOHN,

“It was no doubt rather a strong proceeding on the part of the Duke of Newcastle to suggest to you, of all men, the propriety and expediency of sinking the title Whig. It is true that neither he nor I have the least desire or intention of assuming the appellation; but I presume you would never think of acting with us unless you were persuaded that our views were Liberal; and assuredly in any connection with you we should not be prepared to abandon a Conservative policy. Although the term may appear a little contradictory, I believe that ‘Conservative progress’ best describes the principles which ought practically to influence the conduct of any Government of the present day. This was Peel’s policy and, I think, will continue that of all his friends. For one, looking at the actual state of affairs, I have no objection that the progress should be somewhat more rapid than perhaps he ever intended.

“Ever most sincerely yours,

“ABERDEEN.”

Lord John Russell, as may be imagined, stood up for that blessed word “Whig.” “The term Whig,” he wrote, “has the convenience of expressing in one syllable what Conservative Liberal expresses in seven, and Whiggism in two syllables means what Conservative Progress means in another six.” The Coalition Administration was formed, and was soon too engrossed in the management or mismanagement of

the Crimean War to trouble itself about a political designation.

There is no longer, as we know, neither a Whig party nor a Tory party; but undoubtedly there are still Whigs and Tories, for the political principles expressed by these terms survive in individuals who diminish in number as time progresses. "Conservative" was, it is generally assumed, first suggested by John Wilson Croker in an article in the "Quarterly Review," January, 1830, as a more appropriate party name than "Tory." Canning, however, seems to have been the first to use the word in a political sense. Speaking of the middle class in a speech at Liverpool, March, 1820, he said: "Of that important Conservative portion of Society, I know not where I could look for a better specimen than I now see before me." "Conservative," said O'Connell in the House of Commons in 1832, "that is the fashionable term, the new-fangled phrase now used in polite society to designate Tory ascendancy." The term was disliked by Lord Lyndhurst, who prided himself on being a Tory. Conservative, he said, implied a compromise or cross. Disraeli fought hard for the retention of the older name, and to the last called himself a Tory. In "Coningsby," published in 1844, occurs the sentence: "'A sound Conservative Government,' said Taper, musingly. 'I understand—Tory men and Whig measures.'" Bulwer Lytton, in an essay on "The Genius of Conservatism," written in 1858, says: "In 1831 there was introduced into the English language a new barbarism—'Conservative' passed from a pedantic adjective into a familiar noun. No one knows by whom it was first

applied to a political signification. It was heard of one day, and the next it was the popular title of a party. In vain Sir Robert Peel strove to discountenance the neologism. 'I hate,' said he in the House of Commons, 'that un-English name of Conservative which we have heard lately.' The word triumphed over the man. A very short time afterwards Sir Robert Peel called himself a Conservative, and his party the Conservative Party."

The designation "Conservative" caught the fancy of the bulk of the party, and in time "Tory" came to be used only in its original sense as a contemptuous nickname by the party's opponents. "Whig" shared the same fate. "Liberal," which, like "Conservative," is broad and vague, and at the same time catching, may be said to have been finally adopted by the Whigs when Mr. Gladstone became leader. The "Edinburgh Review" of January, 1877, in an article entitled "The Principles and Prospects of the Liberal Party," says: "When the party to which we belong adopted the name of 'Liberal,' it did so, not because it was ashamed of the old title or meant to disown it, but because the new appellation stretched wider than the old, because it proclaimed the identity of our principles not only with a time-honoured band of patriots in our own country, but with those who have toiled and bled for freedom in every age and all over the world." "One of the most beautiful and powerful words in the English language" is Lord Rosebery's description of Liberal. "Liberal" and "Conservative" are certainly happy and expressive terms; but unlike "Whig" and "Tory," they are not exclusively applicable as party denominations.

“Constitutionalist” was at one time suggested as an appropriate name for the Tory party; but it did not find favour. “Reformer,” once a favourite term with a wing of the Whig party, has long gone out of fashion. But “Radical,” which was first applied about 1818 to Major Cartwright, Sir Francis Burdett, Henry Hunt, and others who advocated a radical reform of Parliament, has still a strong hold on the advanced Liberals. Joseph Hume claimed that he was the first to use the term. “Tory Democrat,” an invention of Lord Randolph Churchill, is heard of no more. “Peelite” and “Gladstonian” we have known; but, of course, personal names for parties, such as these, cannot hold a place for long. “Nationalist,” which under the leadership of Mr. Parnell was substituted for “Home Ruler,” seems likely to be more enduring. So also, perhaps, has “Liberal Unionist,” the designation, of course, of those Liberals who ceded from Gladstone on the question of Home Rule; and it would seem as if the rival party names “Imperialist” and “Little Englander,” which have been waxing and waning in popular use for some time, have now taken a permanent place in political controversy.

## CHAPTER XII.

### UNPARLIAMENTARY EXPRESSIONS.

PROBABLY the most difficult and unpleasant of the duties which the Speaker of the House of Commons is called upon to discharge is that of deciding whether an offensive personal allusion to a member, in the course of debate, is or is not a breach of Parliamentary decorum. There are no definite rules of order to guide the Speaker in this delicate matter. The decision is left entirely to his own taste and discretion. But there has always been a rather curious distinction drawn between remarks that reflect adversely on a member as a man, and on a member as a politician. According to well-established precedents, the former are in all cases considered unparliamentary, while the latter rarely meet with a reprimand from the Chair. Illustrations of both categories of personal allusions, and the light in which they are regarded by the Speaker, were afforded one night in the Session of 1896, during the debate on the new rule of procedure in regard to Supply. The expressions were applied respectively to a prominent member of the Opposition and to the Leader of the House. It was said of the former that he had been a "monumental instance of inconsistency throughout his political life." Here we have an allusion to a member as a politician.



It was met with cries of "Order, order!" and "Withdraw, withdraw!" from the occupants of the Opposition benches; but Mr. Speaker Gully stopped the interruptions by saying: "The honourable member has not used any unparliamentary language." Later on in the debate the Leader of the House was told that "by a 'subterfuge' he was going to palm upon the House a resolution." "That," said the Speaker, "is hardly proper language to use." The word "subterfuge" was withdrawn by the offending member, and, amid laughter, "misapprehension" was substituted in its place.

Now, for a member of Parliament to be told that he is a "monumental instance of political inconsistency" must surely be as offensive to him as to be charged with having resorted to "a subterfuge" in Parliamentary tactics. Yet the different treatment accorded by the Speaker to these two personal allusions is strictly in accordance with precedence. One interesting instance of a similar ruling by a former occupant of the Chair may be given. The House was engaged on April 17th, 1823, in a debate on the vexed question of Catholic Emancipation. George Canning, while in opposition, was a consistent champion of the right of Roman Catholics to admission to Parliament; but now, as the Leader of the House of Commons, and from the point of vantage of the Treasury Bench, he regarded as inopportune the pressing of the Catholic question on the attention of the House. "The right honourable gentleman," said that great master of invective, Henry Brougham, "has exhibited the most incredible specimen of monstrous truckling for the purpose of obtaining

office that the whole history of political tergiversation can furnish." Canning immediately exclaimed: "I rise to say that that is false!" The Speaker, Charles Manners Sutton, who heard with equanimity the sweeping charge of Brougham, was evidently greatly shocked by Canning's emphatic denial. "I hope," said he, in a low voice, "the right honourable gentleman will retract that expression. An individual of his high rank and station must be fully aware that such an expression is a complete violation of the customs and of the orders of the House." "I am sorry I should have used any word which is a violation of the decorum of the House," replied Canning; "but nothing—no consideration on earth—could induce me to retract the sentiment." In order to prevent the duel in which, as was the custom in those days, the incident was almost certain to culminate, a motion was made that the Leader of the House be committed to the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms; and it certainly would have been carried had it been put from the Chair. But happily Canning, yielding to the entreaties of his colleagues on the Treasury Bench, declared that he would think no more of the matter. In this case also we have a charge of political tergiversation used without reproof from the Chair, while the natural retort that the charge was false—implying, as it did, that in the making of the accusation a lie had been told—elicited an immediate reprimand. Brougham, in his subsequent explanation, coined a phrase, which has since been used to give decorous unreality to abuse, and to cover a multitude of unparliamentary expressions. He said that he had employed the words which so

grievously offended Canning "only in a Parliamentary sense."

The heat of political controversy has at all periods led occasionally to the exchange of personalities and of contemptuous language across the floor of the House of Commons. But on the passing of the Reform Act of 1832—which, though it admitted only half a million citizens of the middle class to the franchise, was received with amazement and alarm by the House of Commons, as Lord John Russell described its purposes in grave and solemn tones—there was a widespread feeling in political circles that, as a result, the character of the elected Chamber would undergo a complete change for the worst. Hitherto the House of Commons had consisted exclusively of gentlemen by birth and training—of landlords, retired military and naval officers; of men, it was said, of polished manners and refined language; and it was feared that under the new order of things there would be an influx of members of a coarse material—commercial men, writers for the Press, barristers-at-law, persons of rough and uncouth ways, and of unrestrained and turbulent tongues.

The Whig Government that carried the Reform Act were not free from those apprehensions. Charles Manners Sutton was still Speaker. He was a pronounced Tory, and had used his influence against Reform. He desired to retire from the Chair, on the assembling of the first reformed Parliament, but the Whig Government, confirmed as it was in office by the appeal to the enlarged constituencies, induced him to remain to keep the new House in order. "He would undertake," says Charles Greville, in his

“Memoirs,” “to rule the new House, but it must be with a snaffle bridle.” However, experience soon showed that the snaffle bridle was not needed. The new House went well in the old harness. Indeed, the Reform Act wrought very little change in the *personnel* of the House, and the fears of the dominant Whigs on this ground being two years later dissipated, they ejected Manners Sutton from the Chair, and elected as Speaker James Abercromby, a man of less stern decorum, but a member of their own party.

The first member of the reformed Parliament reproved by the Chair for unseemly language was Daniel O’Connell. The incident, which occurred in the first week of the meeting of the House of Commons, is also remarkable for having evoked from the Speaker a definite ruling on an interesting constitutional point. The “Speech from the Throne” called attention, amongst other things, to the insecurity of life and property in Ireland, and asked for coercive measures for the repression of crime. In the course of the debate O’Connell characterised the Speech from the Throne as “brutal and bloody.” Lord John Russell at once moved that the words be taken down. “Oh!” exclaimed O’Connell, “when we speak of Ireland and her wrongs it must be

in bondsman’s key,  
With bated breath and whispering humbleness.”

Lord John Russell objected to the word “bloody” being applied to a speech which had, only a few days previously, been delivered by the King—William the Fourth—in person in the House of Lords. O’Connell insisted that it was not the speech of the King, but

the speech of the Ministers. The Speaker agreed with the honourable and learned member on the constitutional point, but informed him that his language was not calculated to preserve the order and decency of debate. The "bloody and brutal Whigs" subsequently became a popular phrase with O'Connell in his speeches in Ireland, and indeed is not unknown to-day in Irish political controversies.

On March 4th following, the promised Coercion Bill was before the House. Sir Robert Bateson described the Irish members as "the mere slaves of faction; the representatives of the mob; and the organs of a bigoted priesthood." "I have never in any assembly heard such opprobrious language," exclaimed an Irish representative named Finn. But he only got snubbed by the Speaker for this natural expression of his indignation. "I hope the honourable member will see," said Charles Manners Sutton, "that there is a difference between what he considers good taste and what the House considers out of order." Mr. Finn was a hot-tempered man, and as great an adept as O'Connell in the use of unparliamentary expressions; but on this occasion he seems to have been rendered dumb by the censure of the Speaker, and the words of Sir Robert Bateson are probably the most offensive that stand unreprieved by the Chair.

Two days later an incident occurred which gives an interesting glimpse, as it were, behind the scenes in the House of Commons in that historic period. Then, as now, the front Bench to the right of the Speaker was devoted to Ministers, and the front Bench to the Speaker's left to ex-Ministers. But on March 4th

Sir Robert Inglis called the Speaker's attention to the fact that Sir Robert Peel, the Leader of the Opposition, was unable to obtain a seat on the front Opposition Bench owing to the occupation of that Bench by members who had never been in office. William Cobbett, sitting at the time on the front Opposition Bench, rightly took the remark as applying to himself. But he was not in the least abashed. Indeed, he boldly declared that whenever on entering the House he saw a seat vacant on either of the front Benches he would occupy it. "I know," he went on, "of nothing pre-eminently worthy in the right honourable baronet alluded to which would justify the pretensions put forward as to his right to a particular seat. I am not inclined to concede that right to him, and if he was present I would give him my reasons, fully and plainly, for thinking he of all men in the House ought not to enjoy pre-eminence on either side." "Order, order!" said the Speaker. "I hope that whatever seat the honourable member may choose to occupy in the House, he will at least conform to the rules and orders of the House, and not presume to state opinions respecting any individual in either his public or private character, such as he is not warranted in stating."

In this connection I may quote a story related by Lord Ronald Gower. At a dinner given by Lord Beaconsfield at Hughenden the conversation turned on Cobbett, when the host told the following anecdote. "On one occasion Cobbett insisted upon taking Sir Robert Peel's seat on the Treasury Bench. Sir Robert did all he could to show the intruder that he objected to this proceeding; but all was in vain. At

last Sir Robert requested Cobbett to move, politely but firmly. 'I'll be d—— if I do!' was all the answer he got; and Peel had perforce to take a lower seat elsewhere."

On May 6th in that same Session Cobbett got the opportunity, for which he evidently pined, of telling Sir Robert Peel "fully and plainly" what he thought of him as a statesman. He moved, in a speech of two hours' duration, an extraordinary resolution, which alone fills four columns of small type in "Hansard," censuring Peel for the Cash Payments Act passed in 1819 (the first of the measures upon which Peel's fame as a great financier is based), which, according to Cobbett, had wrought ruin and desolation in the land by requiring debts contracted in depreciated paper to be paid in cash; and praying that his Majesty might be graciously pleased to dismiss the author of the measure from the Privy Council. Peel not only defended the Act in a masterly speech, but carried the war into the enemy's country. "Nine-tenths of the right honourable baronet's reply," retorted Cobbett subsequently, amid cries of disapprobation from both sides of the House, "consisted of extracts read from books written by me, and the rest was made up of vulgar abuse and falsehood." "The honourable member has used language which no gentleman is entitled to use, and for which he is bound to apologise," said the Speaker severely. "Sir," replied Cobbett, "I most readily apologise to the House." In the division only four voted for the resolution, while there were 298 against it. The Speaker had previously pointed out that it would be extremely inconvenient to place upon the

Journals of the House elaborate arguments or pamphlets; and accordingly, on the motion of Lord Althorp, the Leader of the House—who admitted that he was not aware of any precedent for the course he proposed—it was decided by the same majority not to insert Cobbett's resolution in the Journals.

During the consideration of the Liverpool Freemen Bill on March 12th, 1834, a dispute arose between Lord Sandon and Mr. Wason as to whether certain freemen who had voted in a recent election had or had not been bribed. Lord Sandon said he would leave the House to decide from experience which of the two, Mr. Wason or himself, was more likely to be cautious in making assertions on the subject. Mr. Wason retorted that the insinuation was one no honourable man would have given utterance to. The Speaker here interposed and asked the honourable member what he meant by the employment of this phrase. "The noble lord," replied Wason, "insinuated that I was not as worthy of belief as the noble lord. That insinuation, Sir, in deference to you as Chairman—though I may differ from you in that ruling—I treat lightly in this House; but out of this House the noble lord knows how I would treat it." "The honourable member speaks Parliamentary," said the Speaker, "when he says that the deference he pays is not to me but the Chair." However, the incident ended with expressions of mutual apology between the members concerned. Happily most of the verbal encounters between our representatives in Parliament have a pacific termination. On July 22nd in the same year Wason was charged by the Earl of Darlington with being actuated with vindictive



feelings. "That statement is untrue," retorted Wason. "I must remind honourable members," said Mr. Speaker Manners Sutton, "that both the expressions which have been used are unparliamentary." The Earl of Darlington magnanimously declared that he was ready to withdraw his words if Mr. Wason promised to follow his example. "Sir," exclaimed Wason, "I will not accept any conditional apology either in the House or out of it." The honourable member was evidently of a bellicose disposition. There is here, as in the former case, the exciting suggestion of a duel. But after a long debate the ruffled feelings of Wason were soothed, and the two belligerents almost swore eternal friendship in the fervour of their reconciliation.

But of course it occasionally happens that while a member apologises in response to the demand of the Speaker, he will try, by a trick in dialectics, to leave his sting behind. On May 2nd, 1834, during the consideration of the Tithes (Ireland) Bill, Mr. Ronayne, an Irish member, complained of the meagreness of the attendance of members when there was before the House a proposal to give Ireland over to the military and police. The remark appears to have called up a smile to the face of Edward Stanley (afterwards Earl of Derby and Tory Premier), who was lolling at the time on the Treasury Bench. "I am too well accustomed to the insolence with which the right honourable gentleman treats the House on all occasions," said the irate Mr. Ronayne, "to be annoyed by the contemptuous smile with which he now honours me. The right honourable gentleman may smile contemptuously as much as he pleases; he may

throw his legs upon the Table like a man in a North American coffee-house——” Here there were cries of “Order, order!” and “Chair, chair!” and the Speaker, interposing, said that if Mr. Stanley had been guilty of disrespect to the House, the House would not have failed to take notice of it at the time. Mr. Ronayne nevertheless again expressed the indignation he felt at “the gross insolence which was far beyond disrespect” with which the right honourable gentleman habitually treated the House. This induced “the Rupert of Debate” (as Edward Bulwer Lytton described Stanley) to take his feet off the Table and to stand on them, in order to deny that he had ever been, intentionally at any rate, guilty of disrespect to the House. When the honourable member complained of the paucity of attendance, he smiled because he saw there was only one O’Connell present. (At this time three sons of Daniel O’Connell were also members of the House.) Daniel O’Connell retorted by saying that the remark of the right honourable gentleman was distinguished by his usual disregard for veracity. The Speaker rose to demand a retraction of this unparliamentary expression; but O’Connell, seeing the movement of Mr. Speaker Manners Sutton, quickly exclaimed, “Well, I withdraw that statement,” and then went on to say that nothing could be more unfounded—nothing could be “a greater falsity.” “That, Mr. Speaker,” continued the Irish agitator, “is a Parliamentary word which I believe I may use.” There is no reply by the Speaker recorded.

An encounter between O’Connell and Sir Robert Inglis on June 29th, 1835, gave rise to an interesting

ruling by the Speaker—James Abercromby, who had that year succeeded Charles Manners Sutton in the Chair—in regard to personal reflections which are nevertheless in order. “If a man,” said O’Connell, “accuses me of perjury, I cannot find so hard a term to answer him, but in more moderate language I can accuse him of wilful lying.” Sir Robert Inglis said the honourable and learned member had in a hypothetical form been guilty of the grossest outrage that one man could, in a substantive shape, commit upon another; and he called upon the Speaker, who sat there to protect the freedom of debate, to interpose. The Speaker, in reply, laid down a rule which ought to give full license to the abusive or caustic tongue:—

“I always understood that terms only conditionally applied were not such as called for the interposition of the Chair. Thus I recall one of the oldest members of the House using this phrase without reproof: ‘I state in answer to the honourable gentleman, in the strongest terms that can be hypothetically put, that what he has said is false.’ When the hypothetical form is once adopted, the Chair is not required by his office to interfere.”

Here is another example of a nice distinction in dialectics. On February 9th, 1836, the subject of building the new Houses of Parliament was under consideration. Joseph Hume proposed that the buildings should be erected in St. James’s Park, on the sites of Marlborough House and St. James’s Palace, which he thought afforded greater advantages

in the way of light and air. (It is curious to read, in this age of gas and electric lighting, that the old Houses of Parliament were so overshadowed by Westminster Abbey that they lost an hour or an hour and a half of daylight.) It was true, Hume went on to say, that £3,000 had been spent on the preparation of plans for erecting the buildings on the old site by the Thames; but that was a matter of little importance. Now Hume's great *forte* as a parliamentarian was the advocacy of rigid economy in the public service, and this indifference of his to the loss of £3,000 was certainly inconsistent with his past career. "The observation of the honourable member is humbug—sheer humbug," exclaimed Mr. Kearsley. "When he talks about a loss of £3,000 being a matter of no importance, he certainly is not acting an honest part." The Speaker interposing, said it was out of order to impute dishonesty to a member. "Oh," replied Kearsley, in virtuous astonishment, "I cannot speak differently from what I think; I cannot say what I do not think." Then Mr. Thomas Attwood pointed out that the word "unfair" might have been applied just as effectively and without any infringement of the rules of Parliamentary decorum; but the phrase used was, he thought, one unfit for the society of gentlemen. However, Kearsley explained that his remark was intended to apply to Hume's argument, and not to Hume himself. The proposal to erect the new Palace of Westminster in St. James's Park was, it is interesting to note, rejected by 141 votes to 42, or by a majority of 99.

In 1886 Matthew Harris, an Irish member, found himself in a somewhat similar predicament to that

from which Kearsley was rescued by Attwood fifty years previously. Harris, in the course of a speech, had been called to order by Mr. Speaker Peel. "Well, to be sure!" he exclaimed. "A poor man finds it very hard to say what he thinks in this House. I can't open my lips but there's a cry of 'Order, order!' I'm afraid St. Peter would find it hard to keep within order in this House." Mr. John Redmond had an earlier experience than his compatriot, Mr. Harris, that the rules of the House are frequently an inconvenient impediment to freedom of expression. On April 20th, 1882, there was a debate on the promotion of a famous Irish resident magistrate, named Mr. Clifford Lloyd. "If the Chief Secretary [Mr. Forster] had been an honest man or an honest politician, he would have taken a different course," said Mr. Redmond. Mr. Speaker Brand said the expression was unparliamentary and must be withdrawn. "I am sorry, Sir, that the rules of the House militate against telling the truth," replied Mr. John Redmond. "The honourable member has not withdrawn the expression which I declared to be unparliamentary," said the Speaker severely. "I rise, Sir, for the purpose of withdrawing the expression," said Mr. Redmond; "and I would only say this, that I am sorry it is not in my power within the rules of Parliament to make use of the expression." The Speaker declared that the conduct of the honourable member was offensive to the House, and he "named" him for having disregarded the authority of the Chair. Mr. Redmond was accordingly suspended for the remainder of the sitting.

Parnell on April 16th, 1878, characterised a

statement made by Mr. Henry James as "a legal quibble," worthy of the honourable and learned member from whom it proceeded. "I must inform the honourable member," said Mr. Speaker Brand, "that an expression of that kind is unwarrantable and must be withdrawn." Parnell apologised for having used the expression. "I will say," he added, "that the statement was more worthy of the ingenuity of a petty sessions attorney than of a lawyer of the ability of the honourable and learned gentleman." This anecdote recalls the famous retraction by Lord Salisbury of a comparison he had instituted between Gladstone and an attorney. During the debate on Gladstone's historic Budget of 1861—the Budget which abolished the stamp duties on newspapers and thereby led to the establishment of the penny daily Press—Lord Robert Cecil said the tactics of the Chancellor of the Exchequer were worthier rather of an attorney than of a statesman. The remark was not ruled out of order by the Chair, but it was received with cries of "Oh, oh!" and "Withdraw!" from Liberal members. Subsequently, on the night of May 13th, Lord Robert Cecil rose to make a personal explanation in connection with the incident. "The expression I used is thought to be too violent," said he; "and when any gentleman in the heat of debate drops an expression which on reflection he feels to be stronger than was necessary, he ought, I think, to take the first opportunity to apologise or to retract. (Hear, hear.) Therefore I feel that I am only doing justice to my feelings when I avow that on that occasion I did great injustice—(Hear, hear)—to the attorneys. (Laughter, and cries of 'Oh!

oh!') They are a very honourable body of men, and I am sure——" But the shouts of disapproval from the Ministerial Benches waxed so loud that the conclusion of the sentence was lost to the Reporters' Gallery.

Gladstone seems to have been called to order once only in his long Parliamentary career. On July 11th, 1884, Lord Randolph Churchill moved the adjournment of the House in order to call attention to the compromise between the House of Lords and the House of Commons on the Representation of the People Bill, and in the course of his speech accused the Liberal party of "traducing and falsely representing their opponents." Gladstone, who was then Prime Minister, characterised this charge as "the foul language of the noble lord." Lord Randolph Churchill asked Mr. Speaker Brand whether it was in order for the Prime Minister to use words which would not be tolerated from any other member of the House. "I do not think the Prime Minister will insist upon using the term 'foul language,'" replied the Speaker; "though of course the charge made by the noble lord is a very serious one and a very grave one." Gladstone withdrew the expression. "The noble lord," he went on, "has distinctly accused me, and accused the Liberal party, of traducing our adversaries." "Hear, hear," exclaimed Lord Randolph. "It is impossible," added Gladstone, "to conceive a charge more disgraceful." "The noble lord," said Gladstone, on another occasion, of Churchill, in a happy sentence of characterisation, "has many striking qualities, and if half of them could be cut out of him, the remainder would make a valuable public servant."

Macaulay, writing in his "Diary" under date June 11th, 1840, says:—

"The House was engaged upon Stanley's Irish Registration Bill. The night was very stormy. I have never seen such unmannerly demeanour or heard such scurrilous language in Parliament. Lord Norreys was whistling and making all sorts of noises; Lord Maidstone was so ill-mannered that I hope he was drunk. At last, after much grossly indecent conduct, a furious outbreak took place. O'Connell was so rudely interrupted that he used the expression 'beastly bellowings.' Then rose such an uproar that no O.P. mob at Covent Garden Theatre, no crowd of Chartists in front of the hustings, ever equalled. Men on both sides stood up, shook their fists, and bawled at the top of their voices. Freshfield, who was in the Chair, was quite unable to keep the slightest order. O'Connell roared like a mad bull, and our people—I for one—while regretting and condemning his violence, thought it was much extenuated by provocation."

Turning to "Hansard's" record of the scene thus graphically described by Macaulay, I find that O'Connell said: "This is a Bill to trample on the rights of the people of Ireland," and when the statement was followed by ironical laughter and cries of "No, no," he added: "If you were ten times as beastly in your uproar and bellowing, I should still feel it my duty to interpose to prevent this injustice." Sir Stratford Canning demanded the retraction of "the excessively offensive expression beastly" which the honourable and learned member had used. The



Chairman (the House being in Committee on the Bill) appealed to O'Connell to withdraw the words. "The word I used," replied O'Connell, "was 'bellowing,' and did you ever hear any other bellowing than 'beastly' ? What were the sounds that we heard ? Were they human sounds ? No, they were what I described them." Mr. Lambton said the hon. member for Dublin had been subjected to "extremely indecent interruption," and Mr. C. Buller thought the House had been disgraced by members who had introduced "the manners of an ale-house." The Chairman ruled that enough had been said about the matter, and so O'Connell got off without having to withdraw the words "beastly bellowing."

But there was more in the incident than "Hansard" tells us. Macaulay continues :—

"A short and most amusing scene passed between O'Connell and Lord Maidstone which in the tumult escaped the observation of many, but which I watched carefully. 'If,' said Lord Maidstone, 'the word beastly is retracted, I shall be satisfied. If not, I shall not be satisfied.' 'I do not care whether the noble lord be satisfied or not,' replied O'Connell. Lord Maidstone: 'I wish you would give me satisfaction.' O'Connell advised the noble lord 'to carry his liquor meekly.'"

This was not the first encounter between O'Connell and Lord Maidstone. On February 23rd, 1838, Lord Maidstone called the attention of the House to a speech delivered by O'Connell at a political dinner in London, in which he asserted that the Tory Election Committee of the day—or the Committees

appointed by the House to try election petitions, a practice which has since been abolished—had stooped to “foul perjury,” in order that their friends might retain their seats. A vote of censure on O’Connell, which was moved by Lord Maidstone, was carried by a majority of nine. A few days later a curious scene was witnessed in the House. O’Connell had to stand up in his place in the crowded chamber, while Mr. Speaker Abercromby solemnly reprovèd him for “the false and scandalous imputation” he had cast upon “the honour and conduct of members of the House.” “It now only remains,” said the Speaker, in conclusion, “that in obedience to the commands of this House, I should reprimand you, as I now accordingly do.” The reprimand, however, made no impression upon O’Connell. “I have repented of nothing, I have retracted nothing,” said he in the course of a speech he delivered after he had been reprovèd from the Chair, and he concluded by moving for a Committee before which to prove his charges. He subsequently described the members of the House of Commons—in a speech delivered outside—as “Six Hundred Ruffians.”

Forty years later O’Connell’s historic phrase “beastly bellowings” was again heard in the House of Commons. On March 8th, 1881, while the House was in Committee on the Peace Preservation (Ireland) Bill, Mr. Finigan, an Irish member, described the cries of “Divide!” with which his remarks were interrupted as “beastly bellowing.” The Chairman (Mr. Lyon Playfair) at once called on the honourable member to withdraw the expression, or else he would have to “name” him. “I withdraw the words,” said Mr. Finigan, “but I wish to point

out to you, Sir, that I am simply withdrawing them upon your order rather than suffer the penalty with which you have threatened me." Mr. Frank Hugh O'Donnell then endeavoured to point out that the words had already been used by O'Connell, but he was "named" for disputing the ruling of the Chair, and was suspended for the remainder of the sitting. A few months later Mr. O'Donnell got an opportunity of explaining that it was neither his desire nor intention to disregard the authority of the Chair on that occasion; and on the motion of Sir William Harcourt, acting on behalf of Gladstone, the Leader of the House, the explanation was accepted.

During a debate on the state of Ireland, on June 3rd, 1880, Mr. T. P. O'Connor said: "The honourable member in attributing—as I put it, mendaciously attributing—to the Land League the responsibility of these outrages——" when he was interrupted by Sir Stafford Northcote, who called the Speaker's attention to the use of the word "mendaciously." "If the honourable member," said Mr. Speaker Brand, "when he made use of the word 'mendaciously' applied it to a member of the House, he is clearly out of order, and I must ask him to withdraw the word." Mr. O'Connor did withdraw "mendaciously" and substituted "incorrectly" for it. Then Mr. James O'Kelly exclaimed: "I want to know, Sir, whether there is any protection in this House for honourable members on these benches against any gentlemen making statements that are calumnious and lying!" Mr. O'Kelly was not called upon to withdraw the words "calumnious and lying." The Speaker said that, after the warning which had been given to the honourable

member for Galway for the use of the word "mendaciously," he would "name" the honourable member for Roscommon; and accordingly, on the motion of Gladstone, Mr. O'Kelly was suspended for the remainder of the sitting.

Then ensued an interesting conversation between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Justin McCarthy—two men who had a long and intimate acquaintance with the House of Commons—as to the use of the words "calumnious and mendacious statements." Mr. McCarthy insisted that a previous Speaker had ruled that Lord Palmerston was not out of order in using that expression. "If it is not an impertinence on my part," said Mr. Gladstone modestly, "I may say that I think I recollect the incident to which the honourable member refers, and the statement which he has just made is only very partially accurate. The objection was to the word 'calumnious,' and that word was not used by Lord Palmerston, but by another member. The House and Lord Palmerston objected to it. The word 'mendacious' did not come into the case at all." "There were two occasions on which the words were used," replied Mr. McCarthy. "On the second occasion Lord Palmerston objected to them—but he had formerly used them himself, and reference was made to that former occasion as a precedent." The Speaker, however, interposed with the remark that this discussion was altogether irrelevant.

But, as a matter of fact, the word "calumnious" received the *imprimatur* of Mr. Brand's two immediate predecessors in the Speaker's Chair—Mr. Shaw-Lefevre and Mr. Denison—as being a word that may

be applied without offence in the House of Commons. On April 27th, 1855, the attention of the House was called to a statement made by Mr. Layard at a dinner in Liverpool, to the effect that some recent promotions in the Army were due to favouritism at the War Office. "Every reasonable man," said Lord Palmerston, "must be convinced that these charges were false and calumnious." Mr. Otway asked the Speaker (Mr. Shaw-Lefevre) whether the noble lord could charge another member with having stated that which was false and calumnious. "What I understood the noble Viscount to say," replied the Speaker, "was that the charges made by the member for Aylesbury were false and calumnious."

Lord Palmerston was therefore not called to account for the use of the word "calumnious." But, curiously enough, when next the word was heard in the House of Commons—nine years later—it was again applied to a statement by Mr. Layard; and Lord Palmerston entered his protest against the action of the Speaker—this time, Mr. Denison—in not ruling that the phrase was unparliamentary. On July 7th, 1864, there was a debate on a motion moved by Disraeli expressing want of confidence in Palmerston's Administration in regard to its relations with Denmark. Layard, who was now Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was charged by Gathorne-Hardy with having made a "calumnious statement" in a speech he delivered earlier in the debate. Layard moved that the words be taken down. "There does not appear to be anything to call for my interference," said Mr. Speaker Denison. Lord Palmerston, who appeared to be annoyed by the indifference with

which the Speaker treated the charge, pointed out that it was one of the fundamental rules of the House that motives should not be imputed to members. "I appeal to you, Sir," he continued, "whether when one member imputes to another that he has made a calumnious statement, it does not imply that he made that statement with the motive of distorting the truth?" Disraeli then came to the assistance of Gathorne-Hardy by pointing out that what the honourable member had characterised as a "calumnious statement" was the charge made by Layard, —namely, that the Opposition had been guilty of "falsification." Gladstone, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Administration, argued that the attention of the Chair should have been called to Layard's language at the moment the words were spoken. "But," said he, "I apprehend that I am safe in laying it down that a breach of order, much less a mere alleged breach of order, committed by one speaker, will not justify a subsequent speaker in violating order. I hope that will be clearly understood whether the imputation of a calumnious statement is or is not to be henceforward within the bounds of Parliamentary discussion." "The debate has been a warm and exciting one," replied the Speaker; "but it would put the House into a false position if heated language on one side is to be a justification for any passing of the bounds of order on the other." But though there were mutual retractations by Layard and Gathorne-Hardy of the words complained of, Mr. Speaker Denison did not modify in any way his ruling that the use of the phrase "calumnious statement" called not for his interference.

In "Notes from my Journal when Speaker of the House of Commons," by Viscount Ossington (Mr. Denison), which was published since the original appearance of this article in "The Nineteenth Century," the Speaker writes in reference to the incident: "From all I have heard, the House was satisfied with my course. I heard great disapprobation of Lord Palmerston's course. For myself, I did not object to Lord Palmerston's mild expostulation. As to the word 'calumnious,' I could say of this word, as might be said of many others, they must be taken with the context and under the condition of the moment. Under the circumstances of the moment I saw no reason to interfere. Under the circumstances the same word might be used in a manner to give offence, and in a manner which might call for interference."

The word "calumnious" was again used in the House on March 22nd, 1867. Mr. O'Reilly moved a vote of censure on the Government for granting an allowance out of the Civil List to Mr. Robert Young, described as an "agricultural and historical poet" (whatever that may mean), who had fallen under the ire of the Irish members for writing Orange ballads. "The statements which have been made in the course of this debate," said Mr. Whalley, are "malicious and calumnious." Mr. O'Reilly objected to the phrase. "The words used," said Mr. Speaker Denison, "were 'malicious and calumnious'; and I think those words should not have been used." Mr. Whalley accordingly withdrew the expression. However, on May 26th, 1870, a definite ruling was again made from the Chair that "calumnious"

was unimpeachable. The expression "calumnious accusation" was used, and a motion was made that it be taken down. "The word," said Mr. Speaker Denison, "has been called in question before, and was considered to be a word which was not unparliamentary."

It would seem, too, that the phrase "an atrocious calumny" may be used in the House of Commons with impunity. At any rate, on April 19th, 1839, Daniel O'Connell stigmatised a statement that the Irish Catholic clergy were "ignorant, benighted, and immoral" as "an atrocious calumny, for which there can be no excuse except ignorance to the extent of brutality such as was familiar in Kent, which the honourable member represents." Strong language this, surely; but Mr. Speaker Abercromby took no action when his attention was called to it. He probably regarded as an extenuating circumstance the provocation of the language which inspired O'Connell's full-blooded retort. Abercromby's predecessor in the Chair, Charles Manners Sutton, occasionally allowed members to attack each other personally with considerable freedom. During one exciting debate on a motion for the abolition of tithes in Ireland, on July 2nd, 1833—the first Session of the reformed Parliament—he was appealed to not to allow the discussion to degenerate into mere personal attacks. "No one," he replied, "is more sensible than I am of the impropriety of personal attacks being introduced into the discussions of this House. But I am afraid it is rather too late in the night, after what has already occurred, to complain of those attacks."

There are also several interesting instances of



charges of wasting the time of the House, objected to by the members concerned as disorderly, being held to be quite Parliamentary by the Chair. "Was there ever such deliberate waste of time as the moving of such an instruction?" indignantly asked Sir William Harcourt, Home Secretary, on the Hares and Rabbits Bill, August 10th, 1880. "The whole object and intention of this sort of thing is to waste time." Mr. Henry Chaplin asked the Speaker whether it was competent for the right honourable gentleman to impute motives to other members. "So far as I have followed the right honourable gentleman," replied Mr. Speaker Brand, "no expression fell from him which was of an unparliamentary character." Again, in the Session of 1882, Sir William Harcourt said of Mr. Warton that he was "wantonly and unjustifiably wasting the time of the House," and when Mr. Speaker Brand was asked to rule the statement out of order he replied: "The right honourable gentleman is responsible for these expressions. I am bound to say that I do not see that they are out of order." A charge of wasting time was also uttered from the Treasury Bench against members of the Opposition during the Session of 1884. "I cannot say that such an observation is altogether out of order," said Mr. Speaker Brand, when asked to declare that the words were unparliamentary. "It is an observation that has been frequently made in this House, and it has not been confined to one side of the House or the other."

The amusing spectacle of Parnell hotly protesting against a charge of obstruction and being told from the Chair that there was nothing unparliamentary in

the charge, was witnessed on the night of September 2nd, 1886. Lord Randolph Churchill was Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House. In replying to a motion that the debate on the Address be adjourned, he accused the Opposition of obstruction. "I rise to order, Sir," said Parnell, addressing Mr. Speaker Peel. "I wish to know whether the noble lord is entitled to impute a Parliamentary offence to any member or party in this House—the offence of obstruction?" "I never understood," replied the Speaker, "that there was anything unparliamentary in attributing that quality to any honourable member." General laughter followed, and was renewed when Lord Randolph Churchill remarked: "I am sorry that the nerves of the honourable member for Cork are so sensitive."

Mr. Speaker Brand widened the bounds of Parliamentary expressions more perhaps than any other occupant of the Chair of the House of Commons. On August 23rd, 1880, Mr. Mitchel Henry accused another Irish member of having said to the farmers of Kildare, "Don't pay your just debts." The member referred to denied that he had ever used such words. Mr. Mitchel Henry having said that he did not pretend to quote the honourable gentleman's exact words, added, "Nothing could be more contemptible than a denial of this kind." The Speaker was then asked whether such an expression was Parliamentary. "I do not," replied Mr. Speaker Brand, "observe anything in what the honourable member for Galway said that was out of order, or of an unparliamentary character." In the Session of 1881 Mr. Childers said that in his opinion the language used by a member

in a previous speech was unparliamentary. The Speaker was asked whether the right honourable gentleman was in order in using such an expression. "Yes," he replied, "the right honourable gentleman is entitled to say that."

In the Session of 1881, on July 21st, Sir Charles Dilke, who was then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, characterised a statement of Lord Randolph Churchill as "distinctly opposed to the fact." Sir H. Drummond-Wolff moved that the words be taken down, as they contained an imputation on the noble lord's veracity. "I have been many years in this House," remarked Mr. Childers, "and I have heard these words used over and over again, and they have not been considered to be unparliamentary." "I am not prepared to say," Mr. Speaker said, "that those words are unparliamentary."

During the Session of 1883 a member imputed that a Committee of the House had acted "partially and in a partisan spirit." On Mr. Speaker Brand's attention being called to the words, he replied: "The honourable member has made the statement on his own responsibility, and I do not feel called upon to interfere." In the same Session one member charged another with having "grossly misstated" a matter in the course of a speech. "I do not see anything in that expression that is irregular," said the Speaker. The last ruling of Mr. Brand on a question dealing with language was made on February 20th, 1884, on the eve of his vacating the Chair. Mr. T. M. Healy describing an Irish peer as "this bigoted and malevolent young puppy," the Speaker was asked whether it was competent for a member of the House of

Commons to apply such language to a member of the House of Lords. "The honourable member is responsible for his own words," replied Mr. Speaker Brand. "I am here to give my opinion on matters of order. If I were called upon to give my opinion on a matter of taste, it would be a different thing." There was no withdrawal of the words. Mr. Healy retorted that he would leave to the people of Ireland, and to his constituents in particular, the decision of the matter of taste. It is interesting to note in this connection that the statement that the House of Lords were "the hereditary enemies of the Irish people" was ruled out of order by Mr. Speaker Brand in 1881.

Mr. Speaker Gully has also made an interesting ruling, which shows that expressions which if used in reference to an individual member would be unparliamentary, may with impunity be applied to a Government. During the Session of 1897 he was asked whether a member was in order in attributing fraud to the Treasury Bench, and in using the word "alleged" in reference to the statements of the Secretary to the Treasury. The Speaker replied:—

"The use of the word 'alleged' is improper if it was used in the sense, as it seems to me that it was, of suggesting that something stated by the right honourable gentleman was not true. As to the word 'fraud' in connection with the Treasury, such words are extremely objectionable in debate, but, unless they can be pointed to a specific allegation against an honourable member, they are hardly out of order. The action of the Government as a whole can be denounced in much

stronger language than can be used about an individual member of the House. But the honourable and learned member goes extremely near the line."

Happily, the use of strong language in the House of Commons is occasionally softened by an element of humour. On June 13th, 1845, the House was in Committee on the Bill for establishing Queen's Colleges in Ireland. Mr. Roebuck made an attack on Mr. Smith O'Brien. "I treat his attack," said the Irish representative, "with unutterable contempt, and accompany that contempt with intense pity." Sir R. H. Inglis evoked "peals of laughter," according to "Hansard," by asking the Chairman "whether any member could express unutterable contempt." The Chairman fortunately was saved from the difficulty of deciding the point by Mr. Smith O'Brien abandoning the expression.

Major O'Gorman, an Irish member of the House during the 'Seventies, was one of the most amusing humorists of the unconscious order that has ever appeared at Westminster. On April 28th, 1874, there was a debate on a motion for the acquisition and control of Irish railways by the Government. Major O'Gorman said that if the project were carried out the Irish officials of the companies would be told to "go to hell or Connaught." "I must remind the honourable gentleman," said Mr. Speaker Denison (who was evidently unaware that the Major had merely quoted an historic Cromwellian expression), "that his language exceeds the licence of Parliamentary debate." "Mr. Speaker," replied Major O'Gorman, "the language I used was perfectly

historical. It was used by the man who took the mace from off the Table. But of course I will with pleasure beg pardon if I have gone beyond the rules." On April 6th, 1878, a speech by Colonel Stanley, the Secretary of State for War, was punctuated by frequent irrelevant and embarrassing cries of "Hear, hear" from Major O'Gorman in his stentorian voice. The Speaker called on the honourable and gallant member to desist from these interruptions. "I am not interrupting," roared the Major; "I say I am not interrupting," he repeated in reply to cries of "Order, order!" and "Chair!" "I am entitled to call 'Hear, hear,'" he went on. "Yes, I have a right to call 'Hear, hear,' after every sentence, after every semicolon; after every comma, if I think proper, and I mean to exercise it." As he persisted in refusing to apologise, he was "named" by the Speaker and was suspended. On the morrow he apologised fully, amply, and with the most heartfelt expressions of regret.

The cry of "Order, order," so familiar in the House of Commons, was once ruled "out of order" by Mr. Speaker Peel. On April 16th, 1885, Mr. Arthur O'Connor was speaking on a motion relating to the Post Office, and as members generally were not paying attention to his remarks, his colleague Mr. T. M. Healy endeavoured to recall the wandering thoughts of the House by persistent cries of "Order, order." "The honourable and learned member should not be so demonstrative in his remarks," said the Speaker. "Am I to understand that it is out of order to cry 'Order!' in this House?" asked Mr. Healy. "The tone and the way in which the

honourable member expresses himself is out of order," answered the Speaker. "In that case——" said Mr. Healy; but the Speaker pulled him up sharply with the reproof: "The honourable member is not in order in addressing the Chair in that way. If the honourable member continues, I shall have to take notice of his interruption."

On May 20th, 1884, when the House was in Committee on the Representation of the People Bill, Sir Patrick O'Brien, an Irish Liberal member, made an observation which his Nationalist fellow-countrymen received with cries of "Order." "It is not out of order," continued Sir Patrick. "If it were out of order the Chairman would take notice of it." Mr. Matthew Kenny again cried "Order, order!" "Perhaps," said Sir Patrick O'Brien, "the young sea-serpent from the county of Clare would——" But before he could conclude his sentence the Chairman, with a sad lack of appreciation of Irish humour, interposed with the reprimand, "The honourable member must not apply language of that kind to any member of the House." "Then, Sir Arthur Otway, I will withdraw 'the young sea-serpent,'" said Sir Patrick O'Brien.

The only other occasion on which a member was compared to a viper was on May 14th, 1849, during a debate on the Land Improvement and Drainage (Ireland) Bill, which was a Government measure to aid distressed Irish agriculturists after the great famine. Mr. Roebuck opposed the Bill, and made a scathing attack on the Irish members for always coming to Parliament for assistance in times of need. Mr. John O'Connell (son of Daniel O'Connell), who followed,

said, in filial imitation of his father, "The honourable member had enforced his attack with all the grimaces of a mountebank and the spite of a viper." The Speaker (Mr. Shaw-Lefevre) at once interposed. "I must inform the honourable and learned gentleman," he said, "that these expressions are quite unparliamentary." Mr. John O'Connell replied, "And I confidently appeal to you, sir, whether on any occasion when it was my misfortune to fall under your rebuke I did not bow to it at once, and I am ready to withdraw the expression."

The cries, "Shame," "Gag," "Scandalous," are altogether out of order, and have been so ruled repeatedly. "Humbug," and "Tommy-rot" are also under the ban. One honourable member may say that another's statement is untrue in fact, but not that it is knowingly untrue; and there are abundant precedents for saying that honourable gentlemen have deliberately broken faith. One must not talk of the "sharp practice" of hon. members, or call the supporters of the Government "subservient creatures," or allude to the utterance of a Minister as a "swindling speech," or use the phrase "another Treasury swindle." Mr. John Burns once spoke of a peroration as couched in the "language of the pot-house and breathing the spirit of the prize-ring," and on being called to order substituted the words "language of the Stock Exchange," which were allowed to pass. Mr. T. W. Russell was called to order for applying the term "Handy Andy" to another honourable member from Ireland. Col. Saunderson spoke of the Rev. Father McFadden, an Irish priest, as "a murderous ruffian," and a tempest arose which the gallant



member appeased by asking leave to substitute "excited politician."

Observations which are ruled out of order by the Chair are, in the majority of cases, withdrawn; and the House is satisfied with this atonement to its offended dignity and decorum. On June 15th, 1863, the phrase "scandalous and unfounded assertions" was applied to a speech. It was condemned by the Speaker and at once retracted. However, some members declared themselves dissatisfied with the mere withdrawal of the objectionable phrase, and contended that its use should be visited by some signal punishment. But the Speaker ruled otherwise. "The honourable member," said he, "having expressed his regret for the language he used, that expression of regret must be satisfactory to the House." If a member who has used an unparliamentary expression refuses to withdraw it when ordered to do so by the Chair, he is "named" and suspended for a certain period from the service of the House. "Suspension" means entire exclusion, for the period stated, from the Palace of Westminster.

Viscount Peel, speaking once of the House of Commons, said: "There, passions are strewed about the floor like gunpowder, and though every reasonable precaution is taken, as in powder factories, yet now and then an explosion will occur." But it seems to me that a study of the volumes of "Hansard" both before and since the Reform Act of 1832 will show that expressions used in the heat of debate which have been reprov'd from the Chair as unparliamentary, are on the whole very mild indeed, especially when compared with the language used in the Legislatures of

other countries ; that since 1832, notwithstanding the democratic franchise on which the House of Commons is elected, there has been no deterioration in the behaviour of members, that respect for the Chair is as strong as ever, and that the courtesies of debate are still strictly observed. "When gentlemen cease to be returned to Parliament," said Lord Beaconsfield, in 1879, "this Empire will perish."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### “ HANSARD.”

“LET me tell you how to get on in the House of Commons,” said Disraeli to the late Sir John Pope Hennessy. “When the House is sitting, be always in your place. When it is not sitting, read ‘Hansard.’” “He was a constant student of ‘Hansard,’” writes Mr. John Morley of Richard Cobden; “and for one who seeks, for purposes of action and controversy, to make himself well versed in the political transactions of the present century, there is no book so well worth the labour of ransacking.”

I am not a member of the House of Commons. I am not even a politician. But, whether it be the Parliamentary Session, or the Parliamentary Recess, my favourite corner in my club library is just beneath the rows of shelves on which are ranged, in serried files, the volumes—523 in number—of “The Parliamentary History” and “The Parliamentary Debates” (popularly known as “Hansard”), containing a continuous and unbroken record of the proceedings of Parliament from the Norman Conquest, in 1066, to the end of the first session of the first Parliament of the Twentieth Century; and my favourite pastime is dipping into the pages of this mammoth work. I

cannot say that these long lines of volumes in sombre bindings are outwardly inviting to the eye. They have, in truth, a funereal aspect, which must appear singularly appropriate to those who mistakingly regard "Hansard" as a vast necropolis of dead political debates, of extinct Party war-cries, of the reputations of forgotten politicians. It would seem, also, as if those who planned the disposition of the books in this club library assumed that "Hansard" would be seldom consulted. The volumes are not easy of access. To get at them one must climb a slippery ladder, in fear and trembling lest it should collapse. And, indeed, I rarely notice any of the frequenters of the library resorting to the volumes of "Hansard," save an odd journalist searching for the date of the passing of some Act, or the numbers in a historic division, with which to fill a blank in a leading article or a London Letter paragraph; or an odd member of the House of Commons hunting for a happy quotation to add point to the argument of the speech he proposes to contribute to an impending debate should he succeed in catching the Speaker's eye. If you watch these casual consulters of "Hansard," you will see they turn immediately to the end of the volume in order to consult the index. It is only within comparatively recent years that "Hansard" has been equipped with adequate indices, so that if the volume referred to is old it is found to contain only a list of names, with a row of figures after each, affording no clue whatever to the contents; and baffled thus in their quest for a date or a passage, these occasional delvers for a chunk of fact in the mine of "Hansard" throw the volume on the shelf with a gesture of impatience. But if the

index has enabled them to locate the fact they are seeking, they quickly turn over the leaves of the volume in a hurry to get to the page—never, by any chance, lingering lovingly on the way—and, having found it, they scribble a note on a piece of paper, put back the volume again, and hastily disappear.

It is not my habit to ransack "Hansard" in that perfunctory fashion. I take down a volume at random—the date does not matter, provided it is before the time I began to take an interest in current politics—and, carefully blowing off the dust which has accumulated upon it during the months—the years, mayhap—it has lain undisturbed on the shelf with its fellows, I retire to a quiet corner close at hand for a couple of hours of delightful reading. What appeals to me is the human side of these long-forgotten political debates. I think there is no field of man's activity the study of which is more fascinating, or which will yield more instruction and entertainment—yielding, as it does, innumerable examples of tragedy and farce, of humour and pathos, of hopes frustrated, of noble ambitions grandly realised, of human weakness and human passion, of the inanities and vanities of man, of the narrow views and pettiness of some, of the exalted aspirations and great-heartedness of others—than the record of the development of the Government of this Realm by Parliament, and of the final word in the solution of the political problems of nine centuries. We also witness in these volumes the gradual broadening out of popular rights and liberties, and the steady progress of legislation tending to general happiness and social well-being. We see how the political heresies of one generation become the political

commonplaces of the next ; how the impossible Radical programme of one Parliament is embodied in the Statute Book by its Conservative successor. We also witness the interesting working-out of the dual Party system, upon which our Parliamentary Government is based, in the struggle at close quarters between the "ins" in the sunshine of possession and the "outs" in the shades of Opposition ; and as we read these animated and often angry debates we cannot fail to notice the paramount influence of Party loyalty in the tendency of our representatives to regard all questions from the point of view of Party, independently of intellectual conviction.

It is to William Cobbett that the credit of inaugurating this unique record of our Parliamentary history and proceedings is due. In 1802 he began the publication of his famous newspaper, *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* ; and two years later, struck by the inadequacy of the existing reports of the proceedings in Parliament, which he rightly declared reflected very little credit on the nation, he brought out compilations of the current debates as supplements to the *Register*. In the second year the reports were issued separately under the title of "Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates." The work of compiling the debates from the current newspaper reports—with the occasional assistance of manuscripts of speeches from members—was performed by John Wright, the sub-editor of the *Register*, a man whose name deserves to be at least as eminently associated with the publication of our Parliamentary proceedings as the names of Cobbett and Hansard. A few years before, Wright was a publisher and bookseller in Piccadilly, his

failure in 1801 being due, according to Cobbett, partly to his taking "more delight in reading books than in selling them," and partly to "the misfortune of being bookseller to the Anti-Jacobins, by whose works, though such a puffing was made over them, he lost many hundreds of pounds." The "Anti-Jacobin," of which George Canning and William Gifford were the leading spirits, was, in fact, published by Wright at his shop, "No. 169, opposite Old Bond Street, Piccadilly."

In 1806 the idea of a Parliamentary work of still greater magnitude emanated from the fertile brain of Cobbett. This was "Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England from the Norman Conquest in 1066 to 1803." In the latter year, it will be remembered, "Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates" commenced. In the preface to the first volume of this work, dated "Botley, October, 1806," Cobbett writes: "With the literary aid the compiler has received, the public has, perhaps, strictly speaking, little to do; but he cannot for one hour exist under the idea that the whole of the merit, whatever it may be, should be ascribed to himself to the exclusion of the invaluable talents and exertions of the gentleman who is his principal assistant and upon whom no small share of the exertion has devolved." Wright is the gentleman referred to in this passage. He was also the editor of this invaluable work, and in the discharge of his duties displayed a thorough acquaintance with the existing sources of Parliamentary history. It was compiled from the Journals of both Houses of Parliament, from diaries kept by Commoners and Peers, from Constitutional and general histories, from private MSS. collections in country houses and in the British Museum,

and from the meagre reports supplied by the newspapers and magazines of the eighteenth century, despite the pains and penalties — heavy fines or imprisonment in the Tower or Newgate—with which Parliament visited any breach of the secrecy of its sacred proceedings.

The "Debates" and the "History" were printed by T. Curson Hansard, eldest son of Luke Hansard, then the printer of the Journals of the Houses of Parliament. In 1809 the printing of the *Weekly Political Register* was also transferred to Hansard, with important after-effects on the fate of the "Debates." Before a year had elapsed Hansard had a most unpleasant experience of the risks attending even the printing of a political newspaper less than a century ago. The Government instituted a prosecution for seditious libel against Cobbett and Hansard in respect of an article severely condemning flogging in the Army, which appeared in the *Register*, and, as the result, the editor was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of one thousand pounds, and the printer to three years' imprisonment. Cobbett, finding himself unable to raise the money to pay the fine, held, while in prison, an investigation into his business affairs. Wright, who was described in the "Satirist" in 1809 as "the poor devil who corrects Cobbett's bad English, edits his 'Parliamentary History,' brushes his coat, puffs him in coffee-houses and debating shops, and does all his dirty work," was responsible also for the management of the commercial side of Cobbett's various publications. There was no annual stock-taking or balancing of accounts. According as Cobbett wanted ten, twenty, or one



hundred pounds, he asked Wright for it ; and in this hand-to-mouth fashion the business was conducted until the failure of Wright to produce on the demand of Cobbett in the usual fashion the thousand pounds fine in 1810. It was then found as the result of the inquiry that, while the *Register* paid, the “Parliamentary History,” the “Parliamentary Debates,” and the “State Trials”—another of Cobbett’s excellent ventures—were produced at an enormous loss. Cobbett in the circumstances was glad to transfer his interest in the three latter publications to Hansard, and Wright went over with them to the new proprietor.

Eight years later, Cobbett attacked Wright with characteristic virulence of language. In 1818 there was an election for Westminster in which the Radicals were divided, Henry Hunt being the standard-bearer of one section, and Sir Francis Burdett and John Cam Hobhouse the favourites of the other. One of the incidents of the campaign was the publication of a letter from Cobbett to Wright—written ten years before—disparaging the private character of Hunt. Cobbett, incensed by the action of Wright in making the letter public, denounced him in the *Register* as “a wretch unequalled in the annals of infamy” by whom he had been “fouly robbed” for years. The inquiry into his affairs in 1810 showed, he said, that the accounts had been kept by Wright “in such a state that the devil himself could not unravel them.” “There is my son John,” continued Cobbett, “who, though he was then a child, will never forget the big, round drops of sweat that on a cold winter’s day rolled down the caitiff’s forehead when he was detected in

fabricating accounts ; and when I took Johnny by the hand (who had begun whimpering for poor Wright) and said, 'Look at that man, my dear. Those drops of sweat are the effect of detected villainy. Think of that, my dear child, and you will always be an honest man.'” But Wright brought an action for libel against Cobbett, and got a verdict for £1,000. In addition to his services to Parliamentary history, for which he is entitled to be remembered with gratitude, this accomplished man also wrote a memoir of the Right Hon. William Huskisson, the statesman and financier, who was killed by a locomotive engine at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830, and assisted John Wilson Croker in the preparation of the well-known edition of Boswell's Johnson. He died in 1844.

Cobbett's name was eliminated from the title-page of the “Parliamentary History” from Vol. 10, published in 1812 ; and thence to the concluding volume (Vol. 36)—which, appearing in 1820, supplied the last connecting link between the “History” and the “Debates”—the work was called “The Parliamentary History of England.” In the case of the “Debates,” Hansard in 1812 had new title-pages printed for all the volumes which had appeared, omitting Cobbett's name, describing the work as “The Parliamentary Debates,” and stating that they were “published under the superintendence of T. C. Hansard.” It was not until 1829 that the title “Hansard's Parliamentary Debates” first appeared.

On April 3rd, 1865—the day after Cobden's death—Disraeli, taking part in the brief Commemoration debate on the great Free Trader, in the House of

Commons, used some striking and picturesque passages. "There is," he said, "this consolation remaining to us, when we remember our unequalled and irreparable losses, that those great men are not altogether lost to us, that their words will be often quoted in this House, that their examples will often be referred to and appealed to, and that even their expressions may form part of our discussions. There are, indeed, I may say, some members of Parliament who, though they may not be present, are still members of this House, are independent of dissolutions, of the caprices of constituencies, and even of the course of time. I think that Mr. Cobden was one of these men." That is true, indeed, of great members of Parliament. Pitt, Fox, Canning, Peel, Russell, Disraeli, Gladstone, have passed away, but their light will ever be reflected on the horizon of politics; their characters and policies will never cease, perhaps, to be subjects of controversy, and their speeches in Parliament will always be read, at least by members of both Houses of the Legislature and by students of history. In addition to those eminent statesmen, a few strong, masterful spirits like O'Connell, Cobden, Parnell, who exercised immense influence on the destinies of Parliament, or on the course of social legislation, and whose careers were rich in all the elements that in all ages excite the interest, the curiosity, the wonder of mankind, are also immortal in the House of Commons.

But as one turns over the leaves of the five hundred and twenty-three volumes of "Hansard" one meets with hundreds—nay, thousands—of names of members of Parliament, more or less renowned in their day,

which are now absolutely forgotten. That is the pathetic side of "Hansard." Many of these representatives of the people were preachers and propagandists of noble political ideals. Here are set out, in column after column, their earnest and powerful and oftentimes vehement advocacy of their plans for making straight the crooked twists in our social polity—speeches which, perhaps, they fondly thought would serve as monuments in "Hansard" to send their names down in an imperishable halo of reverence to remotest posterity. But how sadly have their high hopes been disappointed! One curious feature of "Hansard" is that, while the entrance of every member into the House of Commons is recorded—"Mr. W. F. Watkins" took the oath and his seat for Barchester"—no notice is taken of his exit—save the application for the writ for an election to fill his vacant place—unless he happens to be a very distinguished occupant of either Front Bench, when, after death, a eulogium is pronounced by his political colleagues and his political opponents. But the vast majority of members pass out into darkness unnoticed; and soon, alas! their very names are forgotten in the House in which they were once conspicuous figures. The evanescence of Parliamentary fame, the fleeting nature of the reputation of political personages, is, indeed, brought vividly home to the reader of "Hansard."

And yet, as we all know, the influence exercised in the government of our Commonwealth, not only by the genius of the golden-tongued orator, but by the moderate gifts of an attractive and persuasive speaker, is enormous. In politics, the man with the power of speech—the man able to express with point and

force the sentiments of his Party—soon achieves fame and position. His renown in his day is great. His name is on the lips of all men, for the morning journals record his utterances, and the illustrated weeklies come later with his portrait. But this lesson "Hansard" teaches, that unless the politician links his name with a great Act of Parliament, a brilliant feat of statesmanship, or an epoch-making agitation, his splendid speeches will be of little avail in keeping his memory green to future generations, or in securing for him a place in history. It is not in their speeches that the memory of politicians live—for these, after they have served the purposes of the hour, few read outside the historian and the publicist—but in their achievements as statesmen or agitators.

And this leads us to another interesting point. "Publicity is now the soul of our political life," said Disraeli in 1872. "We owe to the principle of publicity our chief blessings; we have introduced publicity into the affairs of Parliament, into the Judicial Bench, into the Press." In our day, when publicity is also the very breath of life to the politician, when speeches are delivered in Parliament, not so much in the hope that they will carry conviction to the minds of opponents, and thus influence divisions, as because they will be read through the newspapers by the electors outside, it is not easy to understand the determination with which Parliament, as lately as the eighteenth century, suppressed the attempts of the newspapers to justify their existence by giving their readers news of the debates and proceedings at St. Stephen's. In the struggle between the Crown and Parliament for supremacy during the Stuart period of the seventeenth

century, the secrecy of the proceedings of the House of Commons was essential, for members ran the risk of being summoned before the Privy Council if they said anything disagreeable to the King, and of being sent to the Tower if they did not give a satisfactory explanation or apologise. But that state of things was over and done with for ever in the eighteenth century. The human craving for fame and notoriety must have been in those days, as in these, the inspiring motive, with most men, in seeking a seat in the House of Commons; and yet, as it appears to us, members of Parliament in the eighteenth century were practically unanimous in thinking that a heavy fine, or imprisonment in the Tower or Newgate, was richly deserved by those "News-writers" who had the presumption to attempt to give the public some idea of the oratory, the dialectical skill, and the arguments with which the leading personages of both Houses supported or opposed the political questions of the time. This feeling is not, of course, altogether unaccountable. A contempt for the newspapers was, at the time, widely entertained. A member of Parliament would then no more dream of enlarging his fame by the agency of the Press than he would court notoriety now by proclaiming his opinions from the top of an omnibus to the passing crowds in Fleet Street or the Strand. But, above all, there existed a high and mighty idea of Parliament—that publicity of its proceedings was derogatory to its dignity and to its freedom of debate—and, as the result of an extremely narrow franchise, a supreme indifference to public opinion.

Most of the great speeches of the eighteenth century have been lost through this determination of

Parliament to conduct its debates, as far as possible, with closed doors. No speech that has ever been delivered in Parliament created so much excitement and ferment, or left an impression more profound and lasting on all its hearers, than the oration with which, in the House of Commons, Richard Brinsley Sheridan sustained the charge against Warren Hastings of the spoliation of the Begums of Oude. But we turn in vain to "Hansard" for an adequate report of that brilliant performance. The speech was delivered on February 7th, 1787, and lasted five hours and forty minutes. The report of the speech in "Hansard" occupies nineteen of its short columns, and is a dry and trite record, manifestly compiled from the accounts of various hearers. "It is utterly impossible," it says, "to attempt more than an outline of this unprecedented exertion of talents and judgment. We have endeavoured to prepare a faithful miniature of an unequalled original." At the end comes the following descriptive passage: "On the conclusion of Mr. Sheridan's speech he sat down. The whole House, the members, peers and strangers, involuntarily joined in a tumult of applause, and adopted a mode of expressing their approbation, new and irregular in that House, by loudly and repeatedly clapping with their hands." The day after, Sheridan was offered £1,000 if he would write the speech for publication, but for some reason or another—indolence it is generally believed—he refused. Burke described the speech at the time as "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument and wit united, of which there is any record or tradition," and when Fox was asked, fifteen years later, by his nephew, Lord Holland,

which was the best speech ever made in the House of Commons, he replied, without hesitation, "Sheridan's, on the Begum Charge."

One also notices, going through the volumes of "Hansard," a significant change in the tone and temper of the speeches delivered in both Houses. Party spirit was narrower and more fanatical in years past, as was natural, perhaps, when greater and more fundamental questions divided politicians; and the amenities which now soften Parliamentary strife were, as a rule, unknown. The attack and reply were more virulent, inspired, as they often were, as much by personal enmities as by political differences, and, generally speaking, all party opponents carried their quarrels into private life. The style of debating, from the oratorical point of view, has also undergone a marked change. The dividing line is, roughly speaking, the Reform Act of 1832. Debates on questions which did not arouse the vehement expression of bitter party animosity have often that want of reality, that absence of the note of conviction, noticeable in a discussion in a debating club. Members spoke as if their one object was to amuse and charm; to display their scholarly attainments, or their skill in turning out epigrams and nicely-turned phrases. Nowadays, there is little appeal to sentiment, imagination, passion, or emotion in either House of Parliament. It is all plain, straightforward, common-sense talk.

It must be confessed that "Hansard" is mainly used by members of both Houses of Parliament for the purposes of personal and Party recrimination. To "Hansardise" is an expressive phrase. It means



to convict a member of political inconsistency by quoting from the volumes of the Parliamentary debates different views formerly expressed by him on the same subject. “I have no desire to Hansardise the noble Earl by referring a second time to his speeches on life peerages,” said the Earl of Derby, coining the phrase, in the House of Lords, in 1867. Lord Granville, to whom the term was thus first applied, used it himself in his speech on the Irish Church Disestablishment Bill, June, 1869. “I,” said he, “will venture now—to use a word, an admirable word, invented by a noble lord opposite—to Hansardise;” and he then proceeded to quote extracts from former speeches of noble lords. Professor Huxley endeavoured to bring the word into common circulation. Writing in May, 1869, a month before Lord Granville’s application of the term, he said: “I do not wish to Hansardise Sir William Thompson by laying much stress on the fact that fifteen years ago he entertained a totally different view of the origin of the sun’s heat.” “Hansardising” is, indeed, a common, and oftentimes—owing to the mutability of political opinion—a very effective form of Parliamentary controversy. In 1846 Sir James Graham was taunted in the House of Commons with inconsistency in supporting the repeal of the Corn Laws, which for years he had, like Peel, supported strenuously. “I freely admit,” said he, in reply, “that past declarations of opinion made by members of the House, who have subsequently arrived at power, or who aspire to power, much more the declarations made by the First Minister of the Crown, if at all in variance with the course which he has subsequently pursued,

are subjects worthy of reference, and which call for explanation. The hon. member for Northamptonshire made a direct appeal to the Government, and challenged us, if we had changed our opinions, manfully to own it. I answer that challenge. I do frankly avow my change of opinion, and by that avowal I dispose of whole volumes of 'Hansard,' and of all the charges which have been made on the ground of inconsistency."

The publication of "Hansard" does not seem to have been a commercial success. It was produced at the expense of its owners, without any assistance whatever from the State, until as recently as forty-five years ago. The Hansards—the original T. C. Hansard, dying in 1833, was succeeded by his son, another T. C. Hansard—relied solely on the sale of the "Debates," and in a country like this, which has all its interests centred in the present and the future, where a speech, after it has fulfilled its immediate purpose, is regarded by people generally as a sucked orange—a thing that can give sustenance to no one—it is not surprising to learn there was no money in "Hansard" as a commercial speculation. Yet for thirteen years it had a rival in the field entitled "The Mirror of Parliament." That publication began in January, 1828, and, continuing till January, 1837, thirty-six volumes in folio were brought out. It was resumed again in November, 1837, in 8vo (the form and size in which "Hansard" has been uniformly published), and lasted until October, 1841, when it finally disappeared. Of the second series twenty-four volumes were published. The editor of "The Mirror of Parliament" was J. H. Barrow, a Parliamentary

reporter, and, like "Hansard," it was mainly compiled from the reports which had already appeared in the newspapers.

In 1855, Sir George Cornewall Lewis, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, directed the Controller of the Stationery Office to subscribe for 100 copies of the yearly issue of "Hansard" for distribution among the different State departments and the Colonial Legislatures. The price of the yearly issue of "Hansard," at that time, was fifteen guineas. This was the first pecuniary assistance which Parliament afforded to the publication of "Hansard." In 1858 the number of copies purchased by the State was increased to 120; but in 1878, when for the first time in the history of the work a staff of reporters was engaged to report specially for it the proceedings in Parliament, the State gave it a yearly subsidy of £3,000, in addition to an annual sum of between £600 and £700 for copies, which continued until 1881, when the subsidy was increased to £4,000. In 1882 the grant in aid took the form of the payment of £500 for each volume of not less than 960 pages, and under this arrangement, ten volumes having been published, £5,000 was paid. In 1887 another change took place. The Treasury agreed to pay a subsidy of £6,000 and £645 for the purchase of copies, provided twelve volumes a Session were brought out. In 1889 Mr. T. C. Hansard sold his interest in the work to the Hansard Publishing Union, which undertook to bring out the "Debates" without any subsidy from Parliament, relying for a return on sales and advertisements. The following year saw the bankruptcy of the company and the

disappearance of "Hansard" from the title-pages of the "Parliamentary Debates," though they are still referred to in both Houses of Parliament by that old-familiar name. Since then the production of the "Debates" has been carried on by various printing firms, and as the amount paid by the Treasury was totally inadequate, each contractor has been considerably out of pocket by the venture. For the past few years, however, each Peer and Commoner is entitled to a copy of the daily issue of the "Debates," and, as a consequence, the grant-in-aid has had to be substantially increased.

It seems almost incredible that a great and rich nation like ours should have left to chance, until 1877, the reporting of the proceedings of its Parliament—the most important factor in the making of its history—simply because the Treasury grudged the expenditure of a few thousand pounds per annum on the work. Indeed, of all the legislatures of the world, ours—the progenitor of them all, "the Mother of Parliaments"—is the only one that has not got an official corps of reporters, employed direct by the State, to record its debates and proceedings. Perhaps the parsimonious action of the Treasury is due to the curious indifference with which some statesmen have regarded "Hansard." Mr. Gladstone, during his visit to Ireland in 1877, inspected Maynooth College, the famous training school of the Irish priesthood. On entering the library of the College, one of the first things shown him were the volumes of "Hansard's Parliamentary Debates." The authorities of the institution thought Mr. Gladstone would be pleased to find they had among their books the official record of the doings of

that Assembly in which he was so great a figure ; but he told them he had always made it a rule never to allow a volume of " Hansard " to be brought into his house at Hawarden. Unfortunately, Mr. Gladstone did not explain why he took this course. Again, Mr. Arthur Balfour has contemptuously referred in the House of Commons to " the unfathomable bog of ' Hansard.' " In proposing the toast of the health of Sir John Tenniel, at the banquet to which this great cartoonist was entertained by his admirers on his retirement from " Punch," in 1900, Mr. Balfour delivered a most interesting speech, in the course of which he said :—

" The only form of history which is really immortal is the contemporary record from which future historians draw their materials. Every generation will insist on rewriting the history of the past in its own fashion and in accordance with its own view of these original sources. But the original sources remain. They only remain ; they only are perpetual ; and our guest of this evening has, I venture to say, been no small contributor to the original sources of English history in the latter half of the nineteenth century. (Cheers.) When I said that the sources of contemporary history were immortal, I meant they were immortal for students, I did not mean that they were immortal for the general public. As a rule, I regret to have to say it, they are deplorably dull. Is there any man in this room whose tastes are so unnatural and debased that he would sit himself down in an armchair before a good fire, put his feet on the hob or fender, and take down a volume of ' Hansard ' for his recreation ?

(Laughter.) I do not think so ; I hear no answering response from any quarter of the room. But I go much further. I have among my audience many gentlemen whose business it is to make themselves acquainted with the history of their country, and I would like to put it to them whether they have ever read through from cover to cover the selected speeches of any of our greatest orators ?" (Laughter.)

Undoubtedly few people read the collected orations or statesmen. A scheme for the publication of Gladstone's speeches, a few years ago, collapsed for want of public support. A volume of addresses by the same man is uninspiring and wearisome reading, with their few bald lines of introduction as to the occasion on which they were spoken, without the punctuating "hear, hears," "laughter" and "loud cheers," that give a touch of vitality to reports of speeches ; and with nothing about them of the electric atmosphere of the place and circumstances of their delivery. "Hansard," however, is entirely different. In these delightful volumes, one seems to be an actual listener to the flights of eloquence, the powerful arguments, the flashes of wit and humour, of the great political giants who march across their pages ; for in reading a great oration in "Hansard" one sees the crowded Benches, knows what had led up to the speech, and can ascertain, from the subsequent progress of the debate, its varied effects upon the House.

But do we find an adequate explanation of this warning-off by our statesmen of readers from "Hansard" in these passages from Disraeli's famous attack upon Peel *à propos* the Maynooth Grant in

1845? "What, after all, do our statesmen see on looking over a quarter of a century, or more even, of their speeches in 'Hansard'? What dreary pages of interminable talk, what predictions falsified, what pledges broken, what calculations that have gone wrong, what Budgets that have blown up! And all this, too, not relieved by a single original thought, or a single generous impulse, or a single happy expression! Why, 'Hansard,' instead of being the Delphi of Downing Street, is but the Dunciad of politics!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### HUMOURS OF PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING.

ONE morning, during the Session of 1887, the newspapers reported in exactly similar terms a brief but curious and amusing conversation between Lord Salisbury and Lord Rosebery in the House of Lords on the previous evening. The topic was a rumour to the effect that Sir Drummond Wolff's appointment as British Plenipotentiary at Constantinople had terminated. Lord Rosebery inquired if the news were true. Lord Salisbury, as Foreign Secretary, intimated that the rumour did not quite accurately describe Sir Drummond Wolff's position. What followed is thus recorded by the newspapers. Lord Rosebery: "Are we to understand then that Sir Drummond Wolff is in a state of suspended animation?" Lord Salisbury: "No; rather in a state of animated expectancy."

On the evening of the day this report appeared in the Press, Lord Salisbury called attention to it in the House of Lords. He denied in the most emphatic manner that he had ever used such language, and Lord Rosebery on his part was equally assertive that the remark attributed to him never crossed his lips. But their lordships gave no indication of the nature of the conversation that had really passed between



them on the subject of Sir Drummond Wolff; they simply contented themselves with denying the accuracy of the newspaper report. However, months afterwards, Lord Rosebery, presiding at the International Shorthand Congress, alluded to this remarkable instance of the humour of Parliamentary reporting. He then said that his own words were, "Are we to understand that Sir Drummond Wolff is in a state of agitated expectancy?" and that Lord Salisbury, leaning across the table, had answered jocosely, in a low voice so that it should not reach the Reporters' Gallery, "I will telegraph and ask him, if you like." But what puzzled Lord Rosebery, as he confessed at the Congress, was the extraordinary agreement between all the reports of the conversation which appeared in the newspapers. Such unanimity would have convinced anyone else but the two principals that the conversation had really taken place as it was reported. The explanation of the mystery is, however, simple: all the newspaper reports came from one common source. It is difficult to hear in the Reporters' Gallery of the House of Lords, and the reporters being, for that reason, doubtful that they could, independently, provide accurate reports of the speech, made up between them, as best they were able, a version for the common benefit.

Mishearing is the source of some of the errors in Parliamentary reporting. To it must be attributed the various renderings given in the London morning papers of a line from Macaulay's "Armada" quoted by Lord Rosebery. Two gave the line correctly:—

"Till like volcanoes flared to heaven the stormy hills of Wales."

Two others rendered it—

“Like volcanoes flamed to heaven the stormy hills of Wales.”

But the version in a fifth was extraordinary—

“Like volcanoes flame the heavens,  
The stormy hills of Wales.”

Three distinct versions of an amusing parody used by Daniel O’Connell in the course of a speech in the House of Commons in the Thirties are given in the newspapers of the time. O’Connell had been attacked by three colonels in succession—Colonel Verner, member for Armagh, Colonel Gore, member for Sligo, and Colonel Sibthorpe, member for Lincoln, of whom the two former were clean-shaven, while the latter was remarkable for a full and flowing beard. Rising subsequently, O’Connell convulsed the House with laughter by a ready parody of William Dryden’s well-known lines on Milton. One version of this parody ran as follows:—

“Three colonels in three different counties born,  
Armagh, Sligo, and Lincoln did adorn;  
The first in gravity of face surpassed;  
Sobriety the next: in impudence the last.  
The force of nature could no farther go,  
To beard the third, she shaved the other two.”

This was a second—

“Three colonels in three distant counties born,  
Did Armagh, Sligo, and Lincoln adorn.  
The first in impudence all men surpassed,  
The next in ignorance, in both the last;  
The force of folly could no further go,  
To beard the third, she shaved the other two.”

And this was the third—

“Three colonels in three distant counties born,  
 Armagh, Sligo, and Lincoln did adorn ;  
 The first in direst bigotry surpassed ;  
 The next in impudence, in both the last.  
 The force of nature could no farther go,  
 To beard the third, she shaved the other two.”

Quotations are not often mangled. I have been able to discover only a few examples. Mr. John Bright once quoted the lines from Milton—

“I argue not  
 Against Heaven’s hand or will, nor bate a jot  
 Of heart or hope ; but still bear up and steer  
 Right onward.”

An inexperienced reporter was not familiar with the passage, and having no idea that Mr. Bright was quoting poetry, he turned it into prose, in the third person, as follows : “ He would not argue against the hand or will of heaven, nor would he bate a jot of heart or hope. He would still bear up and steer right onward.” Still more amusing was the rendering given to the two well-known lines from Tennyson’s “ Lady Clara Vere de Vere ” by a young reporter who was brought into the Gallery one night on trial : “ The honourable gentleman concluded by declaring that kind hearts were far more than coronets, and simple faith much better than Norman blood.”

The famous saying of Drummond, the Irish Under-Secretary, “ Property has its duties as well as its rights,” has been given as “ Prosperity has its duties for which it fights.” “ Great is Diana of the Ephesians ! ” once exclaimed Sir William Harcourt in the course of a terrific onslaught on Mr. Chamberlain ;

but a provincial paper improved the quotation in this novel fashion: "Great Dinah, what a farce this is!" Perhaps there was more in that rendering than met the eye; but if the editor was not cynically expressing his own convictions, it is probably to the telegraph and not to the reporter that the credit of the joke is due. Indeed the telegraph has indulged in many witticisms at the expense of the members of both Houses of Parliament. It has transformed a classical allusion to "Cato and Brutus" into "Cats and Brutes"; the celebrated phrase used by the late Mr. W. E. Forster, in a speech on his Irish policy, "*mauvais sujets* and village ruffians" into "*wandering savages* and village ruffians"; "the cow was cut into *halves*" into "the cow was cut into *calves*"; and "the militia is a great constitutional force" into "the militia is a great constitutional *farce*."

Indeed, when one thinks of the number of stages through which the report of a Parliamentary speech has to pass from the time the words leave the lips of the speaker until they appear in print in the morning paper, the wonder is that the report so often escapes without any distortion of meaning in the process. The speaker may have an indistinct enunciation, or the reporter may have a difficulty in hearing him. But even if the reporter has succeeded in getting the words correctly in shorthand on his note-book, he may misread them in transcription, for the forms of shorthand are sometimes bewildering, even to the writer; or he may transcribe them in a longhand so vile, or with such a plenitude of contractions, that the telegraph-clerk cannot be blamed for confusing them in transmission. And even if the report has been

plainly written, faulty signalling by careless telegraphists, or mechanical or electrical defects in the wires, will make a sad mess of it in sending it to newspapers in the provinces. Then there is the ruthless blue pencil of the sub-editor to be taken into account; or it may be only in the last stages, when the compositor "sets up" the report, or when the reader corrects it in proof, that the error occurs. It is, therefore, difficult to bring home the blame of any blunder in the provincial report of a Parliamentary speech.

Dr. Magee, the late Archbishop of York, was once reported to have said in the House of Lords that "drunkenness is *jolly*." Though no correction appeared, it may be safely assumed that what his Grace said was "drunkenness is *folly*." On another occasion he was represented as having applied the uncomplimentary epithets "hardened and insolent" to advocates of teetotalism. The sub-editor, the compositor, and the proof-reader may have had in mind the supposed declaration of his Grace that "drunkenness is *jolly*," and may, therefore, have passed as natural this sweeping onslaught on the enthusiastic friends of temperance. But the indignant letters which, in this instance, the speaker received from some teetotallers led him to explain publicly that he had used the words "*ardent and excellent*," and not "*hardened and insolent*." Here is another extract from a reported speech of his: "There is nothing ascertainable in what you call spiritual things. The Post Office Telegraph, which best interprets this age, tells you the most you can come to in that line of thought." Readers were naturally mystified by this

extraordinary allusion to the Post Office Telegraph, till they were informed next day that it was the Poet Laureate to whom his Grace had referred. Curiously enough, it was established beyond all doubt that this prank was played in the Post Office itself.

In a discussion on a Factory Bill, one member, according to a report in one of the provincial papers, urged its acceptance on the House in order to put a stop to the practice of "*shaving* factory boys to death." During the last Parliament Mr. Gladstone indulged one evening in some genial bantering of Lord Hartington, and the following appeared in one of the provincial reports of the speech: "Such is the modesty of my noble friend that he *shaves* his head. But I must insist upon placing upon his head the crown which he is entitled to wear." A reference to the report, published in the London journal, shows that Lord Hartington did not *shave* his head, but only *shook* it.

Telegraphic humour is not, however, always unconscious or unintentional. There is a well-authenticated story current in the Reporters' Gallery of a strange freak of a telegraph-clerk in the transmission of the report of a Parliamentary speech by Mr. Forster to a daily paper in Bradford. The subject of the speech was education; the word "children" was frequently used, and, for the sake of brevity, the clerk substituted "kids," trusting that the alteration would be corrected by the operator at the other end of the wire. The message, however, was not only written, but printed just as it was transmitted. Imagine the faces of the right honourable gentleman's constituents when they read next morning: "You know of Wordsworth's

profound saying, 'The *kid* is father to the man.' I need not dwell on the vital importance to the community of imparting a sound moral and secular education to *kids* in their impressionable years. It is for the *kids* that this Bill is introduced, and asking the House to remember that the *kids* of this generation will be the fathers and mothers of the next I confidently appeal to it to support our proposals."

"These are all *friends*, well-known *friends*," exclaimed Mr. Cobden, after citing the names of many authorities in support of the views he was laying before the House: "They are all *fiends*, well-known *fiends*," said a newspaper for him. One of the bishops in the House of Lords was represented as having spoken of the *iniquities* instead of the *antiquities* of an old church. "My lords," remarked another prelate, "we take these children out of the streets; we watch over them, we clothe them, and we tend them;" but his words were read, "we *wash* them, we clothe them," etc. In an Irish report of a debate in the House of Lords, after the execution of Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien at Manchester in 1867, the Earl of Mayo was reported to have "condemned the Fenian executions as sanctimonious murder," and in consequence much amazement was naturally aroused in Ireland. But next day came the correction; his lordship had condemned "the Fenian processions as sanctioning murder." An Irish member, describing one of the processions to the House, was represented as having said: "The people rent the air with ten thousand *snouts*."

The late Earl of Carnarvon was credited with having said, "In these days clergymen are expected to

have the wisdom and learning of a *journeyman tailor*," instead of "the wisdom and learning of *Jeremy Taylor*." "Personally he *violated* the Lord's Day as much as any member of the House," asserted a member for Leicester in the local paper; but when some scandalised and indignant constituents demanded an explanation, it turned out that *venerated* was the word he had used. The following sentence appeared in a despatch that was read in the House during the Crimean war: "Our troops had marched across Belbec and drawn up in front of the North forts." It appeared in some of the newspapers as: "Our troops had marched across the Baltic and drawn up in front of the North Foreland."

These witticisms may be attributed to the antics of the telegraph wires, or to the carelessness of the telegraph-clerks, the compositors, or the proof-readers. But there are many blunders equally amusing to be laid at the doors of the reporters. Most of them, however, are due to the difficulty of hearing in the Reporters' Galleries of both Houses of Parliament.

Lord Shaftesbury once referred to "M. Renan's pestilential book, 'Vie de Jesus'"; and the reporter gave the adjective as *penitential*. An Irish member, smarting as usual under a sense of his country's wrongs, once told the House that "The constabulary fired a shower of bullets on the people"; but the point of the honourable gentleman's denunciation of Saxon tyranny was sadly blunted when it appeared in print as "a shower of *pullets*." "We have a greater stake in the land than politics," exclaimed another Irish member; and the reporter rendered it, "We have a greater stake in the land than *potatoes*."



Ludicrous misconceptions of a speaker's words, arising from imperfect hearing, frequently occur on the floor of the House as well as in the Reporters' Gallery. Here is an extract from a Parliamentary report during the session of 1876:—

SIR GEORGE CAMPBELL said he had some experience of the Glasgow Irish.

MAJOR O'GORMAN (indignantly): "Mr. Speaker, I rise to order, Sir! I wish to know, Sir, whether the hon. member is justified in stigmatising my beloved country-people as 'the blasted Irish.'"

SIR G. CAMPBELL: "Mr. Speaker——"

THE SPEAKER: "Order, order! I did not catch the expression of the hon. member."

SIR G. CAMPBELL: "Will you allow me, Mr. Speaker——"

THE SPEAKER: "Order, order. But if the expression was used it is certainly unparliamentary and most improper" (hear, hear).

SIR G. CAMPBELL: "Mr. Speaker, it is an entire misconception of my remarks on the part of my honourable and gallant friend. What I said was 'Glasgow Irish,' and not 'blasted Irish'" (much laughter and cheering).

Mr. Swift MacNeill once quoted in the House the judicial declaration of the late Baron Dowse of the Irish Bench that "The resident magistrates could no more state a case than they could write a Greek ode"; and it was deliciously rendered by a reporter as, "The resident magistrates could no more state a case than they could *ride a Greek goat.*" Baron Dowse must have immensely enjoyed this rendering. He stated, in the course of a judgment in an action for

libel against a newspaper arising out of an incorrect report, that once in a speech in the House of Commons he had quoted Tennyson's line,

“Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay,”

and read next day that he had edified his audience with the following declaration—

“Better fifty years of true love than a circus in Bombay.”

Mr. Swift MacNeill figures in another amusing case of mishearing in the Reporters' Gallery. He once complained of having been roughly treated by the constabulary while attending some evictions in his constituency in Donegal. “But,” said the honourable member, “I took measures to put a stop to this conduct. Whenever I was hustled or knocked about by a policeman, I simply chalked him, and by that means was able to identify him afterwards.” This was rendered: “Whenever I was hustled or knocked about by a policeman *I simply choked him.*” The innocent readers of that newspaper must have wondered at the privileges of members of Parliament which permitted them to choke policemen with impunity. When Mr. Balfour was Irish Secretary he figured in a London paper as having charged some persons in Ireland (including several members of Parliament) with being “filthy with crime”; the expression he really used was *guilty of crime*. But Mr. John Bright was the victim of what is perhaps the most curious and the most serious instance of misreporting on record. He was represented by one of the London journals as having said in the House of Commons: “But I deny altogether that the rich alone are qualified to legislate for the poor; and I say more,—that

the poor alone are qualified to legislate for the rich." The report was a total perversion, though of course unintentional, of Mr. Bright's words, which were: "But I deny altogether that the rich alone are qualified to legislate for the poor, any more than that the poor are qualified to legislate for the rich." On another occasion also Mr. Bright suffered vicariously at the reporter's hands, when a certain speaker was made to refer to him as "the Gamecock of Birmingham" instead of "the *Gamaliel* of Birmingham." There was some speculation as to what Mr. Asquith meant when in a speech he was reported as having denied that the Liberal Government were in "a peacock temper" in refusing the Lords' amendments to the Employers' Liability Bill. It was pointed out subsequently that the words he had used were "*pique* or temper."

These blunders are sometime due, no doubt, to bad handwriting of the reporters, or to the longhand contractions they use in transcribing their shorthand notes. Lord Chancellor Eldon once indignantly denied in the House of Lords that he annually received £5,000 in perquisites accruing from cases of bankruptcy, and declared that never during any one year had his income from that source exceeded three-fourths of the amount. The reporter in his haste used the contraction " $3/4$ " for "three-fourths"; the printer thus interpreted him: "The learned lord solemnly declared that during no one year of his office had his income from that source exceeded *three shillings and four pence.*"

The mistakes which occur in Parliamentary reporting in our days may chiefly be traced to the

high pressure at which the work is necessarily done, for the integrity no less than the ability of the members of the Reporters' Gallery is universally admitted. Reporters have political opinions like most people; they have also their favourities and aversions among members of Parliament; but unlike Dr. Samuel Johnson, one of their most distinguished predecessors, who confessed that in his day he took care that the "Whig dogs" always had the worst of it, they never allow their prejudices or their tastes to colour their reports. Members of Parliament may complain, and often do complain, of the scanty allowance of print given to their speeches; but they never attempt to say that they have been wilfully misrepresented in the newspapers of their political opponents. That happy state of things has not always existed. The records of the House of Commons, for instance, show that O'Connell frequently complained of the mutilation and suppression of his speeches by the Parliamentary reporters. In the session of 1833 he brought under the notice of the House, as a breach of privilege, the report of one of his speeches on Church tithes in Ireland, which had appeared in a London paper not alone grievously abbreviated, but, as he complained, in some passages entirely perverted; and threatened that unless he received a satisfactory explanation he would move that the proprietor of the newspaper be brought to the Bar for a breach of privilege. The reporter waited upon O'Connell and made a most remarkable defence. He said that during his walk from Westminster to Fleet Street, the rain, which was falling heavily at the time, had most unfortunately streamed into his

pocket, and washed out the notes he had made of O'Connell's speech. "Well," said O'Connell, "that was the most extraordinary shower of rain I ever heard of; for it not only washed out the speech I made from your notebook, but washed in another and an entirely different one. However, I accept your explanation."

But O'Connell did not rest there. He gave the Parliamentary reporters of the London Tory papers what he called himself "a lick of the rough side of his tongue," pouring on them all the powers of sarcasm and vituperation of which he was an unrivalled master, charging them with "cooking" their reports to his detriment, or else ignoring his arguments, while the arguments of his opponents were given fully. The reporters retaliated. They sent a communication to O'Connell that unless he made an ample apology for his attack they would cease to report him, and the Irish agitator having contemptuously refused to retract, they carried out their threat. O'Connell's name was not even mentioned in the report of the next debate in which he took part. But if he were not to be reported he would take care that no one else was. At the opening of the next sitting he called the Speaker's attention to the presence of strangers, and under a rule of the House, which has since been amended, the galleries were cleared. The reporters then discreetly give way.

This conflict between O'Connell and the Press Gallery is all the more curious because three-fourths of the reporters at that time were Irishmen. William Cobbett, who also got into difficulties with them, was in the habit of referring to them derisively in his

writings and speeches as the "rayporters," in imitation of the Irish pronunciation. They seem to have been up to all sorts of pranks. The most famous of the band was Peter Finnerty. He was the only representative of the Press in the Strangers' Gallery one evening in 1830, so that when his colleagues, arriving towards the end of the sitting, asked him if anything of importance had happened, he was able to play a most audacious practical joke upon them. He dictated to them an extraordinary speech on the virtues of the Irish potato which he said had been delivered by William Wilberforce, who was then one of the most sedate and solemn members of the House, and whose name is inseparably associated with a very different subject. On the next morning accordingly half London was amazed to read how the famous champion of the negro slave had said: "Had it been my lot to be born in Ireland, where my food would have principally consisted of the potato, that most nutritious and salubrious root, instead of being the poor, infirm, shrivelled, stunted creature, you, Sir, and honourable gentlemen, now behold in me, I would have been a tall, stout, athletic man, and able to carry an enormous weight." The speech was the one topic of conversation throughout the day, and great was the merriment it provoked. Wilberforce was naturally annoyed at being made the laughing-stock of the metropolis. He brought the matter under the notice of the House, and denounced the report as a mendacious invention. "If I were capable of uttering such nonsense as is here put into my mouth," said he very truly, "instead of being a member of the House, I should be the inmate of some lunatic asylum."

## CHAPTER XV.

### LAST SPEECHES OF GREAT PARLIAMENTARIANS.

“MY lord, you can now read the Burial Service over me, with any alteration you think proper.” These words were uttered by Lord Chancellor Westbury as he passed out of the House of Lords on July 5th, 1865, after having resigned the Great Seal and made a most dignified farewell to public life. He had been Lord Chancellor for four years in the Palmerston Government. Charges of corrupt practices in the administration of the legal patronage at his disposal were brought against him, the least of the accusations being that he had unworthily used his position to advance his relatives in the world. Committees of both Houses of Parliament appointed to inquire into the allegations found that, while the imputations on his probity failed of proof, carelessness, or, as a resolution of censure adopted by the House of Commons put it, “a laxity of practice and a want of caution with regard to the public interests,” was established against him; and he was consequently obliged to retire. It was of Westbury it was said, in reference to his judgment that the famous Broad Church, or, as some people thought, the free-thinking work, “Essays and Reviews,” contained no doctrine antagonistic to the teachings of the

Established Church, that "he dismissed Hell with costs, and took away from the orthodox members of the Church of England their last hope of everlasting damnation." Two days before his fall there was a debate in the House of Lords on the Nonconformist grievance that only the Burial Service of the Church of England was permitted in churchyards, and it was to Lord Ebury, who had raised the question, that the great lawyer made the remark which lit up with a flash of humour the gloom of the termination of his political career.

Of all the partings by statesmen from the Parliamentary arena, the most impressive and dramatic was that of the Earl of Chatham in 1778. Ten years before, Chatham, broken in health, mentally and physically, had resigned public life. While he had held office British arms had been everywhere victorious. "We are forced," said Horace Walpole, "to ask every morning what victory there is, for fear of missing one." He had opposed at first the ill-fated policy of the Government of Lord North towards the American Colonies, deprecating repression, advocating conciliation; but when the Duke of Richmond, as principal Secretary of State, gave notice that on April 7th, 1778, he would move in the House of Lords an address to the King in favour of making peace with the revolted Colonies, then in alliance with France, Chatham rose from his sick bed to oppose such a policy. The old statesman was carried down to the House of Lords, haggard and emaciated, wrapped in flannels. "Within his large wig," says a contemporary writer, "little more was to be seen than his aquiline nose and his penetrating eye." As



he spoke he leant heavily on his crutch. "I am old and infirm," said he, "I have one foot—more than one foot—in the grave. I have risen from my bed to stand up in the cause of my country, perhaps never again to speak in this House." So he went on in broken sentences, with slow and feeble utterance. But towards the end the unsubdued spirit within him seemed to have overcome his feebleness of mind and body. His faculties regained some of their old clearness and force, his voice some of its old volume and music. "My Lords," he cried in a burst of animated eloquence which astonished and awed the listening House, "his Majesty succeeded to an Empire as great in extent as its reputation was unsullied. Shall we tarnish the lustre of this nation by an ignominious surrender of its rights and fairest possessions? Shall this great kingdom fall prostrate before the house of Bourbon? Shall the people that seventeen years ago was the terror of the world now stoop so low as to tell its ancient inveterate enemy 'Take all we have; only give us peace'? It is impossible." The Duke of Richmond replied. Chatham rose again, but before he could utter a word he fell back on the bench, and, apparently in the agonies of death, was carried out of the Chamber. The startled and sorrowing House instantly adjourned. The dying statesman was removed to Downing Street, and thence, in a few days, to his home at Hayes, where he expired on May 11th following.

Happily, there was no suggestion of the Burial Service in the last appearance of Chatham's great son, William Pitt, in the House of Commons. Chatham was seventy, and the hand of death was heavy upon

him on that memorable April 7th, 1778. Pitt was only forty-seven, and in good health, on July 12th, 1805—on which day Parliament was prorogued—when he was seen in the House of Commons for the last time. His last speech was delivered on July 9th, in resisting a motion by Whitbread for leave to bring in a Bill to enable the Committee of the House appointed to draw up articles of impeachment against Lord Melville to sit during the recess. Melville was First Lord of the Admiralty in Pitt's Administration, and had just been condemned by the House for malpractices while Treasurer to the Navy, an office which he had filled previously for many years. Pitt's argument was that the Bill was a breach of the Prerogative of the Crown. "The motion, if agreed to, would amount to an indirect inroad upon the Constitution," said he. "Nothing can be more certain than that his Majesty possesses constitutionally the Prerogative of putting an end to our deliberations either by proroguing or dissolving Parliament, and that Prerogative would be virtually taken away by a measure of the nature of that proposed." Pitt's argument told; the motion was withdrawn. He, however, agreed to a resolution that the impeachment of Melville was not to be discontinued, notwithstanding any prorogation or dissolution of Parliament.

The final appearance of Pitt in public life was at the Lord Mayor's banquet on November 9th of the same year. The news of Trafalgar had reached London the day before. Pitt's carriage was drawn by an enthusiastic crowd of admirers from Downing Street to the Guildhall, amid the ringing of bells and the acclamations of the people. At the dinner his

health was drunk amid uproarious acclamations as the Saviour of Europe. "Pitt replied," writes Lord Rosebery, in his monograph of the statesman, "in the noblest, the tersest, and the last of all his speeches." It was only a few words. "I return you many thanks for the honour you have done me," he said. "But Europe is not to be saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example." He died ten weeks later, on January 23rd, 1806.

The same note of patriotism was struck in the last speech which Pitt's eloquent Whig opponent, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, made seven years later in the House of Commons. Such was the regard in which this brilliant and versatile man—wit, dramatist, and orator—was held that he was the object of the most unique compliment that was ever proposed to any person in the House of Commons. On the evening of February 24th, 1809, the House was engaged in a most important debate on the campaign against Napoleon in Spain. George Canning, the Foreign Secretary, was speaking on behalf of the Government. Suddenly the windows of the Chamber were lit up by a ruddy illumination. "Fire, fire!" cried some of the members in alarm, interrupting Canning. Sheridan, who sat on the Front Opposition Bench, leant across the Table, and whispered to the Ministers that Drury Lane theatre—which he had only just built and opened—was ablaze. Lord Temple at once moved the adjournment of the House as a mark of sympathy with one of its most distinguished members in the calamity that had befallen him. The first to oppose

the motion was Sheridan himself. He was grateful for the kind impulse which prompted the suggestion, but the calamity was not of a nature that ought to interrupt the business of the country. Still the motion was persisted in, and was supported by several members, till a few sentences of good sense from William Wilberforce decided the House to drop it and go on with the debate. "If our adjournment would have the effect of putting out the blaze, it would be good to do so," he said. "But what an exhibition we would make of ourselves before the world if on an alarm of fire we were to adjourn a debate on such an important matter."

It was in a debate on the same question that, on July 21st, 1812, Sheridan delivered the last of his brilliant Parliamentary orations. He strenuously urged that the long and bloody struggle against the domination of Napoleon should be waged to the bitter end. England, with all her faults, he said, was the greatest nation that ever existed; her constitution, wanting though it was in many reforms, was the best security for freedom that human wisdom had ever given to man. Nevertheless, she might perish in the conflict. "Yet," he concluded, "after the general subjugation and ruin of Europe, should there exist an independent historian to record the awful events that produced the universal calamity, that historian, after describing the greatness and glory of Britain, would say: 'She fell, and with her fell all the best securities for the charities of human life, for the power, and honour, the fame, the glory, and the liberties of herself and the whole civilised world.'"

Sheridan failed to get returned to Parliament at the General Election of that year. He died in poverty in 1816, but his remains were borne by princes, dukes, and earls to a grave in Westminster Abbey, showing, as Moore put it :

“How bailiffs may seize his last blanket to-day,  
Whose pall shall be held up by nobles to-morrow.”

About five weeks before Sheridan cast the glamour of his eloquence for the last time over the House of Commons, the Lobby outside the Chamber was the scene of a terrible tragedy. Spencer Perceval, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, was assassinated there on Monday, May 11th, 1812. As he entered the crowded Lobby from Westminster Hall on his way to the House, which was sitting at the time, a man hiding behind a door fired a pistol at him. The Prime Minister, shot in the back, staggered forward towards the door of the House of Commons, and, with a cry of agony, fell upon his face. The members in the Lobby rushed to his assistance, only to find him dead. “Where is the villain who fired?” said one of the officers of the House. “I am the unfortunate man,” replied the assassin, who held the still smoking pistol in his hand. He was brought immediately to the Bar of the House of Commons, and interrogated by the Speaker; but refused to answer any of the questions, and was committed to prison. It transpired that he was a Liverpool trader in straitened circumstances, named John Bellingham. He had been to St. Petersburg, where he suffered some injury in trade, and as he conceived his claim against the Russian

Government had been neglected by Lord Granville, the British Ambassador, he was loitering about the Houses of Parliament to shoot him, when the Prime Minister crossed his path. The man was clearly a lunatic. He was, however, executed within a week.

On the Friday before the murder, May 8th, Spencer Perceval made his last speech in the House of Commons. The subject of debate was a motion in favour of Parliamentary Reform, and replying to some of its supporters, who taunted him with clinging to office though he had been frequently placed in a minority, Spencer Perceval said: "I deny the position that a Minister ought to resign because he is left in a minority on some occasions, while his measures generally have the support of Parliament."

The most pathetic leave-taking which the House of Commons ever witnessed was, probably, that of Daniel O'Connell. The great Irish demagogue had been for years a commanding personality, mentally as well as physically, in the House. He had been the chief figure in many a noisy scene. He had often thrilled the House by his superb eloquence and the music of his voice; made it laugh by his rollicking humour; and moved it to anger by his stinging sarcasm and coarse vituperation. He appeared in the House on April 3rd, 1846, to speak against a Coercion Bill, which had been introduced to cope with the disturbed condition of Ireland. The change which had come over him was pitiable in the extreme. He was suffering from softening of the brain, the disease from which he ultimately died. The once tall and stalwart form was bent and wasted; the once loud swelling voice was broken and querulous. He spoke,

however, for nearly two hours, standing in the place of the Leader of the Opposition at the table. Benjamin Disraeli, alluding to the scene in his "Life of Lord George Bentinck," says: "To the House generally it was a performance in dumb show: a feeble old man muttering before a table; but respect for the great Parliamentary personage kept all as orderly as if the fortunes of a Party hung upon his rhetoric; and though not an accent reached the gallery, means were taken that next morning the country should not lose the last, and not the least interesting, speech of one who had so long occupied and agitated the minds of nations." The speech is reported in the first person in "Hansard," and occupies over eighteen pages. In it O'Connell urged that the extension of the protection of tenant-right, which prevailed as a custom in Ulster, to the farmers of the whole of Ireland would do more to pacify the country than all the Coercion Acts that could be passed.

But Disraeli was mistaken in saying that this was O'Connell's last speech in the House of Commons. His final appearance in the Parliamentary arena was on February 8th, 1847. The House was occupied with a Bill introduced by Lord John Russell, the Prime Minister, for the relief of the famine which was then ravaging Ireland. O'Connell was feebler still in health and more dejected in spirits. Members were saddened by his tottering steps and vacant looks. "Hansard" in introducing the brief report of his remarks said: "Mr. O'Connell was understood to say," indicating that he was imperfectly heard by the reporters. His speech was an appeal to Parliament "to interpose generously, munificently—he would say,

enormously"—for the rescue of his country. "Ireland," he said in his last words, "is in your hands, is in your power; if you do not save her she cannot save herself." He then left the House and set out on a pilgrimage to Rome, by slow stages, only to die at Genoa on May 15th following.

It is a curious coincidence that the last words of the second greatest Irish leader of the nineteenth century, Charles Stewart Parnell, after a stormy career in Parliament, were likewise an appeal for mercy and pity, delivered in the shadow of defeat and disaster. On August 3rd, 1891, the House of Commons saw Parnell for the last time. There was a debate on the Appropriation Bill on behalf of amnesty to the prisoners convicted of dynamite outrages. "These conspiracies, even in America, have been abandoned for many years," said Parnell in the concluding sentences of his final speech; "and nobody now wishes to blow up the British Empire with dynamite—an idea which has passed out of the view of the most extreme Irishman. These events, terrible as no doubt they were, have passed away; and could not a powerful Government of a powerful nation consider the case with clemency and mercy?" A few days after, Parliament was prorogued. Two months later Parnell was dead, leaving, like O'Connell, his cause in the dust and his land torn and distracted. The fate of these once puissant Irish Parliamentarians recalls the words of the ancient Gaelic bard in reference to the Irish chieftains: "They went forth to the battle, but they always fell."

One of the most notable of last speeches in the House of Commons, both by reason of its own excellence



and the circumstances attending its delivery, was that of Sir Robert Peel. The occasion was a debate in June, 1850, on the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston, who by sending the Fleet to blockade Greece for non-compliance with the demands for compensation for acts of violence towards British subjects had provoked the resentment of France and Russia. Palmerston made a memorable defence of his policy in the famous "Dom Pacifico" speech which lasted over four hours and a half. "As the Roman in days of old held himself free from indignity when he could say *Civis Romanus sum*," cried the old statesman in his peroration, "so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong." The concluding night of the debate was Friday, June 28th, 1850. Peel rose to speak at one o'clock on Saturday morning. He condemned Palmerston's treatment of foreign relations. "Which is the wisest policy?" he asked, "to attempt to interfere with the institutions and measures of other countries not bordering on our own, out of an abstract love for constitutional government; or to hold that doctrine maintained by Mr. Fox, Mr. Pitt, Lord Grenville, Mr. Canning and Lord Castlereagh, that the true policy of this country is non-intervention in the affairs of others?" To that question he returned an answer in the last words he ever addressed to the House of Commons: "I believe the latter to be by far the wiser course, the least likely to involve us in trouble and embarrassment, the best calculated to enable us to promote peace, to make commerce prosperous, and to prevent nations with whom we

have commercial and international relations from entertaining jealousies of us." Late on that Saturday afternoon, Peel left his residence for his usual ride in Hyde Park. Going up Constitution Hill the horse became restive and Peel was thrown violently to the ground. He died on the following Tuesday night, and on Wednesday the House of Commons adjourned as a tribute of respect to his memory.

It was on June 15th, 1852, that Peel's steadfast friend and colleague, the Duke of Wellington, addressed the House of Lords for the last time. A Bill for the reorganisation of the ancient constitutional force of this country, the Militia, was before the House. Wellington was always exceedingly modest in his reference to that crowning event of his great career, the victory of Waterloo, but in this, his final speech, supporting the Militia Bill he described the fight as "the battle of giants." "Take the battle of Waterloo," said he. "Look at the number of British troops at that battle. I can tell your Lordships that in that battle there were sixteen battalions of Hanoverian Militia just formed under the command of a nobleman, the late Hanoverian Ambassador here, Count Killmansegge, who behaved most admirably, and there were many other foreign troops who nobly aided us in that battle—avowedly the battle of giants, whose operations helped to bring about the victory which was followed by the peace of Europe that has now lasted for thirty-two or thirty-three years." Just three months later the great soldier died.

The last words which Richard Cobden uttered in the House of Commons are peculiarly interesting. On July 22nd, 1864, he moved a resolution protesting

against the great extension of Government manufacturing establishments, for, as Mr. John Morley points out, in his biography of the great Free Trader, he accepted Burke's principle that the Government should not be allowed to make for itself any article which can be obtained from private producers in a competitive market. In concluding a long speech Cobden asserted that as a consequence of the practice which he was condemning the armaments of the nation were in a most reprehensible condition; and said finally:—

“ We are governed in this country—I do not use the word invidiously—by a class, and it is a very narrow class indeed, which forms the *personnel* of our Administrations. I do not complain of that, inasmuch as our manufacturing and trading community do not seem disposed to educate their sons to compete for the prizes of official life. But I wish you to bear in mind that by such a neglect and mismanagement as you have fallen into in regard to your artillery and ships you may produce the most serious consequences. I know of nothing so calculated some day to produce a democratic revolution as for the proud and combative people of this country to find themselves, in this vital matter of their defence, sacrificed, through the mismanagement and neglect of the class to whom, with so much liberality, they have confided the care and future destinies of the country. You have brought this upon yourselves by undertaking to be producers and manufacturers. I advise you in future to place yourselves entirely in dependence upon the private manufacturing resources of the country. If you

want gunpowder, artillery, small arms, or the hulls of ships of war, let it be known that you depend upon the private enterprise of the country, and you will get them. At all events you will absolve yourselves from the responsibility of undertaking to do things which you are not competent to do, and you will be entitled to say to the British people: 'Our fortunes as a Government and Nation are indissolubly united, and we will rise or fall, flourish or fade together, according to the energy, enterprise, and ability of the great body of the manufacturing and industrious community.'

Cobden died on April 2nd, 1865. On October 18th in the same year Palmerston passed away. He addressed the House of Commons, in which he had sat since 1806, for the last time on May 23rd, 1865. Some characteristic observations, cynical and humorous, with regard to newspapers formed the burden of his remarks. *The Times* had given an accurate forecast of Gladstone's Budget proposals of that year. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in reply to a question as to how *The Times* had obtained its information, had exonerated the officials of the Civil Service. Palmerston was subsequently asked as Prime Minister whether it was not probable that some Cabinet Minister had disclosed the secret; and he indignantly disclaimed the idea that any person belonging to any department of the Government was responsible. For his part he thought it was due to an exercise of natural sagacity by *The Times*. "Newspapers," said he, "live on the future as well as on the past and present, and it is their business to make guesses which sometimes are

right and sometimes are wrong. When they are right they gain credit ; when they are wrong people soon forget their mistakes." Parliament was dissolved in July of that year, and the country again returned Palmerston to power. It was his seventeenth Parliament, but he never sat in it. He died on October 18th, 1865, within a few days of completing his eighty-first year.

The farewell words of the Earl of Derby—"the great Lord Derby" as he is called—in the House of Lords on June. 17th, 1869, were most striking. They formed the peroration to an eloquent speech in defence of the State Church in Ireland, in the debate on the second reading of Gladstone's measure for the disestablishment and disendowment of that Church, and were as follows :—

" My Lords, I am now an old man, and like many of your Lordships I have already passed the threescore years and ten. My official life is entirely closed, my political life is nearly so, and in the course of nature my natural life cannot now be long. That natural life commenced with a bloody suppression of a formidable rebellion in Ireland, which immediately preceded the Union between the two countries. And may God grant that its close may not witness a renewal of the one and a dissolution of the other ! I do not pretend, my Lords, to be able to penetrate the veil which hides from mortal vision the events of the future ; but whatever may be the issue of this great controversy—whatever may be the result of your Lordships' present deliberations—I say, for my own part, even if it should be that for the last time I now have the honour of

addressing you, that it will be to my dying day a satisfaction to me that I have been enabled to lift up my voice against the adoption of a measure of which I believe the political folly is only equalled by its moral injustice."

Derby's words were prophetic of the approaching close of his career. He died on October 23rd, 1869, within four months of his last speech, after the Irish Church Act had received the Royal Assent, but before the State Church of Ireland had actually ceased to exist.

The last night in the House of Commons of Disraeli—the successor of Derby in the leadership of the Tory Party—was August 11th, 1876. He was Prime Minister, seventy-one years of age, and the strain of leading the House of Commons, with its late sittings, was telling upon him. But no one who heard his speech that night in the debate on the Bulgarian atrocities suspected that it was his last appearance. The Government were supporting Turkey, he contended, purely in the interests of the British Empire. "Those," he said, "who suppose that England would uphold, or at this moment, particularly, is upholding Turkey, from blind superstition, and from a want of sympathy with the highest aspirations of humanity, are deceived. What our duty is at this critical moment is to maintain the Empire of England. Nor will we ever agree to any step, though it may obtain for a moment comparative quiet and a false prosperity, that hazards the existence of that Empire." The next morning, to the astonishment of the country, his elevation to the House of Lords as the Earl of

Beaconsfield was announced. His last speech in the Upper Chamber was delivered on March 4th, 1881—six weeks before he died—when he protested with all his old eloquence and earnestness against the evacuation of Candahar by the British troops. Still, even if it should be abandoned our hold on India would, he said, remain. “My Lords, the key of India is not Herat or Candahar,” said he in memorable phrases. “The key of India is London. The majesty of Sovereignty, the spirit and vigour of your Parliaments, the inexhaustible resources of a free, an ingenious and a determined people—these are the keys of India.”

Most of the famous statesmen who have passed away were not conscious, during the delivery of the speeches which proved to be their last, that their voices would be heard no more in the Parliamentary arena. Gladstone, however, was aware on March 1st, 1894, that it was his last appearance in the House of Commons. The year before, the Lords had rejected his second Home Rule Bill. Now, on March 1st, their amendments to the Parish Councils Bill came before the Commons. Gladstone, as Prime Minister, advised the House to agree to the amendments, and then launched forth into a vigorous and stirring attack upon the hereditary Chamber. He said:—

“The issue which is raised between a deliberative assembly elected by the votes of more than 6,000,000 people, and a deliberative assembly occupied by many men of virtue, by many men of talent, of course with considerable diversities and varieties, is a controversy which, when once raised, must go forward to an issue. The issue has been postponed—long postponed, I

rejoice to say ; it has been postponed in many cases to a considerable degree by discretion, circumspection and reserve in the use of enormous privileges which the House of Lords, on various occasions in my recollection, in the time of the Duke of Wellington, Lord Aberdeen, and other periods, have shown ; but I am afraid, sir, that the epoch, the age, of that reserve and circumspection may have gone by. I will not abandon all hope of it. But I must say of the present, I do not like to say that the situation is intolerable, because that is a hard and may seem a dictatorial word—but I think honourable gentlemen opposite must feel, as I feel, that in some way or other a solution will have to be found for this tremendous contrariety and incessant conflict upon matters of high principle and profound importance between the representatives of the people and those who fill a nominated or non-elected Chamber.”

There had been rumours that Gladstone was about to retire from public life. But as the crowded House listened to the still ringing voice, felt the glowing passion of the speech, and witnessed the extraordinary vigour and energy with which it was delivered, it became the general impression that the aged statesman, despite the burden of his eighty-five years, would not quit the political arena yet until he had another encounter with the House of Lords. But the House of Commons was really to see him no more. That was on a Friday. The House immediately adjourned after the speech till the Monday following, March 5th, when Parliament was prorogued and the resignation of Gladstone was authoritatively



announced. I was in the Reporters' Gallery on that Friday evening, March 1st, 1894. After the Speaker had left the chair, and while the ancient cry or the doorkeeper: "Who goes home?" was ringing through the Chamber, Gladstone on his way out paused for a moment on the first step of the dais containing the Speaker's chair, and surveyed, in one swift but parting glance—with, no doubt, tear-bedimmed eyes and aching heart—the scene of sixty years of political storm and stress, of enduring triumphs in oratory and legislation, before turning away from it for ever.



## INDEX.

- ABERCROMBY, Mr. Speaker, 312, 319,**  
     326, 332  
**Aberdeen, Lord :**  
     Coalition Government, 1852, 53  
     Queen Victoria's letter to, 58  
     Russell, Lord John, Letter to, 304  
**Absenteeism from the House, 273**  
**Addison, Joseph, Maiden Speech, 224**  
**Albemarle, Lord, Claim to travel in**  
     State Coach with Queen, 39  
**"Alleged" as a Parliamentary Expression,**  
     Ruling, 336  
**America. See United States.**  
**Annunciators, 113**  
**Army :**  
     Flogging—Queen Victoria's Views  
         on, 72  
     Purchase Abolition, Exercise of  
         Royal Prerogative, 69  
**Arrest :**  
     Privilege of Members, 148  
     Royal Servants exempted from, 12  
**Ashley, Lord, Maiden Speech, 226**
- BAGEHOT, Walter, 2, 18**  
**"Balance of Power," Origin of**  
     Phrase, 299  
**Balfour, A. J. :**  
     "Hansard," Remarks on, 361  
     Maiden Speech, 248  
**Bankrupts disabled from sitting in**  
     Parliament, 149  
**Barrow, J. H., 358**  
**Bateson, Sir Robert, Unparliamentary**  
     Expressions used by, 313  
**Bath-rooms in the House of Com-**  
     mons, 122  
**Beaconsfield. See Disraeli.**  
**Beards, Wearing in the Navy—Queen**  
     Victoria's Suggestions, 70  
**"Beastly Bellowings," Origin of**  
     Phrase, 324  
**"Bedchamber Question," 1839, 29**  
**Bellamy's Tavern, 109**  
     Descriptions of, 114, 116, 131  
**"Big Ben," Refrain supposed to be**  
     chimed by, 86
- Bill of Rights, Protestant Succession**  
     Enactments, 5  
**Bills, Royal Assent to, 1**  
**"Black Rod," 101, 102**  
**Blackstone, Sir William, on the**  
     Rights and Disabilities of the  
     Sovereign, 4, 6  
**Board of Green Cloth, 12**  
**Bradlaugh, Charles, 204**  
**Brand, Mr. Speaker, 321, 323, 333,**  
     334  
**Bright, John, 280**  
     Errors in Reporting Remarks by,  
     374  
**Brougham, Lord, 119 :**  
     Celebrated Sayings by, 286  
     Great Seal, dividing with Lord  
         Lyndhurst, 171, 176  
     Maiden Speech, 223  
     "Potations pottle deep" Anecdote,  
         133  
     Unparliamentary Expressions used  
         by, 309  
**Buckingham, Duke of, Quarrel with**  
     Lord Brougham in the House, 134  
**Burke, Edmund, 355 :**  
     Maiden Speech, 230  
**Business of the House, Procedure**  
     Rules, 252  
**Byron, Lord, Maiden Speech, 235**
- CAIRNS, Lord, and Lord Selborne**  
     dividing Great Seal, 177  
**"Call of the House," 273**  
**"Calumnious" as a Parliamentary**  
     Expression, Ruling, 327  
**Campbell, Lord, and Lord Chelms-**  
     ford dividing Great Seal, 177  
**Campbell-Bannerman, Sir H., Phrases**  
     coined by, 292  
**Canning, George :**  
     Celebrated Sayings by, 294, 297  
     Maiden Speech, 237  
     Queen Victoria's Letter on Indian  
         Mutiny to, 59  
     Unparliamentary Expressions used  
         by, 309

- "Cant of Patriotism," Origin of Phrase, 287  
 Cap of Maintenance, 99  
 Carlyle, Thomas, 282, 291  
 Catering :  
   Bellamy's "Kitchen," 113  
   New Palace, Arrangements, 121  
 "Cave of Adullam," Origin of Phrase, 280  
 Cecil, Lord Robert. *See* Salisbury.  
 "Chaff-wax," 160  
 Chamberlain, Joseph, Maiden Speech, 247  
 Chatham, Earl of, Last Speech made by, 389  
 Chelmsford, Lord, and Lord Campbell, dividing Great Seal, 177  
 Chiltern Hundreds, 276  
 Churchill, Lord Randolph, 323  
 Clapping a Member's Speech, Instance of, 355  
 Coalition Government, 1852, 53  
 Coalition Governments, Disraeli on, 283  
 Cobbett, William :  
   Maiden Speech, 222  
   Unparliamentary Expressions used by, 314  
 "Cobbett's Parliamentary History," 346  
 Cobden, Richard :  
   Atmosphere of the House, Remarks on, 124  
   Errors in reporting Speeches by, 371  
   Last Speech, 391  
   Maiden Speech, 249  
 Cochrane, Lord, Privilege Case, 151  
 Conservative, Origin of Term, 305  
 Consort of the Sovereign, Rights of, 11  
 Constitutional Presence of the Sovereign in Parliament and Law Courts, 17  
 Corn Laws Repeal, 39  
 Counting the House, Motion for, 261  
 Craig, Gibson, Maiden Speech of, 228  
 Creevy Libel Action—Breach of Privilege, 152  
 Crimean War, "Day of Humiliation," 56  
 Crown, Imperial, carried at Edward VII's first Parliament, 98  
 Crown, Succession and Tenure, Conditions of, 5  
 Cumberland, Duke of, 136  
 Current Phrases of Politics, 278  
 "DAY of Humiliation" for Success in Crimean War, 56  
 Death of the Sovereign not recognised, 4  
 Death Duties and Probate, Sovereign exempted from, 10  
 Debates in Parliament :  
   Hansard. *See* that Title.  
   Sovereign's Personal Opinion excluded, 22  
   Titles of Courtesy used in, 269  
 Denison, Mr. Speaker, 329, 331, 337  
 Derby, Lord :  
   Celebrated Sayings by, 279  
   Last Speech, 393  
   Queen Victoria's Letters to, 60  
 Dickens, Charles, Bellamy's Tavern described by, 116  
 Disabilities of the Sovereign, 1  
 "Dished the Whigs," Origin of Phrase, 281  
 Disraeli, Benjamin :  
   Audience, House of Commons as, Remarks, 215  
   Celebrated Sayings of, 283  
   Cobden Commemoration Debate, Speech at, 350  
   Gisborne's Break-down in the House, Description of, 120  
   "Hansard," Remarks on, 343, 363  
   Last Speech, 394  
   Letter to a Lady at Court, 75  
   Maiden Speech, 216  
   Presentation of Address, Letter on, 156  
   Queen Victoria's Affection for, 74  
 Distrain of Goods not made upon Sovereign, 9  
 Divisions in the House of Commons, 266  
 Dress formerly worn by Members, 111  
 Drummond, Thomas, 286  
 "Dunciad of Politics," Hansard described as, 363  
 Dundas, Henry, 23, 117  
 "EDUCATE our Masters," Origin of Phrase, 281  
 Eldon, Lord, and the Great Seal, Story of, 171  
 Erskine, Thomas, Maiden Speech, 236  
 Etiquette of the House, 253  
 "Every Man has his Price," Origin of Phrase, 285  
 Exile of Subject, Sovereign unable to compel, 14  
 Expulsion of Members, 210

- FINCH, Lord, 226  
 Flogging in the Army, Queen Victoria's Views, 72  
 Foreign Legislatures, Oaths and Declarations, 211  
 Forster, W. E., Queen Victoria's Letter on Death of, 78  
 FOX, Charles James :  
   Careless Attire of, 111  
   Maiden Speech, 231  
 Francis, Sir Philip, Failure as Parliamentary Speaker, 234  
 Free Access to Sovereign, Privilege of, 155  
 French Chamber of Deputies, Cost of Toilet Appliances, 123
- GEORGE III., "Scotch Metaphysics" Anecdote, 23  
 Gibbon, Edward, Failure as Parliamentary Speaker, 233  
 Gisborne's Break-down during Speech, Disraeli on, 120  
 Gladstone, W. E. :  
   Celebrated Sayings of, 24  
   Churchill, Lord R., characterised by, 323  
   Death of, Queen's Message, 80  
   Hat—speaking without his Hat on, Anecdote, 260  
   Irish Disestablishment Scheme, 64  
   Last Speech, 395  
   Maiden Speech, 242  
   Marriage of Princess Louise, Speeches on, 14  
   Relations with Queen Victoria, 73  
   Slavery, Speech on, 243  
   Unparliamentary Expressions used by, 323  
 Gordon, General, Queen Victoria's Letter on Death of, 76  
 Graham, Sir James, 280  
 Great Seal, 159  
 "Great Snoring" Bill Anecdote, 131  
 "Greatest Happiness of greatest Number," Origin of Phrase, 281  
 Grey, Earl, 135  
 Guildford, Lord, Maiden Speech, 224  
 Gully, Mr. Speaker, 336
- "HANSARDISING," 356  
 Hansard's Debates, 343  
   Balfour, A. J. on, 361  
   Cobbett's Parliamentary History preceding, 346  
   Commercial Failure of, 358  
   Disraeli on, 363  
   Gladstone on, 360
- Hansard's Debates—*continued.*  
 Hansard Publishing Union, Bankruptcy of, 359  
 State Subsidies, 359  
 Stockdale v. Hansard, Privilege Case, 153  
 Harcourt, Sir William :  
   Errors in reporting Speeches of, 367  
   Maiden Speech, 244  
   Wasting Time, Charges made by, 333  
 Hats :  
   "Colourable Substitute," Speaker's Ruling, 257  
   Humours of the Parliamentary Hat, 258  
   Seat retained by means of, 256  
   Tall Hats worn by Peers in the House, 125, 144  
 Healy, T. M., 335, 338  
 Heralds at Edward VII.'s First Parliament, 96  
 "Home Rule," Origin of Term, 291  
 House of Commons :  
   Audience, House of Commons as, 213, 215, 240  
   Bath-rooms in, 122  
   "Best Club in Europe," 123  
   Obstreperous Members, Police Assistance, 137  
   Divisions, 266  
   Old Chamber, 109  
   Privilege, 145, 153  
 House of Lords :  
   Description, 94  
   Disraeli on, 299  
   Old Chamber, 129  
   Opening of Edward VII.'s First Parliament, 86  
   Standing Order against Asperity of Speech, 137  
 Hume, Joseph, 120  
 Humiliation Day for Success in Crimean War, 56
- IMMORTALITY of the Sovereign, 4  
 Imperial Crown, 98  
 India, Royal Proclamation, 1858,  
   Queen Victoria's Amendments, 60  
 Infallibility of the Sovereign, 6  
 Infant, Sovereign not considered a legal "Infant," 3  
 Ireland :  
   Disestablishment Scheme, 64  
   Home Rule of, Queen Victoria's Disapproval of, 78  
   Peel's Policy, 1841, 33

- "JACK Cade Legislation," Origin of Phrase, 299
- Jewish Members' Objections to Oath of Allegiance, 197
- "Jingoism," Origin of Term, 296
- "Johnny's upset the Coach," Origin of Phrase, 280
- Johnston, J. T., Maiden Speech, 227
- "Judicious Bottle-holder," Origin of Phrase, 295
- Juries, Serving on, English and Welsh Members exempt during Session, 151
- KEARSLEY, Mr., Unparliamentary Expressions used by, 320
- Keeper of the Great Seal, 161
- King Consort, Queen Victoria's Wish to make Prince Albert, 11
- King Edward's First Parliament: Opening Ceremony, 84
- Speech and Declaration at, 105
- King's Prerogatives and Disabilities, 1
- LADIES in the House: Disguised as Men, 110
- Old Chamber, Admittance to, 130
- Law Courts: Sovereign not sued for Personal Misconduct, 6
- Witness, Sovereign unable to appear as, 9
- "Leap in the Dark," Origin of Phrase, 278
- Legacies, Sovereign exempted from Probate and Death Duties, 10
- Libels in Parliamentary Speeches not actionable, 151
- Liberal, Origin of Term, 306
- Library of the Houses of Parliament, 124
- Lord Chancellor: Great Seal, 159
- Order in House of Lords not maintained by, 135
- "Purse-bearer" of, 161
- Lords Commissioners, 146, 159
- Lowe, Robert, 281
- Lyndhurst, Lord, and Lord Brougham dividing Great Seal, 171, 176
- MACAULAY, Thomas Babington: Disraeli's Maiden Speech, Letter on, 218
- House of Commons as an Audience, Views on, 213, 240
- Maiden Speech, 240
- Smoking-room in 1831, Description, 112
- Macaulay, Thomas Babington—*continued.*
- Unparliamentary Language, Use of, described, 324
- Magee, Dr.: Attitude of lay towards spiritual Peers, Remarks on, 143
- Errors in reporting Speeches by, 369
- Quarrel with Dr. Tait in House of Lords, 140
- Maiden Speeches, 213
- Maidstone, Lord, 324
- "Majesty of the People," Origin of Phrase, 282
- Manners Sutton, Charles, 310, 312, 316, 319, 332
- Marriage of Member of Royal Family, Sovereign's Consent, 12
- "Masses against Classes," Origin of Phrase, 289
- Mathew, Father, Anecdote of, 132
- May, Sir Erskine, 21
- Maynooth Bill, 1845, 33: Duke of Newcastle on Power of initiatory Legislation by Crown, 37
- "Meddle and Muddle," Origin of Phrase, 279
- Melbourne, Lord, 28
- Members: Absence from the House, 273
- Counting, Motion for, 261
- Dress formerly worn by, 111
- Expulsion of, 210
- Libel in Speeches not actionable, 151
- Oaths. *See* that Title.
- Privilege of, 145, 153
- Quorum, Constitution of, 260
- Suspension of, 321, 341
- Unparliamentary Language used by, 308
- "Mend it or End it," Origin of Phrase, 285
- "Mendacious" as a Parliamentary Expression, Rulings, 327
- "Mirror of Parliament," 358
- Misquotations, 366
- Mistakes made in Parliamentary Reporting, 364
- Morley, John, 285: "Hansard," Remarks on, 343
- "Mostly Fools," Origin of Phrase, 282
- "NAMING" Members, 321, 341
- Navy, Shaving and Wearing Beards in—Queen Victoria's Suggestions,

- Newcastle, Duke of, on initiatory  
Legislation by the Crown, 37
- Newspapers :  
Privilege in Reports of Speeches, 154  
Reading in the House, Breach of  
Order, 272
- "Nonconformist Conscience," Origin  
of Term, 292
- Norfolk, Duke of, "Great Snoring"  
Bill Anecdote, 131
- OATHS :  
Bradlaugh, Charles, Case of, 204  
Catholic Members, Oaths taken by,  
192  
Clergy, Oath of Allegiance taken  
by, 180  
Jewish Objections, 197  
Protestant Declaration, 104  
Quaker's Affirmations, 196
- O'Brien, Sir Patrick, 339
- O'Brien, Smith, 337
- O'Connell, Daniel :  
Celebrated Sayings of, 293  
Disputes with Lord Maidstone, 324  
Disraeli's Maiden Speech, O'Con-  
nell's Attack upon, 216  
Last Speeches of, 386  
Maiden Speech, 223  
Oath refused by, 195  
Parody of Dryden, 366  
Reporters, Conflict with, 377  
Unparliamentary Language used  
by, 312, 327
- O'Gorman, Major, 337
- "Old Parliamentary Hand," Origin of  
Phrase, 290
- "One Man, one Vote," Origin of  
Phrase, 299
- Opening Ceremonies at King Edward's  
First Parliament, 84
- Oranges, Members sucking, during  
Speeches, 119
- Orders worn at Opening of Parlia-  
ment, 1901, 91
- PALMERSTON, Lord :  
Complaints by the Queen, 42  
Dismissal from Office, 48  
Last Speech, 392  
Maiden Speech, 238  
Phrases coined by, 295  
Queen Victoria's Letters to, 63  
Unparliamentary Language used  
by, 328
- Papal Aggressions in 1850, 50  
Pardons from the Crown, 15  
Parliament, Opening by King Ed-  
ward, 84
- Parliamentary Debates. *See* Hansard.
- "Parliamentary History of England,"  
347, 350
- Parliamentary Papers, Stockdale *v.*  
Hansard Privilege Case, 153
- Parnell, Charles Stewart :  
Last Speech, 388  
Maiden Speeches, 250  
Obstruction, Protest against, 333  
Unparliamentary Language used  
by, 322
- "Peace, Retrenchment and Reform,"  
Origin of Phrase, 298
- "Peace with Honour," Origin of  
Phrase, 284
- Pease, Joseph, 196
- Peel, Mr. Speaker, 146, 321, 334, 338,  
341
- Peel, Sir Robert :  
Administrations formed by, 33  
"Bedchamber Question," 1839, 29  
Celebrated Sayings of, 295  
Corn Laws Repeal, 39  
Last Speech, 389  
Maiden Speech, 230  
Queen Victoria's Letters to, 31, 35,  
36, 38, 39, 42, 47
- Peers' and Peeresses' Robes at Open-  
ing of Edward VII.'s First Parlia-  
ment, 89
- Perceval, Spencer, Assassination of,  
385
- Personal Opinion of the Sovereign,  
Restrictions upon, 21, 22
- "Pin-pricks Policy," Origin of Term,  
301
- Pitt, William :  
"Bellamy's Pork Pies" Anecdote,  
108  
Drunkness in the House, 117  
Last Speeches, 382  
Maiden Speech, 229  
Neat Attire, 111  
Prayers in the House of Commons, 254  
Prerogatives of the Sovereign, 1  
Exercising, Instance of, 69  
Presence, Constitutional, of Sovereign  
in Parliament and Law Courts, 17  
Press Gallery. *See* Reporters.
- Prince Consort :  
Appearance in Parliament censured,  
40  
Death of, 63  
Louis Napoleon's Coup d'État,  
Letter on, 49  
Rights and Privileges of, 11  
Status and Allowance, 32  
Unpatriotism, Accusations against  
the Prince, 54

- Privilege, 145  
   Newspaper Reports, 154  
   Stockdale *v.* Hansard Case, 153  
 Probate and Death Duties, Sovereign  
 exempt from, 10  
 Prohibited Expressions in Debate,  
   340  
 "Property has its Duties as well as  
 Rights," Origin of Phrase, 286  
 Protestant Succession, 5  
   Agitations in 1850, 50  
   Declaration against Transubstantia-  
   tion, 104  
 Puffendorf, Samuel, on the Preroga-  
 tives of the Sovereign, 8  
 Punishment, Remission by Sovereign,  
   15  
 "Purse-bearer," 161  
 Pursuivants at Opening of Edward  
 VII.'s First Parliament, 96
- QUAKERS**, Affirmations made by, 196  
 Queen Alexandra, Appearance at  
 Opening of Parliament, 101  
 Queen Victoria :  
   First Constitutional Sovereign, 26  
   Foreign Affairs, Personal Influence  
   in, 41  
   Foreign Secretary's Duties, Memo-  
   randum on, 44  
   Forster, W. E., Death of, Letter,  
   78  
   Gladstone, W. E., Death of,  
   Message, 80  
   Gordon, General, Death of, Letter,  
   76  
   Indian Mutiny, Letter, 59, 60  
   Irish Disestablishment, Viewson, 64  
   Ministers, Letters to, 31, 32, 35, 36,  
   38, 39, 58, 59, 60, 63  
   Political Opinions and Actions, 27,  
   62, 64  
   Prince Consort. *See* that Title.  
   Salisbury, Lord, Memorial Eulogy  
   of, Extract, 81  
   Tennyson, Lord, Correspondence  
   with, 78  
 Quorum, Number of Members con-  
 stituting, 260  
 Quotations, Mistakes in Reporting,  
   365
- RATES**, Sovereign exempt from, 9  
 "Red Tape," Origin of Phrase, 300  
 Redmond, John, "named" by Speaker,  
   321  
 Refreshment Rooms :  
   " Bellamy's Kitchen," 109, 114, 116,  
   131
- Refreshment Rooms—*continued.*  
   New Palace, Catering Arrange-  
   ments, 121  
   " Register, register!" Origin of Phrase,  
   295  
   Remission of Punishment by Sove-  
   reign, 15  
   Reporting Speeches :  
   Difficulties of, 368  
   Hansard's Debates. *See* that Title.  
   Humours of, 364  
   O'Connell's conflict with Reporters,  
   377  
   Political opinions of Reporters, 376  
   Press Gallery, Establishment of,  
   130  
   Reprieves by Sovereign, 15  
   Minister's Approval—Comyn Case,  
   16  
   Resignation of Members, 276  
   " Revolution by due course of Law,"  
   Origin of Phrase, 287  
   Robes and Orders worn at Opening  
   of Edward VII.'s First Parliament,  
   90, 100  
   Rochester, Earl of, Maiden Speech,  
   214  
   Roman Catholics :  
   Agitations in 1850, 50  
   Bill to exclude, from Parliament,  
   185  
   Declaration against Transubstantia-  
   tion, 104  
   Emancipation of, 191  
   Maynooth Bill, 1845, 33  
   Oaths taken by Catholic Members,  
   192  
   Protestant Succession, 5  
   Ronayne, Mr., Unparliamentary  
   Language used by, 317  
   " Rose like a Rocket and fell like a  
   Stick," Origin of Phrase, 282  
   Rose, Sir George, Inebriate in the  
   House, 118  
   Rosebery, Lord :  
   Errors in reporting Speeches by,  
   364  
   Maiden Speech, 246  
   Rothschild, Baron de, 198, 201  
   Royal Assent to Bills, 1, 18  
   Royal Household, Servants exempt  
   from Arrest, 12  
   Royal Marriages, Consent of  
   Sovereign, 12  
   Royal Sign Manual, 18  
   Rules of Procedure, 252  
   Russell, Lord John :  
   Celebrated Sayings of, 288  
   Defeat on Militia Bill, 1852, 52



- Russell, Lord John—*continued*.  
 Maiden Speech, 239  
 Peerage—Cartoon in *Punch*, 139  
 Queen Victoria's Letters to, 32, 42,  
 47  
 Whig, Remarks on Use of Term, 304
- St. STEPHEN'S Crypt, 111  
 St. Stephen's Hall, 109  
 Salisbury, Lord :  
 Error in reporting remark by, 364  
 Maiden Speech, 244  
 Memorial Eulogy of Queen Victoria,  
 81  
 Unparliamentary Language, Anec-  
 dote, 322
- Salomons, Sir David, 199, 201  
 Satchels for Great Seal, Lord Chan-  
 cellor's perquisites, 176  
 "Schoolmaster is Abroad," Origin of  
 Phrase, 286  
 "Sea Serpent from County Clare"  
 Anecdote, 339  
 Seal—the Great Seal, 159  
 Historical Account of, 162  
 Seats obtained by attending Prayers,  
 254  
 Selborne, Lord, and Lord Cairns,  
 Great Seal divided between, 177  
 Servants, Royal, exempt from Arrest,  
 12  
 Sheridan, Richard Brinsley :  
 Begum Charge, Speech on, 355  
 Last Speech, 384  
 Maiden Speech, 232  
 Sympathy shown by House at  
 burning of Drury Lane Theatre,  
 383  
 Shaving in the Navy—Queen Vic-  
 toria's Suggestions, 70  
 Shaw-Lefevre, Mr. Speaker, 329  
 Sheehy Privilege Case, 150  
 Sheil, R. L. :  
 Bellamy's Tavern described by, 114  
 Disraeli's Maiden Speech, Defence  
 of, 220  
 "Sick Man," Origin of Term, 291  
 Sign Manual, 18  
 Smith, W. H. :  
 Letters to his Wife written in the  
 House, 125  
 Office of Profit accepted without  
 vacating Seat, 253  
 Smoking-room, 112  
 Sovereign :  
 Consort, Rights of, 11  
 Constitutional Presence in Parlia-  
 ment and the Law Courts, 17  
 Free Access to, 155  
 Sovereign—*continued*.  
 Immortality of, 4  
 Infallibility ascribed to, 6  
 Infant—Sovereign not considered  
 legal Infant, 3  
 Personal Opinions, Restrictions on,  
 21, 22  
 Prerogatives and Disabilities, 1  
 Rates, Taxes, &c., Exemptions from, 9  
 State Matters, Communication be-  
 tween Sovereigns forbidden, 20  
 Succession and Tenure of Crown,  
 Conditions of, 5  
 Speaker :  
 Address on Sovereign's Speech  
 formerly presented by, 155  
 Counting Members, 261  
 Reprimands for Breaches of Order,  
 252  
 Title of Address, 269  
 Speeches :  
 Last Speeches of Great Parliamen-  
 tarians, 379  
 Maiden Speeches, 213  
 Parliamentary Privilege, 151, 152,  
 154  
 Sovereign's Speech from the Throne,  
 105  
 Tone and Style of Debate, Changes  
 in, 356  
 Standing Order against Asperity of  
 Speech, 137  
 Stanley, Lord, 280  
 Strangers' Withdrawal, 266  
 Steele, Sir Richard, Maiden Speech,  
 225  
 Stockdale *v.* Hansard Privilege Case,  
 153  
 Suspension of Members, 321, 341  
 Sutton, Charles Manners, 310, 312,  
 316, 319, 332  
 Sword of State, 98  
 Symbols of Authority used at Opening  
 of Parliament, 98
- TAIT, Dr. :  
 Irish Disestablishment, Letters on,  
 Quarrel with Dr. Magee in House  
 of Lords, 140  
 Taxation, Sovereign exempt from, 9  
 Tea on the Terrace, 124  
 Tennyson, Lord, Correspondence with  
 Queen Victoria, 78  
 "Three Acres and a Cow," Origin of  
 Phrase, 297  
 Thurlow, Lord Chancellor, Great  
 Seal stolen from, 169  
 Titles of Courtesy used in Debates,  
 269

- Tobin *v.* The Queen Case, Sovereign's Prerogatives in, 7  
 Toll, Sovereign exempt from, 9  
 Tories and Whigs, Origin of Terms, 302  
 Turkey, "Sick Man" and "Unspeaking Turk," Origin of Phrases, 291  
 "ULSTERIANA," Origin of Term, 292  
 Uniforms worn at Opening of Parliament, 1901, 92, 96  
 United States :  
   Congress, Declaration made by Members, 212  
   "Trent" Case, 62  
 Unparliamentary Language, 308  
 "Un-Whig that Gentleman," Origin of Phrase, 287
- VETO Power of the Crown, Lapse of, 18
- WASON, Mr., Unparliamentary Language used by, 316  
 Wellington, Duke of, Last Speech made by, 390  
 Westbury, Lord, Last Speech made by, 379  
 Whigs and Tories, 174, 302  
 "Who goes Home?" 277  
 Wigs, Bishops discarding, in the House, 144  
 Wilberforce, William, Reporter's Practical Joke upon, 378  
 Woolsack, 135  
 Wright, John, Assistant Compiler of Parliamentary History, 346, 348

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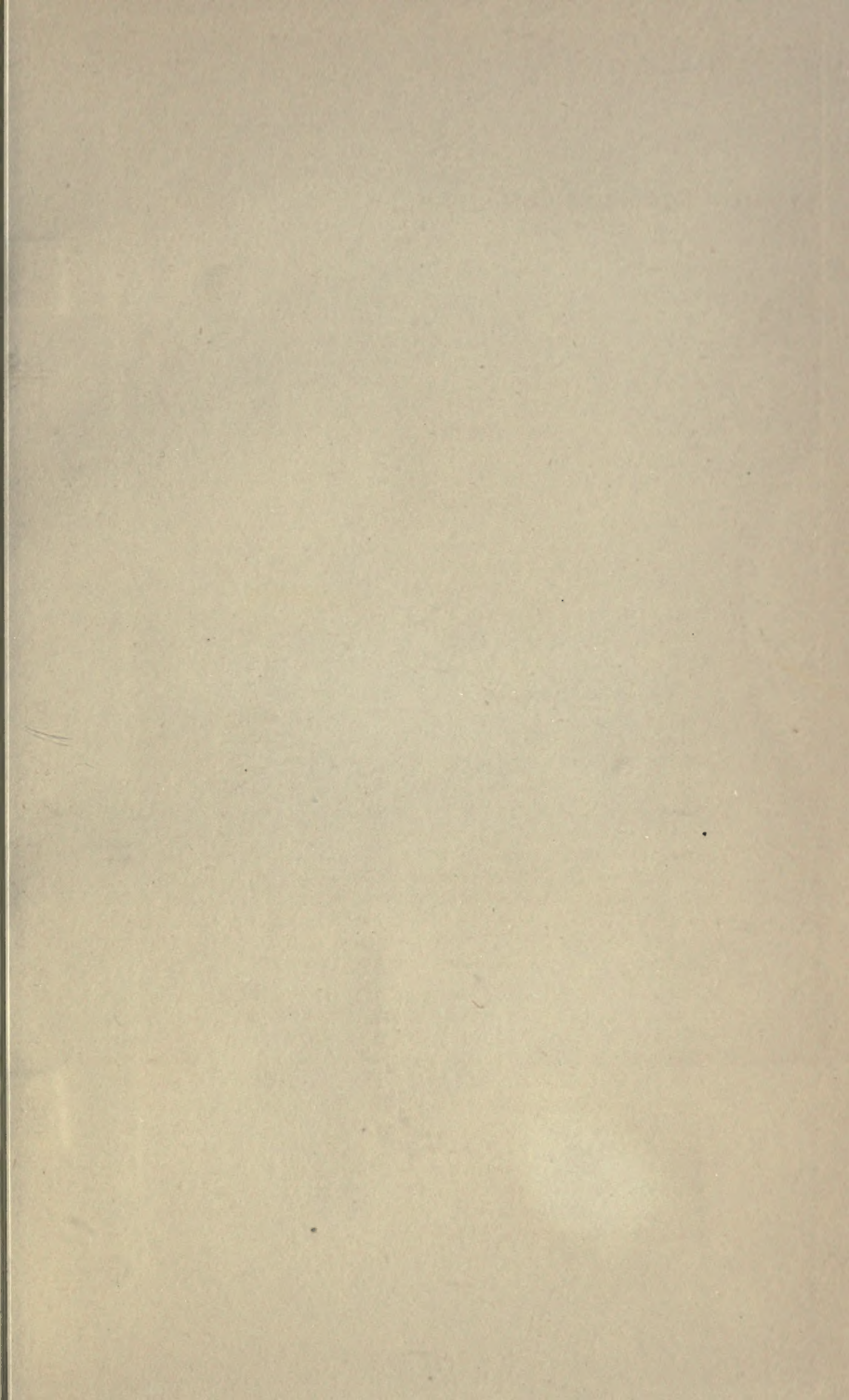
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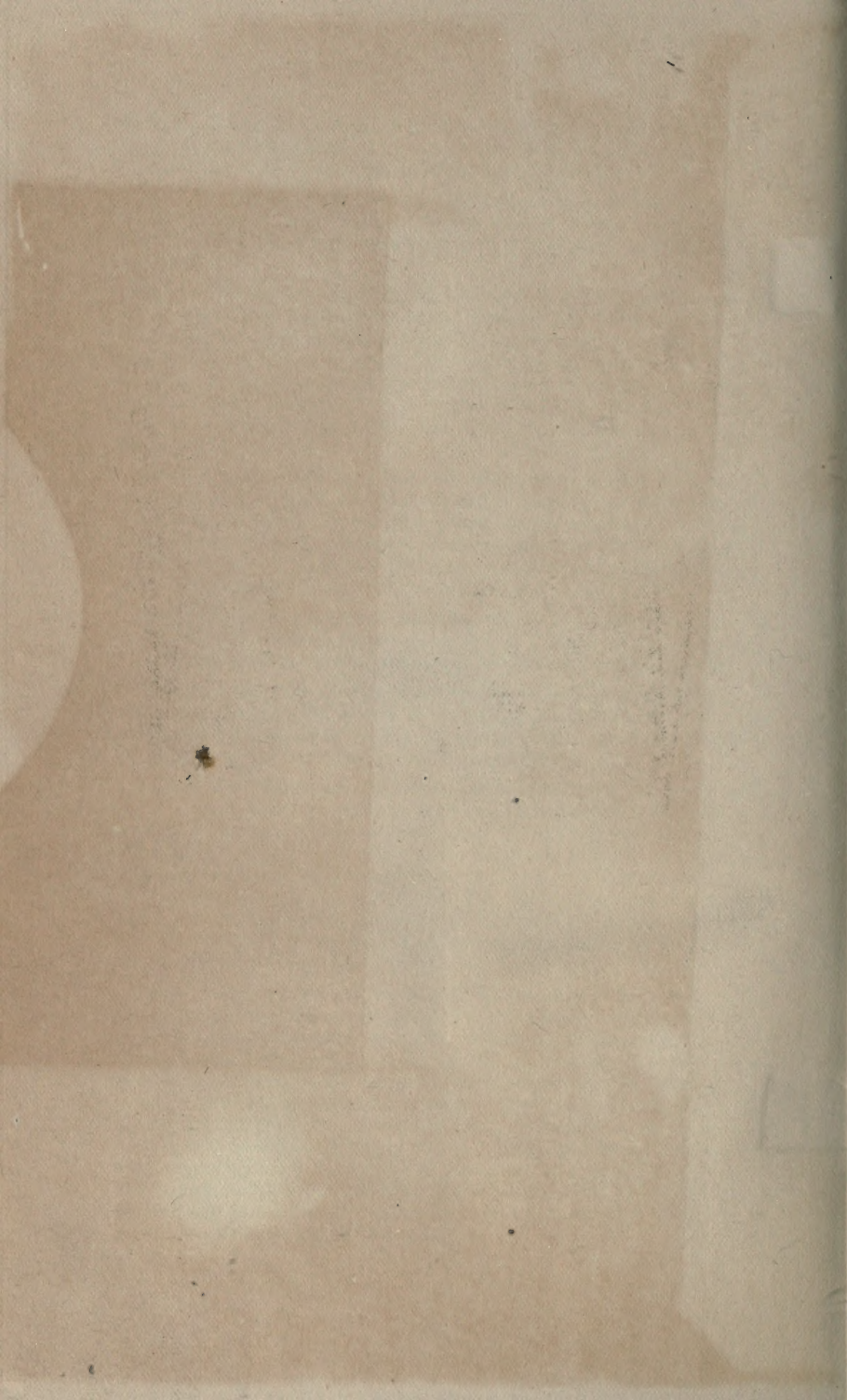
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