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SKETCHES

(PERSONAL AND POLITICAL)

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

By A SILENT MEMBER.

First Series.

No. 1.—TALKERS AND SPEECHMAKERS.
2.—THE ADMIRALTY—Mr. BAXTER.

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J Lambert Wood

PREFACE.

The writer of these pages proposes to place before the public some particulars of the Interior Life of the House of Commons. The papers are designed to form a complete series of twenty, and will be published at short intervals. They are intended to point out and to correct some of the annoyances which the House inflicts upon

A Silent Member.

London, October, 1870.

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SKETCHES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

No. I.—TALKERS AND SPEECHMAKERS.

> ——Have a care
> Of whom you talk, to whom, and what, and where.

Except the Speaker and the clerks and the reporters, and, as I wish to be comprehensive, the doorkeepers and the waiters, there is not a more ill-used and bored person in or about the House of Commons than the silent member. There are a great many silent members in the House,—there had need be, or Heaven knows what would become of him if there were only one silent member,—and their lot is not cast in pleasant places.

Zano's observation that "we have two ears and but one tongue," was fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, early impressed upon my mind; and the lesson to be derived therefrom, that we had better through life listen to twice as much as we speak, I have never forgotten. I have now to listen to nine hundred and ninety-nine times more than I speak; and, as I never speak in the House at all, I could almost wish that I had never been gifted with ears. That defect, however, would, I fear, have debarred me from obtaining a seat; for although there are the halt, the maimed, and the blind in the House, there is as yet no absolutely deaf or dumb member.

A constituency, not too numerous, returned me to Parliament for the third time at the last election. I was opposed by a man who had a tremendous power of speech—"his untired lips a wordy torrent poured;" and to this he added the immense power wielded by the pen of a ready writer, and he was principal proprietor of the county "Thunderer." With these mighty engines against me, I was not sanguine of regaining the honour I had so long enjoyed. Conscious of my own shortcomings, and particularly my weakness in speech-making, I resolved to fall back resolutely upon the one quality which I knew I possessed in the very highest state of cultivation—silence.

I beat him: and my adversary now has the manliness to admit that silence was the weapon in my political armoury which vanquished him. "If he would only speak out and give me an opportunity of pitching into him," my foe was good enough to say at least a dozen times during the canvass; but I was not to be tempted. I counted heads, and went about my business with some degree of thoughtfulness—no bustle, no noise, no bluster, and certainly no speeches,—and I succeeded. My opponent's volubility set off by a striking contrast my reticence, and I was conscious of being the gainer. So deep, however, was the impression made by his copiousness, that some of the electors began to speak of him with just a shade of satire as "the orator." A few others were not so delicate, and called him "stump orator"; while another section of my enlightened constituents dubbed him "Demosthenes." When it came to that, I knew victory was certain. I regarded my antagonist as an individual who was to be beaten by confidential whispers, knowing nods to my best supporters, kindly shakes of the hand to my doubtful ones, and kind deeds and few words to those who stuck to me through thick and thin, and, as I have already observed, I succeeded. It must be clearly understood that the contest referred to did not take place in Lancashire. The opposition of my fluent friend obliged me on the hustings to extend the usually brief limits of my remarks on these occasions. When my proposer and seconder had duly shouted and shrieked out my political principles and faultless character to the crowd below—thank God this electioneering piece of folly is soon to be abolished !—I came forward in answer to the demands of cruel necessity to make a few remarks. They were regarded at the time as neat and appropriate, and may therefore be quoted.

" Electors and Non-Electors,—You have heard the eloquent addresses of my proposer and seconder,—it would be presumption on my part to add to them. In a few minutes my honourable opponent will address you in a speech flowing with words but not with wisdom, and I will save myself and you much time and trouble by observing that my opinions are totally at variance with those which he will enunciate, and I may be understood to say 'No' to every expression of opinion to which he will give utterance." It was raining very hard, and the constituency was getting excited and quarrelsome. My speech was made in the customary hustings manner; the chief indications of speech of any kind, visible to bystanders, being the contortions of my face and the movement of my head and arms, and my hat which was in my right hand, and my stick which was in my left. The compositors and printers' devils belonging to the "Thunderer" occupied the front row at the foot of the hustings, and they had evidently resolved that I was not to be permitted to speak, or that if I did speak I was not to be heard, so I gladly took them at their word.

"Even a fool," says the Psalmist, "when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding."

Emerson, speaking of the power of silence, says:—"What a strange power there is in *silence!* How many resolutions are formed—how many sublime conquests effected during that pause, when the lips are closed and the soul secretly feels the eye of her Maker upon her! When some of those cutting, sharp, blighting words have been spoken which send the hot indignant blood to the face and head, if those to whom they are addressed keep silence, look on with awe, for a mighty work is going on within them, and the spirit of evil, or their guardian angel, is very near to them in that hour. During that pause they have made a step toward heaven or toward hell, and an item has been scored in the book which the day of judgment shall see opened. They are the strong ones of the earth—the mighty food for good or evil—those who know how to keep silence when it is a pain and a grief to them; those who give time to their own souls to wax strong against temptation, or to the powers of wrath to stamp upon them their withering passage."

If a few prominent members of the House would but consider this passage, and act in the spirit it suggests, what a marvellous change would take place in their behaviour, and how much good would arise from it!

The grand curse of the House of Commons is its chatter—vapid and unprofitable chatter. Of its eloquence I propose to speak in a future paper. This matchless gift is happily neither rare nor stinted in the House. The silent member of all others would regret its decline. To him it comes as an oasis in the desert to the sand-becovered traveller. But what does worry him—what makes life a burden, and the House of Commons well-nigh intolerable—is its voluble, meddlesome, half-instructed, and chattering member. I have at this moment in my mind's eye at least two dozen notable offenders of this class. Whenever a debate becomes interesting, and the pith and marrow of some intricate and debateable point are being extracted by the clever intellects of the House, one of these vicious and restless babblers is sure to be seen jumping up at intervals, as if an arrow had pierced him, striving to catch the Speaker's eye.

Though it may be deemed the most critical, there is no more tolerant, assembly in the world than the House of Commons. No one who has anything to say, and can say it, no matter how feebly and imperfectly, need be afraid of not having ample opportunity.

The House of Commons has a wonderful instinct in recognising quickly those who can contribute to its knowledge, its talent, or its eloquence, and, in the same way, is not slow to discern those who only increase its defects by wasting time in merely airing their vocabulary.

It has already been remarked that the House is a critical assembly, but its criticism is the criticism of common sense. I have known men—still know men—who can get up, at a moment's notice, and address the House in a long and fluent speech, with not one adjective or adverb misplaced; but the House would not listen to them. The speech was as barren of new ideas relating to the subject under discussion as the dry bones were of muscle, and the House discovered that it was only listening to a *rechauffé*, well dressed enough, of commonplaces known to everybody. On the other hand, I have seen a member get up, who could only speak in uncouth and ungrammatical language, one sentence after another falling from the speaker as stones fall from a quarry—some short, some long, and all more or less mis-shapen—listened to with the most respectful attention; but then he had something solid to contribute to the discussion, and this critical assembly not only listened to but applauded him.

Members of the House of Commons, as a rule, are more interested in being instructed than amused. The man most esteemed is he who can increase the common fund of information, and legislate for the wants of present times by the light of prudence and the possession of extensive knowledge.

After the first session of a new Parliament, members gradually find their level and their places, and the bores and babblers are discovered, and, as occasion requires, snubbed and chastised.

I shall never forget the rebuke administered one evening last session to Mr. Charley. He rose to speak upon one of the clauses in the Irish Coercion Bill. Sir John Gray had made a stirring appeal on behalf of the limitation of certain restrictions proposed to be put upon the Irish press; Lord John Manners had made an ill-timed party speech; and Mr. Gladstone, in a spirited reply to both gentlemen —both of whom had been hitting rather hard— aroused the enthusiasm of the House, and carried its sympathies along with him. There was a good attendance, and the members, animated by the lively encounter, were in unusually good spirits. At this juncture Mr. Charley rose to address the House, and met with such a reception as I hope never to see awarded again to any member of the House of Commons. With one sudden burst, and with as much precision as if they had been led by Costa or Hullah, two hundred and fifty voices howled a howl which resembled nothing in this world but a determined united howl of "Swee–ep!" Its spontaneity, its universality, its intense earnestness, could not be doubted. It expressed the annoyance, the vexation and inopportuneness, of Mr. Charley's appearance in such a way as could leave him no room for mistake. It told him, in language plainer than words, that he was out of place; that he was not wanted; that, in the opinion of the House, he could then add nothing either to its knowledge or gratification; yet, did Mr. Charley take the hint and sit down? No—certainly not; Mr. Charley, in the quietest possible manner, proceeded with his speech. The members ran away; but he was tolerated, and no doubt edified the Speaker and a few of the silent members, but the bulk only returned when he had sat down.

I must candidly confess that Mr. Gladstone is one of the worst examples and greatest offenders in this matter of overmuch talking. During the past session he was on his legs one hundred and seventy-eight times, and his speeches occupy about eighty columns of the *Times*. If placed in single column, it would be a sheet reaching to the top of the Monument. The whole annals of Parliament furnish no such parallel, or anything approaching it. And the evil is, that there is not a single member of the House who is not aware that the Premier's volubility was very frequently restrained. He could actually have talked twice as much; and, to use a well-known phrase, talking a horse's hind leg off is nothing to it. Earnest to a degree to which the House of Commons has never been accustomed, and which in the jaunty days of Lord Palmerston would have been considered ill-bred, if not impertinent, Mr. Gladstone is ever anxious to elucidate the merest detail of the most comprehensive measure to the meanest capacity. No matter how thick-headed his opponent may be, and how utterly wrong he may interpret some clause in a bill, the Premier cannot rest satisfied until he has made everything clear. He knows nothing of broad effects, light and shadow, or central objects; everything in his mind is pre-Raphaelite. If there be credit given him for sincerity in all this, there is at any rate a great loss of dignity, and dignity and repose have their advantages as well as sincerity. His sensitive nature is lacerated under failure or criticism, and although lately the consciousness of his political strength has given him more confidence, and enabled him to suffer an occasional check with more composure, the well-directed shaft of a skilful opponent can still wither and agonise him. And then there flows such a copiousness of words as makes one marvel that his mind does not break down under it!

Whatever be the subject before the House, if Mr. Gladstone can possibly find an excuse for engaging in it, he springs to his feet at once. The key to his character is his love of popularity and applause—to be right with the public, to be certain he is in favour with the multitude, is his constant weakness and besetting failing, and whenever these appear to be drifting away from him he talks and explains himself unceasingly.

Such being the vice of the leader of the House, it is not surprising that the lesser lights are fond of giving loose rein to their tongues. The measures carried last session were important enough, and were perhaps quite sufficient for one year's work, but how much more might have been done had there been less talking! We should in all probability have had the Ballot, University Tests Abolition Bill, one or two of Mr. Bruce's budget, and some others of pressing importance, and the members and the Ministry would not have been so palefaced and exhausted as they obviously were at the close of the session.

The House, however, is not powerless to restrain the loquacity of some of its members, and this power has been exerted upon occasion as unsparingly on a Cabinet Minister as on a noted bore. And it often makes itself felt with a measure of promptitude and sternness which brooks no resistance, and absolutely startles the speaker into silence. Very few members can retain their faculties for any great length of time under a well-sustained cry of "Divide,"—"'Vide,"—"'Vide." Nor can any member rouse himself into eloquence when he sees member after member stealing out of the House as he proceeds, until probably only forty remain out of two hundred members who were in their places when he began. Nor does a speaker make much headway when the House is talking almost as loudly as himself, and giving him the broadest of broad hints that what he is saying is not worth listening to. Failing, however, all other resources, the last is to pull him down in pure good nature by the coat tails.

The causes of Parliamentary loquaciousness are not far to seek. Constituents in these days are brought into much closer contact with their representatives than formerly. The press sends its newspaper into the remotest village, and into the cottage of the humblest elector, and no one knows better than the member of Parliament that it pleases a constituency greatly to see his name prominent amongst its proceedings. To feed this craving, he is obliged to do something. The most harmless of means for innocent notoriety is to cultivate the presentation of petitions; this plan is adopted by those who find themselves utterly unable to overcome the terror of a public utterance, and it leads to your name constantly figuring in the first page of the Reports. Or, he must be ever and anon asking a question. This method of showing legislative wisdom, and obtaining a cheap notoriety, has become exceedingly popular. In the first place it is easy. The Speaker calls upon you and you rise. It is not as in a debate, when you have to jump up like a flash of forked lightning to catch his eye. You can read your question from a piece of paper, and sit down with composure. In the next place it is dignified. You can call up one or two Cabinet Ministers in the course of one evening to reply to you with as much facility as if you were merely ringing the bell for the waiter. Perhaps, also, it gives you importance, not so much on account of your question, but by reason of some hasty or ill-considered sentence which the Minister may let slip in answering you. This may give rise to a leader in the *Times*, and then you have the gratification of seeing your name bracketed with Mr. Gladstone or the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

There were twenty-eight questions asked one evening last session, and it need not be a wild prediction to forecast forty-eight as a probable maximum next session. A man who finds he must say something will make a speech if he cannot ask a question, and of two evils the House had better choose the lesser. Besides, the dread lest some sharply-worded question may be asked, is a capital restraint over jobbery or trickery by members of the Administration; and although this is said to be the "Ministry of all the virtues," it is none the worse for being watched. But unfortunately there are others whose ambitions rise beyond the innocent and simple rhetoric of question-asking. It is these who are the plague of the House, and who waste its valuable hours, and the worst of them are of two classes—expectant placemen and riders of hobbies. Of the first class there are many melancholy examples. They are never, whatever may be their abilities, liked in the House. You never know at what stage one of them is going to interpose in a debate, and their efforts to make a mark, and prove their fitness for office, are so persistent, and often so offensive, that they produce *au fond* a bad impression upon you. They are rigorous attenders of the House, always watching for, or predicting some redistribution of offices, and always deprecating their appointment to the office which some chaffing friend tells them they are fitted for and likely to get—next time.

Take as a type of the class a man like Mr. Bernal Osborne or Mr. Candlish. He is looking out for a berth—say at the Admiralty. He is "a consistent supporter of the Government," and what does that mean? Stated in a bald and unvarnished way, simply this, that whenever the Government, or more especially that department which seems to promise him future loaves and fishes, gets rather the worst of the argument, the "consistent supporter of the Government" must chime in and make a speech in their favour. The House of course is bored, and not unfrequently the Government is bored too, and would fain cry, "Oh! save me from my friends." But Mr. Candlish must continue making his little speeches, and otherwise busying himself about affairs for all that. See how many men have succeeded by doing this. Where would Mr. Ayrton, or Mr. Childers, or Mr. Baxter, or Mr. Stansfeld be, had it not been for their little speeches? In truth the House holds out many inducements and rewards to the talkative, and little marvel that so many try to distinguish themselves by loquacity. What is the true and sure way to get place? It may be summed up in this —Be gifted with physical strength and endurance, read the blue-books, attend the House regularly, avoid being considered a man of hobbies, be patient and fluent, be always ready to make a speech, and, whenever the Government is attacked, pluck out from your mental pigeon-hole some appropriate little speech, and then fire it off. It is always better now and then to give it a slightly patronising flavour,—as if their success would not have been quite so certain, or defeat could scarcely have been avoided, had you not most opportunely and gallantly and unselfishly come forward to help them.

Thus chatterers are multiplied, and the silent members who seek no reward are horrified. But perhaps the very worst of the two classes I have alluded to are the riders of hobbies. There are few things more interesting in the House of Commons than to see a new member mount his hobby for the first time. At the end of his first session, when he has not yet made his maiden speech, having only ventured so far as to ask a question, he puts a notice on the paper that early next session he intends to call attention to—say the Diplomatic and Consular service.

During the recess he is hard at work getting up his statistics and his speech. If he is a metropolitan member, he leaves his wife and family, and retires alone with his blue-books either to Brighton or Hastings, there to gather the facts and cull the flowers of oratory which are to astound and electrify the House when it meets in the following spring. He engages a master of elocution to improve his pronunciation and delivery, and you will observe, should you chance to meet him, that his voice is pitched considerably higher now than it was the last time you spoke to him. So carefully has he combined his facts, and so thoroughly has he mastered his subject, that his only dread is, that he will not be able to compress his speech into less than three hours.

At last the eventful night has come when his motion is numbered among "to-day's notices," and evidences that something unusual is going to happen do not escape the silent member. The House has met at four o'clock, and almost the first person who enters is a nervous and very anxious-looking member, who places his hat and a bundle of papers on the third row behind the Treasury bench, and then retires. Questions have to be asked and answered; but as half-past five approaches, and the Ministers have been duly put through the daily catechism, the same semi-excited individual is seen making for his seat, and carrying with him a tumbler of water which he deposits carefully on the floor beside him. In a few minutes the Speaker calls upon the new hobby-rider in terms of his motion, and he rises at once to address the House. He makes a very fair start; but, unfortunately for him, the members do not yet know him, and are not interested in his hobby, so they retire in threes and fours from the House—a proceeding which he had not calculated upon when he was composing his address, and he is proportionately disconcerted. He pauses and stammers—a very dry and sickening effect seems to be produced in his throat—he betakes himself to the tumbler of water which his forethought provided, and the few remaining members encourage him by a generous cheer. As he proceeds somehow he appears to discover that he has not quite so much to say as he thought he had, and, in place of occupying the House as he expected for three hours, he finds he has been unexpectedly able to deliver all that he had got to say in considerably less than half an hour, and no man is better pleased, or more relieved, at this circumstance than himself. The silent member has listened and is not edified, and wonders what can have induced any man to undergo such fatigue and excitement for so unsatisfactory a result. But this is not the point of view of the hobby-rider. He has made his start—he has aired his hobby—his first speech has given him confidence, and should he be in the House for the next twenty years, you will hear that first speech delivered over and over again, with but slight variations, until he has so thoroughly tired out the Government and everybody else, that they are obliged to give his hobby a *quietus*, and put an end to the sickening reiteration.

There is quite a large stud of hobby-men, and their numbers increase every session. Leatham and the Ballot; Tom Chambers and the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill; McLaren and Edinburgh Annuity-Tax Bill (just settled); Mr. Loch and the Game Laws (Scotland) Bill; Mr. Monk's Revenue Officers' Disabilities Bill; the number could be largely added to, and there consequently flows a stream of unceasing chatter from February till August.

To find a remedy for this state of things is more difficult than to point out its great disadvantages. Various suggestions have been made, and all have been welcomed by the silent members, but nothing really practicable has been proposed. The five or ten minutes' system would require so many exceptions that it would be impossible to draw the line. Mr. Whalley would certainly object to have his right of boring the House limited to speeches of only ten minutes.

All the speakers could not be placed upon the same footing, for many obvious reasons. The intention and scope of a Land Bill or a Reform Bill could not be compressed by the tersest Minister into a speech of ten minutes, or even of ten times that number.

The sense of the House itself does a great deal, but much remains to be done. A House of Commons accustomed to listen to Mr. Gladstone, and to take delight in such speeches as he delivered when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, will always have a tendency to loquacity. In this matter, example is nearly everything. One may be right in looking for a better state of things in external causes, which may encourage greater thought and fewer words.

The great change which the French and German war has brought about may lead to a diminution in the number of talkers in the House next session, by impressing upon the hobby-riders and small critics that there are deeper questions now to be dealt with than those which have furnished the petty themes of their exuberant eloquence.

England may now be entering upon a new epoch, when, in place of her attention being absorbed by domestic changes, her exertions will have to be turned to external affairs. No man can predict what may be the course of events in France, or how far the workers of revolution may extend their efforts to destroy the institutions of our own country. When Mr. Gladstone's love of talk and popularity induces him to give audience to the representatives of the International Democratic Association, the Land and Labour League, and the International Working Men's Association—to whom he announces the policy of the Government; while they inform him, without a word of rebuke on his part, of the revolutionary principles which they represent—prudent men may well stand amazed, and forget for a time their hobbies and their riders. A new power has arisen in Europe which cannot fail to be a cause of envy and jealousy to her neighbours, and England cannot look on, an uninterested spectator. Measures for national security and defence may take the place of measures for improving the condition of cabs or giving women the suffrage, and the race of chatterers will gradually diminish, if it does not for a time disappear. There will be less talk and more work, and the bores, and the babblers, and the hunters after place, may become examples of modesty and silence.

No. II.—THE ADMIRALTY—Mr. BAXTER.

Clamor operariorum ascendit ad aures meas.

One of the most remarkable things connected with parliamentary government is, the extraordinary variety of offices which one man, during a long official career, may be called upon to hold, and, by the fact that he accepts them, considers himself qualified to undertake them. Take Earl Russell as an instance. He has by turns filled the office of Paymaster of the Forces, Home Secretary, Colonial Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Lord President of the Council, and First Lord of the Treasury. Or Mr. Gladstone, who began as Junior Lord of the Treasury, then was successively Under-Secretary for Colonial Affairs, Vice-President of the Board of Trade, President of the Board of Trade, Colonial Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and now is Prime Minister. It has been the same with Mr. Disraeli, Lord Stanley, and other of our leading statesmen.

It is surely a great stretch of credulity to believe that these various offices could have been efficiently filled by the same man, and that he carried into each that complete mastery of principles and details necessary to ensure proper administration. A peasant cannot be turned into a priest in a day, though the operation is one very frequently performed; nor can one believe that a respectable chairman of quarter sessions can suddenly be converted into an efficient Lord High Admiral of the Fleet.

Hyde, Earl of Rochester, asked Lord Keeper Guildford, "Do you not think I could understand any business in England in a month?" "Yes, my lord," was the reply; "but I think you would understand it better in two months."

But if it be strange that one individual should fill so many offices, it is stranger still that such offices as Secretary of State for War and First Lord of the Admiralty should ever be assigned to civilians, who probably may know as little about naval or military organisation, or *matériel* of war, as a Thames mudlark knows of mathematics.

Such a system may be necessitated by the exigencies of party government, but no man in his senses will maintain that it is the best, or that it is even desirable, or that it would be endured were this country unhappily plunged into a long war. In the Crimean War Sydney Herbert tried it, and died under it. In the Abyssinian War success was achieved by the Secretary of State abnegating his office, practically resigning control and authority, and placing the expedition, almost unreservedly, into the hands of a thorough soldier—Lord Napier of Magdala. It must, however, be humiliating to a man of spirit to find himself occupying an office which could be more worthily filled by another: and perhaps the day is not far distant when even the necessities of party warfare may admit of more satisfactory arrangements.

Many instances might be given to point these observations, and the subject might be elaborated to almost any length, but the danger attending the present system may be sufficiently illustrated by one example—and it is a very striking one—the recent and melancholy loss of H. M.'s ship *Captain*. Here we have a First Lord of the Admiralty building a ship in deference to public clamour, contrary alike to the views of his professional advisers and to the principles of science, and only restrained from building a number of *Captains* by a catastrophe which has shocked the feelings and practical sense of the whole country. A sacrifice of half a million of money and five hundred lives is a pretty heavy price to pay for the arrogance and professional ignorance of a Lord of the Admiralty, who assumes an office which he ought never to fill.

But, perhaps, stranger still than that civilians should occupy such posts, is the fact that two such men as Mr. Childers and Mr. Baxter should fill the offices respectively of First Lord of the Admiralty and Chief Secretary.

Surely, the march of folly can no further go, when statesmanship is swallowed up in shopkeeping, and the highest achievements of a session, in a department so vital to the welfare of England as the Admiralty, are—a saving upon pens and pencils—a reduction in the price of coals and oil—a wholesale discharge of workmen and clerks, and a scheme of retirement which deprives the country of the services of officers in the prime of manhood.

Economy, certainly, is necessary and right, as much at the Admiralty as in the meanest home in England; but economy used as a party cry, lifting into place and power incapable men, who make economy the moving spring of the service upon which the greatness of England, and the peace and security of every home in this land depend, can end in nothing but humiliation and disaster. This cry has, happily, almost worn itself out. For two years the Admiralty has been shrieking it and thrusting it in the face of the House of Commons, until at last it has become not only offensive there, but odious to the whole country. And, perhaps, no cry has ever experienced so signal a collapse. The French and German War, which has been so prolific of great surprises and sharp lessons, put an instant end to it. The outbreak of that war, and the unexpected necessity of providing for the possible contingency of our becoming a party to it, furnished the most complete condemnation of the course pursued by the Admiralty since the present Administration took office which history could record. No sooner was war announced, than immediately two millions had to be voted, to put the economised army and navy in a proper state of efficiency. No more selling of surplus stores—no more cheeseparing in pens and pencils—no more discharging of workmen, and, I wish it could have been said—no more retiring of officers. The question of our national defences has become a matter not so much for the Government and the House of Commons as for the people, and further boasts of miserly thrift would now be regarded as an impertinence. We have been assured by Mr. Cardwell and Mr. Childers that never were the Army and Navy in such a high state of efficiency; but we have begun to put little faith in general official assurances. The Duke of Gramont was equally confident; and Marshal Lebœuf, when asked if he was prepared, is said to have replied, "Ready—we are more than ready!"

The English nation has begun to realise the fact that, after all, twenty or thirty millions per annum is not such an extravagant cost for the protection of a thousand millions' worth of property, to say nothing of our lives. We shall doubtless hear again of economy, for it is the quality of ignorance and presumption to be obstinate and audacious; but, at least, we shall have a short respite. Mr. Childers and Mr. Baxter must be thankful that Parliament was so opportunely prorogued; for certainly their lives would not have been enviable had the House been sitting. The course of events has made their speeches and their policy, since they assumed office, both ridiculous and contemptible. Is there a man in the country whose regard for economy has been so violent as to make him feel anything but ashamed of the discharge of workmen—their shipment to Canada, and their idleness and poverty in our dockyard towns? Such a policy arouses a strong sense of injustice, oppression, and exasperation; and it may fairly be reckoned that every Liberal seat for the dockyard boroughs is lost for the next ten years.

I shall take leave to investigate the capacities of both of these men, and point out some of the causes which have led to their occupying the positions which they now hold; and, first, I will refer, in this brief paper, to Mr. Baxter.

Mr. Gladstone, having been raised to power by the votes of the Radicals, he was obliged, when he formed his government, to bestow some of the sweets of office upon that section of his supporters, and hence it is we have Mr. Baxter, Radical and Reformer, as Secretary to the Admiralty. The "commercial element," as Mr. Baxter phrased it, has been in the ascendant—for I now speak of it as a thing of the past, and during its elevation its blaze was visible over the whole country. The

Admiralty's doings were in everybody's mouth, and the extreme rigour of their administration was as surprising as it was novel. There were no half-measures. What Aristotle described as a condition of moral virtue—the possession of a spirit of moderation—was not one of the considerations of the authorities at Whitehall. There were new brooms, and, for once, there was to be a clean sweep.

The Radical faction is nothing if it is not noisy, and, being composed principally of Bodwinkles, it is bent upon rising in the world. Poor Mr. Baxter, who has acquired that lean and hungry look which he wears by patient waiting upon a political providence, found himself at last the happy possessor of a share in the Administration, and forthwith he carried into his office all the din and energy which he had diligently practised out of it. Such a godsend as at last fell to his lot must, as the clergy say, be "improved," and Mr. Baxter has been doing so since the first day he stormed Whitehall. He had before been filling the *rôle* of political hack. Was there any work which he would not have willingly performed for his party? Was there any speech of which he was capable that he would not have delivered against time at the call of the Liberal whip?

He had done his part so thoroughly, that the Liberal chiefs must have long ago been ashamed of not giving him some appointment. As an office-seeker he is certainly not the worst, but he is not the best type of the class. As an individual member of the House, he is no more entitled to take rank among its high-bred or scholarly classes, than Gourley would be to take rank with Gladstone.

At one time he thought he discerned the possibility of creating such an agitation in Scotland as would induce the Government to appoint a Scotch Secretary of State, and he had, it may be supposed, a keen eye for the office; but that business failed, and why it failed was made sufficiently obvious by the result of the inquiry instituted by the Government, under the presidency of the Earl of Camperdown, in Edinburgh at the beginning of last session. All the stories told about Scotch maladministration were proved to be exaggerations, and there was not shown to be the shadow of a pretext for wishing to alter existing arrangements. That cock would not fight, much to the chagrin of

Mr. Baxter; and when it failed, as he saw it would, and abandoned it accordingly some years before, there seemed little prospect of a *battue* for him in any other direction; for he is a man whom it is difficult to say you can find a place exactly to suit. It would be an unwarrantable stretch of courtesy to name him in the same breath with statesmen; but I have been told, on good authority, that his father predicted he would some day be Prime Minister of England. Perhaps so. As the fallen Emperor said a short time ago, at Wilhelmshöhe, when some one suggested he might yet return to his throne, "No one can tell—no one can tell."

My belief is, that he would himself admit that he has neither the education, the knowledge, or the talents to be a first-rate politician. His bearing is that of a man who is neither at ease with himself, his position, or his fellows. The appearance of such men at court, in the garb of official life, must make the masters of the ceremonies quake, and the pages fall into a state of nervousness bordering upon paralysis. Mr. Baxter's politics and fitness for court life may be best illustrated by an incident.

It is related as a fact that, when Prince Arthur went to Canada, her Gracious Majesty the Queen wished him to go in a ship of war. The Minute was forwarded to the Admiralty, and passed through Mr. Baxter's hands; who suggested, by an observation endorsed upon it, that it would be better for him to go by the Cunard or Inman line, any one of whose ships could sail round any vessel of war that could be spared. And the Prince took the hint, and travelled as Mr. Baxter would have him travel accordingly. Assuredly this lesson in Radicalism was not taught by the dignified and loyal Quaker who has so ably led that party.

Mr. Baxter is a man whom you can imagine searching for all the evil he can find in persons and their proceedings, rather than looking for any good: and when evil is hunted down, visiting it with an overwhelming rod of punishment, rather than seeking its mitigation in surrounding corruption or bad example.

Democracy is always more exacting than despotism. The man of the people generally turns out to be the master of the people. Who would have dreamt that the elect Radical Government of the working men should have so sharply turned round upon them? Considering the poverty of Mr.

Baxter's ability, he has done much to make himself remarkable. He discovered the treachery of a dockyard butcher, and sent to prison a man who sat opposite to him at his desk. He had waited too long for his appointment to enter upon its duties with calmness or moderation. He has stormed the Admiralty rather with the energy and force of a bull in a china-shop, than as a prudent and cautious administrator. He was always a heavy speaker, fearfully didactic and prosy; which it is, however, gratifying to note is being changed to a somewhat gay and airy tone. When he replied to Mr. Corry's observations on the night the Estimates were proposed last session, he appeared in quite a new character, and delighted his audience. The whole House laughed. Mr. Gladstone had never been seen in such exuberant laughter. Did Mr. Baxter suspect they were laughing at him? "Goodness gracious!" No!

Mr. Gladstone took Mr. Baxter's measure very accurately when he fixed upon him as the man suited to respond to the Radical cry of Retrenchment. He is of the commercial classes—commercial; he speaks like a business man; he is or was in trade (it is quite the thing now to boast you are in trade since Mr. Goschen condescended to leave the Bank parlour for the Cabinet, and Mr. Childers abandoned joint-stock and limited liability companies for the Admiralty), and his name is associated with a profitable trade in jute and flax. It is easy to imagine Mr. Gladstone weighing these considerations, and throwing into the scale Mr. Baxter's fourteen years of diligent servitude. The motives of a Prime Minister cannot always be regarded in the same light as those of other men. However earnest, conscientious and unselfish he may be, he can only be as a Prime Minister always must be—the slave of those who hang upon and surround him. A great deal has been said about Mr. Baxter as a commercial man—a thorough man of business, and much more to the same effect. But if this all be so, I cannot quite make out where he has gathered his experience, nor have I been able to discover any of its successful fruits. The thorough commercial man of business has generally been imagined as a person who has for a great number of years carried upon his own shoulders the cares and responsibilities of a large and flourishing trade. Mr. Baxter stated in the House that he is not a partner in the firm in Dundee which bears his name, and he certainly cannot lay claim to being a thorough man of business of the description just stated. He was in the House when he was twenty-four years of age, and his chief occupation there has been a diligent pursuit of a seat on the Treasury Bench. But what goes to prove his inexperience and want of business aptitude most is the succession of blunders he has committed, and the absurd contracts he has made. One instance is as good as a thousand, and I will notice one or two with which the public is more or less already acquainted.

The first attack which was made upon him in his new position was in connection with a large sale of anchors. Mr. Baxter takes especial charge, as he says, of the Purchase and Sale Department. What happened in this case? A firm in the City has an enquiry for old anchors for a particular undertaking, and they write and describe their wants to the Admiralty, and forthwith Mr. Baxter disposes of two hundred and sixty-one anchors at £6 5s. per ton.

When the anchors are being delivered it is discovered that the anchors sold by Mr. Baxter, in place of being old and obsolete anchors, are anchors simply unappropriated to ships, which had cost the country £40 to £50 per ton.

Well, it was a "mistake,"—a *lapsis pennæ*, and it was rectified, but had it not been for the honourable behaviour of the firm to whom the anchors were sold, it would have cost the country £10,000. Mr. Baxter stated in the House of Commons that this blunder did not cost the country "a single shilling." With all respect for Mr. Baxter, that statement was not quite true. Before that assertion was made the Admiralty had recouped the buyers of the anchors the carriage which had been incurred upon the portion delivered, and this amount was not a single shilling, but £163 13s. The device used by the Admiralty is an anchor. I can imagine its reminding Mr. Baxter every time he sees it of a very unpleasant incident. I ask, was there any evidence of commercial ability in this transaction? There was evidence of ability during the progress of it, but it was of a very mean sort indeed. Mr. Baxter, who was mainly responsible for the egregious blunder, tried to fasten it upon the clerks in his office, who, he maintained, ought to have seen the error he was committing, and to have pointed it out to him, and he was prepared to sacrifice any number of them providing he could throw the blame off his own shoulders, or off those of his hasty and precipitate colleague, Sir Spencer Robinson.

Another sample of his business qualifications was the employment of a firm of timber brokers in the City to catalogue the timber in Woolwich Dockyard. The firm to whom this work was entrusted proceeded to carry out Mr. Baxter's wishes, and speedily produced elaborate and useful statements and measurements of the stock. They employed an extra number of hands, and carried out the work expeditiously and satisfactorily, and very soon afterwards sent in their account, amounting to something like £5,000. Mr. Baxter was astounded. "Goodness gracious!" This shrewd man of business had not made an agreement as to the firm's scale of remuneration.

Arbitration was proposed and names exchanged; then others, and again others, and finally the decision was left to Mr. Reed, the late Chief Constructor of the Navy. After much negotiation the sum was considerably reduced. Mr. Baxter was not on this occasion either an example of what is properly and popularly supposed to be the thorough man of business.

One evening last session Mr. Mellor asked Mr. Baxter a question relative to the sale of H. M.'s ship *Mutine*, and detailed certain facts connected with the ship. Mr. Baxter got up with much indignation and replied that there was not a word of truth in the matter referred to; but, to the surprise of every one in the House, before he sat down, he confirmed substantially every statement Mr. Mellor had made. Mr. Baxter has, no doubt, studied the art of answering questions, which, I am sorry to say, has become rather too much of an art, and rather a black one in the House of Commons, but he will not venture to impugn the accuracy of either of the statements just made. This art of replying to questions has been carried to great perfection in the House, and it is now almost difficult to discover the difference between a reply to a question and a wilful falsification—either a suppression of the truth or a perversion of it. Mr. Cardwell's answer regarding 300,000 Sniders *in store*, carried this wretched system as far as it is likely to be permitted to go for some years to come. Young administrators are particularly prone to offend in this way, and to think it rather clever to hoodwink the House of Commons, and Mr. Baxter has certainly not been the least guilty in this respect. He had, at a late period of the session, to explain away assertions made at the early part of it, respecting the quantities of various articles in stock, which he contradicted when stated by Mr. Corry. His explanation, too, regarding a proposal made for breaking up obsolete vessels of war—a matter in which he had not shown much business ability—did not tell the whole truth, or give a correct colouring to the transaction. But Mr. Baxter's particular innovation, and the matter upon which he will, no doubt, be willing either to stand or fall, is the institution of a "Purchase and Sale Branch" at Whitehall. For this novelty he has declared himself primarily responsible. Former Boards of Admiralty expected their secretary to undertake the superintendence of the correspondence of the department, and to be perfectly *au courant* of every detail of its proceedings and policy, and as this duty afforded him the opportunity of having an intimate acquaintance with the whole administration of the office, he was ready to assist in the defence of the department when assailed in the House of Commons; and even to move the Estimates should the First Lord from any cause be unable to do so. There was at least regularity and a clearly-defined position, and certain obvious advantages from this apportionment of duty. Since the present Board came into office there appears to be a complete *bouleversement* of all previous arrangements. No one knows whether there is a Board of Admiralty at all, or, if there be, whether its policy is regulated by collective or individual decisions. Mr. Baxter's position appears to be something between that of a cattle salesman and an upper clerk. To official disorganisation has been added internal dissension. The retirement scheme evidently met with strenuous opposition from Sir Spencer Robinson, at least so far as the retirement of officers who had served in a similar capacity to himself was concerned.

It seemed at one time to be doubtful whether the order to proceed with ships should come from Mr. Childers or Mr. Reed, and the general chaos in affairs appeared too much or too little for the advanced reforming tendencies of Mr. Trevelyan. The successor of the last-named gentleman was not chosen from the "commercial element." It is well known there were over twenty applications from that section of the Liberal party for the vacant office, but it may be presumed Mr. Gladstone thought that one Mr. Baxter was quite enough at a time. Mr. Reed had to resign in the middle of the confusion in order that Mr. Childers might go on building *Captains*; and if there were no Board of Admiralty, there was at least one Board formed and constituted to take charge of the construction of ships. It took half a dozen subordinates to make one Mr. Reed, and it is to be feared that the Admiralty has forgotten the old proverb, that "half a dozen ducks do not make a swan." In the general disarrangement at the Admiralty, Mr. Baxter chose a sphere in the mismanagement of affairs suited to his training and associations. As secretary he would have been in too quiet and literary a position for his tastes. As a mere subordinate functionary there would not have been sufficient popular notice bestowed upon so Heaven-sent a reformer. Hence we have as his product a "Purchase and

Sale Branch," invented and entirely regulated by the Secretary to the Admiralty. As far as can yet be judged, this new-fangled establishment has not been very successful in operation or fertile in fruit. The theory upon which it has been formed is the substitution of the system of purchase by public tender for a mixed method of purchase by advertising publicly as before, requesting special firms of brokers to make certain purchases, or employing special agents for specific articles.

The innovation is on its trial, and I am persuaded will not be tolerated. Its adoption is a retrograde step, and must inevitably lead to favouritism. The Whigs obtained the confidence which was long reposed in them, by their constant opposition to privilege and monopoly; and it is a curious fact, that a Radical Government should be the first to open the door to a return to such practices. Mr. Baxter may make a perfectly honest arrangement with City firms to make certain purchases or bargains for his department, but every such arrangement is open to great suspicion. Were not Messrs. Shaw and Thomson employed to sell the surplus stores because by the surrender of the anchors they helped the Admiralty out of a scrape? Is there not a memorandum drawn up by Mr. Baxter and approved by Mr. Childers concerning this arrangement at this moment in the pigeon-holes of the Admiralty? All men may not be so conscientious as Mr. Baxter, and his successor may see no harm in an appointment which he would consider a gross job. Private firms, who are looking to their own gain merely, are not to be compared with the Admiralty, whose aim ought to be to invite every competent firm to tender, and give all an equal chance. Private firms purchase secretly, buying in the cheapest markets and selling in the dearest, in order to forestal their neighbours and ensure a speculative profit. The Admiralty merely wishes to supply its wants from the best sources at the lowest market price. Coals, candles, and coffee can be bought as cheaply by public tender as they can be by private contract, without the necessity of employing brokers, or incurring the charge of jobbery or favouritism. Mr. Baxter has appointed a special agent for the purchase of coals who has had various experiences in the coal trade. Will Mr. Baxter deny that his agent may have preferences? He was at one time connected with the Hirwain Colliery, and it is a curious fact that Hirwain coals are now largely bought by the Admiralty.

This "Purchase and Sale Branch," with its private appointments and secret negotiations, is not destined to last: it has earned notoriety for its founder, which was probably its chief end. The new Superintendent of Contracts—a partisan of Mr. Baxter's, promoted suddenly from £300 a year to £1,000 a year—will, by and by, it is to be hoped, have recourse to the former system of purchase by public competition solely, and the Admiralty will then return to a healthy and just manner of dealing with the traders of the country. The public would infinitely prefer that even higher prices should be paid by public competition for articles required by the Admiralty, than that a system should be adopted which leaves the characters of our public men open to the slightest imputation. Scotch secretiveness is not a quality which the nation will ever like to see carried into any of the public departments. If the days of secret deplomacy are numbered, it may be presumed that Mr. Baxter's private "Purchase and Sale Branch" will not have a very prolonged existence. Mr. Baxter may learn that there are changes which are not improvements, and that hurried and immature plans lead only to disaster.

What has been the sum of all the noise which has been made by Mr. Baxter? Admit that a certain reduction was made in the Estimates for this year, and that the cry of economy—so far as regarded such a reduction—was justified. Admit also that something has been done to purify the morals of dockyard servants and clerks as regards the blameable practice of "tipping." (One may hope that Mr. Baxter is consistent enough never to tip a railway guard or porter, or his friend's gamekeeper when he goes out for a few days at the pheasants.) The whole of the rest of the story is a record of incapacity and blundering. The amount stated to have been saved at the beginning of the session had to be re-demanded from Parliament before its close. The first note of war on the Continent shattered the economical hypocrisy to the winds. This vain and empty cry simply meant a foolish, if not culpable, reduction of the stocks and establishments, and within the space of one short session of Parliament the whole mischief had to be repaired, and the policy abandoned.

The commercial element may have its uses in its place, but there is room to doubt whether the training and education of the commercial classes in the House of Commons are yet sufficiently advanced to enable them to take those broad and thoughtful views of administration which are of more service to good government than all the petty knowledge of trifles and details which the "commercial element" can alone offer in their stead. Certain it is that a man may find himself able for a time to keep himself in people's mouths without winning their respect or confidence. Some such lot as this may be in store for Mr. Baxter. The expectation that Mr. Childers's ill-health may, on an early day, require him to relinquish his office, has led to Mr. Baxter's name being mentioned with others as his probable successor.

It can be confidently predicted that no such misfortune is in store for the Naval Administration; but it may be expected that if England is roused to a proper sense of the necessity of a vigorous overhaul of our national defences, Mr. Baxter's presence at his "Purchase and Sale Branch" will be dispensed with.

SKETCHES

(PERSONAL AND POLITICAL)

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

By A SILENT MEMBER.

Second Series.

No. 3.—Mr. DISRAELI — THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY.

4.—DO YOU WISH TO OBTAIN A SEAT IN THE HOUSE?

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PREFACE.

The writer of these pages proposes to place before the public some particulars of the Interior Life of the House of Commons. The papers are designed to form a complete series of twenty, and will be published at short intervals. They are intended to point out and to correct some of the annoyances which the House inflicts upon

A Silent Member.

London, December, 1870.

SKETCHES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

No. III.—Mr. DISRAELI—THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY.

" Hæc scripsi non otii abundantiâ sed amoris erga te."

The reviewers who were at the pains to notice the first issue of these papers, generally remarked that my observations were written from the Conservative point of view. The remark was just. I am a Conservative—a staunch, an out-and-out Conservative—a Tory of Tories—an unbending upholder of the principles of the party!

I have been so for some years, and have indeed been very ardent in my day. There are a great many men, both inside and outside of the House of Commons, who have been equally strong in their opinions—ready to live and die for Conservatism or Toryism—or the new *ism*, Constitutionalism.

But a few of us are beginning to awaken, and to wonder what it is all about; what are the principles we represented, or thought we did, and whither they have led, and what have been their results. I am one of these newly-awakened people. I began to open my eyes first when General Peel, Lord Carnarvon, and Lord Cranborne parted company with Mr. Disraeli, and left us all wondering what next? and next? It is true there still remained Mr. Hardy and Sir John Pakington, and Mr. Newdegate, and several other great men and eminent Tory statesmen: but we were not quite the same, and somehow feel we have not been quite the same ever since.

It is painfully obvious that we have something wrong with us. Last session we were the mildest and most broken-down looking party conceivable. We felt our pulses to be low, our vigour diminished, and our pluck gone. We sat with our fingers in our mouths,

> "Bated in spirit and with pinions clipped,"

ready, it is true, to pounce upon the errors of the Government; but as a party we were helpless, dejected, and undone; and—what was most disagreeable—we knew that, had the

Government committed the greatest possible blunder, we were unfit to assume the reins of power, even had the Liberal Administration thrown them in our faces.

I shall make no apology for giving expression to a few thoughts which occurred to a silent member, and I hazard the opinion that they will be found in harmony with those of some who are given to leading and speaking from the Opposition side of both Houses of Parliament. My picture shall be a plain and unvarnished one, and shall at all events have the merit of free, though I trust not unfaithful, delineation. Should it turn out that I am not a Tory—not a Conservative—not a Constitutionalist—I cannot help it. The fault must be in the principles, not in the person. I wish to be a Conservative, and if I am not, I am nothing. I shall confine myself in the present paper chiefly to Mr. Disraeli.

Enter, then, Mr. Disraeli! Enter the ex-Premier, Sir Robert Peel's vigorous enemy, Mr. Bright's "mountebank," Mr. Gladstone's successful rival, Lord Derby's confidential friend for more than twenty years. Enter the *litterateur*, novelist, philosopher, political dreamer, and still leader of the Conservative party.

When a member takes his seat in the House of Commons for the first time, who has not seen much of political society—and there are more of this class than electors imagine—the first person he is likely to wish to have pointed out to him is Mr. Disraeli.

There is a peculiar fascination about the name, antecedents, history, character, and general reputation, of the man. Of all political leaders of the last thirty years, his face and figure are the least popularly known. He has never been the idol of the multitude, or sought their acquaintance or applause. He is a shrewd man, and knows that, if he had tried to do so, he never would have succeeded. One of the proudest days of his life must have been the day when he entered the House as Prime Minister in March, 1868. I recollect it well: the circumstances must be stamped upon the memory of every one who was present: it was the night Mr. Disraeli promised the Conservatives "a liberal policy—a truly liberal policy"; and strangely enough it was the same day that the youthful Marquis of Lorne took the oaths and his seat. It was a dramatic performance, and every member of the House of Commons felt it to be so. He made his appearance by the door below the Speaker's Gallery—an unusual door for him to enter by. Those inside the House heard a burst of cheers outside which preceded him, and his entrance was met with sympathetic acclamations of welcome from his own supporters, and half-hearted cheering from the Liberal side.

His mind has never been in harmony with the characteristics of English character. Nobody likes being looked down upon, and English politicians have had an idea that Mr. Disraeli possesses greater and deeper political knowledge and insight than any other member of the House of Commons. He has baffled his opponents by the artifices of a character which they have been unable to comprehend, and dazzled his followers by cleverly winning unexpected victories. Reticent, watchful, and subtle, he has lacked that air of sincerity, straightforwardness, and singleness of purpose, which gain English respect and confidence.

Versatile, clever, and industrious, he has by turns astonished the country, as novelist, orator, and successful politician, without being able to remove the impression that, while winning his way, he was perpetrating a good joke upon a credulous people, and wearing a stolid and hard countenance which ill-concealed an inward grin of contemptuous laughter.

One day, during the Session of 1868, I was walking down to the House of Commons with a friend from the country, and as we approached Parliament Street I observed Mr. Disraeli in front of us, making his way also to the House. My friend, who was quite a provincial man, well-to-do in the world, but ignorant of political men beyond what he read of them in his local newspaper, was delighted when I pointed out to him the Premier.

But no sooner had I communicated the fact, than our conversation, which had before been somewhat animated, suddenly stopped, and my companion seemed wrapt in deep thought. He kept his eye fixed upon Mr. Disraeli, regarding him most attentively. His back being towards us I could only remark—what, indeed, I had remarked often before—the shining brightness of his black curly hair; his long overcoat, of a reddish brown colour, reaching below his knee; his hat rather below than above the usual height; and his boots, as usual, scrupulously neat and bright.

"Do you really mean to tell me that that is the Prime Minister?" said my friend. "Certainly," replied I; "but what should make you doubt my assertion?" "Oh! nothing—nothing," said he; "but do you hold any money in Government Stock?" "Not a farthing," replied I, regretfully; "but why do you ask the question?" "Because," answered he, "if that is really the Prime Minister of England, I intend to go into the City to-morrow morning, and sell out every shilling I hold."

My friend was a sincere and earnest man, and I believe did it.

Somehow Englishmen have never yet been able to give their confidence to any one who bears the unmistakeable traces of Jewish origin. This fact, and this alone, is at the bottom of much, if not all, of the criticism, jealousy, envy, and evilspeaking, which Mr. Disraeli in his long, arduous, and distinguished career has had to submit to.

While his achievements will form one of the most interesting pages in English history, our prejudices have denied him the praise and place in our esteem which his splendid talents have won for him.

Had he been of British descent, like his lifelong rival, Mr. Gladstone, everything would have been forgiven him. We should all have been proud of the man who without connection, without wealth—the god of British worship—without the factitious aid of family influence, carved his way to power and fame in the most difficult arena in the world. We should all have spoken admiringly of him who raised himself by industry and genius from being the timid member for Maidstone, who stammered in his first speech, to be one of the foremost orators of our time, the leader of a powerful party, and Prime Minister of England. It is said there is nothing so successful as success; but if any one wishes to depreciate Mr. Disraeli by the cynicism of this remark, let him enter the House of Commons, and see for himself there the difficulties with which a man beginning life, as Mr. Disraeli did, must have to contend. The greatest learning, the most extensive knowledge, the highest standard of oratory, are there, as they are nowhere else in the world, in the highest perfection; and he who enters the lists, and bears away the palm, must, indeed, have abilities which the proudest monarch might well envy. Mr. Disraeli's name will live in the history of England when many of the dukes, and marquises, and earls, who have sneered at him, will have their only records in the muniment-rooms of their mansions. That a man who has taken so prominent a part in all the important legislative measures which have become law, during the last thirty years, should always have been right, is to expect an impossibility. Let us do him justice in what has been commendable, but let us also confess that his leadership has been a failure—a palpable political blunder.

Why is the Conservative party at present in such sorry plight? Who is responsible for its being in a minority of 126 in the House of Commons? Who has wasted its strength, damaged its prospects, and frittered away its reputation? What cause or combination of causes, what man or association of men, stands accountable for the humiliating position which this once proud party now holds in the estimation of the country?

Is the disaster to be traced to the unfortunate influence and leadership of one man guiding his followers in crooked courses; or is it that the leader has been only the slave of a mistaken and bucolic party? Have philosophic, air-drawn, political ideas been its ruin, or have these only been adopted to suit a party which had no politics at all? Has the leader, "born in a library," (he was not, like Horace, "cradled in the huts where poor men lie,") been unfit for the council, and is it to him Conservatives are indebted for their degradation?

The decline of an Emperor, or of a private person of eminence, or the downfall of a nation, is always a sad and depressing spectacle;—we know that the laws of morals are as unalterable as the laws of nature, and that a course of deception, infamy and treachery, is as certain to lead at last to loss of position, influence and respect, as that summer shall follow spring, or autumn precede winter. There may be fluctuations in political thought; the voice of the majority is not always the voice of right; there may be changes in the position of parties from the Treasury Bench to the cold shade of Opposition; but these are changes not necessarily involving loss of character or self-respect. On the contrary, they rather prove the possession of them. The decline, which is to be regretted, is when a long career of success, founded upon an upright and honourable course of conduct, has been suddenly abandoned for some silly temporary advantage, obtained at the cost of consistency, and truth, and honour. Is it such a decline as this which has visited the Conservative party, or is it only that in this hurrying and bustling age the ancient landmarks are being trodden under foot, and that those who guarded and upheld them are for the time despised and rejected of men?

The question is not without importance, however feebly it may be answered. I propose to carry back the inquiry to the termination of the ministry of Lord Liverpool in 1827, and to trace by hurried steps the gradual decline in power of the Tory party, which has culminated in the leadership of Mr. Disraeli.* This date may be taken as a convenient starting-point; first, because it was the end of Tory ascendancy which had subsisted for the previous sixty years, and has never since been recovered; and second, because the changes created by the new development of social life which followed, began in that year. Liberalism, which took its rise in French ideas, and acquired some practical consistency in the Revolutionary period between 1789 and 1815, had then begun to affect the English mind. The success of Republicanism in America, which followed the incompetent and mistaken policy of Tory statesmen, and led to the severance of the political connection between the two countries, gave new life and vigour to doctrines which had only been regarded as crude and impracticable socialist theories. The calm which followed Waterloo, and the conviction that a peace had been made which must subsist for many years, gradually withdrew men's minds from foreign affairs, always the chief bulwark of Conservative policy, and the tax-paying public looked for the amelioration of their own distressed lot, in retrenchment and domestic reform. The energies, which had been exerted in the great conflict with France, were now to be directed to the development of manufacturing industry and mechanical invention. The men who conducted the foreign policy of England with vigour and success, were now to give way to a new school of politicians representing home wants and home legislation.

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* A writer of great power and experience has carried back this inquiry to a remoter date, and brought into the controversy Mr. Pitt's Reform Bill of 1786, and Mr. Gray's of 1793 and 1797. It is sufficient, however, for the purpose I have in view, to confine my retrospect to the period which has elapsed since 1827.

The first railway in England was opened for traffic in 1827; the electric telegraph came into operation in 1836; in the same year the reduction of the newspaper duty from fourpence to one penny came into effect; in 1838 the *British Queen*, intended to carry goods and passengers to New York, and only 275 feet in length and 1,860 tons register, was the largest vessel in the world; and in 1840 the penny postage was adopted.

The domestic revolution which these innovations have effected is almost inconceivable, and that they were bound to affect the legislation of the country to a remarkable extent was certain. These were days of sudden, agitating, and tumultuous changes, and, in view of them, it was evident that the relations between classes in the State and theories based upon a past which had no reference to the present, must have to submit to reconsideration. Rapid interchange of thought and communication, and an increasing daily literature, dispelled many political illusions, and the people demanded the redress of palpable wrongs.

The Tory party failed in discerning the signs of the times. In place of guiding and controlling the new current of political thought, they were content to sit still, and oppose and repress it. Instead of sailing cautiously with the stream, they resolved to resist it. Vain, weak, and unstatesmanlike endeavour! The torrent roared, and they did buffet it with lusty sinews; but never could they reach the point proposed—the world would not stand still to please a political party!

The Whigs seized the opportunity, caught the popular tone, anticipated legislation, and have never lost the advantage which they then obtained. The new creed which came into vogue suited the wants of the times, and as it was adopted by earnest and, on the whole, honest men, it could not be otherwise than successful. One of the first statesman to adopt the new order of thought, and who has consistently maintained it ever since, Earl Russell, sums up the dogmas of the new Whigs, about this time, very briefly in his published "Speeches and Dispatches."

1st. Not to interfere in the internal Government of other countries.

2nd. To make peace with our American colonies, by acknowledging their independence, and to satisfy the people of Ireland by conceding their demand of political equality.

3rd. To promote religious liberty, and to remove the political disabilities affecting Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics.

4th. To favour Parliamentary Reform and the liberty of the press.

This short programme was gradually increased as position after position was gained—its prominent achievements have been Catholic Emancipation in 1829; the Reform Bill of 1832; the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts; the abolition of the Corn-Laws; Free-Trade; the Reform Bill of 1866, which led to Mr. Disraeli's Bill of 1867, and the recent Irish Church and Land Bills. Now, the programme consists of the Ballot, University Tests Abolition; and if Radicalism is triumphant, in about ten years it will be the disestablishment of the Churches of England and Scotland—the shelving of the House of Lords, and shortly afterwards the Republic which Mr. Gladstone is doing his utmost to hasten and inaugurate.

From the day Earl Russell's creed was adopted by Whig statesmen, the reign of Toryism was doomed, so far as any power remained to them to direct domestic legislation. The new direction of thought and conditions of society which have sprung up within the last half-century, have been unsuited to the Conservative temperament. The Tory aristocracy and county families would not condescend to coalesce with the vulgarities of borough manufacturers and successful merchants. Land, title, and descent, despised cloth and tape, and people who had no grandfathers, as pig-iron now looks down upon tenpenny nails. But unfortunately the cloth and tape and tenpenny nails were to become the masters of the situation, and the men of land and title and descent had at last to hobnob with them to prevent their utter destruction. Aristocratic exclusiveness was to be trenched upon by middle-class energy and ambition—the product of the Reform Bill of 1832—and the struggle has been decided in favour of the latter. The battle has been long, and the contention severe; but gradually the reins of power have been loosened in the hands of the possessors of the land, and transferred to the hands of the industrial classes. Mr. Disraeli's Reform Bill of 1867 completed the operation. The party which had its power established upon the solid foundations of Monarchy, Church and Land, with all their varied and interwoven ramifications, has had to succumb to a firm phalanx of resolute men, deriving their strength only from the people bent upon the removal of political disabilities, and determined to promote legislation calculated to benefit the many, even at the risk of sacrificing the few.

The beginning of this great struggle for supremacy between Whigs and Tories only became marked when Mr. Canning formed his administration on the death of Lord Liverpool, and after his own mind had passed through almost every phase of political tergiversation. His ministry lasted but a few short months, and ended with his death. However much the Whigs may be grateful to Fox, it was Canning's talent, forethought and eloquence, that shaped their principles, and infused into their minds that belief in their soundness which ultimately took possession of them. It was really not till then that Whig and Tory defined distinct political principles. Government, whether carried on by the one party or the other, had been a mere contest between two aristocratic and powerful factions—Tories often adopting and encouraging reforms, and Whigs opposing and hindering them, though the Whigs generally supported and represented the democratic side, and Tories the kingly and ecclesiastical power. By both sides the people were regarded only as useful payers of taxes; while the ministries who ruled scorned to receive within their charmed circle any one blessed by a beneficent providence with anything less attached to his name than Earl, Marquis, or Duke. Political wisdom—political knowledge and fitness to rule—political Cabinet pretensions were only in harmony with the peerage.

There was little thought when Canning entered Parliament, a Tory of Tories, of Parliamentary Reform. The class which the commerce of the past half-century has called into existence was then a mere cypher, and had no voice in political affairs, except through a Parliament which could only be entered by corruption or aristocratic connection or influence. The great maritime owners and manufacturers of England, acquiring large profits and calling into being a new race of workmen, tutors, artists, writers, painters and thinkers, were then of small importance compared with the astounding magnitude which they have since reached. When the England even of fifty years ago was spoken of, it was its territorial lords and ancient lineages which society praised and regarded as the chief support of its greatness. Now, our boast is that England's ships visit every navigable sea, and that England's manufactures are sought and bought in every civilised market.

The aristocratic few have lost their power; they are almost altogether ornamental, and have come to be regarded as the fifth wheel in the cart. Of the seventy millions of taxation raised annually, sixty-five millions are contributed by the middle and industrial classes. Toryism, as represented by its aristocratic pretensions, has been senseless and absurd, and has done its best to make itself contemptible. At this very date—assuming a change of Government were to take place, and Conservatives were to take office—how many men now on that side of the two Houses of Parliament who are not Dukes, Earls, or big landowners, would become members of the Administration ? I venture to say not one. We should have the Malmesburys, and the Buckinghams, and the Montroses, and the Marlboroughs, and the Devons, and the Abercorns over again.

Sir Henry Bulwer describes in excellent language the situation of affairs at the time Canning became Prime Minister.

" Mr. Canning was a renegade for quitting his old political friends to join the Whigs ; the Whigs were renegades for abandoning their old political principles to join Mr. Canning. Party rancour had not the candour to acknowledge that, if the opinions of Mr. Canning on Catholic emancipation were sufficient to alienate from him the great bulk of the Conservatives, it was natural that those opinions should attach to him the great bulk of the Liberals. To the attacks of his own party, which he called 'the barking of his own turnspits,' Mr. Canning was sufficiently indifferent; but there was one voice lifted up against him, the irony of which pierced his proud heart deeply. Alone and stately, Lord Grey, who had long considered himself the great Whig leader, now stood stripped of his followers, and with little disposition to acknowledge the ascendancy of another chieftain. Contempt was the terrible weapon with which he assailed his brilliant rival, whom—from the height of a great aristocratic position, and a long, consistent, public career—he affected to look down upon as a sort of political adventurer; now carrying out measures the most oppressive to the civil liberties of the people; now spouting Liberal phrases which he had no intention to realise; now advocating the claims of the Catholics in glowing words; now abandoning them, when called upon for practical deeds; and, finally, dressing himself up in borrowed plumes, and strutting before the public as the author of a foreign policy, the errors of which he cast off upon his colleagues, the merits of which—with equal meanness and unfairness—he took wholly to himself.

"If all that Lord Grey said could have been completely justified (which it could not); if all that Lord Grey said, I repeat, had been entirely just (which it was not), the speech which contained it would still have been ill-timed and impolitic. Mr. Canning represented, at that moment, those liberal ideas which the public were prepared to entertain. He was encircled by the general popular sympathy, and was therefore, in his day, and at the hour I am speaking of, the natural head of the Liberal party. The great necessity of the moment was to save that party from defeat, and give it an advanced position, from which it might march further forward in the natural course of events. If Mr. Canning's party had not obtained power, Lord Grey would never have had a party capable of inheriting it. If Mr. Canning had not become Prime Minister, when he did, Lord Grey would not have become Prime Minister three years afterwards.

"The public, with that plain common sense which distinguishes most of its judgments, made allowances for the haughty nobleman's anger, but condemned its exhibition."

With even more power and effect, he thus describes the last days of that distinguished statesman :—

"On the 2nd of July, 1827, Parliament had been prorogued; on the 6th, the triple alliance was signed. This celebrated treaty was the last act of Mr. Canning's official life. The fatigues of the Session, short though it had been, had brought him near the goal to which the enterprising mind and assiduous labours of our most eminent men have too often prematurely conducted them. Of a susceptibility which the slightest word of good or evil keenly affected, and of that sanguine and untiring temperament which would never suffer him to repose during circumstances in which he thought his personal honour, his public opinions, and the welfare of his political friends required his exertions; tortured by every sneer, irritated by every affront, ready for every toil; in the last few months in which he had risen to the heights of power and ambition—such are human objects—was concentrated an age of anxiety, suffering, and endurance. His countenance became more haggard, his step more feeble, and his eye more languid. Yet at this moment, jaded, restless, and weary, he held, in the opinion of the world, as high and enviable a position as any public man ever enjoyed. All his plans had succeeded; all his enemies had been overthrown. By the people of England he was cherished as a favourite child; on the Continent he was beloved as the tutelary guardian of liberal principles, and respected as the peaceful and fortunate arbiter between conflicting interests. Abroad, one of the most formidable alliances ever united against England had been silently defeated by his efforts. At home, the most powerful coalition that a haughty aristocracy could form against himself had been successfully defied by his eloquence and good fortune. The foes of Don Miguel, in Portugal; the enemies of the Inquisition, in Spain; the fervent watchers after that dawn of civilisation, which now opened on the vast empires of the New World, and which promised again to shine upon the region it most favoured in ancient times; the American patriot; the Greek freedman; and, last of all, though not the least interested (whether we consider the wrongs he had endured, the rights to which he was justly born, the links which should have joined him to, and the injustice which had severed him from, the national prosperity of Great Britain)—last of all, the Irish Catholic, dwelt fondly and anxiously on the breath of the aspiring statesman at the head of affairs. His health was too precious, indeed, for any one to believe it in danger.

"The wound, notwithstanding, was given, which no medicine had the power to cure. On the 1st of August the Prime Minister gave a diplomatic dinner; on the 3rd he was seized with those symptoms which betokened a fatal crisis to be at hand."

The policy struck out by Canning has been followed up since 1827 to 1870 by statesmen, some of whom are still living. Catholic Emancipation, the Reform Bill of 1832, the abolition of the Corn Laws, the admission of the Jews to Parliament, and latterly the Irish Church and Land Bills, were partly, and some almost wholly, the workmanship of Earl Russell, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Bright.

Brief intervals of Conservative administration have occurred between these two dates, but they have only resulted in Liberal opinions becoming more firmly rooted, and Liberal measures being more easily passed. The Conservative party since 1827 has only sought to regain its position by a series of sudden surrenders of its principles, not one of which has been successful, but every one of which has been humiliating.

In 1828 Mr. Peel declared in favour of a policy of conciliation towards Ireland, which he resolved only the year before he would never submit to, and publicly stated he would not merely resist, but would never consent to serve under any Prime Minister who countenanced it.

Again did Sir Robert Peel desert his party in 1845 on the question of the Corn Laws, and a small body, calling themselves by his name, from this time formed themselves into a debating clique, ready to take advantage of either Whig or Tory division as circumstances might arise. Mr. Gladstone is the product of this division, and his political tergiversation since is one of the results of the indecision and superficiality of character which characterised him at this time.

Mr. Disraeli's conduct in 1867 with his Household Suffrage Reform Bill is a lamentable instance of the same sort of policy, and will be referred to shortly. Suffice it at this point to say that, by adroitness, skilful combination, and questionable morality (Mr. Disraeli is a great advocate and admirer of astute diplomacy), occasional triumphs have been secured, and the Government has passed into Tory hands, but the occasions have been in themselves trivial. Conservatives have only been permitted to remain in office until Whigs and Radicals had made up their differences. Sometimes it was that the Radicals wanted to go too far or too fast for their Whig friends, or at another time that Whig ideas were too Conservative for Radical enthusiasm; but in either case the combination of both of these sections has secured almost a monopoly of power.

Never since 1827 has the Conservative party had a secure established hold of popular political sentiment.

The chief blame—if it is right to blame any member of a party where all have been guilty—rests mainly upon the late Earl of Derby. His influence, abilities, and eloquence have been the greatest hindrances to Conservative progress and power which possibly could have been created.

The idol of the aristocracy, the refined scholar, the powerful orator, the model English gentleman, sportsman, and landlord, he held the Tory party spellbound, and they had but to follow whither his erratic political judgment led. He could not divest himself of the idea that the English Constitution was a machine perfect in all its parts, suited to the wants of any age, and incapable of any amendment or improvement. He led the party by the influence of his character and social position irrespective of their opinions, and they were content to be his humble followers, regardless of any opinions whatever.

The counties did not like to see the towns rising into importance, and they wanted a leader who could define sharply the difference between squirearchy on the one hand, and trading pursuits on the other. Lord Derby was the man, and he did it. Mr. Disraeli furnished the philosophic formula for the operation, and handed it to his chief, who used it in eloquent perorations as occasion required, and everybody was pleased—the party was titillated, and its vanity gratified. This was not accomplished by obtruding these sentiments upon popular attention, but by Lord Derby himself being a living witness and example of his beliefs.

From the time he parted from the Whigs on the question of Lord Melbourne's project for reducing the Irish Church Establishment, he ceased to be a statesman, and became the leader merely of a party of reaction.

Mr. Disraeli acted as his lieutenant. In one of his novels he has described the necessity of a young man of ability allying himself with a powerful nobleman, and he showed his confidence in his own advice by acting upon it himself.

The time, however, came when Mr. Disraeli felt free to attempt a little statesmanship on his own account. The fall of Lord John Russell's Administration in June, 1866, at a time when physical infirmity had so overpowered Lord Derby, as to prevent his being leader, though he assumed the Premiership, Mr. Disraeli tried to establish his party in power by completely repudiating the opinions upon the faith of which every Conservative member had been elected. His Reform Bill, in one word, is a monument of immorality—a cause of shame and disgust—to every man who opposed, as Mr. Disraeli and all other Conservatives did, the Reform Bill offered by the Whigs and Radicals in 1866. It is needless to characterise it. The common sense and common honesty of every rightminded man has placed that transaction in its true place in the annals of inconsistency and shameful treachery. As Mr. Forster truly observed in his speech at Bradford, on 18th Sept., 1867: "Mr. Disraeli exhausted the Radicalism of his Conservative followers."

Mr. Disraeli's policy was disowned by the conscientious members of his party, and has roused feelings of insult, discontent, and indignation which are yet unallayed. Is it not surprising that he is still our leader?

The circumstances of political life are constantly changing. The average duration of a ministry may be reckoned as five years—the longest administration during the present century lasted from 1812 to 1827, a period of fifteen years. The Conservative party is still the largest and most compact opposed to the Radicals. The Whigs, who hate their pretensions as much as Tories, only hate them a little less because they are not so strong. The probability is, that before long, and at an earlier date than some imagine, a change of Government will be demanded by the country.

What prospect has the Conservative party, as at present constituted, of retaining power, even if it were offered them? and what is the policy which it ought to adopt? Is it always to remain an obstructive opposition, a reactionary instrument; or is it to be a party maintaining a policy, and claiming power upon a clearly understood basis?

Let it at once be admitted that power cannot be accepted while the party adheres to its present state of inactivity and indifference; or while its numbers are so monstrously diminished. We have had enough of carrying on a Government in a minority. We have seen and deplored what that has led to.

How then is power to be regained, and from whence are the elements of permanent strength to be derived? This is the question which now absorbs Conservative interest.

The English nation is not yet prepared for Radicalism; nor do the Whigs seem willing to follow into the revolutionary abyss which Radicals have opened up for them. The Reform Bill of 1832 broke down the aristocratic monopoly of place and power, and transferred it for the most part into the hands of the middle classes. Notwithstanding all that has been said regarding the Reform Bill of 1867, it is still the upper and middle classes who rule and govern, and who are likely to do so till the end of this century. The real Conservative party should make its advances to this middle class, whose increasing wealth and intelligence make them the barrier between aristocratic arbitrariness on the one hand, and Radical assumption on the other. But the *old* style of Tories—now happily an effete and almost defunct race—have always looked down upon mere traders, and manufacturers, and intelligent working men. The consequence has been that the whole of that body, except in some special instances, has in fact made a party by itself, which has shunted many even of their Whig aristocratic friends, not merely out of place in Parliament, but in the Liberal Administration. This class will become more opposed to Socialism and Radicalism in proportion as working men's candidates and ignorant pretenders of all sorts claim greater power and influence, and in proportion also as its own position improves and its wealth increases.

How is this class to be gained—its interests conserved, and its just influence maintained? Radicals they are not; Tories they will never be. But the party who obtains their confidence will command attention and demand power. The Whigs truly are "dished," and are only powerful so long as they are Radical.

What statesman is to combine and re-form these scattered sections and weld them into one homogeneous, powerful party?

Mr. Gladstone's tenure of office is not likely to be a long one. Even his devoted admirers in the press, who have familiarly styled him the "People's William," are beginning to throw him overboard. The indiscreet *Edinburgh* reviewer has piped "Happy, happy England" to a tune to which the people will not dance. The "Retrenchment and Economy" folly has been ridden absolutely to the death. Mr. Gladstone has proved himself incapable, by nature and temperament, to lead England through a perilous crisis.

But who is to succeed him? Is Mr. Disraeli again to claim the Premiership? I hope there is but one answer to the question—emphatically and indignantly "No!"

Mr. Disraeli ought to accept the usual reward of worn-out Prime Ministers, and be content to enjoy political repose in the supreme serenity of the House of Lords.

It is clear to my humble judgment that it is in the power of a statesman—if such there be—to construct a party, Constitutional or Moderate, or whatever it may be called, which shall be at once a protest against revolution, and yet a party of political progress; a party which shall raise its hand against fundamental changes in the Constitution, but which shall be in harmony with the thought and intelligence of the present day. The Radical faction is only powerful in proportion as it is helped by Whig support. There are Whigs and Whigs, Liberals and Liberals, as there are Tories and Tories. It is for the prudent and sensible of these various sections to merge their differences into one common creed, a creed which shall be the safeguard of English institutions, institutions which have guaranteed the greatest amount of individual liberty any nation ever enjoyed; which have ensured the greatest material prosperity ever attained by any State, and which have placed the country we all love and are proud of at the head of civilisation.

This is the hour! Where is the man?

No. IV.—DO YOU WISH TO OBTAIN A SEAT IN THE HOUSE?

> "Sometimes the truth in fiction we disguise—
> Sometimes present her naked to the eyes."

A SEAT in the House of Commons! M.P. attached to your name, an honoured guest in your borough or county, an important personage at public meetings, a political unit in the greatest legislative assembly in the world. This is justly counted a great thing. And why so? Because, as a general rule, the members returned to Parliament are really the best and fittest men of the Boroughs or Counties who return them; because the House of Commons, whatever its demerits otherwise may be, is an association of gentlemen, where the suspicion of accepting pecuniary consideration in exchange for a vote would be sufficient to send the suspected one to Coventry for life; and again, because the country has pride and confidence in its Parliament, and is willing to accord consideration to its members. Its Cabinet Ministers are not Stock Exchange gamblers, nor its members the representatives of special class or trade interests. The nation is deeply interested in maintaining a high standard of character in its representatives, and even still more interested in contriving proper political machinery for guaranteeing that only the worthiest shall be elected.

It was a melancholy duty for members when they had to sit in judgment upon some newly-elected member who had obtained his seat in Parliament by scattering his sovereigns like chaff over a borough. But it is still more depressing to the thoughtful and intelligent in the country to have to read the revelations which are extracted from witnesses when an election petition is tried, and the truth elicited by the sharp and piercing cross-examinations of Queen's Counsel and Sergeants-at-law.

A member taking his seat, with his conscience dulled by pledges and promises he never intends to keep; his self-respect annihilated by rowdy meetings, canvassing and canvassers, placard-bearers and pot-house orgies; and his hands defiled by treating, bribery, and corruption,—what benefit can such a man be to his country, and in what sense can he be regarded as the "honourable member" for his dishonourable borough?

It would be worth while to try the experiment of the ballot, if it were only to discover how many men have obtained seats in the House by intrigue, local prejudice, connection, or patronage, expert agency, and other improper means. The common sense of the electors, it strikes me, would rarely fail to put the right man in the right place, providing the ballot can ever be conducted with absolute secrecy, which most of us very much doubt.

With all our integrity and highmindedness, what member of Parliament is there who saunters through the lobby of the House—the admired and envied of the *gobemouches* who flock round the door—but does not occasionally reflect upon the wretched means by which he acquired the right to strut there, and find a blush of shame upon his cheek.

I presume there is no Englishman of the better classes, of full age and not incapacitated by crime—or mental infirmity, as Mr. Gladstone would say—who would not desire a seat in the House. To enter by that sacred door on the left-hand side of Westminster Hall, unchallenged by the watchful policeman, has been the cherished determination of many an ambitious mind. What Eton, or Harrow, or Westminster boy, who has been told the traditions of his school, has not burned to emulate the splendid success of some of his predecessors? What University graduate in any of the three kingdoms has not indulged the aspiration that some day his name would be distinguished in the House as the rival of Curran or Plunkett, Campbell or Brougham, Gladstone or Derby? But those who enter on a Parliamentary contest had better count the cost. Do you want weary fatigue, impaired health, disappointed expectations, self-confidence shaken, and personal opinion overwhelmed, then turn your thoughts to the House of Commons. Those who feel tempted to gratify their ambition ought to give full weight and consideration to the advice which *Punch* gave to people about to marry—*don't.*

After all the number of members of Parliament is limited. It might conveniently be considerably reduced, and there are hundreds, if not thousands, who would like a seat who must remain without one. Some people seem exceedingly unlucky, and have to fight and fight again to get a seat, while others are returned in a canter at their first contest. For a long time one could scarcely see a new election without the name of Mr. Staveley Hill, appearing as a candidate. I really wonder how often he tried and failed before he succeeded. But if luck has anything to do with it, what must be said of Mr. Gladstone and his tremendous efforts to obtain a seat for his native county at the last election? Did ever man spout and stump so much before? did ever man determine more resolutely to compass his desire? and yet he had to fall back upon the judicious forethought of a sensible Alderman, who had more practical sense, if he had less shining talents, than the Prime Minister who was to become his colleague.

Mr. Odger has not yet been able to get a seat; and has he not fought and struggled bravely? Poor man! were he in the House to-morrow, he would find himself out of place, and he may rest assured he would not be happy there. A few of the Radicals of the Dilke-Hughes-Fawcett-Holms' class would smile upon him, be polite to him, encourage him, and bow to him for perhaps the first three months; but after that, Mr. Odger, you would be a neglected man—very likely a forgotten one. You might essay a speech and be successful, common politeness and the novelty of your position would cause the House to overlook your faults of manner and mistakes in grammar; but take my word for it, you would not enjoy your situation or appreciate its advantages. You are far more powerful, far more in your place, outside. Your day will come; don't be in a hurry, but don't spend your strength endeavouring to force a position which cannot be forced with success. The House of Commons is not yet ripe for you.

It has occurred to me that I may be able to give a few hints to aspirants for Parliamentary honours, which may be useful to them.

"Remember this," says Franklin, "they that will not be counselled cannot be helped. If you do not hear reason she will rap your knuckles."

In the preceding paper I was obliged to admit, in order to enforce my argument, that I am a Conservative, and the same admission is necessary here. My first experience of Parliamentary contests arose in this way:—

I had been of some use, it was thought, in the county where my chief interests are involved, and it was deemed proper by a few of the parties who held that opinion that I should be asked to offer myself as a candidate. I was a complete novice in electioneering, and thought it desirable to obtain the best legal assistance and advice in my power. An accommodating friend placed me in direct communication with the political agents of the Tory party. Mr. Disraeli, I knew, had always a great idea of diplomacy, and encouraged electioneering wire-pulling. It is one of those Napoleonic features of his mind which has recently attracted so much attention. Fouchés and Piétris going and coming, reporting and arranging, give employment to the intellect, and if thoroughly trustworthy command occasional success; but their connivings are no guarantee for successful government or permanent power. Having determined to obtain electioneering counsel at the fountainhead, I presented myself at the office of Mr. Spofforth. How Mr. Bright hated that man! It was enough for him to know that Mr. Spofforth pulled the Tory strings and worked the Tory constituencies for Mr. Disraeli!

Mr. Spofforth has now abdicated his functions, and although last session we saw him almost every afternoon in the lobby—the scene of many of his former triumphs—he felt himself no longer in the brisk activity of life, but rather like a man loth to throw off his boots and spurs after a long ride over a hard country.

When I presented myself to Mr. Spofforth he eyed me carefully—he had a wonderful eye, I could see, for a candidate—and gradually extracted the story of my Parliamentary hopes.

"I think you will succeed," he said; "but if you fail I can easily find you a seat. How far would you like to go?" Supposing the question to have reference to the distance I would be disposed to go from the county I had named to him, and wishing to accommodate myself as much as possible to his views, I answered, "I should have no objection to go as far as 200 miles." "Nonsense, nonsense!" said the shrewd and astute Mr. Spofforth; "I mean how far would you like to go in money?" "Not very far; would £2,000 do?" replied I, meekly. The amount was apparently satisfactory, and my name, with my history, antecedents, and price, was registered in Mr. Spofforth's little book.

Two thousand pounds for a seat in Parliament, where you get nothing for your pains but virulent criticism from your constituents, ill-health from late hours, and hard work on Committees. Yes! it is quite true, and two thousand pounds is but a trifle. Did not the Conservative member for one of the divisions of the County of Durham pay £15,000 at least for his seat, and does he not count it cheap at the money? Did not his opponent spend £8,000, and not get a seat after all?

Mr. Spofforth gave me two mottoes to fight with which pulled me through—"Faint heart never won fair lady," and "Don't spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar." I recommend both sayings to the next candidate for a vacant seat, and, if he sticks to the advice, I promise him victory.

The services of Mr. Spofforth have been dispensed with, but if it be an absolute necessity that party tactics should be conducted by clever lawyers possessing great electioneering knowledge, Mr. Spofforth's loss will be irreparable. I must confess, however, that lawyers, whips, and whip's agents, are not objects of my intensest admiration, and that I think they carry party discipline to an extent, which has done more evil than ever it has done good. Constituencies keep a sufficiently watchful eye over the members to cause them to be regular in their attendance and consistent in their votes. When a party needs these aids to Government, it has not a very strong reliance upon its principles or much confidence in popular support.

To have a man at the door of the House of Commons notching off your arrival or departure, your absence or your whereabouts, is not a very elevating sight. I must admit I feel humiliated by it, and I am certain it would not be suffered to exist did not the greed of office overcome all finer and better feelings.

What should it matter to any particular member whether I choose to come or not to come to the House, and why should I be at the call of any Prime Minister to vote whether I will or not, in order to keep him and those who hang upon his bounty in office?

Having got your seat, your difficulties have only begun.

There are four large and broad classes in the House of Commons.

1st. The brothers, sons, nephews, cousins, or remoter relatives of the House of Peers who obtain their seats by family influence, or through that superstition in English minds which still clings to and dearly loves a Lord; and the County landowners.

2nd. The merchants, bankers, coal-masters, manufacturers, &c., who get into the House by force of wealth, to obtain social distinction and importance.

3rd. The professional men—lawyers, officers of the army and navy, &c. who have spent their last sixpence to get their seat, in the expectation that it may lead to place or preferment.

4th. Younger sons of members who wish to go early into training for office.

If you belong to the first class, everything goes smoothly for you. Your introduction is easy. You have met a large number of the chief members of the House in society before you got your seat, and you enter upon easy familiarity with the chiefs of the House at once. You are a known man and immediately recognised.

The second class is not so favoured. The local merchant or banker just returned for a northern burgh, has perhaps never spoken to a member of

Parliament twice in his life, and has never spoken to a Lord at all. He goes up to the House, scarcely knowing what two members he is to get to introduce him to the Speaker; but having accomplished that feat he has exhausted the list of his Parliamentary acquaintances. There is a sweet and lively prospect for a member of Parliament!

Some of the most solitary men I have ever seen have been in the House of Commons. There is no association of men where each so swiftly finds his own level; and there are unwritten laws of relationship to each other which woe betide the man who transgresses them. On the whole, the House of Commons is not sociable. To be something or somebody of rank, wealth, or mark, is the prevailing desire of each individual member. Even amongst the Cabinet Ministers those delicate distinctions of rank are clearly marked which everybody feels and all are bound to regard.

Who would have the audacity to sit on the seat usually occupied by Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Disraeli? Or what would be thought of Mr. Ayrton were he to occupy the seat assigned to the Chancellor of the Exchequer; or of the Secretary to the Admiralty if he were to dare to take the seat of the

First Lord? Yet any democratic representative could maintain, and succeed in his contention, that there is no law placing one seat above another, or giving any one a title to a seat more than another.

Amongst the third and fourth classes there are men of some talents who have resolved to make a mark in the House. The "commercial element," as a rule, do not want place. Before they enter the House they are generally fifty or sixty years of age, their vigour is gone, and their ambition is satisfied by being able to write M.P. after their name. But many of the professional men want to rise in the world, and if you want to rise in the House of Commons you must be continually rising and making a telling speech. One of the hardest things in life is to see one of these men trying to get into notice by continually harping upon the one topic which has occupied his thoughts. The lawyer believes that a war with Russia might be avoided had some Statute of Queen Anne relative to the Woods and Forests been repealed. The choleric admiral maintains that England's influence on the continent has declined, entirely because Mr. Childers has passed a retirement scheme which prevents his going to sea again, although he is only nine and forty. The merchant holds there will be no honesty or intelligence in public departments until "purchase and sale" branches have been organised in all of them.

Some others are a thorough psychological political study—men like Mr. Newdegate, who attribute all the evil in existence to the domineering influence of the Papacy; or Mr. Whalley, who believes that the structure of political, moral, and religious life is being sapped to its foundations by the craft and cunning of the Jesuits. The House of Commons is truly a representative assembly—reflecting the folly, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness of the nation as faithfully as its intelligence.

In the House of Commons there is one thing at present certain. You must stick to your party if you have even utterly to disrespect yourself. This state of discipline has been carried much further during the last ten years than it ever was before. The truth is, that Administrations are now composed of needier men than they formerly were. Cabinet Ministers, not a few of them, now find their salaries no contemptible part of their income, and it is not considered desirable to part with place and patronage without a great struggle. We have not yet reached the point attained by our friends on the other side of the Atlantic, where it would damage your reputation morally and pecuniarily to admit you were a member of Congress, but we are certainly getting less scrupulous both as to the means of obtaining and retaining power. There are men who go into the House of Commons determined to get place and to live by it. Of course no man seeks a seat without certain pecuniary means, but there are many men who can just scrape enough money to get there who cannot remain unless they get an appointment.

It is not surprising to see a new member lost in amazement at the wonderful knowledge which some of the members possess as to forms and rules. Mr. Bouverie is an animated manual of Standing Orders, and a vigorous constitutional stickler for the rights of the Commons. Should the present Speaker be obliged, from his impaired eyesight, to retire from his position, there could be no better selection than the member for Kilmarnock.

There are two descriptions of new members in the House. Those who are struck with the immense knowledge and wonderful abilities of the leading members, and those who are disappointed at what they consider the exaggerated importance which those outside attach to the qualifications of the chief speakers. The last are generally talkative, self-confident, and half-educated men; the first are those who, knowing the difficulties of speaking well or wisely, or thinking deeply, can appreciate the results of toil and reflection. There is another class to which I will refer probably in a future paper—professional politicians. It is not every one of these who is so successful as Mr. Childers, and obtains a seat in the Cabinet, or Mr. Stansfeld and Mr. Ayrton, who get "Right Honourable" prefixed to their names.

I should like to know for certain, really for certain, what the Radical Government would have given last session to have found Mr. Ayrton ill of an ague from which he would not suffer much, but which would have confined him to his room for at least twelvemonths. Mr. Layard was very decently disposed of. Unless that gentleman had got what he wanted, there would have been little peace for a Radical Ministry. There are at present a few who are very clamorous for this or that Governorship, or this or that diplomatic post, and it will be desirable to gratify a few of them.

I could put down on a list the names of twenty members who are bidding high, fabulously high for place, but I forbear. It is a peculiarity of Mr. Gladstone's Radicals that they all think themselves quite as clever and fitted for place as himself.

He must be sorely tried by them—so is a silent member; and so will be the next new member who obtains a seat in the House.

SKETCHES

(PERSONAL AND POLITICAL)

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

By A SILENT MEMBER.

Third Series.

No. 5.—THE ADMIRALTY—Mr. CHILDERS—OUR DEFENCES.

6.—CABINET MINISTERS—PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT.

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J Lambert Woo

PREFACE.

The writer of these pages proposes to place before the public some particulars of the Interior Life of the House of Commons. The papers are designed to form a complete series of twenty, and will be published at short intervals. They are intended to point out and to correct some of the annoyances which the House inflicts upon

A Silent Member.

London, January, 1871.

SKETCHES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

No. V.—THE ADMIRALTY.—MR. CHILDERS. OUR DEFENCES.

> "Qualem commendes etiam atque, etiam adspice ne mox
> Incutiant aliena tibi peccata pudorem."

The First Lord of the Admiralty has been a very important personage during the last two years. The Navy has for a considerable time occupied a decidedly prominent place in public attention, as what department would not, presided over by two such energetic men as Mr. Childers and Mr. Baxter. Their colleagues must have been quite envious of them. Who so successful in gaining popular confidence as Mr. Childers, and so much talked about as Mr. Baxter? What department so evidently in harmony with public opinion, and so signally victorious over Tory argument and opposition? A chorus of praise from

Radical members in the House, and from the Liberal press in the country, followed each announcement that another batch of 200 men had been discharged and sent into the streets to starve, that another dockyard had been closed or sold, or that some sweeping reduction in clerks, storekeepers, or officers, had been made. Popularity is, however, proverbially transient and fleeting—

> "The crowd to restless motion still inclined
> Are clouds that rack according to the wind."

Wise men regard the full tide of popular fame as the index of error—the hoisted drum giving warning of a speedy storm.

There has certainly been less noise from the region of Whitehall lately; less boasting of economy; more modesty in administration since the loss of the *Captain;* a greater exhibition of common sense since England has been face to face with war; but in the heyday of their folly they were irresistibly vigorous, resolute, and sweeping. They used a giant's strength like a giant, disregarding every precaution which accumulated experience had found to be requisite in a large public department, and overthrowing every obstacle in their path. The situation they have brought matters to would really be laughable if it were not so grave.

The Admiralty, which is the largest shipbuilding establishment in Great Britain, has actually been eighteen months without a Chief Engineer, and six months without a Chief Constructor! Both offices are in commission, and the Admiralty itself, First Lord, Sea Lord and Store Lord, Secretary, and all the rest, have virtually put themselves in commission by the recent appointment of a committee to be presided over by Lord Dufferin. Only a few months ago they marched steadily onward in their career of retrenchment, without so much as a thought of resistance; and to do them justice they were impartial, sparing no one, from the meanest messenger to the Sovereign herself. Some months ago, when the Queen's steam-yacht was being refitted at Portsmouth, the usual cabin furniture and embellishments had of course to be provided, and the customary requisition for such articles was made to the Admiralty by the captain of the yacht, Prince Leiningen. Mr. Baxter objected. The fittings were too dear! Too much had been spent on a former occasion, and the work ought to be done economically, at any rate at the lowest market price. Prince Leiningen could not obtain the usual description of fittings under about £2,500; but Mr. Baxter asked for a specification of what was wanted, called competitors into the field, and received an offer from Messrs. Marshall and Snelgrove to do the work for between £1,800 and £1,900! Prince Leiningen was no match for a prince of economists! His Highness of Leiningen protested, and his Highness of economy retorted. The Queen had at last to be called into the controversy, and, with that good taste which the nation appreciates, her Majesty wrote, expressing her regret that the furnishings for the yacht should cost so much, and the wretched business was brought to an end. It is only fair to Mr. Childers to say that he deprecated any interference in such a matter, but Mr. Baxter was unrelenting;—he had an opportunity of crossing a radical lance with Royalty, and could not resist the pleasant temptation. The incident is but a sign of the times. The Radicalism of the present day is in its first generation. It takes, as Lord

Macaulay says, three generations to make a gentleman.

It is really amusing to observe in the House of Commons what may be called the "attitude" of the advanced Liberals towards Whig members of the Government. Mr. Cardwell is complained of as being *too gentlemanly* a man, and not willing to be sufficiently offensive to the Duke of Cambridge; Mr. Forster is, if anything, too whiggish and official; Lord Granville is sure to fall into error in foreign affairs by his invariable habit of being courteous and dignified on all occasions.

Our great admiration and talk in these days is of business men, hardworking men, energetic men. The other day, when Mr. Bright retired from the Cabinet, a Birmingham newspaper, pointing to his probable successor, said, "Ministers can scarcely be indifferent to the support of the advanced Liberals, and if they are not, we may presume that the vacant seat will be offered to Mr. Stansfeld, whose claims can scarcely be overlooked without injustice to himself and to the opinions he represents." Poor hardworking, businesslike, eccentric Mr. Stansfeld, and the opinions he represents! Mr. Stansfeld and the advanced Liberal party will have to wait. The country is not inclined their way at present. Formerly, when speaking of persons to be entrusted with the care and guidance of political affairs, we thought of educated men—men of culture and refinement—men with well-balanced minds—wise, prudent, and sagacious. We are at present handed over to the tender mercies of the energetic men—to our energetic Ayrton and Baxter and Childers. There is some consolation after all in the fact that we are a singularly volatile and changeable nation in our political likes and dislikes. The god of yesterday is the demon of to-morrow, and the popular frenzy of six months ago will be the popular fury of the next six months. No matter what the ignorance of our "energetic" men may be, it is more than made up for by their presumption. However unfit they may be to fill posts requiring special or technical knowledge, their arrogance leaves them no compunctions of conscience in accepting them. Quacks in physic and quacks in politics are remarkably alike. They substitute for proper training and skill an irrepressible impudence and unwearying audacity.

Noise and bluster somehow get their nostrums believed in,—at least for a time. They can give you an opinion in two minutes upon any technical point or scientific principle which a diligent student of the subject would hesitate to express after twelve months of careful investigation.

The other day one of the Radical members for Hackney stated, when addressing his constituents, "that Mr. Baxter had told him that if we were going to war either immediately, or *several years hence*, the result would be the same, for it was utterly impossible to make the Navy better than it was."*

Mr. Baxter and Mr. Holms do not trouble themselves about the question of high or low freeboards—ships with masts or ships without, ships for coast defence or ships of light draft for coast attack. We all listen deferentially to the oracular announcement that we are quite safe, not now only, but *for several years hence*, and we retire each night to our slumbers in peace and contentment.

Just imagine the confidence we must all feel after reading such an opinion as this given by Mr. Baxter and endorsed by Mr. Holms of Hackney. Who need now fear Prussia, or Russia, or the United States! Any plain unsophisticated man would suppose that these gentlemen were respectively Admiral Baxter and Rear-Admiral Holms, who, after taking the fleet to sea, after manœuvring the ships in every change of weather, after winning at least three successful engagements against a powerful enemy, had returned to port jubilant and victorious, to express with pride and confidence their high opinion of the squadrons under their command. Of course these gentlemen are not Admirals; they have never been to sea in their lives; they know absolutely nothing of what they have been talking about; they have been brought up to make money, one in flax, the other in woollen stuffs; but they favour us with their opinions upon naval supremacy, and there are people to be found in *Hackney* silly enough to listen to them. Mr. Holms is not yet of sufficient importance to be able to quote off-hand a Cabinet Minister, but if he had quoted Mr. Childers no sensible man would have attached any greater importance to the statement.

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* *Daily News*, 14th December, 1870.

I expressed in a former paper, in which Mr. Baxter's proceedings were commented on, my intention to revert to Mr. Childers and the Admiralty, and I must plead guilty to some satisfaction in returning to the subject. I was unwilling to do so until the Minute, then in preparation upon the loss of H.M.S. *Captain*, had been published.

Of this Minute it may simply be said, with the utmost truth and candour, that it is the greatest affront to the common sense of intelligent men which ever was penned by any Minister. It can only satisfy one man, and he, Mr. Childers. The Controller did wrong, the Chief Constructor did wrong, fearfully wrong; Messrs. Laird did wrong; the Court-martial did wrong—even dared to criticise the wisdom of Parliament upon naval matters; everybody did wrong except the responsible head, the pet patron of *Captains* and Captain Coles—Mr. Childers himself. The air of judicial investigation and decision which pervades the document involuntarily suggests a mockery or caricature of the Lord Chief Baron. With all the assumed impartiality of a Lord Chief Justice, assisted by twelve British Jurymen, "My Lords" decide the cause and award the sentence—and this too when the only person whose reputation is most concerned, who is alone directly responsible to Parliament and the country for this sad catastrophe, is the benignant distributor of justice —the high and lofty Minute-writer—Mr. Childers himself.

"My Lords"—practically Mr. Childers—sitting in judicial conclave over the finding of a Court-martial, a tribunal recognised by the laws of the country, and only subject to the veto of the Sovereign, is certainly what in "My Lords'" language would be a sight "in some respects unprecedented in character," and what I would also venture to consider, as unexampled in impertinence. A decision against the Crown in the Court of Common Pleas commented on in a "Minute" by the Lords of the Treasury, would be considered also as in some respects "unprecedented in character"! Certainly it would; and so will the "Minute" of "My Lords" of the Admiralty at the proper time, I have no doubt.

I have seen and have read many papers ordered to be presented to Parliament, but for sterling audacity commend me particularly to this one. In recent years one of the qualifications expected in Parliamentary officials is the art of estimating the weakness of their fellow-men, and being able to amuse, instruct, or befool them at will: this qualification is specially requisite when the public mind has to be soothed or cooled down—or when some awkward incident has to be explained away and the public wishes quietly ignored.

There is no personal fitness requisite in a First Lord. You do not need to know anything of science, centres of gravity or meta-centres—whether a ship built in a given way should sail like a swan or sink like a stone—you require to be able to make plausible speeches and write audacious "Minutes" after any shocking catastrophe.

The Court-martial found that the *Captain* "was built in deference to public opinion, expressed in Parliament, and through other channels, and in opposition to the views and opinions of the Controller and his department; and that the evidence all tends to show that they generally disapproved of her construction." Who then was to blame? The Court-martial left Mr. Childers no room for doubt; and there I leave the subject.

Mr. Childers's severest critic could say very little, beyond a condemnation of this Minute, and his desire to gain fame by adopting a new type of ship in defiance of his professional advisers, to his personal or political discredit. Taking the world as he finds it, he has resolved, with many disadvantages, to make the best of it. Bland and conciliatory in manner, he has constantly had an eye to what is vulgarly called the main chance, and his career furnishes one of those often-quoted examples of industry without genius, and talent without learning, obtaining one of the highest prizes of life. He began to serve the State as Commissioner of Customs in Australia in 1850—and, having by energy and ability made a name of some mark in the rather turbulent legislative assembly of Victoria, he returned to England in 1857, after having secured a pension for his services. Mr. Childers has not been a man of any pretence. He is a professional politician—his aim is office, and he likes the sweets that office brings. As things go he is as good an example as Parliament can produce of the success which attends speech-making.

I am more anxious, however, in this paper to refer again to the Admiralty in relation to our national defences than to waste space upon Mr. Childers. I have good reason to suppose that he will not wish to retain his present post next session. The question of our defences daily increases in importance, and is at present the most engrossing topic of thought and discussion.

The rude awakening which the outbreak of the French and German war has produced, has come upon this country with all the force and suddenness of a shock.

We have, within six months, witnessed the downfall of an Emperor, and the defeat of a nation, with a degree of surprise only equalled by the magnitude and completeness of the disaster. We have seen an army of 350,000 men vanquished, routed, and incarcerated; the Emperor a prisoner, the Empress an exile, the Ministers fugitives, and the whole framework of government broken into fragments. We have beheld a nation, shouting "*à Berlin! à Berlin!*" so confident in the belief of its own security from invasion as not to think such a possibility worthy of a thought, overrun by hostile troops; its villages plundered; its towns heavily mulcted, and the country laid waste. We have seen what, if it were possible, is still more astonishing, the treaties which bound nations by ties of a much vaunted morality and Christian civilisation, torn into shreds and thrown into the faces of the credulous people who were foolish enough to attach any importance to public faith and national honour. In view of these things we have begun to ask ourselves the serious question wherein lies our own security? Who are our allies, and who may be our enemies? Are we in a position to make our signatures to the treaties we have entered into respected? Are we relying merely upon a moral influence in the council of nations which even a pious king can laugh at? or are we so Radicalised, so economised, so peace-stricken a nation, that we have ceased to respect ourselves, and are content to let foreign Powers do as they please with us? Are we on terms of close friendship or cold reserve with America, and European Powers? Are there no questions unadjusted between us and other countries which war alone can ever settle? and, in the awful event of war, are we fully, thoroughly, adequately prepared? Are we deluding ourselves by an insufficient estimate of needful resources? or are we resolved to be ready, at any cost, at any sacrifice, for every emergency?

Woe betide the Ministers in that day when we shall be found unprepared! Woe to the Government which shall be in existence should ever hostile foot of foreign foe effect a landing on these shores!

We hear from Versailles that a successful invasion of England is considered not merely possible, but easy of accomplishment, requiring only a Von Moltke to plan and direct, and competent subordinates to execute. We all receive the assertion with excusable hesitation; but I confess I attach more importance to it than I do to the thread of "silver sea" theory propounded by an *Edinburgh* reviewer. While there is still time, opportunity, willingness, and means, let us look the situation fairly in the face, and let each man, to the best of his ability, assist in forming a right judgment as to our position and necessities. In dealing with this subject the present Government must feel themselves placed in a position of peculiar difficulty. Indeed, it is scarcely possible that they can approach it at all, and they cannot attempt to do so without politically stultifying themselves.

The Ministry came into office with "Retrenchment and Economy" as one of its leading cries. That cry has been placed in the foreground of their policy. To satisfy its behests, sweeping reductions in men and material have been made, stores have been reduced, workmen discharged, officers retired, sailors and marines paid off, clerks dismissed, ships dismantled, and dockyards closed and sold. We have been busy with the axe felling the root of the tree, which to us is the tree of life. These are facts—facts of which the Admiralty were proud, and of which Mr. Gladstone himself boasted; and they are now the stumbling-blocks in the way of a Radical Government being able to face a totally different national necessity. It seems to us now as if these things took place a very long time ago. We can scarcely believe that it was only the other day we were such a parsimonious, self-confident people, submitting quietly to the economical vagaries of Mr. Baxter. We give our Cabinet credit for so much forethought and sagacity—at least we used to do so; they have so many opportunities and means of ascertaining the state of affairs in foreign countries, and have so many indices of the political barometer which the public has not at its command, that we feel amazed and annoyed when we discover that their policy has reckoned upon no provision for contingencies, has foreseen no possible change in circumstances, and provided for no sudden emergencies. The shade of Lord Palmerston rises to rebuke the present condition of England. The truth is, when we look back upon Mr. Bruce's speeches in Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire in the autumn, and Mr. Gladstone's contribution to the *Edinburgh Review*, we begin to wonder whether statesmanship has not gone out of fashion in England, and been smothered in the superficial commonplaces of inordinate speech-making.

But the question of our national security must be dealt with, whether Mr. Gladstone's economical Government likes it or not; and although the country is at present in no panic—is not even seized with one of its periodical fits of extravagance (generally the result of a too rigid economy), its mind is bent upon arriving at a solution of the question whether our present defences are really adequate for our protection or not. The nation feels that there must be no doubt on the point, and that its reliance is not to be placed in this matter upon the simple *ipse dixit* of some successful politician whose glib tongue has gained him high place, but on the result of inquiries carefully carried out by men in whose opinion the country can place absolute dependence. The demand is imperative and must be met—we require security for our property and our homes at any price, and at the earliest moment.

What ought our national defences to be? I answer, first, a naval and military force, completely organised, which shall, in the opinion of competent commanders (our Trochus and Von Moltkes, if we have any), be sufficient to render this country safe from invasion; and, second, such an augmentation of that force in reserve as shall, in the event of our honour being affronted or our flag insulted, be capable of inflicting condign punishment upon the aggressor. That is the political definition of what is requisite, and which the House of Commons, I believe, will endorse. We do not wish a force with which to interfere wantonly either with the internal government or external quarrels of other nations; but we cannot disregard obligations already incurred, or forget that the actions of European Powers may imperil our colonial interests.*

Our first line of defence is our Navy, and, without doubt, it will receive immediate attention when Parliament meets. One of the greatest evils which this country has to endure, as the price of Parliamentary government is, that a department of administration so essential to our well-being as the Admiralty has to be handed over to a merely professional statesman, dependent on his success in Parliament for place and power. Such a man can never retract anything, can never admit he has been wrong: a failure, palpable and circumstantial, is to him ruin: hence he has to fence, refine, and explain away, and at all hazards appear to be consistent.

In such a position of affairs as that now threatening us, we cannot afford to be hoodwinked by the political necessities of any man or body of men. Perish Childers, Baxter, and all the economical school to which they belong, if need be; but, as a nation, we demand to be satisfied that our Navy is equal to the duties which we feel may shortly be exacted from it.

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* I have not had a naval or military training, nor has Mr. Childers or Mr. Cardwell, and I shall not attempt to say in what form or what numbers that force ought to be organised.

The Board of Admiralty, or, as they are more properly called, the "Lords Commissioners executing the office of Lord High Admiral," is an anachronism—it is worse, it is a grievous blunder in the present day. The institution of the office of Lord High Admiral of the Fleet dates as far back as the eleventh century, when the fleet was an aggregation of galleys of districts, contributed by the maritime towns. The office was filled by Edward III. when he went out in person to the siege of Calais in 1347. The British Navy may be said to date from the reign of Henry VIII., when Commissioners were appointed to manage naval affairs. These Commissioners have continued to direct the Navy ever since, except when the office of Lord High Admiral has been conferred upon a Prince of the Royal house. When Mr. Childers hoisted his flag some months ago as Lord High Admiral, he practically illustrated a joke which Sydney Smith only imputed to Lord John Russell: as a piece of bad taste it was incomparable, but as an historical act it was unjustifiable. A personal office in Commission cannot be assumed by any individual member of the Commission, whether he be the first or the last. When these Commissioners were first appointed, the fleet they had to direct consisted of one ship of 1,200 tons, two of 800 tons, and six or seven smaller—the largest was called the *Great Harry*. A stevedore in a fair way of business now in Liverpool or London would look at the duties exercised by "My Lords" then with contempt. Queen Elizabeth's fleet, which went out in 1588 to meet the Spanish Armada, consisted of twenty-eight vessels measuring about 10,000 tons, and manned by about 6,000 men.

The "My Lords" Commissioners of Admiralty, as then appointed, were splendidly adapted for the management of the tiny fleet then in existence—forming about one-fifth of the present Cunard or Inman line; but in the name of Reform, which Mr. Childers has so often invoked, what can we be thinking of, when our "My Lords" are just the same to-day as they were five hundred years ago, with this difference, that in those days a Lord High Admiral meant a real Admiral, and now it only means an office-seeker, a professional talker, a tolerable speech-maker.

Here is Mr. Childers just now in bad health struggling against every possible personal disadvantage. He entered upon his duties with an ignorance and blind self-confidence which he must now bitterly regret. He and Mr. Baxter took office with the evident conviction in their minds that all the officials, dockyard superintendents, clerks and workmen, were to be distrusted, and, as soon as possible, dismissed. Mr. Childers was to be the only one guide, lord, and autocrat, and Mr. Baxter was to be his prophet.

They carried matters with so high a hand that no man, with any degree of self-respect, could remain in office with them. Mr. Murray, the chief engineer, was objectionable—he was not an economist, he was suspected of holding too confidential an acquaintanceship with Tory politicians, and he received his *congé*. Mr. Reed's resignation, and the reasons for it, will remain a standing scandal and disgrace to the Administration.

Mr. Childers may exercise his pen in Minutes of any length, or any degree of talent he pleases, he will never explain away the fact that Mr. Reed was driven from office because he absolutely set his face against building *Captains*. With such a man as Mr. Childers at the head of affairs, you must run in the popular groove, sail in the rising politician's boat, and be useful for his advancement, to be thoroughly appreciated. Mr. Reed did not see things from this point of view, either with Mr. Childers or his predecessor, and no conscientious man, who is a true disciple of scientific truth, ever will. First rate talent and fearless ability are not thought credentials of character in a department presided over by political *parvenus*, who must distinguish themselves in order to secure further advancement.

Mr. Reed may be proud of his resignation and the causes which led to it. Such talents as his are too valuable, and too much needed in a nation like ours, to be hid under a bushel; and I venture, what I believe to be no rash prediction, when I say that Mr. Childers may yet find his own true level in Mr. Reed's presence.

The treatment of Rear-Admiral Astley Cooper Key was equally disgraceful, but, if possible, more tyrannical. What was the real reason for this treatment? It is not always that the British public is allowed to know the sober truth in these matters. The British lion is known to be occasionally rather fierce, especially when he discovers that a powerful public department uses its power to get rid of a useful public servant, whose only crime happens to be an inability to see things exactly from the point of view of his temporary superiors. Admiral Key was Admiral-Superintendent of Portsmouth Dockyard, and was not quite so eager to dispose of anchors, chains, spare gear, and other surplus stores, as his economical rulers at Whitehall.

Returns of stores were demanded with a view to a succession of sales, but the Admiral did not show that smart Dundee-like celerity in preparing them which was thought requisite by his superiors, and indeed more than hinted to them that sales of such stores were rather likely to be injurious than beneficial to the service. Conduct so ignorant and so indifferent was insupportable to the new and enlightened "purchase and sale" Secretary and First Lord, and it became a very serious question whether Admiral-Superintendents were not mistakes, and ought not immediately to be abolished. Mr. Baxter proceeded himself to Portsmouth to obtain the information he was so urgently in want of, and it is a fact that he did succeed in discovering no inconsiderable quantity of old brass, scrap iron, old rope, and unused Dundee hemp; but alas! Admiral Key did not show him that marked courtesy which the Secretary thought to be his due. Mr. Childers, when attacked in the House upon this tender topic, was glad to beat a humiliating retreat. A prolongation of the subject would not have been desirable; he promised the Admiral that he should not be a pecuniary sufferer by his removal from Portsmouth—has he kept his word?

It is a wonderful place, the House of Commons, and I can tell those who are not members, but who wish to be members, that if they are intelligent observers, and not exactly speech-making machines, their moral sense will receive a shock now and then which will astonish them. They will see things done, and hear things said by those whom they have hitherto regarded as men of high integrity, unimpeachable truth, and stainless honour, which will make their hair stand on end. The contemptible tricks sometimes resorted to are mean and degrading in the very highest degree. Party-spirit blinds apparently the purest minds. Never, surely, since the days of Walpole, was the tone of the House of Commons so low as it is at present. It has fallen indeed so low that I apprehend nothing short of some moral catastrophe can redeem it. Things get to the worst and mend.

I am not a naval man, and I do not therefore presume to say what ought to be the strength of the Navy, the type of ship, its armament, or what should be the harbour defences which this country ought to possess; but this I will say, that I have no confidence whatever in any statement which Mr. Childers may make, or Mr. Baxter may make, upon the subject. They are the very blindest leaders of the blind in such matters. Let the situation be what it may, all you hear from them is the well-known, oft-repeated phrase, "Never was the condition of the Navy more satisfactory or its efficiency more assured than it is at present." This was Mr. Childers's language before the outbreak of the French and German war,—just before two millions had to be demanded from Parliament for the economised Army and Navy! This is Mr. Childers's language now, and it was, as I have shown, Mr. Baxter's language the other day; but before we are three months older does not every one of us know that the Estimates will be considerably augmented, and that other two millions, if not more, will have to be voted to increase the number of ships and place the stores and establishments upon a safe footing? Is this a state of affairs which any great nation ought to submit to? Are we so politically blind as not to see what such a system as this must end in? In these days of ironclads, rifled ordnance, turret ships of Mr. Reed's design, and turret ships of Captain Coles's invention, ships with sails, and ships without them, it is simply discreditable to us that the First Lord of the Admiralty should be a man ignorant of technical knowledge, and only acquainted with the arts of Parliamentary warfare.

Responsibility to Parliament can be secured in fifty ways, without the perpetration of such a piece of folly as this.

I contend that public confidence in the Admiralty will not be restored until the whole service has been thoroughly reported upon—our true position as regards ships, men, and stores made known—and the Board of Admiralty itself reconstituted. Mr. Childers, I am sorry to think, is out of his place, and as for Mr. Baxter, he ought never to have been in it. I am quite sure he could give an opinion upon the *Captain's* "proper curve of stability," without any difficulty whatever, and it might be guessed to run as follows:—"The curve of stability is simply a device of Tories to cover extravagance; nothing of the kind has ever before been heard of, and it ought not to be entertained except with a view to further economy"!

Mr. Childers is an energetic man. Will he try his hand at Admiralty reform, and a really good retirement scheme, and begin with his so-called Board? and will he permit a suggestion to start with? First, dismiss Sir Spencer Robinson, next Mr. Baxter, and then consider seriously as to how he should dispose of himself. A Naval Commission ought to be appointed forthwith to restore public confidence in this department.

"My Lords!"—Lords, of no one knows whom, or what, or where—ought to disappear from sight with the wooden galleys and line-of-battle ships which were their fitting prototypes.

Such a Commission ought to be composed of the very best naval talent, and should such Commission be appointed, and its members selected for their eminent reputation and attainments, without for once (just for once) regard to political creeds, there would be some hope that the unbelief in Ministerial statements regarding the Navy would disappear, and the country would learn its necessities, and willingly endeavour to supply them. I observe that a Committee of this kind, but appointed for a special object, is to inquire into the question of naval architecture; but this appointment is merely the adroit manœuvre of a skilful politician to get over a serious difficulty. If the Admiralty officials, however, cannot give an opinion upon such a subject as the proper design of ships which the country will accept as conclusive, it shows that the Admiralty is aware that its own decisions are not respected by the country. The sooner, therefore, a change is made the better. The first duty of this Commission ought to be to make minute and searching inquiries into the number of ships—large and small, available for active service if suddenly called upon—their equipment, ordnance, commissariat, and stores. The whole of the proceedings of Mr. Baxter's "purchase and sale branch" ought to be overhauled and reported upon, and a thorough investigation made into the number of surplus ships for coast defence available, the means of manning and equipping them, and the reserves held against contingencies. Such a Commission might ultimately supersede the present Board. If it were constituted with a regard to ability only, and animated by a firm resolve to arrive at the truth, its recommendation would be respected and acted upon.

I think much mischief is done by the weight which the public attaches to merely Parliamentary utterances upon technical subjects. What should we think of Bismarck informing Moltke of the number of troops necessary to render the siege of Paris effective? The political sphere is quite of sufficient importance for any man without trenching upon a province which only skill, training, and experience can properly occupy. To politicians and statesmen we leave the great political issue of peace or war, only nominally still in the power of the Crown, but the question of our naval and military organisation should assuredly rest in professional hands. It was said many years ago of Earl Russell that he had so much confidence in his own ability that he would not think the command of the Channel Fleet too much for him; but his Lordship has endeavoured lately to show his abilities also as Commander-in-Chief. We must have 100,000 militiamen called out at once, either by force or persuasion, is Earl Russell's demand.

Lord Elcho, another experienced soldier, advocates a totally different scheme.

"A Hertfordshire Incumbent"—a spiritual soldier—tries to lead us into a maze by ringing the changes upon words, and asking us whether, if we are attacked, we mean to arm like a nation of Goliaths or monkeys. Neither, reverend Sir; we mean to arm against the possibility of invasion first, and decide our policy afterwards—perhaps we shall not then need a policy; in any case policy must always be regulated by circumstances.

Perhaps Lord Elcho is right; perhaps Earl Russell is wrong: perhaps both are right; but are these the men, eminent though they are—but not in war—who are to guide the nation in providing the proper means of defence, naval and military, for this country, and are they to gauge the necessities of England, which Trochu and Moltke have had to do for France and Germany? We have our Olliviers and our Gramonts amongst ourselves more than fully represented in our Parliamentary talkers; but in the dreadful alternative of war they generally retire into that insignificance which they ought never to have left.

How is it that in the discussion of this important subject scarcely a naval or military man has spoken out?

Simply because ignorant talkers in Parliament have crushed out of their true place the professional opinion of the country. We are far more ready as a people to listen to trash spoken by a man with M.P. after his name than any amount of truth uttered by a man who has studied with a master-mind either the rough arts and science of war, or the gentler arts and sciences of peace.

Those members of the House of Commons who formed the Abyssinian Committee, which was presided over by Mr. Candlish, will not be surprised that military men have become somewhat diffident. They will recollect with shame the questions put to Lord Napier of Magdala, and will never forget the modest demeanour of the great commander, and the graceful diction in which his answers were couched. They will recollect also Mr. Candlish!

Nevertheless, if there be a Blake or Nelson among us, unknown to and unrecognised by the Admiralty, pining as a retired captain, while Mr. Childers's private secretary gets the command of a squadron, let him take courage—he may yet be discovered in the day of our need, and be appreciated.

If there be a Von Moltke in our midst, let him come to the front! If Sir William Mansfield be he, let us clear the field for him, and give him adequate power!

No. VI.—CABINET MINISTERS.—PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT.

> "Mark by what wretched steps their glory grows,
> From dirt and seaweed as proud Venice rose."

In England we have unlimited confidence in our system of Parliamentary government. Any true-born Briton who held a doubt upon that point would scarcely be considered a safe man, and many of the advanced Radical school would think him quite fit to be sent to a lunatic asylum. Illiberality to others is a marked characteristic of professing Liberals. I have often wondered what would have been said of any member of the House of Commons, or the Reform or Conservative Clubs, who in the month of May last would have quietly predicted to his friends in the smoking-room the leading European events of the past six months,—who would have told us that the Emperor and 350,000 French soldiers would be where they are,—that the Germans would have accomplished what they have done,—and that Paris would be bombarded! We should all have smiled a smile of abject pity upon our friend, and regretted that he was showing unmistakeable symptoms of softening of the brain. Next time we met him in the smoking-room, or elsewhere, we should all have quietly cut him! But there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our day-to-day political philosophy.

If I venture in these papers, before they are completed, to hint that Members of Parliament—even Cabinet Ministers—are not always wise; that Parliamentary government is not quite perfection, and that in my humble judgment it has many defects and disadvantages which hinder the progress of legislation, and consequently retard the welfare of the community, I hope my friends will be gentle with me, and at least save me from violent hands. I may, indeed, have to go further, and maintain that government by a Parliamentary party presents many striking anomalies, more especially in administration, and that, however well adapted the system may be for quiet times and domestic purposes, it is not the best, or anything like the best, for a period of national peril.

We live in strange times, and nothing ought to surprise us. The *Times*, excusing Mr. Gladstone for not addressing his constituents, whom he has never met, although he has "represented" them for two years, is really as good a caricature of representative government as could be conceived; especially good, considering Mr. Gladstone's natural reticence of character, as so strikingly exhibited in Lancashire!

When the late Prince Consort, who was more of a statesman than our jealousies permitted us to allow, ventured to say at a great crisis that "Parliamentary institutions were on their trial," we all hooted him, mocked him, and basely derided him. That crisis, if I recollect aright, was at the time our naval and military organisation broke down so disgracefully in the Crimea, and when the condition of affairs was so deplorable that Lord John Russell could only describe it as "horrible and heartrending." We had then an attempt to start a new Parliament in Drury Lane Theatre, with Mr. Roebuck and Mr. Layard as anticipatory prototypes of M. Jules Favre and M. Gambetta. Public action then was ready to follow any course which a man of transcendent mind, had he appeared, would have counselled. There is but one step from constitutional liberty to despotic tyranny, and there is no tyranny like Republican tyranny. Fortunately for Parliamentary institutions Lord Palmerston came to the front, and, when he took the helm, confidence was restored, and we were saved from drifting no one knew whither. But had Lord Palmerston been a younger man, with some of that southern blood which runs in Gambetta's veins, or had he had the training and ambition of Napoleon, we might have had a striking example of what the Americans deprecatingly call the "one-man power," and it would not have been favourable to monarchy and representative government.

But there was a truth underlying the Prince Consort's observation which not a few thoughtful Englishmen took to heart, and which it would be well to consider at the present juncture.

What I apprehend the Prince Consort meant was, that no institution, be it Parliamentary or whatever else, can be expected to endure if its spirit and aims are not in harmony with the genius, temperament, and history of the people where it exists. Englishmen are, by nature and tradition, a high-spirited race; they have for generations been accustomed to regard themselves as a leading power in the world, and as a formidable foe in any battlefield. No important change in the map of Europe has been made for centuries without our concurrence, and no war has been commenced without appeals for our aid or moral support. We have been the friends of liberty at home, and its supporters and champions abroad; and we have been vain enough to believe that we have done something towards European freedom and civilisation. We have earned the good opinion and lived in the respect of Continental nations, and been regarded alternately with that fear which dreads an encounter, and that affection which waits upon the just and powerful.

Perhaps all this was wrong. Perhaps the policy of Cromwell, Pitt, Fox, Canning, and Palmerston was a huge blunder. Probably it would have been better if we had shut ourselves up in our little island, abstained from foreign wars and discouraged the establishment of a Colonial Empire, and stuck to our liberal domestic policy and shopkeeping, leaving other nations and peoples to do as seemed to them good.

"Happy, happy England," encircled by her "thread of silver sea," would then have presented that spectacle which some of our statesmen sigh for in the future, but look for in vain in the past. But this has not hitherto been our policy, nor, I am fain to believe, can Englishmen adopt it now.

If the exigencies of party government, and the accompanying greed of office, aid in foisting such a policy upon England, the attempt may be temporarily successful, but such a policy will not be established. We may descend to a very low level in the scale of nations before the people discover the extent and consequences of their degraded position; but that a nation with our history, character and interests, can condescend to forfeit our rank, and initiate, with our eyes open, the decline and fall of the British Empire, is a possibility which I cannot permit myself to entertain. Such a policy is the outcome of the grossest selfishness,—it is economy run mad—it is the miserliness begotten of immense riches—it is comfort and luxury feasting while the soul and spirit of the nation's life are starving. Man cannot live by bread alone; nations, if they are to occupy the front rank of civilisation, must live a higher life than self-interest, and cultivate higher aims than national exclusiveness. Nothing but the love of place and power and Cabinet appointments could induce any party to advance such a policy, and in the end it must be fatal to the party who advances it, and to England herself, should she adopt it. This love of place and power is at the root of half the mischief which has degraded England and the name of Englishmen of late years. Bribery by money in the present House of Commons certainly is a thing unheard of. Whatever it may have been in the days of Walpole—when every man had his price —it is not so now. But human nature in the concrete does not alter ; it merely changes the form and expression of its vices.

Money is too common and plentiful now to make it an object of desire to Members of Parliament ; but there are other objects no less desired than money ever was. The rich *parvenus* who have entered Parliament within the last few years crave for social distinction—some of them want place, and many wish title, and to gain these they give votes. It is quite comical to notice the public career of a thorough democrat who goes in for equality, and contempt of state and ceremony, and rank and title. No sooner does he attract any public notice in his borough or county than immediately he wishes to be made a magistrate, and, if possible, a deputy lieutenant. When he gets a seat in the House you will find his name coming in at the tail of all the fashionable assemblies he can possibly get an invitation for during the season; and if there be any public occasion where he can display a uniform, you are sure to see him there, dressed up in his paint and feathers.

But of all struggles, the struggle for a seat in the Cabinet is the most vigorous and determined. The resignation of a Ministry creates a flutter of excitement and expectation, which is quite unequalled by any other political event. All the *quidnuncs* are on the move. The Clubs are crowded, the expectant placemen are in town, and very much about town. A new round of agitation follows each announcement that the Duke of A. has refused this, Mr. B. declined that, and the Right Honourable C. accepted the other. The successful are gratified, and the disappointed vow vengeance.

It is not my intention in these papers to enter into lengthy argumentative discussions or didactic dissertations; although the extraordinary circulation of these Sketches compels me to write with greater gravity and responsibility than I at first intended. Formidable though the heading of this paper be, I shall not weary the reader either with a tedious history of the Privy Council, or the gradual process by which it evolved out of its own consciousness that peculiar combination called "The Cabinet." My object is merely to

> ". . . shoot folly as it flies,
> And catch the manners living as they rise."

Yet it is worth while to note in passing one or two things regarding the Cabinet before saying a few words upon Cabinet Ministers. As most people know, a Ministerial Cabinet has no constitutional rights or functions, and has no specific responsibility whatever. Its decisions have no legal force, no minutes of its proceedings are recorded, and it is understood that its discussions are to be kept strictly secret; but this last condition is not always fulfilled. The practice of consulting a small committee of the Privy Council was adopted in the reign of Charles II. A habit of taking counsel with one or two favourite advisers, instead of laying matters before the full body of Privy Councillors, was frequently referred to as one of the innovations made by Charles I., and was looked upon, oddly enough, as having a tendency to arbitrary government.

The words "Cabinet Council" are not to be found in any legal text-book. The institution, as the Americans would call it, grew up by stealth, and prospered on account of its evident advantages. It was obviously a better arrangement to have to confer with fifteen men than one hundred and fifty men, and the innovation gradually took root without much comment or hindrance.

But it may be asked—What can a silent member know about the Cabinet? Everybody knows that no silent member ever was invited to form one of that august and right honourable body. Silence never yet recommended itself as a qualification for obtaining a place in the charmed circle.

It is a curious thing, however, that no sooner does a man become a member of an Administration, or more particularly a Cabinet Minister, than the mantle of Silence descends upon him, and envelops him from head to foot. Office is the best cure for a blatant tongue that ever was discovered, and it is almost infallible. The laborious orator who launches his nightly philippic against a recreant Administration, and becomes fierce as a fury in his invective, finds his voice stilled and hushed when a shrewd Prime Minister discovers that he is a fitting object for the title of "Right Honourable." The laughter-moving wit sparkles no more—the trenchant faultfinder becomes mild and submissive—the continual twaddler ceases to bore and annoy his fellow-members, when the time has come when a wise Administration has seen fit to endow him with the responsibility of office.

I have said office is an *almost* infallible cure for loquacity, and I used the word *almost* advisedly. There are some souls that cannot be crushed, spirits that can never be quenched, tongues that will not be silenced; and when these weak brethren join the administrative body it is difficult work for them. If they don't answer to the curb in their mouth, they must go—sad and bitter fact—they must resign! Silence in subordinates is an imperative necessity,—leaders only dare speak, and even they must speak with bated breath, as if the springs and fountains of knowledge had dried up, or become exhausted.

A remarkable example of the restive administrator was presented to the public a short time ago. Mr. George Otto Trevelyan took office as a junior Lord of the Admiralty at £1,000 a year when Mr. Gladstone formed his Ministry. His tongue was very troublesome to him in the very act of taking office, and he had to tender his resignation after offering in his re-election speech an indiscreet and unjustifiable insult to H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge. Mr. Gladstone overlooked that error, attributing it no doubt to his youth and inexperience, and allowed him to keep his place; but still Mr. Trevelyan was difficult to keep in hand. At last of course took place, what everybody who observed him foresaw, Mr. Trevelyan broke loose, he could restrain himself no longer! Having got his neck out of the official collar he has ever since been indulging himself for his long restraint, by what he seems to like much better than either office or salary—listening to the sound of his own voice. All the pent-up eloquence of two years has been poured out upon a patient and forbearing public.

During the last three months Mr. George Otto Trevelyan has been "in hand," on the cheapest possible terms for a speech anywhere, everywhere, from Land's End to John O'Groat's. A love of notoriety, publicity, and talk, I observe, runs in families. If the name of Trevelyan is not known to every British householder, it is not the fault of the gentlemen who bear it.

But I would just make this single observation upon this noisy class, and Mr. Trevelyan may take the benefit of the remark—When you get place, stick to it, and don't run away to gratify your own vanity at the expense of your colleagues. They are likely to forget you the next time they form an Administration—and very able men can be done without, abler men even than Mr. G. O. Trevelyan now is, or ever shall be.

The demeanour of a man in the House of Commons when he has newly assumed office, and the changed appearance he presents from what he was before he got it, is really so ludicrous that I wonder we can restrain ourselves as we do from laughing in his face. If a pantomimist were to perpetrate such an abrupt change we should certainly applaud and admire his art. And it is the same thing whether the recipient of honour and office be layman or cleric.

We all remember the story told of an ambitious divine, who preached a sermon before James I. The king fell asleep, to the great vexation of the preacher, who resorted to the expedient—a common one enough—of repeating his text with marked emphasis at the close of a section of his subject. The text was, "Couldest thou not watch one hour?" The noise of the orator's hand upon the pulpit, accompanying the loud exclamation, had the desired effect. The king awoke, and felt himself so sinfully inattentive that, at the end of the service, he sent for the preacher and offered him a bishopric; the only condition his Majesty attached was, that the new bishop's first sermon should be preached before his Majesty, when he promised him he should reward him by that attention on the second occasion which he had lacked upon the first. The preacher willingly consented. The day came—the king was all attention, but the bishop, on this occasion, chose for his text, "Sleep on *now* and take your rest."

Politics presents a sphere of thought and action so captivating for its own sake, as well as for the power it places in the hands of successful men, that every quality of the human mind is brought into play to achieve distinction. Happily for the nation in the past, only very few men aspired to leading positions in the Government. Only rare talents and high mental attainments qualified a man for a place in the Cabinet when Pitt, Fox, Burke, Thurlow, Eldon, Percival, Canning, and Palmerston were the lights of their day. England owes, in my humble opinion, her high position—if that high position still exists—and her great prosperity, to the fact that this favoured nation has been presided over since 1688 by thoughtful, cultivated, and statesmanlike minds.

Granted that Parliament was corrupt, that it was not so purely representative as it is now, and that bribery and many other evils existed,—power was only entrusted to men who were cognisant of England's history, jealous of her honour, and careful of her reputation, and who had the training and the attainments to lead her successfully through every danger and difficulty. Waterloo, it is wisely said, was won at Eton. The restraints of good breeding, the discipline of exact teaching, the manly courage engendered by English sports and games, and the moral tone imparted by refined and God-fearing English mothers, gave us then, and gives us still, some splendid examples of noble minds. Now, I am sorry to think we are entering, if we have not already entered, upon an entirely new phase of affairs. Any half-educated blockhead, provided he can succeed in making noise enough, no matter what his early training may have been, thinks himself fit to be Chief Commissioner of Public Works, or Secretary to the Admiralty, or, for the matter of that, Prime Minister itself. You may as well expect to gather figs off thorns or grapes off thistles.

We are in the era of Radicalism—an upheaving of the dregs from the bottom of the political *residuum*. I am no prophet, but if that policy is carried much further than it has been lately, I am much mistaken if there be not, one of these days, an assertion of England's common sense upon the matter, which will astonish the advanced Liberal section of the community. The efforts of this party recently to obtain place and power have been so vigorous and persistent, that it must have puzzled

Mr. Gladstone sorely to resist them. Their astonishment when Lord Enfield, the other day, was appointed Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was simply ludicrous. This office was apportioned, in Radical minds, to Mr. Mundella. There could be no objection to Mr. Mundella, able and clever as he undoubtedly is, for such an office except this,—Mr. Mundella has neither the abilities, the education, the training, or the capacity, which such an appointment demands; and Mr. Gladstone, being responsible to his countrymen, could not conscientiously give him the appointment.

But then the Radical cry is,—How are we all to become Cabinet Ministers if Mr. Gladstone is to go on in this way?

> "Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence,
> And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense."

Lord Enfield preferred before *us*, whose votes secured him the Premiership! An office like this bestowed upon a Whig—an old Whig—an ultra Whig; a man, too, who lost a seat to the party at the last election by downright obstinacy! Our Radical friends, of course, make perfectly certain that Mr. Gladstone is losing his head, and forsaking those dear democratic principles which gained him Radical votes and enabled him to oust Mr. Disraeli. I am really sorry for the Radicals; and I should not wonder if they contrive to teach Mr. Gladstone a lesson before next session is over: for has he not also kept Mr. Stansfeld in the background, and left without a representative in the Cabinet those principles which Mr. Bright adorns, and his followers rigorously uphold?

It is all very well to be a Cabinet Minister—the office brings much honour, great patronage, and no end of consideration; but silent members may console themselves; if they miss distinction they avoid disgrace, and, at all events, they are free from many cares and responsibilities, and have no critics to point out the weakness of their understanding and the foolishness of their appointments. Who could conscientiously envy Mr. Bruce? Was there ever such an unmitigated mistake in any Cabinet as that man? He has proved himself weaker even than Mr. Walpole, and that was difficult.

It may be admitted that if the Prime Minister walked any morning down Parliament Street he could choose out of the first dozen men he met a more efficient Home Secretary than he has got at present.

I had intended to make a few observations upon the composition of Cabinets, and the surprising combinations which have to be formed—such a combination, for example, as Mr. Lowe and Mr. Bright have recently presented, but space forbids, and I must, if possible, return to the subject—which is scarcely yet touched.

> "Disce docendus adhuc, quæ censet amiculus, ut si
> Cæcus iter monstrare velit; tamen aspice, si quid
> Et nos, quod cures proprium fecisse, loquamur."

AN EXPLANATION.

No. IV.—DO YOU WISH TO OBTAIN A SEAT IN THE HOUSE?

Referring to a statement in the above paper, Mr. Staveley Hill, Q.C., M.P., writes to the author to state that he only contested Wolverhampton in 1860, and Coventry twice since: the remarks in the above paper applied in a general sense to persons whose names are constantly before the public in short paragraphs as probable candidates.

SKETCHES

(PERSONAL AND POLITICAL)

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

By A SILENT MEMBER.

Fourth Series.

No. 7.—KING GLADSTONE—THE PROSPECTS OF MONARCHY.

8.—THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF THE SESSION, 1871.

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PREFACE.

THE writer of these pages proposes to place before the public some particulars of the Interior Life of the House of Commons. The papers are designed to form a complete series of twenty, and will be published at short intervals. They are intended to point out and to correct some of the annoyances which the House inflicts upon

A SILENT MEMBER.

London, April, 1871.

PREFACE TO THE PEOPLE'S EDITION

OF FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD SERIES.

THE notice bestowed upon these fugitive papers has induced my Publishers to meet the demand by the publication of a People's Edition. The dissemination of these papers will be, I believe, for the public good. The practical purpose of the "Sketches," so far as they have yet appeared, was to draw public attention, before the opening of the present session of Parliament, to the disorganisation and incapacity at the Admiralty; and as a Committee of the House of Lords has been appointed to investigate the subject, and as Mr. CHILDERS and Mr. BAXTER have retired, and Sir SPENCER ROBINSON has been dismissed, the object I had in view has so far been accomplished. The future "Sketches" will, I hope, assist in producing equally salutary results in other political departments which will be discussed.

THE SILENT MEMBER.

London, April, 1871.

J Lambert Wood

SKETCHES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

No. VII.—KING GLADSTONE.—THE PROSPECTS OF MONARCHY.

"Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissur hiatu?"

The Jews have their Talmud, the Catholics their Legends of Saints, and the Turks their Sonnah. To this list Mr. Disraeli's father added "and the Protestants have their Bible." The inquiry which I propose to institute is, however, not religious, but political; and I would vary the remark only by saying that England has its creed of advanced Radicalism, and advanced Radicalism has its Dilke, its Fawcett, and its Taylor; just as France has its Rochefort, its Hugo, and its Louis Blanc. The names of our three English Republicans will undoubtedly become historical. Henceforth they will compete for notice with the three tailors of Tooley Street, or the four famous Liverpool merchants, or the five Quakers who went to St. Petersburg before the Crimean War.

These were all wise and honourable men. They all represented, or thought they did, some grand religious or constitutional principle, and the historian will not be unmindful of them: he will assign to each group its proper niche in the temple of Fame.

The great men who have founded systems, dispelled the mists and errors of false science and philosophy, or utilised the forces of nature for the benefit of mankind, have each their honoured place in our gratitude and veneration. Why should not our Taylor, our Fawcett, and our Dilke, the great exponents of Radicalism, the courageous triumvirate of anti-dowry voters, the discoverers of the arch-hypocrisy of aristocracies and royalties, be ranged by their side, and included amongst the noble benefactors of their race?

Seneca observes of gratitude that, "as it is a necessary and a glorious, so also is it an obvious, a cheap, and an easy virtue." There is no reason, therefore, why it should be stinted or measured to the three political prophets of our day. If justice is not done them now, certainly it will be hereafter. If they have to suffer ridicule and contempt at present, these are but the customary rewards which an ignorant and perverse generation has always bestowed upon its most gifted philosophers. If, contrary to promises given and received, the allies of Messrs. Dilke, Taylor, and Fawcett slunk away and left them in a miserable minority on the "Princess Louise Dowry Bill," that incident can only add hereafter to their renown. It has only been another instance of the pusillanimity of feeble-minded and insincere men, afraid to incur the odium of resistance to established usage, whether of thought or action. I sympathise with these three historical gentlemen, and consider they have been very badly treated. They hold principles which they believe to be right, and which if carried into practice, they maintain would contribute to the welfare and wellbeing of the commonwealth, and they are not afraid to follow them, no matter whither they lead. These are the men who have always been useful for good, and in the advocacy of new views have been hosts in themselves. What did the world at first say of its Galileo, its Luther, or its Cromwell? What may not hereafter be said of the Dilke, Fawcett, and Taylor of our own time?

There are many advanced Radicals of the school of Messrs. Fawcett, Dilke, and Taylor who adopt their creed with only partial knowledge of its scope and consequences—half-hearted men who shrink from the logical deductions of their doctrines, and compromise between creed and conscience—insincere men who assume the name of advanced Liberal merely as a means of obtaining seats in Parliament; but these are the covetous Simons of the sect, who have no part or lot in the matter. They disgrace the name, as they retard the progress, of perfect Radicalism. The three individuals referred to are not of such as these. Having adopted their principles after careful inquiry and investigation, they are prepared to uphold them through good report and evil report. With them there is no paltering with principle. If right be right—follow the right. The word *compromise*, they contend, ought to be obliterated from the political vocabulary, and party political necessity, according to this creed, is a mistake, a delusion, and a snare.

If we blame their doctrines, we must at least admire the men. True consistency, earnestness, and sincerity demand respect, wherever they are found, even if it be in a Whalley, a Charley, or a Newdegate, a Dilke, a Taylor, or a Fawcett, and can only be really appreciated when placed side by side with their spurious imitations.

The head of the Radical school is Mr. Gladstone. It is generally supposed he is an earnest and sincere man, and above all a Radical. He leads the party whose tendencies are anti-Monarchical and pro-Republican. By what political accident did this arise, that the three men most scrupulously representing the logical position of the school were left in the lurch upon a question which, looked at from the Radical standpoint, is of the very first importance, the very basis and groundwork of the creed? Is it that after all Mr. Gladstone and his numerous followers are not Radicals, and that the only true living representatives of the creed are Messrs. Dilke, Fawcett, and Taylor? Or is it that the ground the latter occupy is far removed from the area of true Radicalism, and that Mr. Gladstone and his deluded followers have yet to traverse a wide tract of political territory before their borders meet? Be the reason of severance or non-agreement what it may, I am inclined to think that the three gentlemen alluded to are the true Radical Simon Pures, and that the rest are but wretched impostors. No one can pin his faith upon the consistency of Mr. Gladstone. He has been all his life a political chameleon—by turns Tory, Conservative, Whig, Peelite, Liberal, and Radical—everything by turns and nothing long.

If he does not know the best merits of all parties he ought to know, and if his measures in the House of Commons do not show that he has profited by the variety of his political experience, his legislation must stand self-condemned. Mr. Gladstone's followers in the House of Commons—Messrs. Dilke, Fawcett, and Taylor among the rest, form, I fear, but a very partial and inexact estimate of his political character. Most of them entered the House of Commons only three years ago, having obtained their seats by merely invoking his name and bearing him shoulder high upon a policy which they neither studied nor understood, but which they pledged themselves unreservedly to support. They have voted an Irish Church Disestablishment Bill, and an Irish Land Bill, and if a new election were to take place next week, and Mr. Gladstone occupied the position now which he did then, the same men, to get seats in Parliament, would vote for the disestablishment of all the churches in the universe and the division of all the land in creation. The bulk of Mr. Gladstone's followers are by no means particular. It is a question of seats in the House and individual distinction entirely. They will follow whithersoever he leads. Mr. Bouverie can no longer say that his party "have leaders who will not lead, and followers who will not follow." Mr. Gladstone learned his lesson and has profited by it.

The English people make a great mistake if they suppose that any demand they choose to make would not meet with a cordial reception; but all demands must be accompanied by three conditions—first, Mr. Gladstone must be sure that they do not imperil his position as Prime Minister; second, the votes to be given must not interfere with the Radical craving for social distinction; and third, the programme must be accepted by the Radical chiefs, because no Radical can dare be anything in the House but the slave and subordinate of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Gladstone's claims to be a great statesman I will presume to be incontestable. What every Radical in the House, and every Liberal newspaper in the country proclaims every day, must surely have some foundation in truth. Lord

Brougham was a great man in his day; he was, at one time, quite as popular, as powerful, as versatile as Mr. Gladstone; but he lived on, and somehow we gradually came to think him just a little of a quack and "Jack of all trades," and when he died nobody in the country lamented him particularly, and the conviction grows upon us that he was an over-rated and over-praised political character. The praise, especially, at one time in his life, had been remarkably overdone. If I admit Mr. Gladstone's claims to the title of statesman, in its highest sense, to be indisputable, I do it under protest, and only because it would be considered ridiculous in the present day to express a doubt on the point. Still, I may be permitted to observe, that he is not famed abroad for this special reputation. Russia, it is certain, does not think so, and Prince Gortschakoff recently gave ample evidence of the fact; Germany does not think so, for Count Bismarck treated Mr. Gladstone's Government, from the first to the last of the Franco-Prussian war, as a schoolmaster treats a puny boy; America, during her great internal struggle, did not say so, though Mr. Gladstone apologised, and promised wider and sounder views for the future; and France would not be disposed at present to say so, whether the ex-Emperor, the Count of Paris, or M. Thiers were consulted. But, statesman or no statesman, speechmaker he certainly is, and let us hope no man will come forward as his competitor.

"Paris is France," used to be one of the boastful maxims of that brilliant capital, and was an exaggeration as maxims generally are; but that the House of Commons is Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Gladstone is the House of Commons there is little room left to doubt. His extravagant rhetoric has become an intolerable nuisance, and I enter my emphatic protest against his ceaseless verbiage and unprofitable disquisitions. Restraint and responsibility are said to be incompatible with eloquence, but surely the observation is not sound. Mr. Gladstone's copiousness has increased with his responsibility, and his love of speech-making defies all restraint. His example has raised the market-value of words, and encouraged more mediocre men to obtrude their opinions upon the House than any previous Parliament ever produced. In a former paper I referred to several bores in the House, who absorb time and talk platitudes, but I withdraw any offensive observations I then made respecting those gentlemen, and apologise for them. There is now only one bore—immense, overwhelming, and irresistible—the Prime Minister. The command of a copious vocabulary and smart readiness in debate are undoubtedly great advantages, but the position of Prime Minister seldom warrants their free exercise. If all that Mr. Gladstone says in his speeches were prudent and wise, which unhappily it is not, he would be able to claim a pre-eminence which no man living would deny him the right to occupy. If he only spoke what was harmless it would be some consolation, but no one can speak incessantly as he does, filling the position he holds, without doing infinite mischief.

I wish in this paper particularly to refer to his views respecting the Monarchy and to Monarchy itself, as unfolded in his speech the night he proposed the dowry and annuity to Princess Louise, when, unsought and unchallenged, he addressed the House for nearly an hour upon the present position and *raison d'être* of Royalty. On that occasion he played the part of "candid friend" to her Majesty, who could hardly be obliged to him for doing so, especially as he blurted out the truth that the Queen had determined to arrange a private alliance in England before this particular marriage was thought about. Such a speech as Mr. Gladstone delivered, occupying the eminent and responsible position he does, is of unquestionable importance and deserves more than cursory consideration. If the claims of Royalty to the place it holds have no better title than those urged and enunciated by Mr. Gladstone in this hasty and ill-advised speech, Messrs. Dilke, Fawcett, and Taylor, and those whom they represent, may well be excused should they say, "If these be all the uses and functions of a costly Monarchy, we may easily save the expenditure and dispense with the boon." Mr. Gladstone's eagerness in this speech to anticipate the criticism of his followers upon the question of the dowry, painfully betrayed his own consciousness that the policy he has pursued since he obtained the post of Prime Minister has tended to imperil its stability and lessen the probabilities of its maintenance. He was aware that although "retrenchment and economy" was merely a party cry, and intended to mean nothing and gain nothing, except political capital, it had struck root in the democratic soil deeper than he intended, and he knew that his Irish Church and Land Bills were, in the nature of things, revolutions as sweeping in their consequences as the destruction of a Constitution, or the dethronement of a monarch. He was anxious to allay a Frankenstein which, when he beheld it, both startled and alarmed him. Had he resolved to bring forward no Dowry bill his followers would have gone with him almost to a man, and not a sixpence would have been bestowed. The mere question of giving or withholding £6,000 a year and a dowry to a Princess is however a very small part of the matter. The Monarchy in this country is not likely to be dispossessed on the ground of its costliness. The House of Commons and the country will take ample care to provide against any such contingency.

It is quite refreshing to observe how singularly Conservative we have all become during the past few weeks. The reign of the rabble in Paris has had a wonderful effect upon the Liberal party, and has actually opened the eyes of the country to some of the dangers of democracy. Mr. Gladstone, always earnest on the superficial aspects of any political movement, has even ventured to ridicule Mr. Odger and his co-Republicans! Unhappy Mr. Odger!—strange Mr. Gladstone!

Poor Messrs. Fawcett, Dilke, and Taylor, warn us by anticipation of the results Radicalism must ultimately arrive at; but they are in advance of their leader, and they were left high and dry while he gave the word "Not yet"! upon the Dowry bill. Mr. Gladstone succeeded in baffling the extreme section of his supporters on this bill, and stifled alike their criticism, and their creed and its consequences; but two or three similar successes would be the downfall of Mr. Gladstone or the throne. If "Down with the Civil List!" "Down with Princes and Princelings!" "Down with all Kings and Queens!" become the future election cries of England, the country will have no difficulty in pointing out whose policy made such cries possible in England.

The attitude of the country towards the Monarchy deserves the careful study of English statesmen; and, with all respect, I would add, the attention of the Monarchy itself. If a general election had been pending during the discussion of the vote for Princess Louise's dowry, every Radical candidate would have been pledged to its refusal, and he who would have declined to be so pledged would not have had the remotest chance of election. These are the signs of the times which tell accurately to the practised mind the future bent and disposition of the people. Mr. Gladstone is as well aware of their direction as any man in the country. Every writer who has touched upon this topic and every speaker, except himself, who has approached it in Parliament, has done so with a gingerliness and tenderness which do credit to their prudence but injustice to their judgment. Our social system is far more powerful in its control and restraint over the expression of individual thought than our political system. We are a nation of born snobs. The increase of wealth has driven up from the lower ranks a host of new families who must be, above all things, *d'accord* with the political feelings and social instincts of their betters. The struggle for distinction produces a mawkish self-abasement to great men and their opinions, to social absurdities and political traditions, to aristocratic habits and fashionable follies, which is doing much to reduce the manliness and independent spirit which formerly characterised Englishmen. Every one must spend more, dress better, and keep better company than his neighbour; and the recent brood of men who have entered Parliament utterly unknown, and some as ignorant as they are unknown, have wives and daughters who have to be introduced to society and to the court, and who must flaunt their gilded awkwardness and vulgarity in the face of their fellow-creatures. Do they imagine that they impose upon the refined and educated people with whom they wish to associate? The most Radical member of Parliament, no matter how conscientious he may be in the maintenance of opinions opposed to our hollow court and caste life, in their political aspects, cannot judiciously obtrude them without certain painful social penalties, which a man who has risen from the ranks in this country is averse to incur. In this simple fact lies the basis of the support which extreme Radicalism gave Mr. Gladstone in moving "the Princess Louise Dowry Bill," and which left the three courageous disciples referred to out in the cold; and it is in the use which Mr. Gladstone and other Liberal Prime Ministers have made of this craving for social notice that Liberalism has prospered and increased.

If, however, Radical members, ambitious of courtly distinction, or obsequious courtiers within the presence-chamber, fail to tell their Sovereign of the discontent which fills the air, and has gradually permeated the country, those who are neither Radical members nor courtiers, but who regard their country's welfare, must speak out the reasons of this discontent, and the causes which underlie its existence, in the hope that the ear of Royalty may deign to listen, and that the dissatisfaction may be allayed. The cause of the Monarchy is the cause of order and good government. The middle classes are as much interested in its maintenance as is the Sovereign herself.

The comparatively feeble outcry against the Princess Louise's dowry was only the indignant outburst of the lowest stratum of the constituencies; but every one who observes the facts and listens to the conversations of daily life, knows that faintly-uttered mutterings and whisperings of disapprobation have pervaded the whole range of society respecting the position, during the past few years, of our monarchical representation.

If the Monarchy has been practically defunct, Mr. Gladstone has not been idle. By constantly presenting himself before Parliament and the country in the character of popular agitator, popular legislator and popular leader, he has done much to show, unconsciously perhaps, that so long as he was at the helm of the State, Royalty might either walk, or hunt, or drive, go abroad, or remain at home, and England would be none the worse for it. Little wonder that with Royal seclusion and apparent apathy on the one hand, and enthusiastic Radicalism legislating with economy as a cry, and disestablishment as a policy, on the other, great numbers in the nation have begun to think Royalty a useless and costly piece of ceremonial lumber, rather than an ornamental political necessity.

Mr. Gladstone's personal position has been eminently detrimental to the Royal House, but his policy threatens to prove disastrous. Mr. Gladstone may, however, be excused, and so may those who share his views, for reading Royalty a lesson, by the universal concurrence in the fact that ancient customs which ought long ago to have been abandoned, and ceremonies which have become ridiculous and contemptible, have been continued, as if knowledge had never increased or education become better diffused. A certain amount of ceremonial display is undoubtedly necessary in a Monarchical State; but it is not always either desirable or dignified. Take, as an illustration of this observation, the pageantry of the opening of Parliament. The nation, so desirous of late to see the Sovereign in person, was treated at the commencement of the Session, with one of those royal processions which constitutional sticklers consider indispensable to the proper public representation of the dignity of the Crown. As a piece of pageantry it was a miserable failure. For picturesqueness, variety, and novelty, the Lord Mayor's Show leaves it nowhere, while it again is left in the shade by the procession of Crowned Heads at the Agricultural Hall at Christmas time.

Certainly the "buffetiers" are an imposing sight. The grooms, too, with walking-sticks in their hands, and the bandsmen with their jockey-caps and golden liveries and superb horses, are a glorious spectacle, and so also are the policemen with their bâtons, and the soldiers in their best uniforms, and the cavalry with their shining accoutrements, and so also is that wretched dog which always will be the most important personage in every large street assembly; but surely there are few who see the necessity, or splendour, or common-sense of such a proceeding.

Perhaps I am a stupid and discontented person of uneducated taste. I think, however, in my stupidity, that all this is a wretched exhibition of silly trifling and ridiculous pomp; a paltry display of caparisoned horses, liveried servants, and gilded equerries, worthy only of third-rate actors in a fifth-rate theatre; an aspect of Royalty in fine raiment and gorgeous appointments beneath the dignity of an enlightened and self-governing people. And is it by such an example as this that our nation, already too prone to personal embellishment and extravagance, is to be benefited? Is it thus that Royalty can alone exalt itself? Is it in pageantry of this description that the respect and sympathy of an educated and thoughtful people are to be conciliated and won? Are the grooms, and jockeys, and palace attendants the royal representatives of Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights, or if not, what are they? Does the Master of the Horse, drawn by six faultless steeds, represent any specific epoch in English history? and if the procession is meant to have any political meaning, will anybody inform me what horse or horses, what coach or coaches, represent Mr. Disraeli's Reform Bill?

Of course, within the Chamber of Peers one can discover a deeper significance in these things. It is a great historic assembly. The Queen comes to deliver an important message to a proud people, and to open the deliberative proceedings of a nation's representatives; the bishops come in their spotless lawn to represent the purity and meekness of the Church celestial; the peeresses come in their ermine and feathers to exhibit the vanity and weakness of the Court terrestrial; the royal princes and princesses come to occupy their respective places in our British *Almanach de Gotha*, and to show their various relationships to the British taxpayer. It is a great sight —superb in its splendour and awful in its dignity; but, in its general effects, disappointing, dissatisfying, and, to tell the truth, puerile. But then such spectacles must surely have their uses, or they would never be suffered to exist. The nation desired to see its Sovereign and everybody was pleased that the Queen had opened Parliament. All this may become so, but it does not controvert the fact that the ceremonial aspect of Royalty in the present day may be the most fatal and dangerous to its existence. Certainly in France, during the Napoleonic dynasty, it excited the envy and wrath of the democracy. The unthinking crowds who go to admire such a pageant as I have described are the very people, when appealed to by a popular declaimer, to pull down the god they have been wont to worship. The day, however, has gone by when the thinking and educated classes will be content with the mere upholstery of Monarchy. The gorgeous side of Monarchy has ceased to attract any save the thoughtless crowd and the idle *habitués* of a Court, who have always been, since the world began, the victims of their own conceit or ignorance. Last Session we passed an Education Bill, and what is likely to be the effect of this bill upon the Monarchy? What may we expect when a generation of fairly educated people rise up to sway the destinies of England?

It is an easy thing to impose upon the imagination and rouse the passions of an ill-educated people. Humbug and claptrap are the instruments which the skilful politician uses to achieve his purposes. Humbug, alas! is not the monopoly or coinage of to-day; it has been the potent influence of many past days. Humbug in Parliament, humbug in parties, humbug in politics! And what has maintained it? Simply love of self—personal ambition, or advancement, or aggrandisement. The standard is a low one, true; but is it untrue? That is the question. Humbug was the panoply of the laborious Mr. Beales, who has "effaced" himself in a County Court Judgeship—it is still the panoply of the ingenious Mr. Disraeli and the righteous Mr. Gladstone. This is the weapon that guides parties, conciliates supporters, and beguiles the people. Why, we all know it is so! But why is it so? and how has it been permitted to be so? The answer frankly is this:—The great bulk of the English nation has been steeped in ignorance—physical, mental, and political. The masters of humbug have played upon the ignorance and credulity of the masses as Mr. Hallé plays upon the keyboard of a piano. The marvel is that an Education

Bill has been passed at all; the novelty of an educated people will put all the old machinery of political leadership out of joint. Education means a contempt of humbug, and should the use of this political weapon be discontinued, is it likely that truth and common sense will take its place? and if these do, what will be the consequences?

In considering what may be the effect of an increase of education in England, we have one guide already to go by. The Church has been the best and purest educating influence this country has ever had, and within this influence I wish of course to include the old universities as part of the *corpus* of the Church; and the result has been that the religious education of the English people has been far in advance of their secular and political knowledge. England and Scotland adopted the Reformation with an eagerness which has been the surprise of the world. The people threw off the mummeries and petty pageantry of Popery, when the simple truths of Protestantism were presented to them, with a readiness which has astonished every reflecting mind.

Ignorance must always be appealed to through the imagination and the senses. Candles, and vestments, and the trumpery paraphernalia of a foolish ritual are the necessary accessories of dull, intellectual perceptions.

When political and secular knowledge are better diffused over Britain, will the antiquated pomp and circumstance of Royalty stand the mental inspection of an enlightened nation? The first effect of education, as we observe in America, was that the people despised the court life and kingships and emperorships of Europe. Will our improved education lead us to a Republicanism like that of America, or to a military despotism like that of Prussia? or will Constitutional Monarchy, with men like Mr. Gladstone as Prime Ministers, still hold its own? Will the gilt and ceremony and expense of Royalty be endured? or will Royalty justify its existence, adapt itself to changed circumstances, fill a sphere which will ensure its permanence, and succeed in retaining the respect, loyalty, and reverence of an enlightened nation?

There is no use in denying the plain and obvious truth. The retirement of the Queen from the public functions of Royalty for so many years has been both a loss to the nation and a blow to the Monarchy. Whether the £385,000 a year given to the Queen has been saved or not, whether that sum is sufficient for the "competent and becoming support" of the Crown and Royal Family, is really not the question. £100,000, more or less, can be, in its amount, but a very trivial consideration to a rich nation like ours. The real question is—Have the duties and functions of Royalty been fulfilled or neglected? And if they have not been fulfilled and have been neglected, wherefore should the nation endure a misdirection of its means, and uphold an unnecessary political accessory? This involves a double inquiry. First, what are the functions and duties of Monarchy? and, second, Have these duties and functions been disregarded of late years, and is the popular discontent justifiable? I shall humbly endeavour to pursue these inquiries to a solution; but before doing so, I take leave to say that the marriage of the Princess Louise to a subject of the Queen is an error which, in my humble judgment, will do much towards reducing the respect for Monarchy, and will tend very much to hasten its abolition.

This marriage is generally acknowledged to be a triumph of Liberalism—one of the flowrets in Mr. Gladstone's political chaplet. The Radicals were quite right: the commercial element *is* in the ascendant. It was thought to be a decided, though perhaps necessary, condescension to the trading classes, when the Duke of Argyll placed two of his sons in merchants' offices; but when these two sons can speak "on 'Change" of "my sister-in-law Her Royal Highness the Princess Louise," it is evident that Royalty has succeeded in placing itself in harmony with the commercial spirit of the age. Mr. Gladstone has gained a political victory which it is easy to perceive must have consequences not perhaps contemplated from a political point of view by his Sovereign. Mr. Disraeli has lent to the transaction the benefit of his approval, to the annoyance of a not unimportant number of his supporters. There is certainly a wide field for political adventure in the same direction, and probably he has an eye to outbidding Mr. Gladstone for popular notice on some future day. Who knows but Mr. Disraeli may eclipse the wildest dreams of Mr. Gladstone? He beat him in the Reform Suffrage question; why not in royal marriages?

Mr. Disraeli would achieve a decided success next time he is Prime Minister if he could arrange an alliance, say between H.R.H. Prince Alfred and some cotton spinner's daughter near Manchester; or if he could prevail upon the Queen, who acts, in these matters, as Mr. Gladstone bluntly stated, upon the advice of her Ministers, to induce our next marriageable Princess to bestow her hand upon the rising scion of some eminent City firm. Why should there be any restriction? If one of our Princesses were to marry the heir of one of those rich persons in this country who are, according to Mr. Disraeli, "not in the most elevated ranks of society," there would, at least, be no need for dowry and that would save scandal and trouble as well as money. Nobody could find any fault. The rule once broken, and Liberalism being conciliated and bowed to, such marriages cannot be limited to the sons of Scotch Dukes who may be Radical members of the Cabinet. Where is it to end? May we expect our political leaders to aim at rivalries of this sort and rejoice in ministerial matrimonial victories? If so, the next time a dissolution takes place we may have to listen to some new and not very pleasant party cries. Mr. Gladstone's supporters may be shouting "Liberalism, and a royal marriage to an Irish

"Squireen"

~~Marquis~~," while Mr. Disraeli's followers may be shrieking "Conservatism and a royal marriage to the daughter of a rich City merchant."

I confess my utter astonishment at the manner in which the Conservative party has accepted this remarkable incident, and regard it as a further surrender of one of those securities for the preservation of Constitutional Monarchy which our leaders seem so desirous, one by one, to part with, and which are rapidly disappearing. Mr. Disraeli is certainly educating his party, with a rapidity which must astonish some of them. There is one, and only one, reason which can justify this alliance. The increasing number of unknown and generally penniless German sons-in-law was beginning to be felt as a nuisance, and another added to the roll might have produced consequences which would have been unpleasant. But if Liberalism has been gratified by this marriage, Mr. Gladstone has no reason to be proud of the manner in which the Liberal constituencies regarded the question of the dowry.

There is not a subject in her dominions whose sympathy the Queen has not deserved and received in the great calamity which has obscured the brightness and dimmed the happiness of Her Majesty's life during the past ten years. The death of the Prince Consort was felt to be, not a loss to the Queen and her family only, but a national, nay a personal, loss to every one. The noble qualities and statesmanlike intellect of the Prince have only been properly recognised and appreciated since his death. Time will only add deeper respect for his character. He was by nature a shy man, and the peculiar delicacy of his position assisted in withholding from public notice, during his lifetime, the valuable acquirements of his mind and his highly cultivated graces and accomplishments. It is difficult to decide whether he excelled most or won our greatest admiration in the sterling qualities of a good husband, a wise father, or a gifted statesman. He was the advocate of national progress, the devoted supporter of the throne, and the joy and pride of his home. The proper fulfilment of the duties of his exalted station,—duties obviously difficult and delicate, was his constant object, and that he succeeded most completely is admitted beyond question. Never was the British Crown held in such deserved esteem as during the lifetime of this sagacious and virtuous Prince. The ten years' seclusion which have elapsed since his death, will mark an epoch in the history of British Monarchy.

Let us turn briefly to the inquiry as to the proper functions and duties of Royalty, and whether the nation has a right to complain that these functions and duties have not been fulfilled or are unnecessary. They may be described as political, moral, and social. The political duties of Royalty in England may be very easily defined. The Queen gives the Royal assent to bills passed by Parliament—a mere empty form so far as any influence for good or for evil is concerned. Certain official documents bear the Royal sign-manual, and Her Majesty, without doubt, finds this to be her most onerous and troublesome political duty. Seeing that the Queen now attaches her signature, in these economical days, to sheets of foolscap in place of pig-skin, the question is worth considering whether Her Majesty's signature ought to be insisted upon at all. It is said to be the custom in some of the large commercial firms in the City to have a salaried partner whose duty it is to sign the firm's name and nothing else. As we are now so very commercial in all our affairs, could no liveried Jenkins be employed in such routine work as this? Messrs. Dilke, Fawcett, and Taylor could, I have no doubt, find an easy remedy for this royal necessity. The political functions of Royalty are merely honorary, and reduce Royalty almost to an impersonality.

The House of Commons has absorbed in its own person all governing power—the Ministry for the time being the practical head of the State. Tradition, custom, habit, legal usages, only still induce us to use the language of Royal formality. The power of which the Crown has been gradually dispossessed by Parliament still exists by virtue of what is euphemistically called pious fiction, but nobody is deceived, and least of all the Sovereign herself. Sensible minds may, however, be permitted to question the propriety of allowing the political skeleton of Royalty to haunt the Houses of Parliament, and most people will admit that the political power of Royalty having disappeared, we should cease to mock the Sovereign by assuming the possession of rights and the exercise of functions which are reduced to a make-believe and a sham. No advocate for the maintenance of Monarchy in England can now found his argument upon its political necessity. The Queen of England reigns and lives in the hearts and affections of the people, not because of her political power; not because her splendid position as the head of a prosperous, free, high-spirited people, makes her the world's envy; not because her signature and assent are given to the nation's laws; but because she is regarded as the sovereign head of every British household, the wise respecter of the national will, the fountain of the nation's honour, and the noblest example of domestic virtue which ever graced a throne.

The highest and best influences of Royalty and its *raison d'être*, must rest hereafter upon its moral and social advantages.

It is here that Royalty will find—nay, must find—its best, its surest, its only foundation. We are not, as a nation, prepared to hand over our privileges to the custody of any monarch, be he or she never so wise. The Queen has won her brightest crown, and earned our profoundest reverence and respect, because she has been a noble example of what a daughter, a wife, and a mother ought to be; a pattern of womanly feeling, affection, and purity.

Distant, I trust, may be the day when Her Majesty shall no longer reign over these realms, but her successors may reckon upon this fact—that only so far as the pure and devoted life which has preceded them is imitated and followed, will they secure the same loyalty, and find the same security for the maintenance of the Crown. Selfish isolation, or neglect of the onerous social duties which the Monarchy involves, will undoubtedly tend to lessen not merely the influence, but the safety, of the throne.

Who amongst us who mingles among the society of to-day fails to observe the different tone which pervades it compared with what it was ten years ago? Are not the morals, the manners, and the habits of society looser, freer, faster, less modest and rightminded, than they were before the Queen's calamity drove her into retirement, and withdrew her example and influence from the upper classes? The press and the pulpit—our daily and weekly literature—testify to the sad falling-off which has taken place. Are not the modes and manners of corrupt and degenerate France more evident in this country than we care to see them? Are not false hair, painted faces, and indecorous toilettes, more frequent in our midst than they were a few years ago? Who is to frown down these contemptible tricks of fashion—these wretched evidences of low morals? The manners of our drawing-rooms become the models of our kitchens. No one who remarks the downward progress we have made, can fail to regret that the Queen has absented herself from society, and has abdicated the best, the highest, the only potent influence which it is hers still to wield.

If our princes choose a life of hunting, racing, shooting, and pleasuring, no Englishman will interfere with them. They can adopt the habits, as they can adopt the position, of private persons in this country; but no observing man can conceal that no king will reign in England who does not show, by a lively personal interest in the material, social, and religious welfare of this country, that these are his first concern—his chiefest thought —his highest duty—his greatest pleasure.

No. VIII.—THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF THE SESSION, 1871.

" Some wandering touches, some reflected light,
Some flying stroke alone can hit them right."

PROPOSERS AND SECONDERS.

THE first night of the Session is always interesting. Who would have thought from the diffident air of the gentleman who proposed the Address that he was an officer trained to stand with a firm and erect bearing to " Attention ! "

Speechmaking in the House certainly is a trying ordeal, and Major Hamilton, I have little doubt, would have stood up with greater courage and more composure to be shot than he did to make his speech.

Mr. Morley's red coat imposed upon nobody. He is not a soldier. No deputy-lieutenant's uniform could make Mr. Morley look anything else but what he is—the sharp, keen-eyed, energetic commercial man. He ran over the subjects of the speech with an air of personal satisfaction and smug self-complacency which was quite amusing in its way. Just sufficiently educated to be able to speak grammatically, but not quite enough to know anything about the composition of an Address, he was considered by the "commercial element" around him to have achieved quite a success. Before Mr. Disraeli had spoken half an hour, Mr. Morley must have felt his oratorical effort to have been very insignificant. The scholar and orator ran down the commercial man's platitudes to a very low price.

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.

Mr. Disraeli, evidently stung by comments upon the wretched appearance the Conservative party presented last year, has again come forth to battle, like a giant refreshed, and to do him justice his armour is as bright, and his points and thrusts are as dexterous and dangerous, as they were in his very best days. Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Bernal Osborne have already distinguished themselves greatly. In the solemn pantomime which is played at St. Stephen's, and in which Mr. Gladstone takes the part of *Melancholy Jacques*, Mr. Osborne and Sir Robert Peel affect the more active characters of clown and pantaloon. While the sober business of the play is proceeding, their antics and somersaulting amuse the audience. Nobody is much hurt, and they provoke laughter, of which there is none too much in the House of Commons.

OFFICIAL RUMOURS.

Rumours in the press as to probable official appointments have strange results. On the 15th March, when Mr. Shaw Lefevre was appointed Secretary to the Admiralty, there were letters there addressed as follows:—7 for Mr. Mundella, 5 for Mr. Lefevre, and 3 for Mr. Candlish, each being designated "Secretary to the Admiralty." Clearly Mr. Mundella ought to have had the place!

THE COMMERCIAL ELEMENT.

The Government acted with proper caution in avoiding the appointment of a commercial man as successor to Mr. Baxter at the Admiralty. Had Mr. Mundella or Mr. Candlish been appointed, he must of necessity have out-Baxtered Baxter, and the public and the Government have had quite enough of annoyance from that source. Mr. Baxter's promotion is the only alloy in the change. He has left a bad influence behind him. The "energetic" men feel that after all nothing secures promotion except turning everything upside down, screeching economy, and making departmental noise. Do this effectually, and you will become a Lord of the Treasury—continue it steadily, and you will get Right Honourable attached to your name—pursue it with sophistry, pseudo-sincerity, and interminable speechmaking, and you may some day be Prime Minister.

CAB LAW—THE HOME SECRETARY.

It will be satisfactory to the public to know that Mr. Bruce—the eminent Mr. Bruce—applied the vast resources of his capacious mind to the amendment of Cab Law in the Metropolis. Mr. Bruce has failed. It would really be worth while to know in what Mr. Bruce has succeeded. He is a Cabinet Minister, and that ought to be a guarantee for something striking in a great country like England; but if Mr. Bruce has done anything to make him worthy of such a post, most people are in a lamentable state of ignorance about it. The public has long ago ceased even to laugh at the Home Office. One cannot laugh at what only inspires contempt. Mr. Beales and Mr. Merriman each in his turn revealed the weakness of its administration. Mr. Bruce's genius has been thrown away. Cabby does as he likes, and Mr. Bruce is content. We have the worst cabs and the most wretched cabmen in Christendom, yet Mr. Bruce is content. Wonderful Home Office! Weak Mr. Bruce.

POLITICAL ROBBERY.

The manner in which Mr. Cardwell stole Mr. Trevelyan's political toy—his abolition of purchase in the army—deserves the severest censure. Here was a young man of considerable ability who had roused the attention of the country by a whirlwind of stump oratory,—who had got together a following of members, and who, when Parliament met, felt himself to be only less influential than the Prime Minister, suddenly deprived of his political capital by the basest political theft which ever was perpetrated. Mr. Cardwell kept his secret well. It was said Mr. Trevelyan was informed about it beforehand, but I don't believe it. The Radical following absolutely gaped with astonishment when Mr. Cardwell intimated that the abolition of purchase formed part—nay, the main part—of the Government scheme of army reorganisation. Mr.

Trevelyan ought to be comforted and rewarded. Could not the Prime Minister ask Mr. Cardwell to resign and give his place to Mr. Trevelyan ?

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY.

Everybody asks,—If the present Government were to suffer a defeat sufficiently important to cause them to resign, who is to succeed them ? Such a defeat might have taken place on the Army Reorganisation Bill, but the game was up when the advanced Radicals found the Government anticipating their wishes. So long as that policy is continued Mr. Gladstone is sure of retaining his majority. If such a contingency, however, arose, as the advanced Liberal party joining the Conservatives to overthrow the Government, how long would the alliance last, and how could Mr. Disraeli keep office with his present minority of 120 ? Such a condition of things needs only to be mentioned to show its absurdity. A junction of the moderate Liberals in the constituencies with the Liberal Conservatives—having for its object the repression of Radicalism and Republicanism (at all events until a generation has grown up under the new Education Act)—is the only combination under which Conservatives can agree to accept office. No doubt the placemen of the party would be willing to accept office upon any terms, but they are not the *whole* Conservative party, and that party will not accept further gratuitous tuition in Radicalism from Mr. Disraeli.

THE LIBERAL PARTY.

Strong in numbers the Liberal party is decidedly weak in ability. The Cabinet is shorn of any pretensions to first-rate statesmanship since Lord Clarendon's death—or even first-rate oratorical power since Mr. Bright's resignation—always excluding Mr. Gladstone himself.

The Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary, and the Lord Privy Seal, would certainly not have the audacity to urge any claims to the highest, or even the lowest, rank of statesmen.

The First Lord of the Admiralty, the Vice-President of the Council, and the President of the Poor Law Board are hard-working men of figures, but without any extraordinary abilities, not possessed by at least twenty thousand men in the country. The Foreign Secretary, the Secretary for the Colonies, and the Secretary for War, are men of wider experience, who are above the ordinary run of politicians; but if we call Bismarck, Cavour, and Talleyrand statesmen, we cannot degrade the word by applying it to these gentlemen. Of the rest perhaps the less said the better. Mr. Gladstone is, perhaps, enough for the party and the Cabinet.

"EFFACEMENT."

One of the phases of character most disliked in the House of Commons is "bumptiousness." Whenever a man seems to get anything like a conceit of himself, the House begins immediately to take a malicious pleasure in "effacing" him. When the Duke of Argyll some years ago got up in the House of Lords to reply to the late Earl of Derby, the indignation of the noble Earl must have been eminently amusing. He told the story, which has become classical, of the navvy who, when he was asked why he allowed his weak little wife to beat him, gave for answer,—"It pleases her, and it does not hurt me." A few years ago one of the members for Glasgow, who was really a good speaker, "effaced" himself by a quotation which he thought apposite, but which was ridiculous, and he has never recovered his self-possession since. Mr. Candlish by his Abyssinian Committee has practically effaced himself. Nobody had a better chance of getting one of the minor appointments in the Radical Administration, but he was in too great a hurry, and meddled in matters too high for him. Had he been a prudent man he would have been content to criticise—not to search out—wasteful expenditure. No doubt that expedition cost a great deal of money; but we are only human. Go on, Mr. Candlish, and you may be a Cabinet Minister yet before you are seventy!

A RADICAL CABINET.

Neither advanced Radicalism nor extreme Toryism represents English political thought or feeling. If Mr. Disraeli were again to assume the Premiership it would be impossible for him to make the same, or anything like the same, appointments as composed the last Conservative Administration. If he did, his Ministry would not endure six months.

Judging from the present position of the advanced Radical school I have no doubt they will be in the ascendant about eight years hence, and in 1879 the following may be the Cabinet. Owing to the scarcity of the Radical element in the House of Lords several new peers will have to be created.

First Lord of the Treasury .	Mr. Stansfeld
Lord High Chancellor . .	Mr. T. Chambers (Lord Marylebone)
Lord Privy Seal . . .	Sir C. W. Dilke (Lord Chelsea)
Lord President of the Council	Mr. J. W. Pease (Lord Coke)
Home Secretary . . .	Mr. T. Hughes
Foreign Secretary . .	Mr. Mundella (Lord Sheffield)
Colonial Secretary . .	Mr. Rylands
Indian Secretary . . .	Mr. G. Duff (Lord Macduff)
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Mr. Ayrton
Secretary for War . .	Mr. Trevelyan (Lord Cambridge)
Chief Secretary for Ireland .	Sir John Gray
President of the Poor Law Board	Mr. G. S. Lefevre
Vice-President of the Council	Mr. A. Herbert
President of the Board of Trade	Mr. P. A. Taylor
First Lord of the Admiralty .	Mr. Candlish

CONSERVATIVE POLICY.

An Opposition it is always understood criticises its opponents, and never declares a policy except as a direct means of obtaining power. Place and power are the objects of political life—it matters little what policy obtains them. One side is as guilty in this respect as the other. Mr. Gladstone swallowed disestablishment and disendowment—two words which were previously hateful to him; Mr. Disraeli passed a Household Suffrage Bill!

Supposing the Conservative party at the beginning of this Session had rigorously maintained what the bulk of Englishmen believe,—that Mr. Gladstone's policy of retrenchment and economy was a grievous blunder little short of a crime; that the Conference to register Russia's determination regarding the Black Sea was a sham and a disgrace; and that Mr. Gladstone's policy in the Franco-German War was neither expedient nor dignified; supposing, I say, the party boldly challenged a verdict upon these points, gathering up all its forces, and fully expressing its opinions, would not this course have been more manly, more candid, more likely to be successful, than making speeches which neither leant this way nor that way, but trimmed themselves to the popular breeze whatever it might be?

It is no disgrace to be in a minority. The minority sometimes turn out to have been right, and the day of reward generally comes to them. Mr. Disraeli refuses an invitation to pay a visit to Lancashire, because the moment is not suitable for discoursing upon Conservative policy. It is never a suitable moment to play upon the ignorance or prejudice of one's fellow-countrymen. It is always suitable to speak about principles founded upon truth—and upon a policy based upon a straightforward course of conduct.

POLITICAL CREEDS.

Although having, as I believe, some claims to be considered a Conservative, I am not, I frankly admit, an admirer of Mr. Disraeli. This fact can be of very little importance, especially to Mr. Disraeli, who has not only given to the country his views of critics generally, but his keen-edged sarcasms have pointed his contempt for them. Mr. Disraeli has been a success. I do not deny that he deserved it. He has achieved an eminence in politics only equalled by Napoleon III. in Imperialism. He is the wonder of a generation, and the surprise of a nation, and he can despise criticism. Public men generally affect to do so. I say *affect*, because I know no men who are more sensitive. Their constant references to the "public out-of-doors"—what "the people" think, and what "the people" said, and what "the people" are likely to think and say—betray a regard for their opinions which no amount of affected contempt for them can conceal. I believe it to be possible to be a Conservative without being a worshipper of Mr. Disraeli. The discovery that this may be so is gradually dawning upon Mr. Disraeli himself. Certain indications, which any man must be blind not to see, have shown themselves this Session, which Mr. Disraeli knows the full meaning of. He is not so self-glorious as to ignore the evidences which some of his followers make only too plain.

THE ADMIRALTY.

They are all gone! Mr. Childers, Mr. Baxter, Sir Spencer Robinson! They have all disappeared, and their places at Whitehall know them no more. They have followed their humbler colleagues, Mr. Murray, Mr. Reed, and Mr. Trevelyan. What remains? Who is responsible for the Navy of the country? Who controls, who appoints, who builds, who rules?

Mr. Childers retired on a warranty of physical unsoundness given by three doctors. The document was made public to show the only reason which existed, or could exist, for his retirement. The country was proud of him, and could not dispense with his services except under a certificate given by three medical men! The country, the dockyard labourers, the clerks, the storekeepers, the retired officers, the Chief Constructor, the Engineer, and the Controller, were all expiring of gratitude to him, and could only see Whitehall deprived of his presence under the stern orders of a medical certificate subscribed by three practitioners. What a rare public servant, and how deeply regretted! Various paragraphs in newspapers since warn us of his advent to office again by and by. Mr. Goschen, it is said, is only doing for some months what Lord Halifax did for a week or two, namely, keeping the nest warm for Mr. Childers.

In a few months that ugly piece of business about Sir Spencer Robinson will be forgotten. It will pass out of mind that Mr. Childers wrote a Minute behind his colleague's back, which that colleague maintained was quite untrue, and that he resolved to dismiss him, though he had not the courage himself to do so. He absented himself from his office, leaving the dismissal of his colleague in Mr. Gladstone's possession. It was not quite the handsome thing—it was surely not etiquette, and it was certainly not the conduct of an English gentleman.

Mr. Baxter had been quite long enough at Whitehall. He had mastered the "curve of stability," and that was quite as far as his naval education could judiciously be carried. The atmosphere of the Treasury will no doubt have its customary effect. We may shortly expect to see Mr. Baxter shorn of part of his Batavian grace. This office may lead to his being by and by Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests. He and Mr. Ayrton are products of our special epoch, who show us the rank absurdity of some of our parliamentary appointments.

Mr. Childers and Mr. Baxter have retired, and Mr. Goschen and Mr. George Shaw Lefevre reign in their stead. Mr. Goschen must feel his position to be sufficiently ridiculous, without any critical comments. If he had come down to the House in an admiral's uniform, cocked-hat in one hand and telescope in the other, the day before the announcement of his appointment was made, he could not have caused greater surprise than his appointment itself did; but we are a forbearing and law-abiding people, though we do occasionally get a little obstreperous. When we can stand Mr. Goschen—late of the City, a respectable merchant and a bank director, a writer on the theory of exchange and a person who admits that, speaking of the Navy, "he knows very little about these things"—as Lord High Admiral of the fleet, or First Lord of the Admiralty, or chairman of a naval committee—whichever designation be the right one—it may be admitted that John Bull can stand anything. Why does not Mr. Gladstone make Mr. Mundella Lord Chancellor, or Mr. Bernal Osborne Archbishop of Canterbury? These are offices requiring special training and skill, like the Army and Navy, and Mr. Mundella and Mr. Osborne could read up sufficient in three weeks to give as effective a statement regarding their positive present and future prospects as Mr. Goschen did the other night respecting the Admiralty. The rapid life we live in these days has a natural tendency to specialities. It is impossible to be abreast of the general knowledge of our time and to be able to make ourselves useful in every branch which engages our study. Mr. Gladstone thinks that statesmen are formed by giving them a smattering of the duties of every political office. Mr. Goschen, who spent two years in mastering the Poor Laws, and was just beginning to be useful in his office, has to be transferred to the Admiralty, where two years hence he will know something of its necessities, and then possibly he may be sent to the Colonial Office. This may be party necessity, but nothing, but what Mr. Candlish called Mr. Gladstone's "plausibility," could make it appear convenient. There was no rule which Socrates so much enforced as that no man should undertake or superintend any business of which he has not competent special knowledge. It appears to me that Mr. Goschen is not either a versatile genius or an Admirable Crichton, and, with all respect to him, I think that his abilities were strained quite enough at the Poor Law Board, without attempting to assume the command of the Navy of England. This is one of the necessities of Parliamentary government, and one of the results of the constant acquisition by the House of Commons of executive power. It threatens to be carried so far that, when we do engage in a contest in which we are unsuccessful, military and naval despotism may be the result.

SKETCHES

(PERSONAL AND POLITICAL)

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

BY A SILENT MEMBER.

Fifth Series.

No. 9.—LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS—COMMERCIAL M.P.'S.

10.—MINISTERIAL BILLS, &c.—SESSION 1871.

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PREFACE.

The writer of these pages proposes to place before the public some particulars of the Interior Life of the House of Commons. The papers are designed to form a complete series of twenty, and will be published at short intervals. They are intended to point out and to correct some of the annoyances which the House inflicts upon

A Silent Member.

London, July, 1871.

SKETCHES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

No. IX.—LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS—COMMERCIAL M.P.'s.

———" Eripe turpi
Colla jugo: liber, liber sum dic age"——

What is the use of giving advice? Would Mr. Gladstone thank me if I humbly ventured to suggest to him that his rhetoric would be more forcible if it were not so florid, and that he would achieve more if he attempted less? Would Mr. Disraeli feel particularly grateful if I proposed to him that he ought to retire from the Leadership of the Opposition now, while he can do so with dignity and self-respect, rather than wait until he may have to do so without respect, and with a great loss of dignity? Would Mr. Ayrton be more mannerly, or Mr. Grant Duff less pragmatic—would Mr. Cardwell be less formal and Whiggish, or Mr. Stansfeld less anxious to look the character of Radical philosopher—if I ventured to hint to these individuals that a slight alteration in the direction indicated would be an improvement?

But what is the use of advising when the matter involved is some change in the *vis inertiæ* of a great political system? In such a sphere the most courageous may not be ashamed to falter, and the most resolute to fail. Still it is satisfactory to know that such labours are sometimes successful beyond even the wildest expectation, and that results are produced, from small causes, which afterwards appear almost miraculous. One touches a weak point now and then which happens to be the keystone of some ricketty arch, and when it is displaced, the whole surrounding fabric falls down with a crash. It can only be the cheering hope of some such discovery as this, that can ever prompt any man in his senses to write upon political questions. I have been led to these reflections, by thinking over one or two of the ignorant habits of thought, which sometimes possess a nation, and which nothing but time and improved education can ever eradicate. The habit once overcome, it never reappears, and we are all astonished that it subsisted, even for an hour. We can scarcely credit it now, but there was actually a time in England, and that not so very long ago, when people were Whigs or Tories, Gold or Silver Sticks in Waiting, Admirals of the Fleet, or Grooms of the Bedchamber, simply because their fathers had been before them. One of Queen Anne's observations at a remarkable crisis was, "It would be an injustice were my husband not to be Lord High-Admiral since my father was"! When this Royal personage urged this argument in favour of her husband, she only expressed the idea which regulated in her day, and still regulates too much in our day, the usual sequence of political life.

There was a peculiar pride in the proper lineal descent of the family principles. Political sentiments were handed down from generation to generation, as scrupulously as the old family Bible, or the thin silver plate, or the big yellow chariot.

It must have been a highly satisfactory arrangement for the official persons who prospered in those days. One only required to be connected with the Cabinet or the Court to ensure a flourishing family livelihood. The cliques who governed us, appropriated, as if by prescription, for their sons, nephews, cousins, and remoter relatives, and for their descendants, every available official appointment; and our territorial families regarded it as quite a proper thing that their poor relations, who were born and bred to look upon the hard-working taxpayers—the hewers of wood and drawers of water—with contempt, should have the fee-simple of this same despised taxpayer's breeches pocket. What a pity it must seem to these respectable and exceedingly aristocratic persons, that the English nation is becoming a little more enlightened, and that our taxpayers and governments have resolved to put a stop to these things. One of the acts for which the present Duke of Argyll deserves the approbation of the nation is, that in place of foisting his sons upon the Army, the Navy, or the Diplomatic and Consular Services, where they would have been simple pensioners of the British public, he has sent two of them into the world to earn their own living in commerce. They elevate themselves and their occupations alike by such a step.

There was no superfluous intelligence circulating among the English people in Queen Anne's day, but there was a powerful rough-and-ready prejudice in favour of those who followed "the good old plan, that they should take who had the power, and they should keep who can." The prevailing selfishness amongst the official classes and other candidates for Court favour was seldom disturbed by the perverse interference of public justice or indignant constituencies. Government was an admirably contrived arrangement for the benefit and advancement of two powerful factions. When the Whig families were *in*, the Tory families were *out*, and *vice versâ*. The followers and hangers-on were even stronger partisans than their leaders, and it was nothing short of rank apostacy—unpardonable treason to family and fortune—to express a decided opinion or give a conscientious vote merely for the sake of truth or justice.

Of course in our very democratic and earnest-minded days we are striving to rectify all this. We have not succeeded altogether yet, but we are actively engaged in the endeavour to discover how much of it we can dispense with, and are resolutely aiming at a higher standard of political virtue amongst our public men. The family official institution still subsists in a modified and attenuated form in the Church, the Law, the Army and Navy, and our Diplomatic and Consular Services; but we are making wonderful progress in setting these matters right, and by and by, when the English people are better instructed, and have emerged from their political apathy and indifference, the work will be complete. One may hope to live to see, even in this generation, the last man, who will be so contemptibly stupid as to boast that he is a Whig or Tory, a Radical or Republican, merely because his father or his grandfather had been.

But although this system of the succession of family opinions and offices is gradually disappearing, it is very doubtful whether the parliamentary arrangements which have taken its place will be of very much greater benefit to the country.

It is no discourtesy to the two leading parties in the House of Commons, at present, to say that they are like two flocks of sheep. When the leaders jump, they jump; when the leaders run, they run; and when the leaders stop, they stand still. Mr. Carlyle puts the same idea more forcibly when he remarks: "Ninety and nine public men can for the most part be but mute trainbearers to the hundredth; perhaps but stalking-horses and willing or unwilling dupes."

Mr. Gladstone's trainbearers, alas! are not mutes; nor is this a quality which they are likely to learn from their leader. They rather resemble the mourners at a Mahommedan funeral, where the blind are put in front, to indicate the futility of all human leadership, and the followers lessen the dull solemnity of the proceeding by stopping at intervals to groan and shout, and extol the virtues of him whom they are carrying shoulder high.

It may be worth while to enquire briefly how far this abject submission to party leaders is an advantageous parliamentary arrangement, and whether it is the best method of conducting the legislation of this country. Is it necessary that there should be two antagonistic forces in the Houses of Parliament—one in office, generally promoting and advancing measures designed for the benefit of the nation; and the other out of office, hindering, qualifying, and often defeating them? Of course, in answer to this question, it may be asked,—Is it not of the utmost importance that each measure proposed should be carefully criticised, amended, and, if need be, defeated? Such a question, involving a proposition too self-evident to be disputed, does not touch the inquiry I propose to institute. What I desire to discuss is, the expediency of having two parties in the State—not proposing or opposing measures from a national point of view, but treating them for party purposes, and using them as party foils, with party ascendancy as the end, and office as the main object.

"No man was for party and all were for the State" expressed a beatific political vision which is not likely to be witnessed in our day, but we can at least contemplate what would be some of its beneficent results.

If the occupants of the two front benches of the House of Commons were to form themselves into a Committee to frame laws for the good of the country, banishing for one short twelvemonths party spirit and personal considerations, what a blessed Statute-book we should have! Their experience could place their fingers as if by instinct upon the blots and errors of past legislation, and could readily devise a "healing process" for most of the ills which cry aloud for remedies, and retard our national wellbeing. Civil and religious liberty and national improvement and prosperity would then be words representing real conditions of society, and would not be what they at present are, the abracadabra of political quackery and the stock-in-trade of parliamentary self-seekers.

Had such a Committee ever existed, would the pauperism which is growing up side by side with our immense wealth have become so formidable and difficult to grapple with? Would the lamentable ignorance to which the masses of our population have been abandoned, have so long endured? Would emigration be the only panacea of our impoverished classes? Would children be sent into brickfields to work, before they are almost fit to walk? Would bishops and archbishops be allowed to waste the time in the House of Peers, and the haunts of fashion, which ought to be devoted to the houses of the poor and the visitation of their dioceses? Would fat livings and high preferment be the be-all and end-all of our State spiritual instructors?

Would brewers be permitted to plant their gin palaces in every lane and alley to send forth their progeny of vice, crime, and drunkenness ? Would a fool of an eldest son, simply because he is an eldest son, be allowed to have the right of hereditary legislation in a country which professes to be governed by the chosen representatives of the nation ? Would military rank be bought and sold ? Would beardless boys be permitted to command big-whiskered veterans who have braved the dangers of broiling climates and fiercely-fought battles ? Would the Army and Navy be administered so extravagantly ? Would sinecures be so numerous ? Would the Monarchy be practically defunct ?

Let no man accuse me of Communistic or Republican sentiments in proposing these questions as objects of legislative enquiry. Rather let us admit that it is because such questions are asked, and never answered—because our selfishness prevents their being fairly, honestly, and sincerely considered by Parliaments and Governments—that Communism and Republicanism take root and flourish in our midst. These inhuman outbursts of phrenzy and passion which we have witnessed in France, and which God grant we may not witness some day in England, are the outcome of wretchedness disregarded, ignorance left uneducated, poverty allowed to exist unhelped and unmitigated, and moral and political duty ignored and neglected. Nations, like individuals, have to suffer, when that law which underlies all legislation, and which is the basis upon which all right human action must be founded, is despised or unfulfilled—"That we should love our neighbour as ourselves."

It would truly be a glorious epoch in our history if we might, even for one single year, see our national interests committed to enlightened, virtuous, and resolute spirits—and there are plenty such in the House of Commons—animated by an invincible determination to grapple with the evils which flourish like weeds amongst us, unfettered by party ties, unhampered by selfish ambition, and only eager to co-operate with political friend or foe for the wellbeing of the country.

The merest infant in political history can tell us what faction and unbridled party spirit generally lead to. A miserable struggle for place and power brings Government into contempt, and when personal advancement or distinction becomes the chief object of party, the nation is not a long way off from revolution. Describe it by what phrase we please, and the smoother the words the greater the hypocrisy; the truth is, that the party at present in power in England legislates to retain power, and the party in opposition shapes its courses and contrives its plans to obtain it. "What!" I think I hear it said, "Is patriotism not the ennobling passion of our public men?" "Is public spirit dead?" "Are not the primary considerations and highest aspirations in every legislator's mind the welfare of his country?" God forbid that I should answer "No" to these questions. Although the spirit of the nation's life is almost crushed out by commercial narrow-mindedness and middle-class social mawkishness, it is not extinct. National honour and self-respect still exist, although their whisperings, which ought to be more audible than the shouts of ten thousand Hyde Park ruffians, are almost unheard in the noise and bluster of our money-getting, money-worshipping, "purchase and sale"-inventing age. There is public spirit and there are unselfish men amongst us; but what I speak of is, the depraved tone of Parliament, the aims of parliamentary aspirants and party leaders, and the objects of the groundlings who support and flatter them—these are, I fearlessly state, mean, unworthy, and degrading.

There has not been such a herd of docile, mediocre, common-minded men, on either side of any Speaker in the House of Commons, within the past two centuries, as there is at present. The extension of the suffrage before the people were sufficiently educated to be able to value its responsibility has led to the election of a host of local nobodies, whose only claims to legislative wisdom have been their success in manufacturing calico, or discounting bills, or winning coals, or blowing bottles, or growing turnips. Such men when sent to Parliament must necessarily become party men; they are obliged to attach themselves to a leader, for they have neither had the time, the taste, nor opportunity to study politics for themselves. At the last election Mr. Gladstone recognised and profited by this condition of affairs. "I am a supporter of Mr. Gladstone!" was the keynote of their political ignorance, and their only hustings cry. Without any name themselves, they traded upon his, and repeated with parrot-like fidelity the harum-scarum political utterances which fell from his lips. The result has been precisely what any reasonable or thoughtful man might have predicted. The first Session of Mr. Gladstone's Parliament exhibited the most despicable submission of a majority to the power and will of one man—and that man by nature dogmatic, irritable, and self-glorious—ever witnessed in the House of Commons. Walpole never cajoled, or Pitt commanded, or Palmerston bantered, such a meek, poor-spirited, and meaningless majority as Mr. Gladstone dragooned. It was as much as any of their seats was worth—and that was not much—if their impotent minds ventured to hazard even a mild suggestion to their leader. Party discipline resolved itself into party terror, and the leader became a ruler instead of a guide.

The second Session showed a slight recovery of manly independence and individual responsibility. Mr. Fawcett was the first to break loose from the thraldom that enslaved his party, and to discover the imposture which Mr. Gladstone had perpetrated on the country in the name of Radicalism; and he had also the merit of being the first to declare that, if the majority were obliged to vote with him, they must be allowed to give some scope to their own intellects—at least such of them as had any. Mr. Fawcett's rebellious spirit did not go unpunished. His leader snubbed him, and the Liberal party press in London—the most time-serving and the most narrow-minded in Europe—chastised him, but he provoked a spirit which Mr. Gladstone has found it impossible to quench. Circumstances spoilt a great schoolmaster when they compelled the Prime Minister to adopt the *rôle* of statesman. I never see him turn round to his supporters, when addressing the House, without thinking that his right hand should hold a birch-rod.

Mr. Miall, who happens to have a mind—and, although I do not agree with him, I can respect him—was the next recipient of one of Mr. Gladstone's vials of extremely righteous indignation. Mr. Miall dared to have an opinion of his own upon the. Education Bill; but Mr. Gladstone was more interested in gratifying Whiggery than satisfying Nonconformity, and Mr. Miall's trenchant criticisms had also to be summarily checked.

The present Session developed a further reaction from the tame submission and personal subordination which characterised the first and second Sessions. Mr. Mundella had to eat humble pie some time ago at Mr. Gladstone's bidding and to abandon high official aims, and decently bury his Trade Marks Bill; I cannot say I sympathise with Mr. Mundella; but it is obvious Mr. Gladstone has been decidedly more subdued and less self-confident. Other circumstances, however, have been at work to mitigate the monotony of Mr. Gladstone's tyranny and to modify the exacting discipline which he previously exercised. The blundering of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the weakness of the Home Secretary, the feeble and undignified policy of our Foreign Secretary, the absurdity of some of the Prime Minister's political appointments, and the obvious want of sympathy between the Cabinet and the advanced Radicals, have alienated the sympathies of the thoughtful few amongst his party and unfastened the trammels of party discipline; but still, on a party division, the rank and file of borough-elected nobodies and half-educated millionaires rush into the lobby with their leader.

Perhaps such a condition of things as this is requisite and necessary under our peculiar circumstances, but I leave the country to judge whether it is desirable, and whether also it does not account for much of that tardy and unequal, if not unjust, legislation which goes by the name of law in England. In a Parliament of successful manufacturers, can any one be surprised that labour is somewhat harshly dealt with? or that little value is set upon the traditions and history of the country, and little regard bestowed upon what position England occupies in the council of nations? The bulk of those who for three years have so innocently followed Mr. Gladstone into the division lobby can only speak upon questions of commerce—how much this or that costs, and how much we get, or do not get, for our money. They talk "shop," and unfortunately can talk nothing else but "shop." Parliament has become a huge Manchester warehouse, where the rattle of sovereigns and the din of drays and waggons, and the sharp huckstering of buyers and sellers, alone fill the ear and occupy the mind. We have politics reduced to pounds, shillings, and pence, and national policy regulated by its effect upon our produce markets. We have Mr. Lowe's wit and eloquence expended, not upon a question of how to lessen pauperism, or improve the condition of those who are even worse off than paupers — the industrious poor, —but on a question of taxing matches, a contrivance calculated to make a few of the poor even poorer still. We have Mr. Ayrton revelling in vulgarity, wholly in sympathy with the mind and taste of Mr. Gladstone's local Radical celebrities, who despise artists, architects, and others of this market-gardener class.

The traffickers in the House appear to have taken special possession of the Admiralty, and we have Mr. Goschen from the Bank of England, now sitting at Whitehall, as the head of the Navy, studying the mysteries of naval construction in place of the intricacies of foreign exchange. The Navy of England has to submit to accept as its First Lord a respectable British merchant, in order that Government may be carried on in harmony with the commercial spirit of the age, and that Mr. Gladstone may continue Prime Minister.

Of course it is quite right that in a mercantile nation like ours mercantile men and mercantile affairs should occupy a very large amount of public attention. England is a great nation by reason of her commercial enterprise, her vast material resources, and her indomitable industry. But what I do protest against most strongly is, that the commercial classes should seek to direct English politics, and thrust themselves into political positions which they are quite unfitted to occupy, and in which they appear ridiculous.

The mercantile classes are, comparatively speaking, the product of the past half-century, and their true position has not yet been assigned to them. The change is perhaps too sudden, and the situation too new, for any statesman to fix the true place and proper sphere of usefulness of this important and increasing body.

We blame this class for obtruding itself in the House, and yet our blame ought to be tempered by reflection and dispensed with justice. Is not a seat in the House the only path to honour and distinction open to the mercantile classes? If a great engineer completes some splendid enterprise, the value and usefulness of which to the nation every one of us recognises, how are his services rewarded? Who acknowledges them?

A tutor to a prince, or some weak-brained courtier, willing to be a groom of the bedchamber, is created a knight if he were only before a lieutenant, or a K.C.B. if he were previously only a C.B.; but an engineer, being simply an engineer, and a valuable public servant in the true meaning of these often mis-quoted words, he is left to gain his reward in the price of his work. When a great contractor carries out some grand railway undertaking, which benefits millions of Her Majesty's subjects and becomes a new means of national wealth, does the smile of Royalty cheer him, or the hand of Royalty decorate him? Oh, dear no! Honours are not bestowed for efforts so insignificant and commonplace as these! You require to wear the official livery, and be a recipient of the bounty of the British taxpayer to be thought worthy to receive the common marks of Royal notice or appreciation. Or, at the least, the work must be done to gratify Royalty itself. The roll of honours bestowed on Her Majesty's birthday was quite an amusing study from this particular point of view. The Army and Navy gentlemen, as usual, had it all their own way, and it is to be hoped were pleased; if they were not, they ought to have been! One would almost suppose England's high position and great prosperity were dependent upon the honoured names then singled out for distinction and decoration. It would be a poor England indeed if all that ever was said or done by that distinguished roll were of any importance to the empire over which Queen Victoria rules and reigns.

The evil in a word, is this—English official life runs in ancient grooves, which Her Majesty's Ministers from time to time have not had the discernment to see the folly of, or had the courage to depart from, no matter how unsuited they are to the changed times and circumstances under which we live.

Lord Salisbury is the only statesman who, it appears to me, has appreciated the exact position and powers of the commercial classes, and has been anxious to remedy the evil which I am endeavouring to point out. Any statesman recognising the importance of the industrial classes which have gradually sprung up in this country, would have been solicitous to enlist their sympathies and secure their influence in favour of existing institutions, and especially the maintenance of the Monarchy. But what has been the actual course followed? The commercial classes, who have really the reins of government in their hands, and who, I maintain, are not yet fitted to wield the political power of the country, have been alienated from the Monarchy by the neglect and indifference which the Crown itself has displayed towards them. The stability of the throne and the existence of our aristocratic institutions, it is admitted, depend upon the loyalty of this important section of the community; and yet no statesman has recognised the necessity of winning their sympathies by rewarding their exertions.

We are ready to bestow honours rich and full upon retired Accountants-General and Superintendents of Contracts, who have served official life upon ample salaries, and have retired upon more than ample pensions—but the great pioneers of England's industry are left almost unnoticed and undecorated. The consequence is, that Parliament is crowded with commercial men, who seek there the distinction they could find nowhere else (but which their wealth could buy), and when they enter Parliament, they are Radicals in fact, and Republicans in heart. My argument only requires one touch from nature to prove its truth. When a Radical obtains office, and, with office, the distinctions and dignities which office brings, he becomes a greater time-server and flatterer of Royalty than any who have been courtiers for three generations. It would be invidious to mention names, but there are few of us who could not put his finger at present upon two or three prominent illustrations of this painful truth.

The pursuit of mercantile affairs is not a good school in which to acquire that broad spirit and comprehensive sympathy which political life demands. As a rule, commerce narrows the intellect, and its selfishness demoralises the mind. When a man aspires to a prominent place in the administration of the affairs of this country, and gets up in his place in Parliament and boasts that he left school at thirteen years of age and has "made himself," as the phrase goes, I admire his success, but I do most heartily condemn his presumption. The argument simply is this: "I have had the energy to earn so many sovereigns in so many years, therefore I must be qualified to be a statesman!" I shall not take the trouble to do more than state this proposition. To reduce it to an absurdity would only be to add absurdity to what is already absurd. In two or three generations, when education is better diffused, and when the commercial classes shall have benefited by the higher teaching which I believe will follow, then the "commercial element" may perhaps aspire to shape the laws and guide the policy of England; but until then, surely it is better that they should modestly fill a subordinate sphere. Followers they may be; but leaders not yet. Let the boroughs return them if they will; but when they enter Parliament, let them have the common modesty to be silent there. Audacity is not ability; ungrammatical speech-making is not eloquence; and much talking is not wisdom.

These observations regarding Mr. Gladstone's followers apply in an equal degree to those who sit behind Mr. Disraeli, except that it must be confessed there are fewer of the "pushing" class of men, and more self-respect and dignity of character within their ranks.

I have in a former paper admitted that the Conservative party is the party to which I belong, and I think as a party we require, indeed, no greater testimony to *our* imbecility and submissiveness than to state the fact that we are content to follow the leadership of men like Sir John Pakington, Lord John Manners, Lord Henry Lennox, and Sir John Hay. There is a galaxy of statesmanlike intellect! Who would not be proud to have such distinguished men to reign over him? These men will all have posts in the next Conservative Administration. That is perfectly certain. And with such splendid talent amongst us, directing us, guiding us, and leading us, is it any surprise that we are "the great Conservative party"—in a minority of 120? Can anybody wonder that we are called the "stupid" party? and need any Conservative candidate be amazed to find the constituencies looking coldly and shyly at him?

Then again we have Mr. Disraeli as our leader-in-chief! Well, we all of us know that we cannot help that. Mr. Disraeli will not abandon his position: we cannot drive him out, because we cannot do without him; and we must submit to keep him until Providence kindly takes the matter out of our feeble hands. But the Conservative party in the country is still sound at the core, and can bide its time. We have, it must be admitted, passed through a period of considerable peril.

Mismanagement generally comes to an end, and it may be that we have in the country, although they are not at present in the front, able and capable men, competent to interpret Conservative feeling and to lead it successfully in the Houses of Parliament. We are passing through a crisis which has been produced by our leaders, and it is high time the followers began to take the matter into their own hands. If constituencies do not help in bringing about a better state of things, let them not complain that leaders and followers in the House of Commons should put personal and party considerations first, and good legislation in the background.

No. X.—MINISTERIAL BILLS—THE SESSION 1871.

> "Get wealth and place, if possible, with grace;
> If not, by any means get wealth and place."

THE BALLOT BILL.

It would seem that the only measure of any importance likely to be passed this Session is the Ballot Bill. A process of conversion has been going on which is truly marvellous. The Bill has been accepted by the House of Commons with a majority of 122. The change of opinion which took place when the Corn Laws were passed is nothing to it for earnestness and unanimity. Of course, Mr. Gladstone is converted—that is only right and natural, and can awaken no astonishment—it is what was expected of him, and his new friends would be disappointed if it were not so. But Mr. Lowe is converted, and Mr. Cardwell; Sir George Grey, too, and a whole host of other decent and respectable Whigs. They have all adopted the new creed, the creed which will inevitably be the finishing stroke to Whig political influence and existence. The Jesuits themselves never had such a success, not even when a whole village in Mexico was converted in one day. The time for such a change of opinion seems to me singularly misplaced. Mr. Disraeli's Reform Bill, if it did little other good, certainly made it impossible for any man not an exceptionally great millionaire to buy, bribe, corrupt, or intimidate a whole constituency.

It is not my intention here to argue the subject. These papers have no such lofty aim as would be involved in the deliberate, judicial, and exhaustive investigation of any subject. They are merely intended to inform the public concerning some of the undercurrents which bring such questions to the surface.

I sincerely trust the Conservative Peers will weigh well the propriety, the expediency, and the policy of opposing this Bill. I confess the Bill would have been more satisfactory to me if the Ballot had been left *out*, and the changes in the method of conducting Parliamentary and Municipal Elections named in the Bill had been kept *in*.

On principle the Ballot cannot be objected to, unless we are prepared to shut up the Carlton and other clubs. That the franchise is a public trust is perfectly true, but a trust is a matter delegated to certain persons for the benefit of others. Now that we have Household Suffrage, for whom do the present electors hold this trust? Is it for those who yet remain outside the political pale until Mr. Gladstone has carried Universal Suffrage? Or is it for the women and children whom the Radical party has not yet enfranchised? With the extended suffrage under the Reform Bill of 1867 this argument must fall to the ground. But even if the vote were a trust in its proper sense, the argument cannot be honestly sustained.

The duties of a juryman are surely a very high public trust, and yet we do not exact a public account from our jurymen as to how they have voted.

The House of Commons in its wisdom has conferred the privilege of voting upon a very large number of poor persons who are more or less under the influence of their landlords, employers, or social superiors. To give these persons votes, the conscientious exercise of which would be certain loss or possible ruin, is to mock them; but to give them votes which shall be at the command of their ambitious landlords or employers, and not be in the least a personal trust, is to degrade both the vote and the voter.

Looked at from the point of view of party policy, I believe the Conservative party will gain by the Ballot. The bill has been brought forward by the present Administration out of sheer political necessity to please the extreme Radical wing; and I venture to predict they will not obtain by it the success they have anticipated. The boroughs are more corrupt, take them all in all, than the counties. The local manufacturer who has gained his wealth out of the working men, whom he has badly paid and perhaps occasionally "locked out," is not usually disturbed when he wants to gratify his ambition by any overnice notions about scrupulousness. If he does not bribe the constituency by money, he corrupts some clique by promising to vote for some measure, no matter how foolish it may be, which their ignorance has adopted, but which any enlightened and honest mind would resist. The Ballot will, in my humble opinion, not be degraded by the election of such men. Better "the bitter bread of banishment."

MINISTERIAL POLICY.

It is not always upon the great questions submitted to the House that the real policy of a Ministry is discovered. The true springs of action are often disclosed upon what are merely insignificant points. This is the first time that any Administration has declared its determination to keep place at any price—offering a willing submission to the views of their majority, and withdrawing any measure likely to place them in a minority.

"Show us how you are likely to vote, and we, the Executive, will then decide what legislation we shall push forward, or what course we shall pursue upon any question. If we bring forward a Budget, an Army Reorganisation Bill, a Licensing Bill, or a Ballot Bill, which we have well considered, and have judged to be of essential importance to the nation, you have only to say you don't like it, and we will at once withdraw it—we don't insist upon your accepting our measures, and we will consult your convenience. We will amuse you next Session with these bills again, or any other bills, but in the meantime we are the Queen's Ministers, merely dispensing her patronage, and drawing our salaries." This is no exaggeration of the present ministerial policy—it is the fact, and it is quite a new and interesting phase of Parliamentary government.

But this policy received its final touch from Mr. Lowe a few days ago, when a short discussion in "Supply" took place upon "Queen's Plates in Ireland." Mr. Rylands moved the rejection of the item for the Irish racing plates (it was only a small sum, but Mr. Rylands is a great economist), and the Chancellor of the Exchequer said :—"The conduct of the Government had been perfectly consistent in the matter, inasmuch as they had consented to omit the vote for the Scotch Queen's Plates, *because the Scotch members wished them to do so* (cries of 'No! no!') and they proposed to retain the vote for the Irish Queen's Plates, *in deference to the wishes of the Irish members.*"

This is surely Government made wonderfully easy! Do as you please, gentlemen; only make up your minds! If you Scotch members wish to separate from England, and have a Parliament of your own—you are simply requested to say so! If you noisy Irish clamourers for "Repeal of the Union" are in earnest, intimate your views to Mr. Gladstone, and he will consult your wishes! Questions of principle and executive duty are, during the lifetime of Mr. Gladstone's Administration, submissively kept in abeyance. *Vixerunt!*

THE LICENSING BILL.

Out of tenderness for the Home Secretary, who is at present the Ministerial scapegoat, I had almost resolved not to say a word about the Licensing Bill. Nobody expected that Mr. Bruce could carry an important bill; but when he proposed a measure which applied Mr. Gladstone's principle of confiscation to private property, it was evident that a stronger man than Mr. Bruce, or half a dozen such as he, would have to take the matter in hand. As everybody knows that Mr.

Bruce is a weak Minister, and everybody wonders how he came to be a Minister at all, no one is disappointed. Besides, why should the Government make itself unpopular with the publicans and brewers? They are an important body, so important that they could teach even Liberalism a lesson at the polling-booths—and why should any Government run the risk of present defeat and certain damage at the next election?

This Session has witnessed two or three very astonishing feats of political management, and the withdrawal of the Licensing Bill is not the least remarkable; but the exhibition which Mr. Bruce has made of himself is perhaps the most striking of all.

THE ARMY REORGANISATION BILL.

In the autumn and winter of last year, when every well-wisher of his country had his mind fixed upon the tremendous conflict which was then raging between France and Germany, I was one of the many hundreds of my countrymen who urged a vigorous overhaul of our national defences, and prompt and effective legislation to remedy our weak points. I held this to be a duty imperative upon the Government, and I urged every one who thought about these subjects at all to assist in forming a right judgment as to our position and necessities. Further, I stated what has proved only too true, that "in dealing with this subject, the present Government must feel themselves placed in a position of peculiar delicacy. Indeed, it is scarcely possible that they can approach it at all; and they cannot attempt to do so without politically stultifying themselves."*

It would be idle to recapitulate the procedure of the Government upon this momentous matter. It would be equally idle to characterise the bill. Parliament met, and with a great flourish of flimsy rhetoric—the only thing the present Administration has in abundance—we had brought before the House, what was called the "Army Reorganisation Bill." As a measure of Army reform it was one of the most barefaced shams ever presented to the House of Commons; as a measure of national defence it was simply a farce and an insult to the nation. We had a bill placed before the country which made those who were really interested in national defence ashamed equally of the bill itself, the time-serving petty-minded views of the Government who proposed it, and the Parliament who condescended to receive it from the hands of a pusillanimous Administration.

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* "Sketches in the House of Commons," No. V. p. 117.

The measure was framed to gain the one thing needful for Mr. Gladstone's egotistic ambition—the aim and end of his political life—continuance in place and power. It was drawn to gain the Radical votes, and simply to carry out the Radical views respecting "Abolition of Purchase"; and although Sir John Pakington has seldom done a good thing or said a wise one, he never hit the right nail on the head better than when he stigmatised this bill as merely "a sop to democracy." The idea that England requires her attention addressed to the paltry subject of national defence appears for the time to be scouted and scoffed at by Her Majesty's Government. "Abolition of Purchase" I hold to be a good thing. It is high time that the mere possession of wealth should no longer be a qualification for rank and promotion; and it is high time, too, that ability and worth should be allowed, even though possessed by a man dependent solely upon his pay, to obtain their true place in our national services. But when the Government has wisely resolved to adopt this idea purely for party purposes, why do they mock the nation by calling it an "Army Reorganisation Bill," and foisting it upon the country as a great measure of national defence? Such a policy is "instinct" with the very meanest methods of government: it deceives the people; it gains a paltry temporary advantage which the national "instinct" discovers and chastises; and it is a crime, when practised for selfish ends to the detriment of national security. It is urged that our statesmen are bound to use the forces of public sentiment to pass measures not actually cognate to immediate circumstances, but capable of being passed under just such circumstances and no other, and this argument is set forth as a defence for the Government determining to abolish purchase now, and letting the more important matter of national defence wait. Of course, if the English nation prefers, in its ignorance, to be guided and led by humbug, and treated by Government as a wayward child, that fact must be allowed to have its proper weight.

Greater service never was rendered to the country by any newspaper than that which was resolutely and conscientiously performed by the *Pall Mall Gazette* upon this great controversy. This journal has gained its point against its great competitor, and carried it by the weight of calm reason clothed in convincing words. The *dictum* laid down by Sir Roundell Palmer during the discussion of this objectionable bill, that Parliamentary Government cannot be carried on except by a meek submission to the will of the majority, was one of those thoughtless statements which betray the weakness of some of our strongest intellects, especially when party partisanship comes into play. If this singular legal opinion were to be acted upon we had better be content, when an election takes place, to cast up the numbers, see which party has got the majority, and then give them full legislative powers for the seven years which constitute a Parliament's existence. Well, we have not reached that stage yet! Discussion still performs a useful part, though it may be we have rather too much of it, but sometimes it does have its proper effect even upon an ignorant majority and a dogmatic, popularity-hunting Ministry.

MINISTERIAL WEAKNESS.

The undignified position to which the Ministry have brought themselves by their infatuated blunderings during the Session has been productive of two evils. They have lost the respect of their supporters—especially those below the gangway—and they have ceased to have that command of the business proceedings of the House, without which the process of legislation, under a system of Parliamentary Government, is almost impossible; and the House of Commons is reduced to chaos and disorganisation.

The short and sharp discussion which took place when some criticisms were passed upon the manner in which Mr. Gladstone attempted to obtain the consent of the House to their act of the seven Resolutions of the " Select Committee on the Despatch of Public Business" illustrated this fact in a way which must have lessened very considerably the self-respect of Ministers. Mr. Bouverie's mild and sensible remonstrances were sufficient to frighten the Ministry into submission, and compel them to abandon a course which betrayed more of the methods of a provincial attorney than any one could have expected from Cabinet Ministers.

THE BUDGET—MR. LOWE.

There are few men in the House of Commons who are so thoroughly out of harmony with its spirit and genius as the Chancellor of the Exchequer. When he speaks, you see at once that he does not properly belong to the atmosphere of the British Parliament; he never addresses himself to the sympathies and humanity of the assembly, and he always appears to inhabit a region of cold intellectual gladiatorship, where truth is found and success won by climbing impossible heights, bridging impassable chasms, and taking perilous leaps. He makes life supremely difficult to ordinary men. The House of Commons does not understand him, and its quiet, staid, and sensible members, have somehow come to the conclusion, that all this wonderful exhibition of superhuman effort is not quite necessary. It dazzles for a time, but even if it were admirable it palls upon us. "Uniformity, even of excellence," said Dr. Johnson, "is tedious"; and assuming Mr. Lowe's intellectual efforts to be excellent, we have got tired of them. Mr. Lowe forms one of a small clique who achieved their first distinction in the Australian Parliament. Mr. Childers is one of the same school, and when they returned to England they struggled to obtain office by joining the ranks of professional speech-makers. Mr. Lowe gained his place in the Ministry by his speeches delivered against Mr. Gladstone's Reform Bill. It seems curious that he is a member of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet, but nothing is curious in the greed for office under Parliamentary Government. When Mr. Bright and Mr. Lowe met at the first Cabinet meeting, it is a great pity that some great artist was not present to depict the expressions on these two countenances. What a splendid historical picture illustrative of Parliamentary inconsistency might have been produced! Mr. Lowe, who sneered at Mr. Gladstone's democratic Reform Bill, and scoffed at Mr. Bright and Mr. Gladstone's model working man, joined the Radical working man's Administration, and eagerly jumped at his opportunity. Consistency! That may be a word suited for our pulpits, but it is not fit for politics. Whether a general election take place sooner or later, I am perfectly satisfied that when any member of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet seeks re-election, he will find the working classes not quite so easily imposed upon this time as they were last. Mr. Gladstone moulded the Odgers, Applegarths, Lucrafts, and Howells to his will by flattering and cajoling them; but they have since had their eyes opened, and it will be their own fault if they permit it a second time. Mr. Lowe may get a seat, but I doubt it. He should be christened "Mr. Matchbox Lowe," to commemorate the absurdity and completeness of his financial failure. The Australian school of politicians, of which Mr. Lowe and Mr. Childers are our English examples, rely chiefly upon audacity. Both of them, however, have carried this quality rather too far for modest British tastes.

Just as they thought they had built a substantial reputation, their hollow superstructure has tumbled down, and overwhelmed them with confusion. So will it always, I trust, be with self-seeking professional office-seekers. Mr. Lowe is not the stamp of man who will ever form or lead English politics. There is a natural instinct amongst us, averse to those who are ready to adopt any line of policy or accept any position for mere personal ends. Although their abilities may carry them forward with an appearance of success for a time, they invariably meet with their deserts. The House of Commons and the country have humiliated Mr. Lowe, and not a man has lifted up his voice in mitigation of the disaster. A British Cabinet Minister of a fine sense of honour would have retired from the Administration, and resigned a post which he has manifestly bungled in the face of the nation; but our Radical Ministers do not do these things nowadays

Whatever Mr. Bruce has done by way of withdrawing bills, Mr. Lowe has left him far behind. The abandonment of the Succession Duties was a proceeding quite unique in Parliamentary annals. For pure pusillanimity it cannot be surpassed. Mr. Lowe, when apologising for the withdrawal of his Budget, said, "We found that the proposals were distasteful to the House, and as the House is ultimate master in such matters, we deemed it our duty to withdraw them. . . . We would not throw the matter up like petulant persons, merely because we could not have our own way."

Precisely! But which in that case is the Executive—the House of Commons or the Cabinet? And when a Minister, after mature consideration—in conjunction with the Cabinet—brings a scheme before Parliament, is it competent for him to say, "I am only a departmental clerk of the House trying to discover what you would like; and if I don't succeed, I am ready at once to withdraw my plan and adopt any other which I see will suit your taste"?

What sort of Government is this? To most of us it is new. Burke and Fox, Canning and Pitt, surely would disown it. Earl Russell even would say, "Government I know—but this miserable caricature of it I do not know."

THE ADMIRALTY.

Sir Spencer Robinson has just published a pamphlet, entitled "Results of Admiralty Organisation, &c." A careful perusal of this interesting publication only confirms all that the "Silent Member" had to say upon this subject. The contradiction which Sir Spencer Robinson perpetrates in page 37 is rather striking. He advocates the appointment of a Financial Lord (will Sir Spencer inform me why they must always be called "Lords"? did he feel very much like a Lord when he was dismissed?), and urges "that no one should be appointed without special qualifications for the important office."

Exactly so! Nothing is more obvious or reasonable. But in the next sentence Sir Spencer endorses the absurd political maxim, "that in Army and Navy administration no professional or technical knowledge is required in the Cabinet Ministers who govern these departments of the State." Many political maxims, which have contained ten times more wisdom than there is in this one, have had to submit to reconsideration, and I can only repeat that it is party necessity only which requires, and personal presumption permits, an unprofessional man to assume the post of First Lord of the Admiralty.

THE CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP.

The meetings of the Conservative party during the past two weeks are not likely to be productive of any remarkable results at present. The one point upon which most Conservatives are agreed, but which few have the courage to express, is that Mr. Disraeli's continuance in the post of leader ought to cease. Let Mr. Disraeli by all means have ample rewards and honours for his labours when the time comes, if he desires them, but let it be conceded that his influence over his party is well-nigh gone—that it is prejudicial to its usefulness—that it hinders unity and concord among its members—and that it is imperilling the seats of many Conservatives at the next election. It can be no greed of further political distinction that animates Mr. Disraeli. He has had enough of that surely, and to spare! It can be no egotistical notion that his services are absolutely essential to the existence of Conservatism in the country—Mr. Disraeli is too wise to be so self-glorious. But if it be because a few Conservative Peers consider Mr. Disraeli's services to be indispensable, and will not allow him to retire from a position which he cannot now hold with grace or success, let the party itself speak out both in the House and the country, and challenge a decision.

Who is to succeed him? Yes—who? I have my opinions, and in my next paper will endeavour to justify them.

SKETCHES

(PERSONAL AND POLITICAL)

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

BY A SILENT MEMBER.

Sixth Series.

No. 11.—SOCIALISM AND CONSERVATISM—
NEW LEADERSHIP.

12.—THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND THE
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PREFACE.

The writer of these pages proposes to place before the public some particulars of the Interior Life of the House of Commons. The papers are designed to form a complete series of twenty, and will be published at short intervals. They are intended to point out and to correct some of the annoyances which the House inflicts upon

A SILENT MEMBER.

London, November, 1871.

SKETCHES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

No. XI.—SOCIALISM AND CONSERVATISM—NEW LEADERSHIP.

"Est natura hominum novitatis avida."

There are certain traits in every man's character—peculiarities of thought, style, and manner—which no one can imitate without a sort of moral forgery. However exalted or however insignificant a man may be, he has at least one talent which would contribute, if properly cultivated, to the common good. There are not a few members of the House of Commons who copy very closely Mr. Gladstone's voice, gestures, and language; but they fail miserably, as all copyists deservedly do. It is only the original that can be really true to itself. There are people, on the other hand, whose individuality is so distinctly marked, that one can tell at once, not merely what they would do under given circumstances, but what certain circumstances would be sure to call forth. We only require to see a sturdy Hollander starting from the canvas in some Dutch Gallery to be reminded of the mellow and melancholy hues of Vandyck or Rembrandt. Every great masterpiece reveals by its touch, its finish, its unity and completeness, its originator—there is a natural affinity between every man and his works.

The "New Social Movement," as it is called, betrays its parentage so distinctly, in its conception, its design, and its purposes, that there can be no possible room for mistake. The seven new points of the charter which have been presented to the British public for its delectation and amusement, are clearly the offspring of Mr. Scott Russell's bold and daring genius, adapted and arranged to suit the subtle and mysterious intellect of Mr. Disraeli. There is little need to dwell upon the unnaturalness and ridiculousness of the proposed combination. A grand flank movement in the style and manner of the Reform Bill of 1867 was contemplated; but, fortunately for Conservative self-respect, the scheme was disclosed, and its intentions, so far as it was proposed to effect a political union between Conservatism and Socialism, frustrated and rendered abortive. The noblemen and gentlemen who coquetted with the new political necromancer, have each written up "No Popery," and run away. There is some consolation left to Conservatives of the rank and file, in the fact that these individuals seem now to be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. When this matter comes to be fully disclosed, as it undoubtedly will be, sooner or later, I believe it will be discovered that only Mr. Disraeli's subterranean mind could have given it any real countenance or encouragement.

Most people, during their lives, have observed, or been warned of, the dangers of enunciating new views. True wisdom, it is said, is seldom original, and never obtrusive. The career of the Communist candidate for Truro, a short time ago, was at once an illustration and an example of the truth of this remark. There are gradations in thought, as there are in nature, which cannot be forced or ignored with impunity. Startling discoveries are generally either the results of slow growths only discovered when formation has well developed, or mere vagaries in nature, often inspiring as much disgust as surprise. The world is ever getting wiser—morally, socially, and politically; but it is by the beaten paths and by slow degrees—bold strokes of originality are rare, and always received with suspicion. The man who astonishes us with a new theory or invention is at first a lunatic, a heretic, or an impostor, however successful he may be at last in proving himself a public benefactor.

Montaigne, in one of his essays, tells us of a country where any one who sought to introduce an innovation presented himself in the market-place with a halter round his neck. If his suggestions were adopted, he was crowned with laurel; if refused, he was instantly offered up as a sacrifice to misdirected genius: pointing the moral that misapplied talents are dangerous to society, and deserve the severest punishment. Mr. Gladstone might consider the practicability of applying this admirable remedy to some of the more impetuous of his supporters. Montaigne had a fine common-sense contempt of noisy clamourers and popular agitators.

Englishmen are not admirers of new-fangled notions. There is no country in the world, except perhaps China, where new ideas spread so slowly and flourish so feebly as in England. English Reformers deserve all praise for their endurance and courage, for they have unfathomable difficulties to overcome. We are by habit and nature, as well as by tradition and principle, an essentially Conservative people; and this notwithstanding all the talk we hear about Radicalism, and all the enthusiasm stirred up by Liberal members for Liberal boroughs. Let any thoroughgoing Reformer go into the City of London, where four Liberal members are returned to Parliament, and where Radicalism is therefore supposed to be triumphant, and set on foot a movement to reform some of the antiquated and ridiculous customs and privileges which prevail among the Companies and the Corporation! See how remarkably unradical and un-reforming your enthusiastic Radicals become!—none so Conservative and ignorantly and obstinately opposed to change. Radicalism has done much in amending our political system, but it has never yet penetrated the social life of England.

A Republic may be either a good thing or a bad thing, but in America it has fostered a receptivity of new ideas, a fertility in design and invention, and a readiness to adopt novelties in language, government, and religion, to which we in England are utter strangers. And it is remarkable that this aptitude has not, at least as yet, produced those calamitous results which wise European pessimists predicted.

It is a personal and social, as much as a political outrage, if any man in England dares to wander out of the contemptible limits which party spirit or social position has assigned to him. If Mr. Odger were a newly-created Solomon, speaking with the lips of an angel, we should not believe in him, so long as he was merely a shoemaker. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" is still the question a conventional social life applies to the Watts, Arkwrights, Stephensons, Faradays, and Cobdens of society. We look to our usual leaders for truth and intellectual guidance, and resent as an insult the intrusion of views propounded by humble and unobtrusive followers in the paths of knowledge. Sidney Smith, in his satirical but truthful way, fixed £2,000 a year as the sum a man must possess in England to be permitted even to have an opinion; but so schooled are we, as a people, in narrowness and subserviency, that he might have doubled the sum, and added that he must likewise be a Peer if he feared lest his opinions might obtain too ready an acceptance.

We are all taught by our State-Church, from our infancy, "to be content with that station in life to which it has pleased God to call us," and we all rigorously bend before the liberal and enlightened spirit of this sacerdotal injunction.

The broad phylacteries of the successful bishop are never imitated by the half-starved curate. The high, square, carpeted pew of the country squire is never invaded by the hobnailed boots of the village worshipper. The politician who, in a moment of weakness, has uttered a party shibboleth, or enlisted himself under a party flag, is bound ever afterwards blindly and rigidly to follow his leader without comment or question.

If I venture to make one or two observations in this paper which may not be cast in the customary Conservative groove, I hope they will be received in a spirit of fair consideration, and for the rest I am not anxious as to the result.

In a former paper* I endeavoured to trace the history of the Conservative party since the death of Lord Liverpool in 1827 up to the present time, and to point out some of the causes which have gradually led to the decline of its influence and power—a decline so manifest and unmistakeable at the last general election that he who runs may read.

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* No. III. The Conservative Party—Mr. Disraeli.

In the same paper I ventured in general though distinct terms to hazard some suggestions as to how that power and influence might be won back, and I directed special attention to the necessity of at once deciding that Mr. Disraeli's leadership, which has been so disastrous and discreditable, should cease.

I am well aware of the difficulties which present themselves to a political party in severing itself from an able, an indefatigable, and an accomplished leader. When Earl Russell handed over the Premiership to Mr. Gladstone, his patriotism overcame private feeling, in order that his party and the creed which he professed might be the gainers, even at the cost of personal dignity. At such a time the memories of services freely rendered, abilities of surpassing power offered and accepted, victories struggled for together and won with mutual rejoicing, crowd into the mind, and the very thought of separation is painful and its difficulties almost insuperable. But the very last weakness of noble minds is to cling to a position which it is neither patriotic nor politic to hold. It is better that the General should resign his sword than that useless slaughter should be incurred, when the ground is untenable, victory impossible, and the generalship a failure. I am confident that the very last man connected with the Conservative party who would wish to arrogate a position, or a power which ought not to belong to him, is Mr. Disraeli; and it is my confidence in this conviction which will embolden me to state, without reserve, the reasons which impel me to urge his retirement. It is no light thing for a man admiring Mr. Disraeli as I do, but caring for the credit of my party and the welfare of my country more, to urge such a course upon the consideration of the Conservative party. It is not the idle or thoughtless action of a moment, undertaken from hatred, malice, or any uncharitableness. Mr. Disraeli has never either refused or disappointed me of place, has never wounded my susceptibilities, inflamed my wrath, or quickened my resentment.

My motives no man shall question without a stern and indignant denial. Thus much I consider it due to myself to say, as the paper to which I have already referred has been spoken of and criticised in a spirit far removed from a just conception of its meaning or its motives.

Let us look our situation as a party fairly in the face, and see whether it is not possible to amend our position and improve our leadership. I will assume, first, that the Conservative party does not exist merely to subserve the ambition of party leaders seeking power and place as the aim and end of party existence, or indeed that power and place, for their own sake, have any attractions at all to such a party, or that it is designed to minister to the support of privilege, monopoly, or worn-out institutions. I will assume, further, that its policy is not based upon a strict and reverential adherence to antiquated laws, ceremonies or systems, and that its purpose is not the rigid maintenance of aristocratic distinctions, castes, or traditions. It is necessary to make these reservations because it is scarcely possible to discuss the question of party politics with a Liberal or Radical in Parliament, or to encounter him on the hustings without his boldly asserting, in the very strongest terms, that these are the only objects which Conservatives have always at heart, and which constitute the essence of the creed they are banded together to justify and uphold. I do not blame Radicals and Liberals for holding this view, and arrogating to themselves the credit of all the legislative improvements which have been accomplished within the past thirty years. It has been the error and disgrace of our Conservative leadership during that time, that almost every advance made has been resisted, every needful improvement opposed or retarded, and every beneficent law proposed hindered and delayed, and too frequently rejected. And what are our leaders doing at this very instant in this respect, but dragging themselves and their party deeper through the mire? Take the question at present uppermost in the public mind as an example—namely, the Ballot. Is there any Conservative in existence who, in his heart, believes that this Bill will not pass? or, that the Ballot will be pernicious if its operations are restricted to the purposes for which it is designed—the protection of weak voters from the tyranny of strong landlords or employers? Why do our leaders degrade themselves and unpopularise their party by a persistent and inefficacious resistance to this Bill? This is but one instance, where many could be cited, bringing into broad view the injudicious and ruinous leadership to which we are subjected. Our leaders strive to make it appear that the only purpose under heaven for which the Conservative party exists is to oppose new legislation however good, and retard improvement however needful; running a muck at common sense with most vexatious indiscretion.

Or, take the question of alterations in the Constitution of the House of Lords. What a holy fire of indignation our leaders at once set up when any one dares to offer a suggestion upon this subject! Is the House of Lords perfect? Is it a heaven-sent institution, immaculate and complete in all its parts; or merely the creation of fallible men, prone to error, requiring amendment to suit altered circumstances, and demanding at present the attention of wise statesmen? Or, supposing a Conservative dare venture to say that an Established Church might exist and prosper without episcopal and archiepiscopal political representation—which many consider a standing insult to every other creed in the country—and that the principle of hereditary legislation might be restricted if not abolished, what a wild roar of injured Conservative sentiment and principle is emitted. How Sir John Pakington, Mr. Hardy, and Lord John Manners buckle on their ancient armour, and gnash their teeth in defence of these venerable institutions! And how valiantly they resist, inch by inch, any attack made upon their practices, however hurtful, and their principles, however inapplicable to changed circumstances! But do our leaders represent the common sense either of their party or the nation in such a course, and what useful purpose does it serve?

It must, however, in justice to our recent leadership be added, that all this trouble is taken, and all this resistance offered, under the ill-concealed disguise of an organised hypocrisy. No resistance is really offered—no institution is meant to be seriously defended. All that is contended for is, that Conservative leaders may get office and retain it, and then carry reform further, deeper, and lower, more foolishly and furiously, than those who have clamoured for years for its adoption and strained their utmost efforts for its accomplishment.

Lord Mayo, under Mr. Disraeli's leadership, was prepared to perpetrate the most atrocious system of "levelling upwards," while he was disporting himself in "levelling downwards" at a pace which perfectly staggered every thinking man in the country, and most of all his bewildered followers, who were betrayed and debauched (I beg Mr. Disraeli's pardon, "educated") by a temporary tenure of office.

And what, may I be allowed to ask, is our present position? What wisdom are our leaders exhibiting in the face of grave contemplated changes, and what fitness do they show to guide the party they have morally ruined and miserably diminished?

There is a talk of Conservative reaction. East Surrey and Truro were pointed to a short time ago as disclosing the country's weariness and disgust with Mr. Gladstone; and as showing how anxious—oh! how anxious—we all were for the immediate advent of Mr. Disraeli, Lord John Manners, Sir John Pakington, Sir John Hay, and Lord Henry Lennox. The Conservative press rejoiced over these triumphs—for triumphs they undoubtedly were—and the Carlton Political Committee were in ecstasies. Conservatism was once more in the ascendant, and at another general election a Conservative majority would be secured! If it were so, which happily at present it is not—I would devoutly hope that it may not be so, until Conservatives have made up their minds what they are really contending for—what institutions they would firmly stand by, or educate themselves to throw overboard, so soon as they are strong enough to assume again the reins of office.

Mr. Disraeli has twice recently been called upon to discourse upon his policy to constituencies famishing for want of a political programme, but Mr. Disraeli has respectfully declined. Sir John Pakington has also, upon a recent occasion, preferred a prudent silence when he was called upon to speak; which, in his case, has been as judicious as it was dignified. And the other more immediate political heads of the party have been absolutely dumb. It is useless to speak when you have nothing to say. It is impossible to enunciate a policy when you have none to enunciate, except what any passing event may evolve; and it is discreet to remain silent when anything said must belie past professions and in all likelihood involve future recantation.

The condition to which the Conservative party has been reduced by its leaders is at once lamentable and satisfactory. Lamentable, because it is an example of the just retribution which follows bad generalship and broken principles; and satisfactory, because no time could be more opportune than the present for reorganising its shattered condition, rehabilitating it anew in political respect, and forming new alliances to make its just influence felt in the councils of the nation.

There are but two parties now in this country, describe them by whatever nomenclature we may, or class them by whatever distinctions we choose to adopt;—the Advanced Liberal Party, representing radical change, with a Republic as the end and aim of their political creed—and the Moderate Party, opposed to sweeping reforms, and desirous of change only in the lines of the Constitution.

We may play upon the ignorance of the political *residuum* by shouting Liberal, Whig, Tory, or Conservative, as much as we please; but in fact and in truth these names no longer define political principles—future political battles must be fought from the platform set up by the Advanced Liberal party opposed to the Moderate party.

Why is the country dissatisfied with Mr. Gladstone, and how is it that his popularity has been somewhat on the decline amongst the more enlightened section of his followers?

The answer requires no ingenious or farfetched theory or explanation. The nation observes that he is playing into the hands of the Advanced Liberal party, and aiding the Republican sentiment in a manner which it is not, at least at present, disposed to submit to. We all fear that his fervid mind may carry him into political excesses in the direction of democracy, which would be dangerous if unresisted, and that his absurd talk about "The People's House" and "The People's Rights" may lead to demands and encourage hopes which we are not, as a people, prepared at present to gratify or indulge. His attempt to set up class prejudices—the rich against the poor, and the ignorant against the educated, as a political leverage, are resented as affronts and blunders, and East Surrey and Truro were pointed to as intimating to him that further progress in the same direction would hasten the end of his influence and power.

The country too is conscious that the majority who have supported him in the House of Commons were useful enough for the special purposes for which they were elected, viz. a blind support of their leader in the disestablishment of the Irish Church; but they were not elected to encourage Republican legislation or advance Communistic doctrines in the English Parliament.

The most moderate of politicians observe that Mr. Gladstone is a man who must always have a great bill before him to rouse himself and his followers into enthusiasm, and that as the list of great bills is well-nigh exhausted, Mr. Gladstone is compelled to fall back upon organic changes —which as a nation we are not yet prepared for, and which most of us believe would, if attempted, lead us out of our depth.

Mr. Gladstone is too eager for the slow temperament of his countrymen, and he is deficient in that sagacious and comprehensive estimate of human nature which marks the real statesman, and the want of which so frequently leads subtle and ingenious minds astray.

Mr. Disraeli, although a very different man, errs very much in the same direction. I have no doubt that he recognised no subtlety or inconsistency in his proposition of Household Suffrage; but his followers, who only marked the distinct and palpable appearances of right and wrong, principles abandoned, and professions belied, were probably better interpreters of what was just and desirable.

Having regard, therefore, to the position of Mr. Gladstone and his Administration, the extreme views they encourage, and the sensational legislation which year by year they are forcing upon an unwilling country, the question really comes to be, what part the Conservative party—weak and dismembered as it at present is—can play in preserving the nation from the dangers of Democratic and Republican theories, while desirous of legislating for the growing needs and acknowledged wants of the country. The idea of Conservatives accepting office simply because some fortuitous division may take place among those who have for three years been supporting Mr. Gladstone, is out of the question; unless it be clear that the separation is caused by divergence in principle, leading to a direct and permanent fusion with the Conservative party. That such a contingency may arise is not only possible, but its accomplishment would be comparatively easy if Conservatives would only be true to themselves and place at their head men who really represent their views, and who are ready to think and act in harmony with the moderate section of the community.

What the country requires is not impulsive and hysterical legislators like Mr. Gladstone—hounded on by the Dixons and Bradlaughs, the Carters and Lucrafts, or the Wrights and Odgers of borough constituencies; nor, on the other hand, the respectable narrowmindedness or political bigotry of a Manners, a Pakington, or a Lennox, or indeed Tory squirearchical exclusiveness of any form or description whatever. We should all be content to see at the head of affairs prudent, sagacious, and moderate politicians, ready to legislate tentatively, and not anxious to hurry us on headlong into a revolutionary abyss which none of us have yet been able to fathom. Such a desire and expectation as this is surely not incapable of realisation. Mr. Gladstone and his Advanced Liberal wing do not answer the requirements, nor do Mr. Disraeli and the extreme Tory section meet the description. Extremes we always shall have, and they fulfil a useful function in the body politic; but the fact that they are extreme is the reason which disqualifies them for guidance and control. Safety generally lies midway.

The country looks to Lord Derby as the elect head of a new Moderate party. Whether he accept the position or not, there is no man living who better represents the prudent judgment and sagacious political insight of his countrymen. Without the rash impulsiveness or love of compliment and flattery of Mr. Gladstone, or the craft and cunning of Mr. Disraeli, he possesses that calm common sense which Englishmen regard as the best test of action, whether in commerce or politics. Lord Derby could rally round him the best men of the Whig, Liberal, and Conservative parties; and, if he were entrusted with the formation of a Ministry, it would without question be the best and strongest which is at present possible in opposition to Mr. Gladstone. If a general election takes place when the Ballot Bill is passed, it is scarcely possible that the same miserable class of men, who were ready to promise everything and swallow anything in order to get a seat at the last election, will again be elected. The Ballot, in my humble judgment, will encourage men of known and tried character, and acknowledged political judgment, to come forward as candidates in opposition to mere gilded manufacturers, wealthy brewers, and half-educated local magnates.

Lord Derby is eminently fitted to be the exponent of the calmly reasoned wants and just expectations of the best and most enlightened section of the nation, and this without ignoring or denying the right to a hearing of the very extremest political unit in the country.

I can imagine an Administration formed by Lord Derby embracing in its composition the best and foremost of living statesmen, and I see no reason why some of those who are Mr. Gladstone's colleagues should not be able to join it. I know of no man who could more fitly represent Lord Derby in the House of Commons than Mr. Forster, and I certainly do not know any other who would secure the confidence and respect of the wisest Liberals (who are not Republicans and Communists), and carry the largest number of thoughtful and sensible men along with him. I am not particular to name the other more prominent members of such an Administration; but, if Mr. Lowe and Mr. Bright could sit in the same Cabinet, I see small reason which would prevent Lord Salisbury coalescing with Mr. Bouverie, Mr. Whitbread, or even Sir Robert Peel. As for Mr. Cardwell, Mr. Ayrton, and Mr. Grant Duff, or Mr. Baxter, a country must indeed be hard pressed for politicians when such men as these can come to the front.

Such a party coalition as I have indicated would necessarily have opposed to it the Advanced Liberal section, and it is in view of such a sharply-defined Opposition, which must be sooner or later developed, that I venture to advocate the formation of a new Moderate party. The Cardwells, Bruces, Duffs, and Baxters of the present Administration may make the most of their present position, for the future presents little prospect of their services being required in the same capacity.

Should Mr. Gladstone assume the leadership of the Republican faction—as his antecedents would certainly indicate as most probable—the struggle between extreme and moderate councils would only be the sooner decided; but it may surely be surmised that the political career of the Prime

Minister has been sufficiently exciting to induce him to relax his efforts at radical reforms. And as it is usual for a man at the closing years of his life to dwell upon the scenes and aspirations of his early manhood, perhaps some of those Conservative instincts which marked Mr. Gladstone's youth may return to his mind as energy languishes and life declines. But whether Mr. Gladstone adopts the dignified repose of Earl Russell, or prefers to continue his course of haphazard speech and reckless change, the country cannot too soon set itself to discover from what sources, and in what direction, a party is to be formed strong enough to resist Republican sentiments and democratic absolutism, which threaten to destroy every characteristic which has made English institutions the envy of the world and the name of Englishmen a source of pride and satisfaction, and this despite many acknowledged shortcomings and much which must gradually and carefully be amended.

No. XII.—THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND THE RADICALS.

"There's not an arrant rogue but calls the wretched raving of his paltry gang 'the public voice.'"

When Parliament was prorogued last August, and Radical members were sent home to their constituencies, it must be confessed that Mr. Gladstone had placed them in a position of peculiar difficulty.

When bidding "good bye" to the Premier, I can imagine Mr. Dixon, Mr. Morley, or Mr. Carter, addressing him somewhat in this wise:—"It is useless to deny the fact, Mr. Gladstone, that by your bad management we have almost wasted a Session. You have been more anxious to conciliate Whig support, and compromise Liberal principles in order to retain power and place, than to pass really Liberal measures. You have divided your followers into two hostile sections, satisfying neither Whig nor Radical, and you have opened a fair breach for Conservative attack next Session. You have erred in your Budget, and blundered in every important bill you have brought forward; offended the moderate section of politicians by playing fast and loose with the English Church Establishment, and irritated the Advanced Liberal section by disregarding their educational views; and almost proved yourself incapable of Parliamentary leadership, although an acknowledged successful mob leader. What am I to do? What am I to say to my constituents? What would your rival not have done had he ever possessed your advantages?"

Mr. Gladstone's reply would probably be somewhat as follows: "What, Sir! though all this be as you say, and I cannot deny that there is much truth in your observations, do you not know that the art of government consists not in any of these things, but in appealing to the 'great heart' of the country, 'sticking to the democracy,' and selecting 'a good cry'? And have I not provided 'A Good Cry' ready to your hand? 'Down with the House of Lords!' Do you not observe that this is likely soon to be one of my most cherished political convictions? And does it not sound well? Will it not astonish learned Oxford, where I was once respected and beloved; and will it not gratify ignorant Greenwich, where I have been disliked and suspected? You men from Bristol and Birmingham and Leeds, whose eloquence is not remarkable in the House of Commons, will be able to dazzle your Town Halls with splendid declamation upon so fertile and democratic a topic. Hence to your constituents, and shout 'Down with the House of Lords!' and all our Liberal shortcomings will be covered, and all our blunders blotted out."

This was the programme which the Liberal chief handed to his Radical supporters early last August, just as the doors of St. Stephen's were about to be closed. It has been slightly modified since by Mr. Gladstone in his Greenwich speech, which bears the complexion of Mr. Gladstone leaving his advanced wing in the lurch; but that is by no means an uncommon occurrence. The three gentlemen referred to, who are remarkable only in the House of Commons for that eager political enthusiasm which "the commercial element" relies upon for social notice and distinction, were caught in Mr. Gladstone's political trap. They went down to their constituents and shouted, "Down with the House of Lords!" at the very top of their voices, but somehow no echoes were awakened, and the sound and fury gradually died away.

The constituencies were lukewarm, the electors appeared bewildered by the novelty and difficulty of the undertaking; the press found itself not quite ready with the proper *pro* and *con.* arguments on the subject; and the three ultra-Radical abolitionists found that they had made a mistake—spoken too soon, in fact—and the attempt found little encouragement and fewer imitators.

But it was intended to be quite a different affair, and would have been if Mr. Gladstone had not already invented more than his proper share of political cries within the past few years, and wearied the country with their constant repetition.

We cannot always live in an atmosphere of feverish excitement. However pleasant it may be, champagne is dangerous when constantly drunk, and even the daintiest epicure is obliged occasionally to resort to commonplace beverages.

It was contemplated that from many platforms, and in many public-houses and taprooms, and by many platform and taproom orators, during this recess, the House of Lords would be denounced, and its members abused and vilified. Gentlemen in fustian and fat, and fussy aldermen and shopkeepers in broadcloth, were expected to pour a flood of frothy rhetoric over their boroughs. Concertrooms and corporation-halls were to resound with the shallow and impotent oratory of local grocers and cheesemongers, and many Radical members of Parliament, who dare not open their mouths in the House of Commons, were expected to unlock the fountains of their provincial eloquence to the admiration of astonished and enthusiastic listeners. The House of Lords was to be abolished by ungrammatical resolutions throughout the length and breadth of every British borough; and the Peers were to be ordered to pick up the long ends of their flowing ermine, and retire from the arena of hereditary legislation.

There would have been no harm in all this even had all been accomplished that was intended, if there were any other statesman in the country as Prime Minister in place of Mr. Gladstone. The House of Lords exists and must "show cause," as Lord Derby has phrased it, for its existence, or it must meet the doom that awaits all our institutions which are demonstrated to be useless or injurious to the public welfare. But we must all confess to some feeling of terror and alarm when these things are encouraged by a Prime Minister who disregards the constitutional voice of Parliament, appeals only to the vague tribunal of "public opinion," such as it may happen to be under any transitory excitement, and who, in place of relying upon the wisdom, calmness, and moderation of the enlightened classes in the community, prefers to receive the impetus and impulses of legislation from the passing passions of Democratic agitators.

Upon another important question—the English Church Establishment—Mr. Gladstone advised Mr. Miall to convert the nation, and then he might invoke his help. "Take the hint," he seemed to say, "and try stump oratory. Bring a little gentle pressure from without to bear upon your Disestablishment Bill, and it will soon be carried. Happy you, if perhaps by-and-by the fruits of your labour be not stolen, and the credit of all your exertions assumed by the Government to themselves. Get up a procession, *à la* matchmakers, to invade the precincts of Parliament; let them pelt Mr. Bruce, or me, or, for the matter of that, all the Cabinet separately. Liberalism delights in a mob of roughs. Mr. Bruce will send a detachment of policemen to break the heads of a few of the more respectable of the mob, and then 'public opinion' will triumph and you will have gained a glorious victory. It is no use speaking modestly and moderately in Parliament; arguing the question with statesmanlike breadth and capacity,—that is not the way to succeed. I recommend you to convert the people. You know what that means. Go round on the stump, get together a mob, and bring your vagabonds, angry and howling, to Hyde Park or Westminster Hall."

The House of Lords may have to undergo a revision of its privileges: it may be that abolition sooner or later awaits it; but if either of these alternatives is to take place, let it be done from the dictates of reasonable necessity, and with the dignity which becomes us in dealing with an institution so venerable and time-honoured, and which still commands some feelings of gratitude and respect; not from ignorant mob-clamour hounded on by Republican agitators in a spirit of reckless and indiscriminate destruction, and fostered by a volatile and popularity-hunting Prime Minister.

Let such a subject cease to be discussed from party motives, or for the sake of party advantage, and in the name of propriety and decency let it not be the cloak of ministerial weakness and failure, or the stalking-horse of any Minister, however popular, or any party, however powerful.

The reform of the House of Lords might judiciously begin by the adoption of a more uniform nomenclature of its nobility and a considerable reduction in the gradations of rank. The whole number of titled persons, by right and courtesy above the rank of Knight-Bachelor, in Great Britain does not exceed 8,000, and yet there are no fewer than fifty-two different designations applied to them. The following are a few of the appellatives which vanity has cherished and folly has bestowed upon the privileged classes of England :—Gracious, Most Gracious, Honourable and Right Honourable, Noble, Most Noble and Most Honourable, Sacred and Serene, High, Most High, Lord High, Your Grace, Your Honour, Your Worship, Your Lordship, Majesty, Duke and Duchess, Marquis and Marchioness, Earl and Countess, Viscount and Viscountess, Baron, Baronet, and many more which it is not worth the trouble to name. Let it be borne in mind that these distinctions belong to 8,000 of the population only, and that the remaining thirty-six millions or so, who make up the miserable remainder of the population, are content to be addressed by the common appellation of plain Mister and Mistress, Master and Miss.

Would it be any very great condescension to common sense if the titles bestowed upon all persons not composing the Royal Family were limited—say to ten, or five, or three, or even one? I can imagine the uproar in the drawing-rooms of Belgravia and Mayfair which the bare mention of such a suggestion is calculated to provoke. The Duchess of —— looks down from the height of a supreme elevation upon the Honourable Miss ——, who is only an Honourable. The idea of Lady Smith being obliged to consider herself of the same flesh and blood, rank and fashion, as Mrs. Brown, is of course an idea which compels one to shudder. But the indignation of these respectable persons notwithstanding, it would surely be a wise concession to the spirit of the age, which, in our Liberal phrase, boasts that we really are "all one flesh and blood," that such a suggestion should be seriously considered. Assuming that all the distinctions of Noble and Most Noble, Great and August, Grace, Highness, and Serene, and all the rest, were abolished, it would be simpler and easier, and certainly more dignified and natural, to adopt the single appellative of Honourable for members of the Second Chamber. It is some consolation to our own understandings that no new title of superiority has been invented in our day, and it is creditable to civilisation and education that no addition to the list has been made within the last two hundred and fifty years. The titles of nobility which are in use amongst us were the invention of conceited and arrogant men, at a time when ignorance and slavish subserviency were the lot and condition of life of every man, woman, and child in England, except those who fattened, and flourished, and ennobled themselves upon the fruits of their toil and drudgery. It would be well not to make too rigid an inquiry into the character of the persons upon whom some of these distinctions were first bestowed, or the precise reasons which prompted them. Our times have changed, but we are apt to forget that the lineaments of vice, long practised, often remain upon the countenances of those whose hearts have become virtuous. We preserve the manners and customs of barbarism in an age of education and civilisation. We speak the language of children when we have grown up to be men.

As an example of the manner in which titles enlarge and develope, it is worth while to notice the successive distinctions which have been applied to Royalty. Henry IV. had the title of "Grace" and "My Liege" conferred upon him in 1399. The title of "Excellent Grace" (a step further in grace it is worth observing) was conferred upon Henry VI. in 1422. Edward IV. had that of "Most High and Mighty Prince" bestowed on him in 1461. Henry VII., not to be outstripped in honourable invention, took the rank of "Highness" in 1485; and Henry VIII., took the same title and sometimes "Grace." But these two last were absorbed in the title of "Majesty," being that which Francis I., of France, addressed to Henry at the memorable interview on *The Field of the Cloth of Gold*—an event which gave a stimulus to regal magnificence and extravagance which has not even yet entirely died out. Henry VIII. was the last king who was styled "Dread Sovereign." Intelligence was beginning to dawn, and the fear and terror of Royalty to diminish. James I. coupled to "Majesty" the present "Sacred," or "Most Excellent Majesty." It is quite surprising that during the reigns of the Georges no new monarchical designations were invented—they loved titles with a passionate fondness, but it would be more surprising still if any attempt were to be made in this generation to improve upon any title whatever from the highest to the lowest. We hardly think we could submit to that, and in this we see the folly and absurdity of the whole proceeding.

Away with these vain and empty titles, which are offensive alike to the dignity and majesty of God and the modesty and humility of man, as the very first step in any reform of the House of Peers. Let these be swept away, and a more manly and independent tone would characterise English society. The title-loving, lord-worshipping toadyism (so provokingly sneered at by Mr. Gladstone at Greenwich) which besets the English middle classes, and derogates from the respect and position which they would otherwise enjoy, would disappear. Aristocratic youth would be less flattered and seldomer ruined—the exclusiveness of caste and the selfishness of social superiority would be broken up—one of the snares which places a factitious value upon ignorance and prejudice, and not unfrequently lends a sanction and countenance to vice, would be removed. Society would be less constrained, less envious, less miserably narrowminded, and a higher and more humanising influence would be the result. It is surely better to anticipate the tide of revolution which is indubitably setting in this direction, not in England only, but throughout the world, than to be engulphed in the waves when they are irresistibly upon us. Notwithstanding the titles which conventional society has bestowed upon its favourites, there is no escaping the moral aspect they present, and which cannot be effaced from human nature. We all recognise that John Smith, yeoman and honest man, is a higher and better style of man than Lord —— (however lordly), gambler or drunkard.

I attribute much of the vigour of mind, independence of character, and broad political thought which are the pride of Scotchmen, and which mark them wherever they are found, to the elevated sentiments of manly nobility which Burns's songs stirred up in their minds.

> "A Prince can mak' a belted Knight,
> A Marquis, Duke, and a' that;
> But an honest man's aboon his might,
> Guid faith he maunna fa' that.
> For a' that and a' that,
> Their dignities and a' that,
> The pith o' sense and pride o' worth
> Are higher rank than a' that."

Reform within the House of Lords is a question demanding serious and instant attention. The position which the Peers have occupied during the past twenty years cannot be satisfactory, even to themselves. They have been by turns threatened and bullied, despised and over-ridden, and every opportunity has been taken to intimate to them that they only exist upon sufferance, that they hinder as much as they improve legislation, and that "The People's House" should alone legislate for the people's wants. The more sagacious and statesmanlike members of the Upper House do not fail to perceive that this question must be fairly discussed, and sufficient cause shown, to be apprehended by the ordinary intellect of the country, why the House of Lords, as a political and legislative chamber, should be permitted to continue in existence.

The only real reform which can be made in the House of Lords is the total abolition of the hereditary principle. If England were polled to-morrow upon this question, I have no hesitation in saying that an overwhelming majority would condemn it—a majority none the fewer because Mr. Gladstone at Greenwich gave this subject a threefold consideration.

It is not a question of how much talent there may be at present in the House of Peers—how well the work of its Committees is done—or how much more the Peers would do if it were given them to do; but whether we can permit the existence of an institution founded upon a principle which cannot be sustained by argument, and the evil effects and rank absurdity of which stare us in the face every day.

Is there any reason why, because a child is born in a certain rank, and is the heir of a large inheritance, the weighty responsibilities of a legislator and a judge should be laid upon him, and that too whether or not he is willing or unwilling, moral or immoral, just or unjust, sagacious or stupid, a sage or a fool?

We have greatly altered in all our relative positions to each other in England within the past fifty years. When great riches and landed possessions were chiefly in the hands of the aristocracy, there was some show of reason why there should be a separate House to regulate legislation in which they alone were largely interested. But in these days wealth has become better diffused, and there are many Commoners with riches and possessions quite equal, if not greater, than those possessed by Peers who now sit in the Upper House. If wealth is to be the test of the maintenance of the hereditary principle, there will be candidates exceeding by twenty times the aggregate wealth of the present Peerage. Upon that ground certainly the hereditary principle cannot be maintained. Is talent to be the recommendation? That is clearly a test which cannot be applied to the hereditary principle at all; but if it were applied, surely it would tell against the present system, inasmuch as we all know that many men, incompetent, immoral, and in every way unworthy, are endowed at present with the precious functions of hereditary legislation.

Upon what ground, then, can this principle be defended? Upon no ground whatever, except that it has been; and, because it has been, may or ought to continue. It is the old Tory argument reduced to an absurdity. It is for the Peers to answer to the nation why their position should not be assailed, and this privilege abolished; and I am bold enough to say, that if the question is vigorously put before the country through the

House of Commons, the reform will come to pass sooner than many expect. The hereditary principle destroys the very purposes for which honours and distinctions were designed. These were intended to mark the esteem and respect of a nation for one who had personally advanced its interests, its reputation, or its power; or who had distinguished himself by his attainments in literature, science, or art.

But surely it was straining the proceeding too far when a son, perhaps yet unborn, was to receive the same honours and distinctions for doing absolutely nothing. It may be argued by some that the descent of great and renowned names long after the founder has passed away, stirs up a nation's sons to deeds of fame, and that the reward is attractive, and in every case much coveted.

But do we really find ourselves increasing in our respect for—let us say the Duke of Wellington, by the deeds of his successors? Would not the name of Nelson be just as much honoured even if his descendants had no existence? Is Chatham forgotten because he has no lineal representative now in the House of Peers?

It is a fact that often causes us as much surprise as disappointment, that great men seldom leave equally distinguished sons, and that the riches and the titles, which were so becoming in the father, are utterly unbecoming in his successor.

The real question is—Is England ripe for the abolition of a principle which has subsisted so long that it is part and parcel of the national life of the people? We cannot transform a system of government, obliterate customs, names, and traditions which are blended with our lives at every step, without a great struggle.

Admitting that a Second Chamber, having a veto over the legislative proceedings of the First Chamber, is requisite and necessary, it is quite clear that both cannot be elected by the same constituency. The same electors would only stultify themselves, by appointing one to promote, and another to veto, the same measure. The difficulty in abolishing the hereditary principle is in finding a substitute which will prove to be as elastic, as clearly defined, and, on the whole, as practically useful. The dread of the Radical party, that, if the House of Lords were abolished, a very large number of those who constitute its membership would find their way into the House of Commons, and swamp the Radical element, shows the hold which Conservatism still has upon the country, and is a recognition of the political talent possessed by members of the Upper House.

I cannot conceive that the Radical party are yet prepared to adopt the rule of Trades Unions, and place all our legislators upon the same intellectual dead level. I apprehend that Lord Derby, Lord Salisbury, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Bright, would be great men and command great influence, whether they were in the one House or the other. In fact, one of the evils of the House of Lords is that some of our very best statesmen are buried there and their talents wasted. I cannot dream of any country in Christendom where Lord Salisbury and Mr. Alderman Carter would have equal position or influence, or any constituency in England which, if there were only one Chamber, would prefer Carter to Salisbury. Would the petty qualities of the one weigh for one moment with the commanding faculties of the other? I do not include the rank or wealth of either in this consideration—I merely refer to them as men.

We might, without any affront to Mr. Odger, say we should prefer Lord Cairns, and we might further confess at once that we should prefer the Duke of Argyll to Mr. Bradlaugh. Mr. Dixon might be spared if Lord Granville contested Birmingham; and men of the mediocrity of Mr. Baxter, Mr. Candlish, or Mr. W. H. Gladstone, would have a very small chance against Lord Shaftesbury, Lord Carnarvon, or the Marquis of Ripon. I can imagine some constituencies which would even prefer the Silent Member himself to some blatant demagogue who spouts politics for personal advancement.

There is one alteration in the composition of the House of Lords which is inevitable and cannot too soon be brought about. The Bishops and Archbishops must doff their cassocks and their lawn, their dignities and their titles, and retire to the duties of their dioceses, and this whether or not Mr. Miall is successful or unsuccessful in his endeavours to disestablish the State-Church. Their presence in the House of Peers is at once an argument against their own religious usefulness and a standing reproach to every other Christian denomination in the kingdom. If we are to pass on to a great system of State secular education, there is the more need why the great heads of religious instruction should be at their posts in their parishes and dioceses, and not be allowed to waste their time at political discussions or at fashionable entertainments in London drawing-rooms. A man, it is true, is no less a citizen, though he be a saint; but the clerical body has chosen its own sphere, and it is wide enough and honourable enough to occupy the largest faculties and absorb the strongest energies.

To all appearance the first patchwork of reform in the House of Lords will be in the direction of Life Peerages; which was so contemptuously rejected some years ago.

There are many eminent men who would be glad to accept a Life Peerage, whose wealth is not sufficient to permit them to inflict hereditary honours upon their family, and it is their exclusion upon this ground which makes the House of Peers at present a refuge and reward purely for the wealthy. Why should not the most eminent men of every profession be called upon to give their counsel in such a chamber as the House of Peers? There is one profession which has had more to do with the national progress and prosperity than any other during the last thirty years which has not one single representative in the Upper House

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