

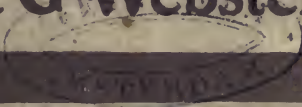
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Stories of
Elections
Past and
Present.

By R. G. Webster

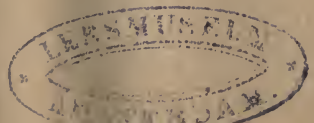
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Elections, Electors and
Elected





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Elections, Electors and Elected

Stories of Elections Past and Present

By

R. G. Webster

LL.B., J.P., Barrister-at-law

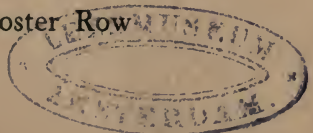
Author of "Japan: From the Old to the New,"
"The Trade of the World," etc.

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To
OLD ACQUAINTANCES
IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS
THE AUTHOR INSCRIBES
THESE PAGES

Preface

THOSE who wish for a complete guide to the conduct of a parliamentary election will have to consult the many text-books on that subject, though in these pages will be found many hints—useful hints, it is my hope—conducive to success, and not to be found elsewhere. From my experience as a candidate in five contested parliamentary elections, and as one who has assisted in scores of other contests, who has been returned to Parliament in the majority of the former, and has had the satisfaction of aiding the victorious candidates in the vastly greater number of the latter elections, I have often found that local enthusiasm and the lack of knowledge as to the right way to fight an election have led many candidates, their agents and supporters, into all sorts of political pitfalls, purposely placed in their way by astute

opponents. Endless time and energy have been wasted on all sorts of false issues, whilst the real question before the electors has been neglected, the result being defeat.

I do not want anyone to cast this little book aside and say, "Oh, elections! that must be a dull book, as it does not deal with the subjects which I usually read about in novels—namely, love and marriage, intrigue and scandal, murder and sudden death, and other pleasant subjects." All I ask is, whoever takes this little book up, read it and judge for yourself.

And whilst deeply impressed with the importance of the subject, and that the election of a member of Parliament for any constituency is a gravely important matter, both to the man who is elected that he does his duty faithfully and well, and to his constituents that he is a useful and fitting representative, although not, as some constituencies seem to imagine, the fountain of doles, or a sort of voluntary relieving officer, still, thank goodness! life is not all gloom; there is the bright side to everything as well as the dark, there is light and shade to every truly depicted picture. A man need not be

invariably considered clever because he is supernaturally heavy and dull and wearisome.

And whatever my critics may say, I shall, in these pages, go from grave to gay, even on this deeply important subject. The public has decided in its latter-day reading, mainly consisting of fiction, not to peruse the Lydia Languish-cum-Falkland kind of twaddle; no more can they endure a few hundred pages of the sighs and the woes of a love-sick maiden, the agonies and despair of her more or less devoted lover, ending in the overthrow of the villain, a marriage, and a live-happy-ever-after numerous-progeny chapter at the end. No; apparently, from the few novels I have recently read, they now demand a high-spirited heroine, who, together with her numerous admirers, must move in the highest circles, who passes her time in incessant love affairs and in constant travelling at home or abroad, and in visits to the houses of the aristocracy. The majority of these worthy characters must be endowed with high-sounding titles, with wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, and be, as a rule, abnormally selfish and absolutely devoid of brains.

The public, who is the king in such matters, has decided that the humorous element shall not be lacking in these works. Let it be so. But can any, even the best of them, compare in real wit and humour to the description of the Eatanswill Election in *Pickwick*? Would that any writer of the present day could compare with Dickens, that great master of the pen, who was witty without being—without leaving a nasty taste in the mouth. So was Lever, and so was Marryat. If I have before me such examples who dealt with elections, our army, and our navy, both in the serious and also in the lighter vein—and how many thousands of boys have joined our navy partly through reading *Midshipman Easy*, and turned out to be gallant sailors?—if I have such examples before me, I know I shall be pardoned by the less exacting if I, too, attempt, however imperfectly, to emulate their example. I purpose in these pages not only to give many of my own personal experiences at elections, as well as those of others, both in the past and at the present day, but to avoid as far as practicable—though to do so entirely would be difficult—allusions to any

burning political question of the day. The country will ere long be engaged in the throes of a General Election. The name I believe I was generally known by in the "House" was "R. G.," and "R. G.," therefore, wishes that the best men may win. But who "the best men" are he leaves for others to decide.

R. G. W.

8 KING'S BENCH WALK,
TEMPLE, E.C.

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Elections, Electors and Elected

CHAPTER I

ELECTIONS IN THE DAYS OF OPEN VOTING

IN jotting down some of the electioneering incidents which have fallen to my lot during five contests at the polls, in three of which I had the honour of being returned to Parliament, although no attempt will be made to show how to win an election, it will be my wish to interest the readers by giving them some of my own experiences at the parliamentary elections in which I have either been a candidate or have assisted, and to add here and there a few hints to candidates and others as to what are the best things to do and those to avoid at elections.

My first experience of electioneering was

as a boy going with my stepfather to the nominations of the rival candidates at a North-country town.

It was in the days of open nominations, and the hustings were erected in the market-place, each candidate and his friends being divided by a wooden partition from the opposite party. The proceedings were practically in dumb show, and the proposing and seconding of the Conservative and the Liberal, and their speeches, were perfectly inaudible for the noise and din, the blare of rival brass bands, tin trumpets, whistles, and the mingled cheers, howls, and yells of the free and independent electors and their belongings. Even the mayor, who acted as returning officer, on his declaring the show of hands in favour of one of the rival candidates, hardly got a hearing, a poll being at once demanded on behalf of his opponent. The only one person to whom the crowd would listen was a local wag, a toffee merchant, who had a stall in the market-place, and rejoiced in the name of "Toffee Joe." His views were supposed to be strongly democratic, and he heckled the Conservative candidate with a number of more or less smartly-put questions of a

somewhat bantering nature. This delighted the crowd immensely, and they laughed and cheered to their hearts' content, punctuating their enthusiasm by a few cabbages and other missiles indiscriminately hurled at those on the hustings. The gentleman whom my relative was supporting treated the matter as a good joke, and retorted smartly, winding up by saying: "Joe, you stick to toffee!" and turning to the crowd, he continued, "You try his toffee, you'll find it much better than his jokes." In fact, though the proceedings were rather noisy and rough-and-tumble, they were on that occasion quite good-natured and free from bitterness.

The next occasion that it fell to my lot to be present at an election was at a memorable contest in 1868. For at this election, in South-West Lancashire, Gladstone and Grenfell were the candidates on one side, and Turner and Cross on the other. It was particularly keenly fought, and it occurred during the old days of open voting, and prior to the Ballot Act. There was then only one polling-place for the whole of this large constituency, and that was at Newton-le-Willows, and to this, at that time, small township I drove

over with the late Col. Wilson Patten, then M.P. for North Lancashire (afterwards Lord Winmarleigh), and my stepfather. The excitement all day long was intense as the returns of the state of the poll were issued from time to time from the rival committee rooms. On their being posted up one noticed that each of them differed slightly; they always gave a *couleur de rose* return for their own candidates. The official returns came out every one or two hours, and, of course, were the only really accurate and reliable ones. It was, during the greater part of the day, a very close contest indeed, and for a long time Gladstone and Grenfell were slightly ahead, and it was not until an hour or so before the close of the poll (which then ended as early as four o'clock) that Turner and Cross had the majority of the votes, and they were ultimately returned.

One rather amusing incident which occurred during this contest was the following:—An elderly gentleman, arrayed in a blue coat and brass buttons, a determined supporter of one of the two great parties in the State (and there were only two great political parties in those days, and not, as now,

several) was asked by the presiding officer when he went into the polling-booth for whom he tendered his vote, and replied, "For the righteous cause," and it was not until several renewed queries had been addressed to him, and it was pointed out to him that he must name the candidates he voted for or his vote would not be registered, that he at length consented to give the names of those for whom he wished to vote. Another elector arrived by a train about ten minutes to four o'clock, proposing to go to the polling-booth. A gentleman who was a supporter of the opposite party to the intending voter engaged him in earnest conversation, till at length the latter said, "Well! good-bye, I must be off to vote." "Next election, I think," said the wily one, who had been conversing with him. "Why, what do you mean?" "Mean!" he replied, "it's past four o'clock, and you're too late this journey." This was then considered a smart electioneering trick.

Shortly before the close of the poll, when it was obvious that Turner and Cross were in, I got a good horse, which, at my request, an ostler had retained for me, and went a

hand gallop over the stony road (then made of cobble sets) to the town of Warrington with the news, and it need hardly be said that my reception at the committee rooms of the victorious candidates was an enthusiastic one, as it was generally anticipated that, at the utmost, not more than one of those candidates would have been elected.

CHAPTER II

THE GIANTS OF THE PAST

BEFORE I take up the thread of my own electoral experiences, I propose briefly to refer to some interesting matters respecting a few notable elections in bygone days, and give short extracts from the speeches of great statesmen on grave issues before the country in the past, issues still, many of them, of to-day.

Prior to the Reform Acts passed during the last century, the polling at contested elections was not, as now, concluded in a day, but lasted for fifteen days, and, in consequence, the wear and tear of these contests and their consequent expense to the candidates were appalling.

The bravest and the wisest electioneering address that I have ever come across, addressed to an assembly of Englishmen, was one delivered to the electors of Bristol by Edmund Burke in 1780. "Would," as

Maurice wrote, "our younger statesmen might read it again and again, till they have, in the true sense of the phrase, learnt it by heart." Burke, who had represented that city during a Parliament for six years prior to that date, was presenting himself to his old constituents for re-election, and explaining his conduct to them to ask for a renewal of their confidence. There was, however, a feeling at that time amongst the merchants of that city that he had injured their trade by his votes on the American War; he had, moreover, offended their prejudices in other ways, and he had been too busy in his parliamentary work to pay them as many visits as they had supposed were due from a representative; and a journey from Westminster to Bristol was not then, as now, a matter of hours, but of days. He made the most complete defence in a speech delivered just before the election, from which great oration I would here fain make a few extracts. "I should wish," Burke said, "undoubtedly (if idle wishes were not the most idle of all things) to make every part of my conduct agreeable to every one of my constituents. But in so great a city, and

so greatly divided as this, it is weak to expect it. In such a discordancy of sentiments it is better to look to the nature of things than to the humours of men. The very attempt toward pleasing everybody discovers a temper always flashy, and often false and insincere. Therefore, as I have proceeded straight onward in my conduct, so I will proceed in my account of these parts of it which have been most excepted to"; and later in the speech he added: "Gentlemen, we must not be peevish with those who serve the people. We shall either drive such men from the public stage or shall send them to the court for protection, where, if they must sacrifice their reputation, they will at least secure their interest. Depend upon it, that the lovers of freedom will be free. . . . If we degrade and deprave the minds of our representatives by servility, it will be absurd to expect that they who are creeping and abject before us will ever be bold and incorruptible asserters of our freedom against the most seducing and the most formidable of all powers." Speaking of his political opponent, who had evidently been "nursing," as it is called, the

constituency in Burke's absence at his parliamentary duties at Westminster, he said, "While I watched and fasted and sweated in the House of Commons, by the most easy and ordinary acts of election, by dinners and visits, by 'How do you do's?' and 'My worthy friends,' I was quietly moved out of my seat; and promises were made and engagements entered into, without any exception or reserve, as if my laborious zeal in my duty had been a regular abdication of my trust. . . . I knew that you chose me, in my place along with others, to be a pillar of the State, and not a weathercock on the top of the edifice, exalted for my levity and versatility, and of no use but to indicate the shiftings of every fashionable gale. . . . To have been the man chosen out to redeem our fellow-citizens from slavery, to purify our laws from absurdity and injustice, and to cleanse our religion from the blot and stain of persecution, would be an honour and happiness to which my wishes would undoubtedly aspire, but to which nothing but my wishes would have entitled me. . . . I must fairly tell you that, as far as my principles are concerned (principles

that I hope will only depart with my last breath) I have no idea of liberty unconnected with honesty and justice. . . . No! The charges against me are all of one kind, that I have pushed the principles of general justice and benevolence too far, further than a cautious policy would warrant, and further than the opinions of many would go along with me. In every accident which may happen through life—in pain, in sorrow, in depression and distress—I will call to mind this accusation and be comforted.”

At the close of his speech Mr Burke was encouraged to go on with his canvass; but the opposition being too decided on the second day of the election, he declined the poll in a noble address, which concluded as follows:—

“ I tremble when I consider the trust I have presumed to ask. I confided too much, perhaps, to my intentions. They were really fair and upright, and I am bold to say, that I ask no ill thing for you when, on parting from this place, I pray that whoever you choose to succeed me, he may resemble me exactly in all things, except in my abilities to serve and my fortune to please you.”

I have not by me the name of the gentle-

man who succeeded Burke as one of the representatives of Bristol, but that is immaterial; he no doubt got what he desired—honours or decorations, if they were given in those days, or, more probably, a statue to delight the eyes of future generations.

About that period, or shortly afterwards, in 1789, one of the great questions on which elections were fought was the abolition of the Slave Trade, which was urged by William Wilberforce in many forcible and earnest speeches. In 1792 he introduced a motion in the House of Commons for its immediate suppression, and supported it by an able speech. The speakers who followed were still inclined for delay, and for gradual rather than immediate abolition. Pitt supported Wilberforce in an eloquent address. Regarding this oratorical effort, the latter inserted in his diary as follows:—"Windham, who has no love for Pitt, tells me that Fox and Gray, with whom he walked home from this debate, agreed on thinking Pitt's speech one of the most extraordinary displays of eloquence they had ever heard. For the last twenty minutes he really seemed to be inspired." All authorities

agree that this was one of the greatest efforts of Pitt's genius, because it combined, with the most impassioned declamation, the deepest pathos, the most lively imagination, and the closest reasoning. Pitt opposed slavery in every form and shape, and declined to allow the matter to wait for its abolition "for the general concurrence of Europe," and in one of the concluding sentences of this speech he said: "Then may we hope that even Africa, though last of all the quarters of the globe, shall enjoy at length, on the evening of her days, those blessings which have descended so plentifully upon us in a much earlier period of the world. Then also will Europe, participating in her improvement and prosperity, receive an ample recompense for the tardy kindness (if kindness it can be called) of no longer hindering that continent from extricating herself out of the darkness which in other more fortunate regions has been so much more speedily dispelled. It is on this view, sir—it is an atonement for a long and cruel injustice to Africa—that the measure proposed by my honourable friend most forcibly recommends itself to my mind."

Wilberforce, though a strong reformer and philanthropist, and an earnest worker for the abolition of slavery, undoubtedly held strongly patriotic sentiments; in fact, at that date the enemies of Great Britain were the enemies of practically all its inhabitants, and we viewed such matters then in the same way they now present themselves to the peoples of the United States and Japan. In 1807, addressing his constituents at Hull, the following occurs in a speech which Wilberforce made whilst we were engaged in war during the Napoleonic era:—"I am glad, gentlemen, to know I am addressing those who, like myself, revere this excellent constitution, and assign its just nature to each of its respective parts; who know that all three branches of it are equally necessary, and who understand that liberty and loyalty can co-exist in happy and harmonious combination. Gentlemen, as long as you thus understand the constitution under which you live, and know its nature, so long will you be safe and happy, and notwithstanding the varieties of political opinions which will exist in a free country, you will present a firm and united front against every foreign enemy.

Great countries are perhaps never conquered solely from without, and while this spirit of patriotism and its effects continue to flourish, you may, with the favour of Providence, bid defiance to the greatest of our adversaries."

A few years prior to this electioneering speech of Wilberforce's at Hull occurred one of the most notable and hardly-fought elections in the history of the City of Westminster. The polling lasted for fifteen days, and it is thus referred to in a record of that election published shortly after that date:—

"In consequence of the dissolution, the gentlemen undermentioned offered themselves as candidates to represent the ancient and respectable City of Westminster in the new Parliament to be holden at Westminster, July 12, 1796.

"The Rt. Hon. Charles James Fox.

"John Horne Tooke.

"Sir Alan Gardner, Bart., Vice-Admiral of the White and Major-General of Marines."

Each candidate apparently fought in different interests. Sir Alan Gardner was a supporter of the then Tory administration of which Pitt was Premier, Fox stood in the Whig interest, and Tooke was an ultra-

Radical. For these fifteen days each candidate addressed the electors at the poll. Fox's speeches were, as all his addresses always were, of a most eloquent character. The admiral's were, as may be imagined, extremely dignified ones, and Tooke's were of the vituperative and burning with indignation, down with everything and with everybody, except Tooke description. I will not attempt to give them, nor would space permit me to do so. It is interesting to note that at the conclusion of the poll on the first day the poll was as follows:—

For *Mr Fox*, 232 ; for *Admiral Gardner*, 132 ; and for *Mr Tooke*, 129.

At the end of the eighth day the poll stood—
Admiral Gardner, 2624 ; *Mr Fox*, 2529 ;
Mr Tooke, 1634.

At the end of the poll on the fifteenth day—
Mr Fox, 5160 ; *Admiral Gardner*, 4818 ;
Mr Tooke 2819 ;

and the two former were returned. This election is also notable for the fact that during its continuance the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire of the day gave a butcher a kiss in exchange for his vote for Fox. It has been rumoured that in more recent days,

during a contested election, one of the canvassers, who was a young and attractive lady of title, was informed by a Westminster butcher that there was a custom in that borough which he should appreciate if she complied with before he promised to give his vote for her candidate. The lady gathered up her skirts and hastily departed, saying, "I'll mention it to the committee!"

The butchers in Westminster appear, about the date of Fox's election in 1796, or shortly afterwards, to have moved actively to endeavour to get rid of what was to them a great grievance, and which a committee of the House was appointed to inquire into—namely, the disadvantage they laboured under owing to the excessive prices charged them for meat by the middlemen.

The committee heard evidence and went into the matter thoroughly, and made three recommendations as to the best mode to obviate the evil complained of, though whether that evil still exists I know not.

Their chief recommendation was as follows:—

"That it is the opinion of the committee that the practice of jobbers and others who

buy cattle and sheep on speculation, which are afterwards sold at advanced prices several times before they are purchased by the cutting retail butcher (by which several unnecessary profits are obtained between the former and the consumer), are the principal causes of the dearness of butchers' meat within the bills of mortality; these practices, having increased to an excessive height of late years, ought to be abolished."

Then, ^{as} now, commemorative banquets appear to have been held in Westminster and the London district in honour of victories at the polls, and as Mr Fox's was a most notable one at Westminster, considering the strong forces allied against him, on 10th October 1797, on the first anniversary of his return, a dinner and meeting were held at the Shakespeare Tavern, Covent Garden, to mark that event, and Mr Fox, in the course of his speech, made the following pointed remarks regarding what he called "independent men" in the House of Commons:—"When the Ministers apprehend any change is likely to take place in the conduct of one of these gentlemen, he is immediately sent out of the House of Commons into the House of Peers.

This mode of expulsion from the House of Commons secures to Ministers a perpetual majority, because the man who gives up his constituents for a seat in another place for life is independent of them, may vote as he pleases, he having nothing to fear with regard to election, and his successor makes fair promises to the constituents and then has a number of years to do as he pleases independent of them."

Fox united in a most remarkable degree the seemingly opposing characters of the mildest of men and the most vehement of orators. In private life he was gentle, modest, placable, kind, of simple manners, unostentatious, and somewhat inactive in conversation. In public life he had an unbounded zeal for the civil and religious rights of all men, and by his liberal principles was favourable to mild government, and to the unfettered exercise of the human faculties and the progressive civilisation of mankind. "Fox's eloquence," says Lord Brougham, "was of a kind which, to comprehend, you must have heard yourself. When he got fairly into his subject, was heartily warmed with it, he poured forth words and periods

of fire that smote you, and deprived you of all power to reflect and rescue yourself, while he went on to seize the faculties of the listener, and carry them captive with him, whithersoever he might please to lead."

Regarding the custom of annually making an address to a constituency by its representative, it may be interesting to note the following observations made by Sir John Hobhouse, then one of the members for Westminster in 1827, in a speech in the House of Commons. "There was a practice," he said, "which prevailed in the city which he had the honour to represent (Westminster), in obedience to which the representatives were obliged annually to appear before the represented, to render an account of their proceedings, and to receive such instructions with respect to their future conduct as the circumstances of the time rendered expedient."

Sir Robert Peel, in speaking to his constituents at Tamworth in 1835, shortly after his conversion to the movement for Reform, said: "I am told I am not a reformer, and that if I am a reformer I must be an apostate"; and further added, later on in his address:

“I may sometimes doubt whether the evil of the remedy is not greater than that of the disease. If I entertain that opinion I will avow it, in spite of its temporary unpopularity; but I shall approach the consideration of an alleged abuse with the firm belief that if the allegation be true, a government gains ten times more strength by correcting an admitted evil than they could by maintaining it, if it were possible to maintain it.” Words, it were needless to add, of pregnant import for all time.

The great question before the country shortly after that period, and for a succeeding decade or two, was Free Trade. And I think it would be interesting to give some quotations from a speech from the great apostle of that doctrine, Mr Richard Cobden, delivered in the House of Commons. He enunciated to the House of Commons the great dogmas he was rousing the country to carry out by platform speeches and the free distribution of pamphlets. This speech on the Corn Laws was delivered in the House on 27th February 1846, and in the course of it he said :

“But the truth is, that you all know that the country knows that there never was a

more monstrous delusion than to suppose that that which goes to increase the trade of the country, and to extend its manufactures and commerce—that which adds to our numbers, increases our population, enlarges the number of your customers, and diminishes your burdens by multiplying the shoulders that are to bear them, and gives them increased strength to bear them—can possibly tend to diminish the value of land.”

And he further added in this address his views on what have been called the “good example” theory :

“We have set an example to the world in all ages ; we have given them the representative system. The very rules and regulations of this House have been taken as a model for every representative assembly in the whole world ; and having, besides, given them an example of a free press and religious freedom, and every institution that belongs to freedom and civilisation, we are now about to give them a greater example—we are going to set the example of making industry free, to set the example of giving the whole world every advantage of climate and latitude and situation, relying ourselves

on the freedom of our industry. Yes, we are going to teach the world that useful lesson."

Sixty years have rolled by since that great pronouncement was made by Mr Richard Cobden. Whether the world has learnt that useful lesson is, of course, too controversial a subject to touch on in these pages.

There has been probably no Minister of the Crown since Pitt who has been more resolved to safeguard the interests of every British subject at home or abroad than Palmerston (others, no doubt, may have been equally so). In 1850, however, "his spirited foreign policy" was challenged in the House of Commons, and in the course of the debate which ensued he made the following notable remarks:—

"I therefore fearlessly challenge the verdict which this House, as representing a political, a commercial, a constitutional country, is to give on the question now brought before it, whether the principles on which the foreign policy of Her Majesty's Government has been conducted, and the sense of duty which has led us to think ourselves bound to afford protection to our fellow-subjects abroad, are proper and fitting

guides for those who are charged with the government of England; and whether, as the Roman, in days of old, held himself free from indignity, so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him from injustice and wrong."

There was certainly, it will be admitted, nothing of "the Uriah Heep Little Englander" about that great and popular Minister of the Crown.

Coming on to more recent times, a year before the General Election of 1874, which resulted in the overthrow of the then Gladstonian Administration, Lord Beaconsfield (then Mr Disraeli) delivered a great address to the Glasgow Conservative Association, and at the termination of his speech used these words: "Our connection with Ireland would then be brought painfully to our consciousness, and I should not be at all surprised if the visor of Home Rule should fall off some day and behold a very different countenance. Now, gentlemen, I think we ought to be prepared for these circumstances. The position of England is one which is

indicative of danger from holding a middle course upon such matters. . . . These things may be far off, but we live in a rapid age, and my apprehension is that they are nearer than some suppose. If that struggle comes, we must look to Scotland to aid us. It was once, and I hope is still, a land of liberty, of patriotism, and of religion. I think the time has come when it really should leave off mumbling the dry bones of political economy and munching the remaining biscuit of an effete Liberalism. We all know that a General Election is at hand. I do not ask you to consider on such an occasion the fate of parties or of Ministers, but I ask you to consider this, that it is very probable that the future of Europe depends greatly on the character of the next Parliament of England ; I ask you, when the occasion comes, to act as becomes an ancient and famous nation, and give all your energies for the cause of faith and freedom." It has not been my good fortune to come across a more stirring, bugle-like call to action before a General Election than this speech of Lord Beaconsfield. In this I think all, whether they agree or disagree with what he then said, will concur.

To give examples of Mr Gladstone's oratory before or during the great political conflicts in which he fought, and in most of which he was victorious, appears needless. Mr Morley, in his "Life" of that great man, has so ably and so recently dealt with the various phases of his career, that to attempt to touch on them would be as essaying to gild refined gold. May I, as one who sat in three Parliaments with Mr Gladstone, humbly say, that though opposing at that time his policy, I was spell-bound by his oratory? I can testify, as an old "Unionist" member, that never did a body of men slowly march with greater sorrow or greater respect through St Stephen's Hall and down the grand Hall of Westminster, than did the members of the Lords and Commons behind the remains of that great statesman to his last resting-place in the Abbey. We all felt a giant amongst men had passed away.

If one touch of pathos could have been added to the solemnity of the service and the gravity of the whole surroundings, midst the semi-darkness of the Abbey, the beautiful liturgy, the thoughtful address, and the majestic beauty of the sacred music, it was the fact that the boys of his old collegiate

school, the Eton volunteers, lined the entrance to the Abbey, and formed a funeral guard of honour to the remains of the great statesman, soon to rest within those historic walls with the dust of kings, heroes, patriots, and statesmen of the past.

When elections were as protracted as they were in the past, and prior to legislation respecting their cost, the expenses were in many instances terrific; an election in Yorkshire between a Whig and Tory candidate respectively, a Fitzwilliam and a Lowther, practically cost each of them a not inconsiderable fortune.

That was in the days of open voting, and in those days not only bribery, but intimidation, were factors with which nearly all candidates had to reckon; though, of course, even at that time many constituencies were above suspicion in that respect.

It is stated that early in the last century a respectable tradesman in Berwick-on-Tweed, which was then a parliamentary borough, placed in his window, about an hour before the close of the poll—and was not ashamed to do it—the words, “I have not yet voted.”

It was, it should be stated, a small elec-

torate and a close contest, and the hint was given in this unblushing way for a visit from an agent of either of the candidates. In fact, bribery was then looked on as a venial offence, and a vote was then considered by many more as a marketable asset than as a trust to be given in accordance with the individual opinion of the elector.

In some towns groups of "freemen" who had votes used to combine, in a sort of guild, and refrained from going to the poll until late in the contest; their leader would then have interviews with the agents of the respective candidates, and whoever of them was most lavish in his offer, found these "free and independent" gentlemen record their votes for his man during the last hour of the poll, who was in consequence returned to Parliament.

There was also a system then in some places prevalent, which, though illegal, was occasionally resorted to, and called "bottling the electors." This, it is sad to relate, consisted in getting a number of the supporters of the rival candidates into a public-house, and either plying them with liquor till they were incapable of voting, or attaining the same end by some other means, such as by

shutting them up in a backyard of an hostelry till the end of the poll. Another equally unfair device was said to have been occasionally practised at Liverpool and other seaport towns, and that was to entice voters of the opposite way of thinking on board a steamer and then take them off, *nolens volens*, to the Isle of Man, or keep them at sea till the conclusion of the hours for voting.

Elections to the House of Commons were simplified in the case of nomination boroughs, where, in many instances, there were only a few dozen or a few score electors, all under the influence of one territorial magnate, whose steward practically informed the electors whom they should return to represent them in Parliament. In these boroughs there was frequently not even the formality of a contest.

It is a matter of note that some of our greatest statesmen owed their first seats in Parliament to this system of "pocket boroughs," including William Pitt, and also, though in a less degree, both Gladstone and Disraeli. But the system, notwithstanding, was a thoroughly bad one, and it was an anachronism that the nominal representatives

of a free people should be in reality the nominees of some rich peer or large landowner, and it was abolished in nearly all boroughs by the Reform Bill of '1832.

I have not before me the minute number of electors in Old Sarum, but prior to this Act I find the borough of Orford in Suffolk had in all only twenty electors, described as either "portsmen," "freemen," or "burgesses," and yet returned two members to Parliament!

CHAPTER III

A CONTESTED ELECTION IN CUMBERLAND, 1880

IT was not till the year 1880 that I was first invited to stand as a candidate. A General Election took place rather unexpectedly shortly after Easter of that year, and a constituency in the North of England which had previously been represented by a distant cousin, then deceased, sent me an invitation to stand. Curiously enough, however, this call came from the opposite party to that which my cousin had represented in Parliament. It should also be added that there had been a candidate in the field at a recent bye-election in that constituency, and that gentleman was loth to withdraw his claims; however, at length the field was clear, though rather late in the day. The rival party had been busy for weeks, and I had to accept the candidature by telegraph and send my

election address by the same means in order to lose no time, and put myself in the first express train to this northern constituency. On my arrival it was satisfactory to find that the committee had acted with promptitude, and that my address was already printed and posted all over the town. At the railway station I was met by some of the committee, and then went to stay at a relative's place in the neighbourhood, which she had inherited from my late cousin previously referred to.

Next morning, on coming down to breakfast (being then a, comparatively speaking, young man), I was rather amused to find myself at once a person in whom everybody took the deepest interest. The old butler, who had been there in my late cousin's time, took quite a fatherly interest in me, and attended to my various wants at breakfast with great assiduity. My hostess noticed this, and remarked, "John used to be a great supporter of my late uncle whilst he was member here; you had better ask him how he is going to vote now, as at one time John was a great politician."

I remarked, "Well, I suppose I must commence my canvass; what do you say, John?"

“Of course I'll vote for you and work for you, sir. I'll always vote for one of the family,” was his reply.

On hearing this, my hostess laughingly said, “A capital start for your canvass”; and John carried out his word thoroughly.

On a visit to my central committee room shortly afterwards, I was introduced to the committee, and found that body consisted of several of the leading gentry and business men of the locality. I also discovered that they had retained as my election agents the services of two young local solicitors, well-meaning and hard-working young men; but this dual control did not altogether answer, and they mostly got in one another's way. This election was fought, it should be here mentioned, prior to the admirable measure steered through the House of Commons by Sir Henry James (now Lord James of Hereford). I allude to the Act of Parliament which has fixed a definite limit to election expenses, and rendered illegal various means of wasting money at elections, which candidates then were, as a rule, in most constituencies called to make, however unwilling they may have been to do so.

Another discovery I shortly made was that I was the happy (?) possessor of committee rooms at nearly half the public-houses in the town, a large portion of the remainder being retained in the interests of my political opponent. The use of these committee rooms was not very apparent. But they had been from time immemorial retained in the interests of the rival parties, in fact, known by their respective colours as either blue or yellow houses (pronounced "yallar"). Paid canvassers were then legal, nor did the fact that a voter, being paid, disqualify him from exercising the franchise, so a small army of canvassers were retained at five shillings a day each by the two rival candidates to visit the electors. These canvassers were armed with small books with the names of the voters inscribed in them. As far as one could learn, their canvassing consisted in sitting and discussing the election at the nearest public-house and bringing in from time to time returns that nearly all those whom they were supposed to have seen were either "Blue" or "Yallar," according to the party that had retained their services.

In this borough a candidate was also

expected to canvass the whole electorate; fortunately for me, as there was but little time to spare, there were under a thousand electors. During this canvass I was always accompanied by a friend, and no candidate should do otherwise, as this companion not only introduces him to the elector, assists him in the canvass, and shows him the way, but acts as a witness to protect the candidate against the risk of false statements being made respecting him later on. On those occasions, by taking out with me some of the returns of my paid canvassers, I was able to judge how fallacious they really were.

This task of calling on the electors was a slightly laborious one, as every house seemed to be approached by a flight of stairs before one arrived at the elector's actual abode. Still it was at times interesting, and the questions one was asked were quaint; and though these personal interviews may have turned a few doubtful voters, the majority of the electors appeared to be fixedly either "Blue" or "Yallar," and the following conversation as a rule took place. After I had been introduced to the elector by an accompany-

ing friend, the elector would say, "What colour are you?" To which my reply was "Yallar." The elector would grasp my hand and say, "That's all right, I'm Yallar. I was born Yallar." Or if he were on the other side, "That's no good, I'm thoroughly Blue." If one attempted to urge the claims the party I belonged to had to the elector's confidence and support, he would listen with the greatest interest, and even go as far as acknowledging "that was all right; I like that; that's what I want"; but notwithstanding that, he was "Blue," and so he apparently remained.

It was a most interesting election; the meetings I held were, for the size of the place, large and enthusiastic, but it must be confessed that I saw the same faces over and over again, and as a rule those present were my supporters and enthusiastic adherents to the "Yallar" cause.

On one or two occasions, with a brake-load of friends I drove to meetings in villages a few miles from the town, which were inhabited by the miners and quarrymen and their families; this was considered quite an adventure by some of the committee, and

unprecedented in the political annals of the place, as it was the stronghold of the "Blue" party ; in fact, going into the enemy's country. These meetings, if the audiences were not enthusiastic, passed off quietly, and those present gave an attentive hearing to the speakers, though they asked the candidate numerous questions.

My political opponent had one great advantage, that not only had he strong local influence, but also that he was the part proprietor of the chief and only completely local newspaper in that borough, which was thoroughly devoted to his party and interest. This is, of course, a great advantage in a country borough, though not as great as it once was. It was a constituency that not only contained urban electors, but a sprinkling of rural votes, and there were in the contiguous neighbourhood a number of coal miners and quarrymen who formed a part of the electorate. A party consisting of a few friends, my wife and myself, went down a coal mine and canvassed some of the men in the cuttings, and whilst there we duly cut some coal. A luncheon basket had been conveyed down with us, and we had a light

repast in one of the cuttings. I am not certain if that would be a safe course under the present law, lest one of the miners who was a voter drank your health.

The constituency had nearly always been a "Blue" constituency, and as the majority of the electors were on that side, and the "Yallar" party were at that time rather unpopular in the country, the result could not be doubtful. There were endless poetical effusions, more or less cleverly written, by poets espousing the "Blue" or "Yallar" sides. One day, chancing to be out riding to canvass some outlying electors, I came across two bill-posters of the rival parties in the adjoining county division, and found them quietly plastering a wall (which probably not one elector would pass in a week) one bill over the other, first a Blue one then a Yellow, till they had made them nearly an inch thick. There was then no limit either to printing or other election expenses, and these men were paid by the number of bills they affixed. A report was made to the agent of the two county candidates who were standing in the interest of the Yellow party, though whether it resulted in checking

this system is doubtful, and it was no wonder that the expenses in that division of the county cost the three candidates contesting the two seats in the aggregate eight or ten thousand pounds. Another mode then of wasting money was the hiring of carriages to take electors to the polling-booths, and so every broken-down trap and woebegone-looking horse was engaged on the day of the election by one party or the other, three guineas being the charge to the county candidates for the use of a horse and trap on that day, while probably the whole turnout was in reality barely worth that sum to buy right out, and two guineas was the tariff if it were retained for the borough election.

Though the vote was then by ballot, by mid-day on the day of the election I saw that I was not going to be successful. The election was, notwithstanding my non-success, a most pleasant one, and there were no personalities on either side. Some of the electors on the polling day amused themselves by throwing flour, coloured either blue or "yallar," at one another. The newly returned member travelled with my

wife and myself in the same railway carriage next day as far as Carlisle. This act of friendliness alone is one of the pleasant features of English political life, and would be impossible in many countries where party rancour is more bitter and more intense.

One thing that made the contest a difficult, if not a well-nigh impossible one for success in this small constituency, was that the party I championed had not had any attempt made to have their interests safeguarded, except in a very perfunctory manner, at the annual revision of the register for years prior to this election.

The great Sir Robert Peel said that to win elections a political party must always bear in mind the "Register! Register! Register!" That is as true now as then. People talk a great deal about "organisation." It is a good five-syllable word, and no doubt in all constituencies the side that has the best organisation has a slight initial advantage, but if the views of the country in nearly every British constituency are, as they were at that time, strongly against the views of any political party, in no constituency in which the majority for that party is not

abnormal, can most organisations, however perfect, return their candidate to Parliament ; still they may considerably reduce the majority of the successful candidate, and so to that extent *stem the wave* against their party, and thereby conduce to a future victory.

No victory can be won at any general election by a political party as a whole unless it has, on any gravely important question before the country, not only according to its own lights a definite policy, but also one clearly understandable by the electors. Still there are numerous exceptions to this rule in individual constituencies, and at all elections seats are lost by the party that is apparently sweeping the country in most places. This may be caused by the fact that the organisation is more active on one side than the other. But in most instances it is that the constituency decides to return the best candidate to represent them in Parliament, irrespective of his views on any question of the moment.

CHAPTER IV

BYE-ELECTIONS IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES

SHORTLY after the General Election of 1886 trade was somewhat depressed, and it was my lot to address many large and enthusiastic meetings about that time on the subject of British trade and Foreign tariffs at, amongst other places, Manchester, Preston, Stockport, Warrington, Hull, Scarborough, and Southwark, and, in the autumn of the following year, to attend a large political conference at Newcastle-on-Tyne. One interesting incident occurred which I will here relate. The conference itself might be described as a rally of the party defeated at the polls in 1880, and there were endless meetings, discussions, conferences, and social gatherings for the delegates to attend, and this political gathering was concluded by an immense mass meeting at a huge Assembly Hall.

By that time most of those present had had a surfeit of speeches, and the chief speakers of that evening were not only long and tedious (but though as a rule orators of no mean reputation), evidently tired and intensely dull, and a vast number of the audience were in a more or less somnolent condition. At length, to the relief of every one in the audience, they ended their harangues. But one duty remained, for someone to propose a vote of thanks to the noble chairman for presiding. When the gentleman (then as now a brilliant ornament of the legal profession) rose to perform that task, most of the audience were collecting their hats and preparing to leave the hall. But soon a change came over the scene. Like a flash of lightning his brilliant oratory aroused the whole meeting to the wildest enthusiasm. All those leaving the hall turned back ; seats were resumed, hats and umbrellas were waved, handkerchiefs fluttered in the air, cheer succeeded cheer in deafening succession, and the scene from the platform of that enthusiastic concourse of people is one difficult to forget. The twenty-five minutes he spoke and held his audience seemed like five.

The London papers next morning, after devoting column after column to the heavy pabulum those present had been inflicted with during the most of the evening, wound up their report: "After which a vote of thanks to the chairman was carried and duly responded to, and the meeting terminated"; and so is history made. The reporters had already enough "copy" for their journals. It struck me then that it would not be a bad idea to keep a good speaker to the end of a meeting to wind it up with enthusiasm and *éclat*, though on that occasion it would seem it was done more by accident than by design. The speaker who winds up the meeting must be content, however, to have a brief, if any, report of his speech in the press.

It should be here incidentally remarked that a few months after the General Election of 1880, and prior to this conference at Newcastle just referred to, I had been called to visit and spend a few months in Hong-Kong regarding an estate I had in that British possession, and whilst there was impressed with the intense loyalty of Britons beyond the seas and their strong sentiments of affection to the motherland, and found it as

marked as it had been when ten years previously it had been my good fortune to take an interesting tour round the world, and in the course of which I visited many British colonies, as well as India, Japan, and the United States.

My views have never since changed, and in all my political contests have I always maintained this: that the keystone to the arch of our future greatness is a federation of the whole Empire linked together by equal, voluntary, and conjoint action in weal or woe, in peace or war; in a commercial, social, and, as far as practicable, a political union. That this will be ultimately attained I earnestly hope and believe, and that its fruition will come in time, by mutual concessions and by the mutual goodwill of the peoples within the vast dominions of the Crown, to the great advantage and prosperity of a truly united Empire.

Though doubtless many antiquated dogmas, insular and sectional prejudices, and parochial, narrow-minded views will have to be swept away before such a far-seeing, statesmanlike policy will be consummated, and the now loosely knit together congeries of

states, colonies, and dependencies are welded together into a federation of eternal fellowship and mutual self-interest and support.

This is no new idea. Thought over and advocated for the last fifty years or more by many far-seeing men, many of whom have passed away to the bourne from which no traveller returns, it has been gradually growing like a sturdy oak in its forest glade, growing by the mutual goodwill of the peoples of this great Empire. To force this healthy growth would be a mistake, and to pull up the roots and examine the progress might prove, it were needless to add, an irreparably fatal error.

Shortly after my return to England, in 1881, I was asked to stand for a west country constituency at a bye-election, where a noble lord who was a supporter of the then Government and also a strong local candidate had already come out. The chances of defeating him seemed to me infinitesimal, and I therefore declined that invitation, and wrote to regret I did not see my way to stand. However, in response to a renewed request within the last few days before the poll, accompanied by an experienced friend

in electioneering matters, we both decided to run down to see how the land lay, with a view to ascertaining what could be done there in the future.

The express train we went by did not stop at the town in question, but by the kindness of the railway company we were allowed to alight at a junction a few miles from the constituency, and, hiring a conveyance, arrived at the town in question about seven o'clock on a Friday morning, which day, it should be mentioned, was the date fixed for the nominations, the poll, if any, being appointed for the following Tuesday. On arriving at the hotel, we were sitting down to breakfast about eight o'clock, when, to our surprise, a visitor came into the room and introduced himself, and said: "If you please, gentlemen, the committee asked me to say that they are all waiting to see you in a private room." We were both a bit astonished at this early arrival of the aforesaid politicians, and wondered where they had all sprung from; however, we did not delay long over breakfast, and soon joined them, when we found about a dozen of the local committee duly assembled. We made

the most careful inquiries from them as to how the land lay, and after withdrawing from the room and consulting together, came to the conclusion that the chance of a win was at the moment nil, and so, on returning to the room, I simply thanked them heartily for the honour they had done me by their renewed invitation, but declined to stand.

This decision did not please them at all, as they were spoiling for a fight, and later in the day, about eleven o'clock, we were informed that the committee had persuaded one of their number to be nominated as a candidate, and hoped the two visitors would stay and help them in all ways in their power. This we readily consented to do, and handed over a draft election address we had, in case it might be required, drawn up on the journey down ; and by twelve o'clock, when the nominations closed, the nomination papers of the candidate in question were handed in, and his address was printed and issued in the afternoon, and a large public meeting held in his support that evening, which we addressed.

In my political experience, lasting over nearly twenty-five years, never was it my lot to see such a busy day as the following

one was; it might be described as one long meeting, so rapidly did they succeed one another, some indoor and some out, including one near a market-place, where a temporary platform was erected. At this meeting a good many friends of the candidate on the other side attended, and a few missiles were flying about, including a rather large cabbage, which one of the speakers managed to field, and remarked, much to the delight of the crowd: "One of our political opponents appears to have lost his head."

There was at the time no lack of matters to criticise, for the Government of the day had got themselves into certain difficulties in regard to their retirement from Kandahar, their South African policy, and the then disaffected and troubled condition of Ireland, and the unfortunate number of crimes and disturbances in the Sister Isle. A working-man speaker got on the temporary platform at one of the outdoor meetings, in front of which were two or three reporters taking notes, and was holding forth in regard to a workmen's compensation bill proposed by a governmental member, which he denounced

as inadequate and a sham. He got so fervent in his eloquence and so engrossed in his subject that he took little heed of the smallness of the rickety platform on which he was standing, and as he was saying, "But that's not near enough, I will go one step further forward," which he did, and fell head over heels amongst an already overwrought press! He escaped, however, slightly shaken but quite unhurt, and at this catastrophe there were, it is needless to say, vociferous cheers and laughter from the assembled crowd.

The coffee-room of the hotel where we were staying was a commodious, comfortable apartment, with two large windows overlooking an immense open space calculated to hold two or three thousand people. From one of these windows Lord Palmerston, who for many years had represented this constituency, had often addressed large crowds of people. So it was resolved that a meeting of the candidate whom we were assisting should be held there. And, speaking of Lord Palmerston, probably no Prime Minister since the days of William Pitt ever really represented the views of the great

bulk of his fellow-countrymen as thoroughly as he did.

When the evening of this eventful Saturday in this the second day of this brief electoral contest arrived, a comfortable supper was served on the table of this coffee-room, and the blinds of the two windows let down. My friend was the first to address the crowd in the market-place, which was densely packed with people who had come from the town itself, and from the surrounding neighbourhood, to hear "the two orators from London," and it is to be hoped they were not disappointed.

After my friend had pulled up the blind and opened one of the windows, he commenced to speak in impassioned tones, and to criticise the Government of the day. Meanwhile the rest of us were busily enjoying the oysters and other delicacies on the supper-table. The speech was a good one, as my friend was a past master in platform speaking. I will not set it forth here, but merely refer to an incident that occurred and to the peroration. Turning round during his speech, as an aside he said: "I'm getting awfully dry and will just wind up," and to me he added, "Would you please carry on the thread of

my speech when I stop, and commence your address from the other window"; and he then terminated his address somewhat as follows: "When the country demanded an end should be put to this state of affairs, who stepped into the breach to stand for, and I hope win, this important constituency? A man more honoured, more respected, more worthy, could not have been found, a man better known and beloved round this countryside could not be before you; in fact, a better candidate in every way could not be imagined. What is the name of this excellent candidate?" (And turning round to me, he said, *sotto voce*, amidst a general titter in the room: "What on earth is his name?") Being reminded of the name, he continued: "I allude to the honoured, the respected, the well-known and the illustrious name of ——" (tremendous cheering and applause). The orator then withdrew his head from the window and the blind was pulled down, whilst, as requested, my head immediately appeared from the other window, the blind of which had been pulled up, and I continued the discourse. Though not intended to do so, this sudden jack-in-the-box proceeding

appears to have had a somewhat comical effect from outside. For it was one or two minutes before I could really get under way, owing to the uncontrollable laughter of the crowd. However, they soon settled down, and never in my experience, though it has been my privilege to address larger audiences than the two thousand or more in that market-place, did I ever speak to so attentive and appreciative an audience.

It was a short, sharp fight, and the cheeriest and most amusing contest imaginable, and with a few more days, no doubt, the candidate my friend and I were assisting would have polled even closer than he did, but at that time, in that particular constituency, a win was impossible.

On our way back to town my friend told me of an experience he had had a few months previously in going down with a possible candidate to another constituency, as follows : On their arrival there, they had had an interview with the committee, though of a different nature, from our experience previously described, for they found them mainly small shopkeepers of the place, and their chairman was an immensely stout, consequential little

man. It should be further said that the constituency had not altogether a clean record as to the way elections were fought in it. The proceedings commenced by his friend, the proposed candidate, making these worthies a short political speech, in which he stated his views on the political situation of the day. On its conclusion the chairman wheezed out: "That's all right; your sentiments are splendid and quite our own; but before proceeding further, let's get to business. This election means a win for you if you are our candidate and we nominate you. We know you are a wealthy man, and there will be a trifling sum to pay us for out-of-pocket expenses before we select you," mentioning at the same time a good round figure. "Now what do you say? Hand us your cheque and you will be sure to be an M.P. in a week or so." His friend looked quietly round the room, and then said: "Before answering you, may I ask you a question?" "Oh, certainly," said the chairman. "Then can you tell me if you have a Bradshaw handy, for I want to find the next train to town." The faces of the committee fell, for the two visitors left by that train.

CHAPTER V

CONTESTING A SEAT IN LONDON

AFTER the Redistribution of Seats Bill of 1885, invitations were sent to me to stand by three constituencies at the then approaching General Election, and I accepted an invitation to be a candidate for a division of a London borough.

Many of my friends told me this choice was to fight a forlorn hope, but I held otherwise, and set seriously to work to do all in my power to win, assisted in that by a particularly energetic committee and a small band of willing workers in this newly-formed division of the borough in question.

If the committee had a fault, they were a trifle too fond of holding committee meetings, which took up a good deal of my election agent's time. On the committee were two solicitors, and they were

immensely technical as to how to carry out, not only in the letter but also in the spirit, the recently passed Act of Parliament introduced and carried by Sir Henry James, and called, for short, "The Corrupt Practices Act," and were so determined to keep within the letter of the law that they even objected to a screen being hung across a street with the words, "Vote for ——" and my name on it, as they said it might be called a banner or flag! and the Act forbade the use of flags and banners. However, they kept everyone straight, and so acted on the right side.

Though no doubt at that time some doubted whether my friends were not unduly strict, it does not appear, in the light of subsequent events and the decision of the judges, that they were. It is clear that the use of banners is prohibited by section 16 sub-section 1 of the Act referred to above. Flags are equally illegal, providing that the payment or contract for payment is made for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of a candidate at any election. The judges have accepted the ordinary etymological meaning of banners in Webster's dictionary, and have even expressed their doubts whether

a canvas covered with placards denoting an election room is not also an offence under this statute, if paid for by the candidate or agent.

It should, however, be noticed, that in the Stepney election petition of 1886 there was an *obiter dictum* that the provision of a banner by a volunteer, not acting as an agent for a candidate, in no way incriminated that person. Mr Justice Vaughan Williams, in his judgment in the Stepney case in 1892, stated that he considered the words, "other marks of distinction," as the governing words of the clause forbidding the use of flags and banners, cockades, hat cards, etc. In this election broad strips of canvas, with the words "Vote for Isaacson," were stretched across different streets throughout the constituency, and as these were paid for by the candidate, both the judges held it to be an illegal practice. Mr Justice Cave said: "I am clearly of opinion that these canvas advertisements, as they have been called, are banners and nothing else"; and again he added, referring to the Corrupt Practices Act: "What was meant to be struck at was the waste of money at elections, which served no useful purpose at all."

It is therefore obvious that it will require

care at all elections, both for the candidate and agent, to see that no such canvas, banner, or streamer is stretched across the street and finds its way under any heading into the election accounts.

It was in April that my selection as candidate was made, and the election did not take place till October, so excluding the months of August and September, during which I was in Scotland, there was plenty of time to make myself known and to meet the electors. And there were no lack of meetings; and pretty noisy some of them were at first, as it was then a plan practised by my opponents for a gang of men, mostly strangers to the constituency, to go round and disturb my meetings, as well as those of the candidates who were fighting on the same side in neighbouring constituencies. And on one occasion it took me an hour to make a speech which could, but for the noise, easily have been delivered in twenty minutes. My plan was, when the interrupters were wearied out by their howling and yelling, to get a sentence or two in and then wait till they gave me another chance.

During that election the candidates in the neighbouring constituencies often helped

one another. On one occasion it fell to my lot to go to speak later on at a friend's meeting in an adjoining division after having addressed a remarkably quiet one in the constituency for which I was standing. On my arrival on the platform of the neighbouring candidate's meeting the noise the opposition were making was deafening, and in the chair sat a noble lord who has since held high office under the Crown, looking thoroughly bored and tired; and well he might, for this din, I learnt, had been going on for nearly two hours. The meeting, however, gave me, when I was called on to speak, a wonderfully good hearing. A subsequent speaker appeared to annoy some of the audience, and at last they became so unruly and out of hand that the chairman declared the meeting over. After he had vacated the chair, and with the others was quietly walking off the platform, a change came over the scene, for sitting in front of the platform were about a couple of score of young army and veterinary college students. They were all strong supporters of the candidate in whose support the meeting had been held, and had had enough of the row, and wanted, as the term goes, "a bit back," so they

quickly smashed a number of cane chairs in front, used the arms and legs as weapons, and drove the "lambs" who had been interrupting helter-skelter out of the hall. There were many broken heads on both sides, though fewer amongst the students than amongst their opponents; but fortunately nothing of a serious character occurred, although a good many heads with plaster on them were seen about the streets for a week or two following, and the "lambs" had enough of it and during that election let the meetings go on quietly.

It has always struck me that if a meeting is held in a ward or a district, and the hall will not hold half the electors, what is the use of having what is called an open meeting and letting in all the "noisy boys" for miles round? It is much better, in my view, to send round cards to all the electors in that ward, and particularly to the friends of the party who hold the meeting, and invite them all to come to it, and after a certain time let in anyone who likes to come in. And that plan is now adopted in very many constituencies; whilst open meetings, as they are called, both in halls and also in the open air, should be occasionally held.

There is no doubt great diversity of opinion and practice as to whether, during an election, it is best to call a number of large open meetings only, and to rely on the enthusiasm they arouse, to deepen the interest in the election amongst the workers and the electorate generally, or to do as I found most expedient in London—to hold only two or three meetings of that description, at which, in my experience, one found the same people friendly or opposed over and over again, many of them non-voters and a considerable number not even residents in the constituency, but coming from adjoining divisions or even further afield.

No hard-and-fast rule can be drawn as to that, and each election agent, candidate, and election committee have their own views on that subject, which no amount of argument will change. Be that as it may, I found that, as far as London is concerned, it was a good plan to supplement these large, or comparatively speaking large, meetings by a number of ward meetings, the invitation to these gatherings to be sent by post, enclosing a card to be presented at the door. This was a better plan to obtain a good audience

than any amount of bill-posting, and was at the same time a compliment to the elector—of course the usual number of bills publicly announcing the meeting being also duly posted or placed by friends in their windows. At these gatherings the candidate gets really more in touch with the electorate than at larger ones. There should always be time left after the conclusion of the meeting for the chairman to introduce the candidate to a number of the voters, when he can listen to their views on many matters of local and even of general interest, and discuss them with the electors. The best chairman of such an assembly of the electors is a leading man residing in the ward in which the meeting is held.

If there is room shortly after the commencement of these ward meetings, anyone wishful to enter should be allowed to do so, of course on the understanding that he does not come for the sole purpose of interrupting the proceedings.

The object of a candidate at an election is, I take it, to be returned to Parliament, not to make great election speeches, or to receive votes of confidence at large gatherings. If he is to be returned the candidate

requires the majority of the votes, and there can be no doubt, as far as the Metropolis is concerned, that these small, more friendly, and less showy gatherings conduce to success in a greater degree than is generally believed. At the same time, the larger meetings are essential, especially when some leading member of the candidate's party comes to assist him, and also to rouse the enthusiasm, especially during the last few days of the contest.

The first meeting of an election should be, in my view, one at which the candidate has his friends present in force and gets a good hearing to give him an opportunity of stating his views and being well reported by the press, and a good report of the proceedings at this assembly and his speech should be sent to each elector, whether there is a good local press or not.

No question of Fiscal Reform was before either the country or that particular constituency, or referred to in the rival election addresses. The General Election of 1886, to which I am referring, was fought throughout the country on the Home Rule question, and I was not a little astonished on

noticing in the shop window of one of the leading supporters of my opponent, that they on this occasion had raked out some old-time political stage property, and a Brobdingnagian loaf, weighing probably some sixteen pounds, was displayed in a window as the result of my opponent's policy, whilst a diminutive quarter-pound one was all that was credited to mine. As I had made no reference to fiscal questions in any way, I was at a loss to account for this, and learnt on inquiry that at some meeting I had not been able to attend, one of my supporters had said he thought the taxation of the country *required re-arrangement*, and that he could not understand why tea and tobacco, which we did not grow in these islands as articles of commerce, should bear so large a share of taxation.

This mild observation appeared to have roused the ire of my opponents as a covert attack on "Free Trade." However, the point of these different-sized loaves was lost to the bulk of the electors, who did not understand that one of my supporters had ventured, however slightly, to criticise the mode of the imperial taxation, and it did not influence the election in the slightest

degree. I trust that those loaves were at all events the result of British manufacture and the work of British industry. The attack fell flat, and the loaves got stale.

The South-country constituency referred to was too large a one for a personal canvass. I, however, called on a good many of the leading electors, and on not a few of those whose views were not pronounced one way or the other, and who, in electioneering parlance, are described as "doubtful voters." My friends, however, carried out a thorough canvass, as did those of my political opponent. The great question that has often arisen in my mind is—Does canvassing really do the good it is imagined? Is it not rather an intrusion to call on an elector and ask him for his vote? However, if one side does it, it seems evident the other must, as the mere fact of a call being made may be looked on by some electors as a personal attention; and as it is legal, probably neither side can neglect it. Therefore, under existing circumstances, canvassing appears to be absolutely necessary both in town and country.

There are, of course, constituencies so large, and with such a large number of electors in

them, that a personal canvass by the candidate, unless he has months in which to undertake it, is a physical impossibility. If he does undertake a general canvass, he should make it, if practicable, a thorough one, and call on one and all, and be always accompanied by some of his supporters, in order that he may have witnesses of all transactions, and that local questions and subjects may be discussed before local men. Except during my first contest, in the comparatively speaking small constituency in the North of England, I never had the time to undertake a thorough personal canvass of the electors. But I was fortunate enough to have others who kindly volunteered and carried out that work for me, so contented myself by calling on all the leading people in the constituency, and the most important politicians whose views were believed to be in sympathy with my candidature—or at anyrate were not diametrically opposed to the party of which I was the candidate—including individuals in all ranks of society. I also went to see a few others whom my election agent suggested I should call on.

There can be no doubt that some of the most efficient canvassers—and all political

parties are equally agreed as to that—are to be found amongst the fair sex; and they have also this advantage, that they can devote more time to canvassing than one's men friends, who, many of them, are engaged in business avocations during most of the day. One feature in this constituency was the willingness with which each side displayed their colours, and by the end of the election there were whole streets in which hardly a house had not a bill in the window displaying either in blue and white or black and yellow their wish for the electors to vote for one candidate or the other. The curious part about it was that in some parts of the constituency there might be two streets occupied by electors in the same kind of employment and in buildings of the same value, and yet in one street the bills displayed were nearly universally in favour of one candidate, and in the next street in favour of the other. And that was also the same in some of the model dwellings. This might often be largely accounted for by the fact that in that particular street or building there was a more than usually energetic worker on behalf of one party or the other, who brought round his

friends and neighbours to his views. The show of colours in the constituency indicated that the parties were very evenly balanced, and the canvass return showed the same, as in fact the result of the poll also evinced.

The chances are that I might have been returned at that election for this constituency—as I was a few months later—had not a rather sharp trick been played on me at the end of the contest. It was as follows. Accompanied by three leading residents, who were my supporters, I paid a call on a particularly influential resident in the district, who at this interview promised me his support, and this fact was accordingly publicly announced both by myself and by my committee. After all my polling cards were posted, at the end of the election my political opponent—whether under a misapprehension of the true facts or not it is impossible to say—the day before the poll issued with his polling cards a statement that this was not the case, and that our statements were knowingly false, and though the elector in question did all in his power to set the matter right by writing to the press that he had stated to me that he was

one of my supporters, this statement only appeared as a short paragraph amidst a mass of election news on the day of the poll, and was in fact too late to meet the eye of any considerable number of the electors, and it was not as generally known as the original mis-statement.

Of course if my election agent had had another spare set of envelopes ready addressed to all the electors, the contradiction could have been sent out at once, and in my three subsequent elections, fought in the same constituency, in all of which I was successful, instructions were always given to my election agent to keep *a spare set of envelopes to be used if necessary for "the last mis-statements."*

Fortunately, however, they were not required. And, in my opinion, even if the legal limit of expense has been reached, I should incur a further expense to pay to correct a similar incorrect statement, as it would appear certain that the courts, on application, would allow the expenditure of that additional sum for printing, postage, etc., if it was pointed out it was solely incurred to contradict a false or malicious statement made at the last minute to affect the result of an election.

CHAPTER VI

TACTICS AT ELECTIONS

IN certain election contests at which I have assisted, the dissemination of false statements by unscrupulous opponents has, I regret to say, been quite a feature. In fact, it has really almost taken one sub-agent's whole time to assist the candidate by issuing posters and in other ways refuting errors. One of the most common, especially used by a certain stamp of candidate in large county constituencies, is this—if one of the candidates is an employer of labour in a large or small way, to allege that he underpays his workmen and does not give them a fair rate of wages. As a rule these statements are generally absolutely untrue and without foundation, but are, notwithstanding, extremely difficult ones to disprove, as it is always hard to prove an affirmative, and are calcu-

lated in large constituencies to lose a candidate many votes. This even where the maligned individual is a local man, as he may only be personally known in one part.

Such a statement when false should be refuted at once, and in no sense harped on to give it undue importance. It should not be treated lightly, as I once heard a candidate treat it, who simply said, "It's absolutely false." In the memorable words of an ancient speaker I would add, "I deny the allegation and defy the allegator"; and by another in more stately fashion, "Slander is like the mephitic vapour in the cave of the dogs near Naples: it suffocates the animal that grovels, but cannot touch the man who walks upright."

It would seem better for the candidate thus unfairly attacked to say, "The statement made by my political opponent, that I do not pay those in my employ the fair and usual rate of wages in this locality, is absolutely false and untrue. I am aware that as a candidate I am protected by an Act of Parliament from unjust attacks of a personal character such as this, but, as my political opponent has my distinct and unqualified

denial of this unjust charge made by him and his supporters, I trust that as a gentleman he will apologise to me for having made it and withdraw it, or that, even if he does not adopt that honourable course, he will refrain from repeating or otherwise allowing to be published such a false statement." A few words corroborating the absolute truth of this denial might be made by some well-known local man, but it should not be harped on, and the old French proverb should be ever borne in mind, "*Qui s'excuse, s'accuse.*" If this does not put a stop to it, and the false statement is persisted in—and all election agents know how the spirit of prevarication is abroad at the time of an election—if this unfair mode of attack is still continued, and it is considered of sufficient importance, action can be promptly taken under the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, 1895, to put a stop to it, and if the statement complained of has been printed and published, this can be done more readily, but, of course, otherwise, even under this amending Act, it may be very difficult to trace slanderous rumours to the source whence they emanated. But where a state-

ment is printed and published, this Act gives a speedy and prompt remedy.

Upon application being made in the Croydon election, Mr Justice Day exercised the powers given him by granting in Chambers an interim injunction under section 3, which gives power to the Courts as follows :—

“ Any person who shall make or publish any false statement of fact as aforesaid, may be restrained by interim or perpetual injunction by the High Court of Justice from any repetition of such false statement or any false statement of a similar character in relation to such candidate, and for the purpose of granting an interim injunction, *prima facie* proof of the falsity of the statement shall be sufficient.”

And Mr Mead, the Stipendiary at the Thames Court, also fined the publisher of an East End newspaper for an offence under section 1 of the same Act, and rendered him subject to the consequent disqualification for an illegal practice. This section deals with the making or publishing of “ any false statement in relation to the personal character or conduct of such candidate.”

It has always struck me the opposing candidate, particularly if he has not a strong case of his own, always tries to draw his rival into a controversy of this kind to throw a red herring over the trail. But in truth it is best for the candidate not to notice him too much, to refer to him by name as seldom as possible; if obliged to do so to simply say, "The candidate our political opponents appear to have selected says." The best thing for a candidate to do is to state his own views and the views of those with whom he is associated, in fact his "leaders," to drive into the minds of the electors that these are the right views to support, and not in any way to advertise, as far as he can help, his political opponent by stating his opinions or mentioning his name.

It were almost needless to add that a candidate should never tire an audience, however brilliant a speaker he may be, by too long a speech, and should at all meetings allow some of his chief supporters resident in that locality an opportunity of making a few bright ten minutes' speeches in moving or supporting some resolution. And in all cases when practicable the chair should be taken

at all ward or district meetings by a leading local supporter residing in that district, whilst at the chief or mass meetings the chairman of his election committee or a leading elector should take the chair. It is a great mistake, in my view, to have too large an array of speakers at an election meeting, either in the town or country; one speaker of ability, or at most two, besides the candidate are all that are required, together with short addresses from the mover and seconder of the resolution of confidence.

Election committees are sometimes altogether too large, and absolutely unworkable executive bodies. Where practicable the best plan is to have a meeting of the whole or general committee just before the election starts, to make a short, stirring speech and ask them all to work, and to appoint two of their number, or at most three, to assist the candidate and his agents in carrying out the actual executive work of the election; or, if preferred, the candidate could invite these gentlemen to act on his committee. The remainder of the general committee should, however, one and all, be invited to work and canvass and to

otherwise help by all legal means at the election; but the old saying is quite true, "Too many cooks spoil the broth," and for the actual executive work—arranging as to where meetings are to be, as to speakers, and the numerous other details of an election—a small committee is best.

Of course there are some who contend that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it would be better to have no committee, and as far as possible to secure the formal dissolution or suspension of all political societies within the borough or county division, and to rely upon individual help; for without doubt the appointment of a committee at once constitutes general and particular agency for each member elected to such a body.

That is doubtless very true; still, a small committee of men who can be relied on to work, and at the same time do so with all discretion, is no doubt an advantage in a large county constituency where there are varied interests, but in a well-knit-together borough the candidate, one leading elector and the agent can probably do all that is needful for the successful conduct of an election,

better than if they had from time to time to consult a larger body. On that subject I may mention that during a contested election fought in 1886, the committee, without either consulting my election agent or myself, invited my political opponent to address a meeting called in support of my candidature and paid for out of my election expenses, after it had been addressed by some friends and myself, and this course they adopted in a part of the constituency in which we were said to be in a minority; and though I won that election, it never struck me as a wise proceeding. Nor should the candidate or his agent undoubtedly deal with associations or organisations of any kind or description, who voluntarily thrust themselves into elections, but with individuals.

It is desirable for the candidate to see his election agent by himself privately for, say, half an hour each morning for at least the week or ten days before the poll to talk matters over quietly with him, answer letters, or get the agent to answer them in his name, to glance at bills and posters and circulars proposed to be issued, to talk over coming meetings and who should be invited to address them, etc.

Where the parties are fairly balanced, an electioneering agent who manages things in a quiet, methodical way, is never put out at anything, and takes quietly the fact that some leading supporter, for some reason or other (sometimes for no apparent reason at all), gets in a huff, has points in his favour and conduces greatly to his candidate's success.

One thing should always be seen to by a good election agent: that is, that members of Parliament and other speakers who, many of them, come a distance at considerable inconvenience to themselves, should be, as far as practicable, met at the station, accompanied by a member of the committee, or one of the clerks, to the hotel or private house at which they are to be located, and given definite instructions as to when they will be conveyed to the meetings. These little details often conduce to success; probably the visitor succeeds in making a better and more telling speech if they are attended to, and, at anyrate, they leave a pleasant impression on those who come to help. I am glad to say it has never fallen to my lot to suffer in this way, but I

have heard others complain a good deal in regard to this in certain contests, and who declined in consequence to go to help in the same constituency again.

Referring again to this division in London in which I was a candidate in 1885, it is always desirable to have good scrutineers to watch the counting of the votes. For a matter of fact, I was informed afterwards in that election the total number of votes declared for the two candidates were sixty short of the total polled number contained in the ballot boxes. My agent did not demand a recount, and in the course of a day or two he received a letter from the returning officer stating that these sixty votes had been cast in my favour and had accidentally not been counted. It did not affect the result, but it is doubtless best, if there be a vote short and unaccounted for in the aggregate of the votes polled, plus the spoilt votes, that a recount should be demanded. An election is too important a matter to allow one single vote cast for a candidate not to be duly recorded, whether that candidate is successful or not.

After this election, in the course of a conversation with a cousin who had sat in

Parliament for nearly twenty years for a division of Sussex, I was shown a marked register of that county division, in which were signified by letters the politics, as far as they could be ascertained, of nearly all the electors, and he dwelt on the importance of having this not only done at election times, but yearly, so that the member or candidate has full knowledge of who are with him, who against him, and who more or less neutral. He also urged that it is desirable at the election to spare no effort to secure the support of all one's known friends and to win over the votes of as many of the "doubtful" voters as possible, that is, those who have no very fixed political opinions—and they are in many constituencies very numerous—and not to waste one's time and energy in trying to win over the convinced supporters of one's opponent. To-day, however, party ties have been so loosened, and the old-world comprehensible political designations are to some extent now a thing of the past, and the General Election of to-day will no longer be on machine-made party cries, so that the candidates of all sections may find

support from unexpected quarters, and so will have to try and win the vote and support of every elector on the register.

In certain constituencies, particularly in large South-country cities and towns, and notably in London, there are yearly from twenty to twenty-five per cent. new electors on the register, and to find out the least trace of the political views of all these newcomers is no light task to the canvassers, more particularly when politics and parties are in the kaleidoscopic and unsettled state they are at present.

There are a great many of the electorate in Great Britain at the present time whose political opinions do not exactly fit in with the tenets of any political party, and who, I believe, in some future general election, will form a sufficiently important and large portion of the community to have to be reckoned with, and be able to turn the scale at many political contests.

There are, in this country, many broad-minded men who are able to look at altered circumstances as they find them, and are not bound by any fetish in the question of taxation, of tariffs, or in the incidence of rates,

who are not hide-bound by any merely doctrinaire opinions, but are in favour of judiciously considered progress and reform in all directions.

Again, the urban working-man elector is not the "Uriah Heep" some imagine he is, neither is he "'umble" without the "H." He is at heart, in nine cases out of ten, progressive, but intensely patriotic, and in many instances genuinely imperialist.

The great mistake some make is to think the British working man loves the alien, and is a friend of every country but his own. He is nothing of the sort, sad as it may be for philosophers, young or old, to reflect on. He is no great admirer of what he calls "them furriners." He will help foreign working men if he can, should they get into trouble, not because they are foreigners, but because they are working men, and at heart, be it wrong or right, he thinks most of the welfare of his own fellow-workers and his own countrymen, though some may denounce that as narrow-minded and selfish. He believes in that kind of patriotism, and is not as a rule a cosmopolitan at heart.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST "UNIONIST" FIGHT AT THE POLLS

DURING the few months that elapsed from the election in the autumn of 1885 to that of May and June in 1886, the political world was greatly stirred by the Home Rule controversy, and the formation of the Liberal Unionist party. Having been again adopted by my supporters as their candidate, I was busily engaged preparing for the next contest in the same constituency as in the previous General Election of 1885. Amongst other functions I attended were many public dinners, not a few smoking concerts, and, together with a candidate on the same side, was initiated and elected as honorary member to numerous friendly societies. Some of the initiation rites were a trifle comical. At one of these the master of the ceremonies, who was arrayed in a

coloured sash over his working clothes, made my colleague (now a noble peer) and myself state that we would never come into the lodge without our hands being properly washed, and refrain in lodge from swearing, spitting, or using offensive language. The thing that tickled both of us so much was that the individual who initiated us looked like the extremely dirty man in the advertisement for a certain soap, who is writing a testimonial as follows:—"Two years ago I used your soap, since which I have used no other."

Some of the public dinners were amusing, others a bit tedious and tiring and sort of mutual admiration societies, where each in turn got up and praised and buttered someone else. One public dinner stands prominently out in my memory, at which ladies were present, and I had the good fortune to sit next an extremely bright and amusing young American lady who had never been to a public dinner before, and who looked on the whole matter as a huge joke. This young lady was sitting on the chairman's left, and the toastmaster with his chatelaine round his neck interested her immensely.

She wanted to know what his steel chain was for, and on being jestingly informed that it was to hang him by in case he did not behave himself, remarked: "Why, is that so?"

After the loyal and formal toasts had been disposed of, the chairman was asked the following question by the toastmaster, which amused the young American lady's fancy immensely: "Will you speak now, sir, or shall you let them enjoy themselves a bit longer first?" The chairman did not look as if he quite appreciated the way that question was put, but when his turn came to speak, this remark, though unintended, nearly hit the right nail on the head. For this speaker, after having drifted on at inordinate length, without clearly defining to his audience what he was driving at, completely lost his way in his notes, and then the thread of what he was talking about altogether, so that it ran somewhat as follows:—"This charity is, as I said, a kind of charity, but a—a—a—the charity is." This caused me to whisper to my fair friend: "If someone would pull him down it would be a charity," to which the lady replied: "It's like his champagne, all wind, froth, and flummery. If he goes on

much longer like that I shall either scream or scratch him." Fortunately he then concluded, though, as I laughingly remarked, "he little knew his danger."

My next election campaign was a short, sharp, and satisfactory one, and in the same constituency. My political opponent commenced, as was his plan, by endless personal attacks, which did not seem to me worthy of any reply, whilst, on the other hand, in my address I steadily pointed out the policy I advocated and let my opponent severely alone. This election was fought on the same register as the previous one, and at one of my early meetings I observed as follows:—"I found a curious thing in this constituency during the election of last year, that not only is the memory of friends who pass away kept green by their names being inscribed on their tombstones, but these names are also kept on the register of electors, and, remarkable though it may sound, a good few of them voted last election." (We, however, laid those ghosts at this election, and also took other steps to guard against the danger of personation.) A man in the hall interrupted me by

saying: "Well, do you know how they voted?" To which remark I replied: "No, sir, I do not; that would, I imagine, very much depend on where they came from!" A quick retort to an interruption is often a useful thing to keep a meeting in good humour.

The Marquis of Caermarthen, now Duke of Leeds, when a young man, was fighting a London seat, and was addressing a big meeting the night before the poll. His appearance then was rather youthful, and to nonplus him, a man in the crowd called out: "Does your mother know you're out?" "Yes, sir, she does," was his reply, "and she'll know I'm in to-morrow." This quick and happy rejoinder was received by laughter and applause, and Lord Caermarthen was a true prophet, for he was returned by a large majority.

Referring to the danger of personation, this offence is not, unfortunately, unknown in large centres of population, but it is, as a rule, attempted more on an old register than on a new one. Amongst the forms personation at elections takes are the following:—

Applying for a ballot paper in the name of another person, whether living or dead.

Voting twice, or voting for two divisions of a divided borough at the same election.

Aiding or abetting or procuring personation.

Forging or counterfeiting a ballot paper.

The mere attempt to procure a ballot paper by personation brings the person so applying under the penalties of the statute.

The penalty is two years' imprisonment with hard labour. No fine can be levied, nor is the judge allowed any discretion as to imprisonment without hard labour.

At that election the governmental policy was a bit obscure, nor did the speeches of their very able leader make the policy much clearer. Speaking on that subject at a meeting during this election, I said: "There is, it is said, a new life assurance company started which offers to assure on favourable terms the life of every candidate standing at this election, except that of the late Prime Minister." "How's that?" said a man in the audience, "isn't his a good life?" "Oh, no, that's not the reason at all," was the reply; "the fact is, they have not got a clerk in their office who can make out his policy!"

At some elections, as I have previously indicated, it is to be feared a good many

political and other mis-statements are made, and it would be difficult to know to whom to give the palm in this unenviable respect. The history of the award of a certain copper kettle may be rather to the point at a good many contested elections. It is as follows :—

Two men were disputing in the street ; to them came a third and asked them what they were talking about, and they replied : " We have made a bet that whoever can tell the biggest lie is to have a copper kettle." " What a horrible wager to make," said the new-comer. " Why, do you know, I never told a lie in my life." At this they both exclaimed : " Here, you win. Give him the kettle !"

After the 1886 election, on going to the hall where the count took place, about the end of the proceedings, it was not difficult to see by my friends' faces that I had been returned. After a hard fight, it is satisfactory to wake next morning and find one has succeeded. Nor is the least pleasing part of one's duty on the occasion of one's return to Parliament, the returning thanks after one's election to the cheering crowds outside the counting hall, or committee

rooms, and receiving the congratulations of one's friends.

A sad incident occurred during this General Election of 1886 to a friend of mine who was a candidate in a neighbouring borough ; for, as this young gentleman was leaving a crowded political meeting, he was somewhat jostled and hustled by the crowd, and whether it was from that, or from cold in going home overheated outside a conveyance, he was taken ill and died in a few days.

The actual taking of one's seat after a bye-election has a certain amount of ceremony about it, and the new member is always more or less cheered by his party, but after a General Election it is a more humdrum affair ; about a dozen or so members take the oath together, then alternately sign the roll, and that ends the matter. Most new members, as there is ample time allocated for the purpose, show no undue haste in taking the oath, but take their turn in a quiet, orderly, and leisurely fashion. There are exceptions to this rule, and I remember one instance of a new member at the beginning of the Parliament of 1886 who, whilst a group of others just elected were awaiting

their turn, rushed like a bull in a china-shop through these gentlemen, and as he was a big burly man and took them by surprise, knocked them right and left in a most unceremonious fashion, thus going through this important parliamentary proceeding a few minutes sooner than he would otherwise have done. The art of "push" sometimes succeeds, and in this and in other subsequent matters he was certainly not wanting in that, but though he was a clever man and his party was generally in power during the time he sat in the House, it did not succeed in his case, and he never held office or obtained social or other advancement.

A man soon finds his level in the House of Commons. Take the case of a demagogue like Dr Kenealy, who, having been the advocate for that arch - impostor "The Claimant," had in some mysterious way a great hold in many parts of the country, and could at one time, it is said, have turned the scale in more than a score of constituencies. And people say we are a calm, phlegmatic people of sound judgment, and not an excitable, easy-moved race. Well,

Dr Kenealy's first speech in the House killed his absurdly over-rated position by ridicule. He soon, like others, found his level; in that speech he described himself as despising his detractors and, like a lion, "shaking the dewdrops from his mane."

Our House of Commons has been described as the Mother of Parliaments—the old lady is remarkably slow and deliberate in her procedure, and has an utter disregard of the value of time. The first thing that strikes a member as absurd is the pompous farce at the beginning of each session of about a third of the House of Commons introducing Bills "in dummy," or placing on the paper notices of motion that never come on. All this wastes a couple of working days, and no one is an iota the better. The House next proceeds to discuss at large, for at least a fortnight, the King's Speech. Everybody knows that an address, thanking His Majesty for his gracious speech, will ultimately be passed; still the farce goes on. And as to the length of speeches—some of them, and from the worst speakers as a rule, seem interminable. A friend of mine, Sir Carne Rasch, has frequently urged in his place that the duration

of the speeches be limited to a fixed period of time ; and everybody sympathises with his motion except the bores.

That a change in this is desirable, all admit ; it will come some day, probably—who knows?—about the end of this century. We move very slowly in this country in any change of effete customs, and should emulate our brave allies, the Japanese, in the business-like procedure of their Parliament.

CHAPTER VIII

“THE HOUSE”

As this is simply a short record of election experiences and not parliamentary ones, it is not proposed to refer at any length to that important assemblage except to repeat that it is a place where a man soon finds his level.

The House of Commons is a pleasant institution to belong to. Perhaps the best way to get on there is to be a trifle hold-offish and to give out one is a very superior person! At least that seems to apparently generally answer. Being good-natured and obliging to one's party, and willing to assist at an election, even at short notice; to move for a return for a friend, or ask a question in the House if asked to do so, or speak if it will help one's party, or take on an amendment to a Parliamentary Bill at the request of a friend—all these things, in my experience,

may make a man popular, but it won't otherwise assist a member's career—rather the reverse. Many men come to the front by force of circumstances, others by family interest, and not a few by the might of mediocrity or by constant advertisement, or by the weight of their purse and their generous support to the funds of their party; they do good by stealth and blush to find themselves ennobled or famous, as they apparently never tell their left hand what their right hand has done. Some succeed by pertinacity, and others by ability and merit.

A great deal of a member's time in the House is devoted to what is neither more nor less than laborious idleness. One has to be there, and if the debate is on a subject one does not take a particular interest in, one's sole resource is to go into the library to write or read and wait for the division bell to occasionally record one's vote. Of course during the summer months there is the terrace to walk on, and last, but not least, the libraries, the smoking, newspaper, and tea rooms, as well as the dining rooms. When I first entered Parliament the twelve o'clock rule had not been passed, and one had very

frequently to sit to all hours of the morning in the House. On one occasion it was my lot to be there twenty-two hours at a stretch, from four one day to two the next, and then home to have a wash and change and back again to the House by five o'clock. That was in the days when obstruction was easier than it is now, and the closure required two hundred votes to carry instead of, as now, one hundred. Sometimes then the Government messengers had to go in search of members to make that quorum of two hundred at all hours of the night and early morning, and all sorts of amusing stories were told as to that, no doubt of an apocryphal nature, and the surprise caused by the messengers' appearance in certain households asking after members whose wives had imagined they were then at their Parliamentary duties.

The new rules of procedure may have done good, but as regards any real criticism of estimates, that is a thing of the past. The Government of the day decide what estimates are to be taken, and most of the time is occupied by a few long set speeches made by a few leading lights on each side. The

governmental representatives do not care how long they take in replying, as it only occupies a part of the time of one of the fixed number of days on estimates, and those estimates that there is not time to discuss are taken *en bloc*, including some votes the Government are not improbably glad are not discussed at all. In fact, the power of the private member in Parliament is gradually becoming a thing of the past. Obstruction used only to be carried out in the House itself. On the standing committees much useful work was done, and by a sort of unwritten law members did not obstruct in committees. It seems a pity that that good rule has been, on one or two occasions lately, partially disregarded.

The House of Commons is, on the whole, a thoroughly fair audience, if at times a slightly cold one, more especially when there are not many present, and most of these are anxious to follow the then member addressing the House and speak themselves. It resents a bore and does not like being addressed as if it were a political meeting or lectured by a superior person. But be the speaker who he may, be he a good and practised speaker or

be he not, if the subject on which he speaks is one the House considers he is thoroughly conversant with, it is a very indulgent audience, if the speaker is not tedious and does not intervene when the question has been thoroughly thrashed out and the House is anxious to go to a division.

New members, and for a matter of fact all members, find their time a little taken up by answering the numerous appeals they have from their constituents for subscriptions for purposes too numerous to mention. One member once jokingly told me that he had one formula to send as a reply to these applications, which was: "Would that I could, alas!"

Any little slip in speaking sometimes tickles the House immensely. A member in the course of a speech on a motion, which he ultimately carried by a large majority, said: "But, Mr Speaker, sir, in this House in which *I* am assembled." This little slip was received with great good-natured hilarity.

By many it is considered to some extent an advantage to address the House early in a debate, when the subject has not been thrashed out threadbare, unless, as is some-

times the case, one can throw a new light on the subject, and of course those who speak later in a debate or wind it up have the advantage that they have the views of the other side to criticise.

A story once went the round of the House regarding the late Mr Bradlaugh, who was travelling down to Northampton with his colleague to address a meeting. He had a plan of writing in a large bold hand on separate sheets of paper the points he proposed to speak on, such as: "One Man, One Vote," "The Eight Hours Bill," etc. His colleague saw him employed in this way on his way down, and was called on by the chairman of the meeting to speak before Mr Bradlaugh. The latter's notes were lying on the table, and easily readable from a distance, and, point after point, the first speaker took up the subjects Mr Bradlaugh proposed to discuss, till the perspiration was running down the latter's brow. When the last point in Mr Bradlaugh's notes was reached, his colleague said: "On this point there is much to be said, and I will simply refer to it briefly and leave this subject to be dealt with more fully by my worthy friend."

Another yarn was that a member of the House who was travelling abroad, and who chanced to be a voter in one of the home counties, was staying at a German hotel, where he had an exceedingly commodious and comfortable set of rooms. The landlord came to him after he had stayed there some time and told him he regretted to say he must put him in an inferior set, as his were required for a German princeling who was expected. The member expressed his surprise, and said to the landlord, "Do you know who I am?" "No, sir." "Well, bring me the visitors' list, and I will add my title to it," and after his name he added the words, "Elector of Middlesex!" in a large bold hand. The landlord humbly bowed at this, and said he did not know he was entertaining so great a man, and our friend retained his set of rooms.

During the course of the 1886 Parliament I went down to assist the Unionist candidate at several bye-elections, including those at Winchester and Coventry. At the former election my friend was returned by a large majority, whilst at Coventry, after one of the hardest-fought elections it has ever been my lot to

participate in, he was in the minority by sixteen votes — the result of this election being due to a great extent, it is said, to a mistake made by a London policeman in "the Cass case." This, which had in reality nothing to do with the questions before the country, was made a great deal of by speakers supporting the Opposition candidate, and at a large meeting, at which reporters were excluded, it is difficult to say what allegations against the Government they did not trump up, or how many votes they may have turned by their rather "smart," if not altogether accurate, statements. Such is, however, the fortune of war in electioneering, and we must take things as they come.

During this Parliament, which lasted about six years, a great portion of the time was devoted to the alleged wrongs of Ireland. We had Ireland from all hours of the morning, Ireland in the afternoon, and Ireland all night, and the same impassioned speeches, the same points came over and over again with endless regularity, till the Unionist members, who had at first resented being called "brutal and base Saxons," and other expressions of a similar stamp, began to look

forward to these flowers of rhetoric on an "Irish night," as they were called, and cheered them to the echo, and, in fact, treated them with ironical applause.

On one occasion I recollect well an eloquent and distinguished Unionist member from Ulster had intervened in a debate, which was, I believe, regarding certain riots that had taken place in Belfast, and endeavoured to correct in the most direct way, though in the most courteous language, some mis-statements which in his opinion had been made regarding the subject under debate by certain members of the Irish Nationalist party. This was too much for one of the Nationalist members, who bobbed up in his place, interrupted the honourable member speaking, and vehemently interjected the following: "The Honourable and Gallant Gentleman, sur, is a cowardly liar!" The conjunction of the terms "Honourable," "Gallant," and "Gentleman" with the latter part of the sentence was, despite the rudeness of this unwarrantable charge, too much of an Irish bull to be received seriously, and was followed by peals of laughter, in which the honourable member thus attacked had

some difficulty in refraining from joining. Of course the Speaker called the Nationalist member to order for his unparliamentary language, and the latter apologised, and the incident closed.

It is a remarkable fact that some members who enter the House, and who apparently lay themselves out to weary it in season and out of season, and appear to take a delight in what is called obstruction, and who rise as a rule during the course of nearly every debate, are not invariably merely windbags, or men who have not proved themselves in other walks of life to be endowed with ability, and to understand the fitness of things. But whether it is they are intoxicated with the delight of hearing their own voices, or endowed with the bump of loquacity, if phrenology has developed such a bump amongst public speakers, they certainly do try their suffering fellow-creatures in the House of Commons pretty highly.

Two or three notable instances of distinguished able and useful ex-Indian civilians come to my mind—Sir Richard Temple, who seemed never happier than when spinning out a debate, and two other worthy and ac-

complished ex-officers of the Crown who had done excellent service in India, and who in private life were pleasant enough friends and acquaintances. These gentlemen were respectively Sir George Balfour and Sir George Campbell. The former, however, tempered his obstruction with mercy, and was occasionally concise and to the point; the latter certainly did not, and the "House" was delighted at one or two little incidents when they had an opportunity to indulge in their risible faculties at his expense after the penance he had so often inflicted on that assembly, and the cause of their merriment, my late friend Sir George Campbell, took the laughter in perfectly good part. One instance was as follows:— In the Parliament of 1886–92 few speakers were better appreciated than the then First Commissioner of Works, Mr David Plunket (afterwards Lord Rathmore); the slight hesitation in his diction appeared only to emphasise the thoughtfulness and elegance of his oratory and the pointedness of his remarks. One of the best-appreciated quips which fell from his lips was on being interrogated by Sir George Campbell as to certain

carved beasts and birds which had been recently introduced into the interior decoration of Westminster Hall, who, in emphatic tones, asked him if he "was responsible for those fearful creatures." The First Commissioner, who had replied to the previously put question in a written official statement, came back again to the table, and in reply to this renewed inquiry, smilingly said, with a genial nod to Sir George, "No, sir, I am not responsible for the fearful creatures in Westminster Hall, or in the House either." To thoroughly appreciate this good-humoured hit one would have had to be in the House at the time. Questions were interrupted for a minute or two by peals of laughter, in which even Mr Gladstone not least delightedly joined.

It is said that soon after Mr Plunket was raised to the peerage he was travelling abroad, and was awoke in the middle of the night by the guard, who came to see that the English nobleman for whom the carriage had been reserved was actually in it, and who asked his name. Without thinking, he replied David Plunket, and it took a minute or two before the then recently created Peer could

remember his title of Rathmore and explain his mistake to the guard.

On another occasion, Sir George had for several days been more than usually industrious, and had kept the House sitting till all hours of the morning whilst he intervened in debate fully a score of times, and not any of them brief addresses. By means of these orations and some others made by a few of his friends, the discussion had been prolonged and estimates prevented being passed. After these exploits he was again addressing the wearied House, and, anxious that the action of himself and friends should not be lost to history, he alluded to them collectively as a "band of us devoted guerillas"; but the pronunciation of this latter Spanish word did not come glibly off his tongue, and what the House heard was "a band of us devoted gorillas." The prolonged and uproarious laughter which greeted this phrase rendered any attempt to subsequently correct it impossible, and Sir George had to ultimately subside in his place. It may be added that the members bore with heroic fortitude the fact that he did not again address the House for several days.

One of the bravest of men and most trustworthy of friends, who, with my late uncle, afterwards General Sir David Dodgson, K.C.B., had been on the staff of his late father, General Sir Henry Havelock, was Havelock-Allan, member for a division of Durham. He had, however, a peculiar mode of crushing his political opponents, not only by the abruptness of his interruptions (and when he chose to make a speech he was one of the most brilliant and lucid debaters in Parliament), but by actually and physically sitting on them. A certain bench on the Opposition side of the House was then usually occupied by his Liberal Unionist friends, and the gallant General himself, once finding an Irish Home Rule member in their accustomed place, he proceeded to plump down on the bench more or less alongside of him, landing heavily on the member's lap, and it was merely the flattened presentment of a member of Parliament who rose to ask if this sort of thing was in order.

Small items in estimates were sometimes discussed at inordinate length, whilst immense sums of money were often passed, it seemed

to me, without due comment, and that is, of course, the case now more than ever, when, after the allotted days have been devoted to their discussion, the remainder are passed by means of the closure without discussion. On one occasion a debate lasting for an hour or two was on the salary paid to the rat-catcher to some public building or royal palace, I forget which. On another occasion there was quite a full-dress debate on an item appearing in the estimates for mending the robes of the knights of the Order of the Garter. A Minister, defending the vote, pointed out that it was needful to alter that sum, in order to maintain the dignity of that high order, to which Mr Labouchere retorted by asking: If the dignity of the order was maintained by its members wearing second-hand clothes? This vote disappeared from the estimates next session.

Although, no doubt, there is a committee appointed to examine the public accounts, their powers appear exceedingly limited; and there should be a strong committee appointed, with full powers, to go into the estimates thoroughly, and report to the House their view, if Parliament really wishes

to have any actual power over the purse-strings of the nation.

During the last session of this Parliament I carried a motion by a considerable majority that "the illiterate vote," as it is called, should be done away with, as I alleged this mode of permitting illiterates to vote in the case of Ireland was abused, and that hundreds of so-called "illiterates" could in reality both read and write, and only alleged their inability to do so to the presiding officer in the polling-booths in Ireland in order to let the personation agents of certain candidates know definitely how they voted, and that in consequence this permission for illiterates to thus vote practically evaded the secrecy of the voting system under the Ballot Act. The vote on my motion was by no means a party one, and a leading and important member of the then Liberal Opposition, Sir Wilfrid Lawson, was one of the tellers with myself in the division.

CHAPTER IX

IN OPPOSITION

THE Parliament elected in 1886 having run its course, another General Election took place, which was contested with great keenness all over the country. Members seeking re-election are often attacked by the rival candidates on their votes during the preceding Parliament. Is that a good policy? Does it not emphasise how attentive they have been to their parliamentary duties, and that they had carried out the pledges in Parliament given the electors who supported them six years previously.

At this election I was re-elected for the same constituency by a considerable majority. An incident occurred on the day of the poll which shows how careful a candidate must be. All the private carriages which had been lent were being used to convey

the electors to the poll. And in the afternoon of the polling day a couple of friends who were not electors were driving with me round the constituency in a barouche which I had hired, which could be used for that purpose, but, being a hired conveyance, it was not allowed by the Act to be used to convey voters to the poll. It chanced to be raining hard at the time, and two electors who were walking down the road and knew me by sight beckoned for the carriage to stop, which it did, and alighting from the carriage, I shook hands with them. They asked me to give them a lift to the poll. To that I had no alternative but to reply: "That is unfortunately a hired carriage, and it is illegal for me to let you drive to the poll in that; but, if you will allow me, I'll walk with you down the road and dispatch that carriage to send back one of the private ones standing by the nearest committee room to pick us up."

But that offer was declined. Whether these electors proposed to vote for me, or whether I lost their votes by my action, it is equally impossible to say. Be that as it may, this is most important, by what I

did any risk of an election petition was obviated.

This was a very short contest as far as this particular constituency was concerned, barely a fortnight elapsing from the date of the first meeting held to support my candidature to the date of the poll. My opponent had been actively working for about eight or ten days longer, but as there were not many supporters of the Government then in town, and I was sitting on an important parliamentary committee at the request of "the Whips," I remained in my place to help them wind up the session before commencing my electoral campaign, and so gave the other side a certain start, with no bad results to my prospect of success, as it ultimately turned out.

I have more than once been asked by candidates for Parliament, When does the actual contest begin; when, in fact, does a candidature commence? There is in fact no definite or clear rule as to that, except that all expenses should be included in the returns sent in of the expenditure incurred during the election which are incurred before "the issue of the writ or declaration of the

vacancy," but after the active campaign has begun. It is of course evident that the law will presume the contest has commenced after a candidate issues his election address and commences a round of meetings to further his candidature, and that the expenses incurred after that time must be returned as election expenses, and be included within the maximum allowed. To obviate any difficulty the candidate should prevent resolutions of confidence being submitted until the campaign has actually started.

It is impossible to exercise too much care in the selection of an election agent, and it is best, where an experienced man can be found in the locality itself, not to go further afield; but should the person who has worked the organisation during this period between the elections, although probably cognisant of the wants of each locality and personally known to many of the leading workers, not have sufficient experience in the actual conduct of an election, it would be judicious to obtain the services of some other person as agent, and to endeavour to secure as well the services of the previously referred to local organiser as one of the sub-agents or

“clerks” to act as the election agent’s right-hand man and to give him, when called on to do so, all information and all assistance in his power.

It is very desirable to have a smart sub-agent for a county election. I was once told a man was selected for the following reason : he had been a canvasser for a bookseller and obtained admittance to a publican’s private room to try and sell him a shilling book. The Boniface told him “to clear out of that promptly!” On returning through the bar, the canvasser said to the barmaid, “The gov’nor says he has not got a loose shilling about him, and to ask you for one and leave this book,” which she did. The innkeeper hearing this was furious, and called to the pot-boy to run after the man and call him back. On picking our hero up the latter said, “Oh, that’s all right. I know what he wants me for, he wants one of these books ; give me a bob and take it back to him at once.” The messenger eased himself of a shilling and returned with the book. The story does not record what the landlord said, or whether the book canvasser proved as successful as a sub-election agent.

In many constituencies the eve before the polling-day is devoted to a series of meetings to keep the enthusiasm up, and to pass at each of them votes of confidence in the candidate in whose interests they have been convened. There is, no doubt, much to be said in favour of that course, though I confess the plan I prefer is to have (at any rate in the case of a town constituency) one large meeting to be addressed by the candidate, and that also during the same evening a series of small ward meetings be convened, which all the workers be invited to attend, and that at these gatherings all the details of the work on the morrow be pointed out to them by the candidate, agent, or sub-agent, and provision made, as far as practicable, to bring up to the poll certain voters known to be supporters, but who might not otherwise find time or inclination to register their votes.

On the day of the election it is desirable that the most reliable of the workers should be placed in charge of the various committee rooms, and that all electors so promised are sent for at the time agreed upon, and that three or four persons are not sent after one

voter. After the declaration of the poll, the supporters of the candidates, victors and vanquished alike, usually appreciate greatly a few words from their champion at their respective head-quarters, when the causes which have secured victory or contributed to non-success can be briefly entered into, and words of encouragement or congratulation given to those who have done their best to secure their candidate's return.

During the election of 1892, except in a minor degree in this constituency I am referring to, no independent organisations took any part. Nowadays in many contests they do, and, as has been previously indicated, it would seem wisest for the election agent and the candidate, and all prominent persons connected with the party, to keep studiously away from the offices of any independent association or body interesting itself in the election. Of course, where a powerful organisation comes and opens committee rooms, and does its best to secure a man's return, it is often difficult for the candidate to keep his agent away from the persons acting on behalf of this organisation. Notwithstanding that, the election agent should

impress on all his colleagues, and also courteously inform the agents of the organisation referred to, that he must not constitute them his agents, or he would be responsible and suffer for their acts, and their expenses would have to go into his return.

The agent should give counterfoiled written orders for everything which he buys during an election, and should also post bills at the commencement of the contest announcing that he has been appointed election agent and that all orders will be made in writing over his signature, and that he will not be responsible for any expense otherwise incurred. A printer's proof of every document issued in connection with the election should be submitted to the agent, in order that he should ascertain that the imprint is correct, and that it contains no false statements with reference to the personal character of an opposing candidate upon which any charge may be based.

Should any bill appear, apparently issued by the election agent or by the candidate, which is in fact not so issued and which may be dangerous, it should be at once publicly

repudiated, and a copy of this repudiation should be sent in a registered letter to the Opposition candidate, in order to call his attention to the fact.

Nearly all over the country, during the election of 1892, the party that had been in power during the last Parliament were losing seats, one of the exceptions being in the borough a division of which I contested, where they not only held their own, but wrested a seat from their opponents, and both my successful colleague and myself had the honour of being sent for and congratulated at the Foreign Office by the Premier on our notable success at the polls.

Soon after the reassembling of Parliament the Government went out of office, and we became members of the then Opposition, which fact gave us both more opportunity of addressing the House if we so desired, as private members on the ministerial side have, *ipso facto*, to rather efface themselves in the interests of their party, though that rule is not strictly adhered to by a good number of them in recent years, and is one now apparently more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

During this Parliament one of the numerous political tours I took was to a bye-election in North Wales, and an uncommonly keenly contested fight it was. Both sides displayed the greatest energy. On one occasion, after a most enthusiastic meeting, the crowd took the horses out of the carriage in which another member and I were sitting, and dragged us through the town for about a mile.

One of the chief towns in the division had a market-place of considerable size, on one side of which was a comfortable hotel with a long wooden balcony. From this balcony the rival candidate and his friends addressed a large gathering, mainly consisting of his supporters. At the conclusion of their speeches, and after this gentleman and his supporters had left the balcony, but before the crowd had dispersed, some friends and I obtained permission to use the balcony and ventilate our views in support of his opponent. Our chairman (who has since sat for many years in Parliament) had some difficulty in making himself heard, as the noise made by the friends of the opposite party was something deafening. At length he called

on me to speak, and having quietly waited my time till the crowd had shouted and bawled themselves hoarse, and were tired of shaking their fists at the small group on the balcony, I ventured to commence as follows:—

“Gentlemen, the warmth and kindness of your reception delights and surprises me.” This was received with renewed howls of execration, and as they wore themselves out a second time, I added: “Again let me thank you for your hearty and genial greeting.” This was too much even for the bitterness of the crowd, who burst out into unwilling laughter at this unexpected response to their by no means cordial welcome. I then proceeded with my remarks, and kept politics aside for the moment, and regaled them with one or two anecdotes, and got their ear, in fact interested, and to some extent amused, them; they put me down as a wag, and I then gave them a good twenty minutes’ political speech, slipping into the views of my political opponents right and left, and ultimately induced them to carry a vote of confidence in the candidate I was supporting, which only shows that even in modern times and from the lips of speakers

who do not pretend to be orators, as in the days of old, a crowd sometimes, if properly handled, will change its opinions.

On my return to town after this particular political campaign, a genial and highly esteemed member of Parliament, one not altogether unconnected with the development of Egypt by the construction there of stupendous engineering works, which will last for all time, asked about twenty other members of the House to meet the writer of these reminiscences at dinner at the House of Commons, when, it were needless to say, compliments flew round and a pleasant evening was spent.

There was also at that time a club consisting of members of Parliament, who took an active part in supporting the political views of one party in the State, called the "Jubilee Club." These members used to dine together from time to time at the St Stephen's Club, within sound of the division bell, to summon them to the House of Commons to vote in a division, and these gatherings at that club were pleasant interludes in the routine of political work in the House. Many of the members of this club, if asked

to do so, used to help at the various contested elections.

Another interesting election during that Parliament, at which I assisted by speaking, was one for the Brigg Division of Lincolnshire, which resulted in an important win for my friends then sitting on the Opposition benches. It was a very uphill fight. Although it was known that it would probably be a very close contest, on the afternoon of the poll all indications pointed out that the candidate whom, amongst other workers, I was assisting would win, and I therefore ventured to send a telegram to a political club in London to foretell that result, and, as previously said, a seat previously held by a supporter of the then Government was carried by the "Opposition" candidate, though only by a majority of seventy-seven votes in a total poll of about eight thousand votes recorded.

Although that forecast was a successful one, it seemed to me too risky a thing to ever afterwards attempt to prophesy about the result of close elections. The ballot box is an uncertain quantity and able to give surprises.

On the evening of this election, whilst I was sitting, shortly before the close of the poll, in a committee room, a canvasser stated that an elector who had just come from work would only vote if the writer of these reminiscences would call and ask him to do so. In this I willingly assented, and accordingly went to this voter's cottage, which was, as I entered it, dark, as the workman had just returned from the iron works. The elector, although friendly, said he hardly liked to shake hands, as they were dirty, and he had not had time to wash since his return from the foundry. On the reply to that remark that "an honest man's hands are never dirty," he shook hands and agreed to go to the poll, and duly proceeded there to register his vote.

During that election, two amusing stories were told me. One was by a friend, and as follows :—

A Quaker who had been all his life a staunch Liberal was converted to Conservatism in the following way. Being a market gardener, he had patches of ground covered with fruit and vegetables in many

localities, which gave him quite a multiplicity of votes. Reading the address of one of the Liberal candidates in one of these constituencies in which he had a vote, he came across a paragraph stating that this gentleman was in favour of "one man, one vote." On being called on to ask to vote for that candidate, he said: "What does this mean if carried out? Can I only vote once during an election?" "Yes, that's precisely it," said the canvasser. "Shan't I be compensated if I lose all the other votes?" "Oh, no, that's impossible," was the reply. "Well, then, friend, if that's the case, I'll turn Tory." And he did.

And the other was this one. As a rule, a candidate canvassing is very civilly treated by the voters, though he may meet with numberless refusals of their support by the electors. Nor does he as a rule receive similar treatment to that meted out to a candidate who, on asking an elector to give him his vote, received the surly reply, "I would sooner vote for the devil than for you," who smilingly rejoined, "Well, as I don't think your friend is standing, perhaps you will later on give me your support."

It is very remarkable how much people take their ideas of what politicians are like from what they read and see in the press. Although the late Lord Randolph Churchill was by no means a small man in stature, but one of medium height, our old friend *Punch*, in his friendly caricatures of him, had always depicted him as one much below the usual size.

That deceased statesman went, about the year 1887, to address a large mass meeting in a hall at Perth. It was my lot to be one of the speakers at that meeting, and it slightly astonished me to see that the committee had had erected a small platform behind the desk Lord Randolph was going to speak from, "so that the audience might see him," it was explained. When the committee met Lord Randolph and saw the mistake they had made, and that he was by no means a short man, that platform, it is needless to say, was hastily removed.

Driving to address several other meetings on another occasion, to various centres in the Highlands, on a coach, accompanied by several friends and an inevitable piper or

two, on one of these expeditions I had a pleasant and interesting, if a somewhat noisy experience ; the refrain from the pipers, aided by the vocal energies of the crowd, being, as the coach departed on its homeward journey, at the termination of this meeting, "Will ye no come back again?"

Once an incident of a less pleasant character happened to me. On driving, after speaking at Flint, in North Wales, to the town of Mold, in an open gig, with an Irish jarvy, a large lump of flint stone was hurled through the air at us by someone behind a wall, luckily missing us both.

"Begorra," said the driver, as he whipped up his horse, "we'd best be stepping along, or maybe the bwoys will hit us," in which remark, it is needless to say, there was hearty concurrence on my part.

The largest meeting I ever had the honour of addressing was an open-air one at Todmorden, Lancashire, when it was stated there were over ten thousand people present.

CHAPTER X

ANOTHER GENERAL ELECTION

THE election of 1895 came somewhat suddenly. That is to say, the division on "cordite," which defeated the Government, was an unexpected one, as it was anticipated that their defeat (and there were only eighteen votes between the governmental majority and the nominal vote of the various sections of the Opposition) would have been, more probably, on some important amendment in the committee stage being carried against the Government on their Disestablishment of the Church in Wales Bill. It was considered at the time that the real policy of the leader of the Opposition was the one Mr Balfour had adopted, and that was to hang on the flanks of the enemy, and attack them on every point, harass them on every opportunity. This division Mr Brodrick chal-

lenged on the "cordite" vote took place on a certain Friday. On the following Monday it is a fact that a division would have been reached on the Church in Wales Disestablishment Bill which would have wrecked the Government, as it was understood several of their supporters representing Welsh constituencies were going to vote for that amendment, whilst others, it was said, would have abstained from voting. I notice Mr Lucy and others well in the know endorse this fact. By chance, I may add, that amendment stood in my name. It was not, to my knowledge, as has been stated, in consequence of the Government of the day "riding for a fall," as it is called, but it was in reality in the nature of a surprise engineered by the Liberal Unionists in the House, who took steps to all vote or get "paired" for the "cordite" division, and to quietly "whip" as many of their Conservative colleagues as possible to be present on that occasion. This, of course, took the ministerial members by surprise, as the attendance having been so close for weeks prior to that, there was always a certain percentage who were absent during the discussion on estimates on the h

sides, and who took that opportunity to fulfil other duties and engagements, unless, as was the case then, a great effort was made by one side to whip up a larger number of their party than usual, as was done on that memorable occasion.

There was great excitement in the House after the division, and members rushed to the telegraph office to let their friends know, but as I sat for a London seat, I knew there was no need to do so, as the news would be in my constituents' hands ere any telegram of mine could possibly reach them. The telegraph office is on one side of the handsome central hall between the Lords and the Commons. Adjoining that central hall is also a corridor to the House through St Stephen's Hall leading from Westminster Hall. On the site of the former hall the House once sat. It is lined with the statues of great statesmen of the past, including, as statues go, quite a lifelike one of Pitt. Its resemblance to that of Mr Chamberlain is remarkable. At Knoll there is one of even an earlier date and finer workmanship, with a more striking likeness to the *enfant terrible* to "Free import traders" and Little Englanders.

During that Parliament, 1892-5, Mr Chamberlain always struck me as at his best when answering attacks all round with cool icy imperturbability. The more heated and fiery his opponents became, the more confident he appeared to be, and the more facilely he thrust them aside with the rapier-like points in his arguments. Like a skilful fencer with his back against a wall, and a slight smile on his face, he disarmed the blundering impetuosity of his opponents and exposed their fallacies. Nor did the recurring outburst of storm, or if half the members lashed themselves into fury, ever trouble him, and while he metaphorically laid them one after the other by the heels, he always seemed as cool as a cucumber.

During the election in 1895 many of my friends who had helped on previous occasions in the constituency I represented had either joined the majority or were away. Meanwhile, other and new stalwart supporters came to the front. The candidate who opposed me was not only a diffuse but a very brilliant speaker, and had the advantage of numerous canvassers from outside, whereas my friends were nearly all residents in the

locality. But what they lacked in numbers they made up in local knowledge and energy. During the contest, being a bit fagged from overwork, not only in the division I was standing for, but in other constituencies as well, I went down to Portsmouth, accompanied by my son, on a Saturday for a blow on an Admiralty steamer and a view of the Italian Fleet, then in British waters, and spent a week-end down there. After this short break I returned to town with renewed energy for the conclusion of the contest, and was again returned by a substantial majority to Parliament for the third time in succession, aided by the energy and good work of my friends. On the day following the declaration of the poll I left London to assist other candidates in several other constituencies where the elections were still pending.

I do not here propose to refer to contests for representative bodies other than the House of Commons, except to say that, win or lose, I invariably found equally kind workers to aid me in them, and that, in consequence, I was nearly uniformly successful in those elections.

My experience goes to prove that with a good cause, quite unruffled determination by the candidate, the election agents, and the workers, and thoughtful action in emergencies, it is odds in favour of a candidate even with a large majority against him to start with.

Above all, a candidate should never show he believes he is on the losing side, nor in any way "lack courage," and endeavour to encourage his supporters to the last. Courage is a very useful factor at a contested election. But speaking of that, there is a story which would appear to show that a lack of courage is not always an altogether *undesirable* thing, which is as follows:—A certain lady who was very much a widow, for she had buried five husbands in succession, took an early flame, who had never made up his mind to propose to her, to the cemetery to see the tombs of her departed spouses. "Ah!" she said, looking at him with an arch smile, "you might be lying there if you'd only had more courage!" That widow appears to have been one who came under the definition of the one described by the schoolboy, who replied, when asked as to what a widow was,

“A widow is a woman what wants a widower!”

It is always needful to make every effort to keep an appointment, especially a political one, so as not to disappoint numerous people. Once I was unfortunate enough to miss a connecting train at Rugby Junction owing to my train being late, and had to post on to near Coventry to be in time for a meeting during a contested election. Nor did I send an excuse as another member of Parliament is said to have done, who was to have made a speech at Derby, and who, being unable to do so because the heavy rains had destroyed the branch railway, sent a telegram as follows: “Cannot come, wash out on line.” In a few hours the reply came: “Never mind, borrow a shirt.”

At a very important election in London during the Parliament of 1892, another member of the House and myself were invited to speak on behalf of the Opposition candidate, who had a remarkably striking resemblance at that time to his political opponent, who was standing in the interests of the then Government. We engaged a hansom to drive from the House of Com-

mons to the meeting, which was in a district in London with which we were both totally unacquainted, and, as it turned out, so also was our driver, to whom we gave most careful instructions as to the name of the hall in which the meeting was to be held, and the street in which the hall was situated. It was a newly built over district, and the streets were a bit confusing, and the cabman at length arrived at a building in which there was evidently a meeting progressing. Alighting from the cab, we were most courteously received at the door, and boldly proceeded into the hall, during our progress up which we were received with cheers by the audience. We saw the candidate, whom we knew only slightly by sight, sitting on the platform, and we imagined him to be the gentleman we had been asked by their political friends to support. On drawing nearer the platform we recognised on it, to our surprise, several members of the House who were politically opposed to us, one or two of whom in a friendly way waved their hands and pointed out we had made a mistake and gone to the wrong meeting. The audience, who evidently did not appreciate the exact position of affairs,

cheered our departure as heartily as our arrival.

The hansom had, fortunately enough, not left the door, and so we promptly went to our friend's meeting, which was quite close, in fact, within a few hundred yards. This was even a larger meeting than the one at which we had inadvertently made an appearance. In addressing the latter meeting, we referred to our slight mistake in going into our political opponents' camp, and had, it were needless to say, a most cordial reception at one of the best meetings either of us had attended in London.

Some people imagine that in speaking to a large meeting one has to bawl and shout to make oneself heard. That is not so; one has to speak slowly (but not tediously so), distinctly and clearly pronouncing each word, even remembering there is a "d" in "and"; one should try to address one's remarks to the furthest man in the hall for him to hear. Open-air speaking is, of course, more trying to the voice than speaking in a hall, but even then, if the speaker will speak clearly and distinctly to the last man in the crowd, not necessarily in a very loud voice,

and he receives a fair hearing, he will make himself heard. If I may venture to say so, it has often struck me that there is one mistake which even the best and most finished speakers make, and that is more especially when speaking on a subject which they are thoroughly well up in themselves, and, so to speak, saturated with the knowledge of. I refer to what many unintentionally do, namely, speaking over the head of their audience, and not taking the trouble to explain to them in clear, easy, understandable language some of the alphabet of the subject—in fact, giving the audience credit for understanding the subject better than nine-tenths of them really do. For instance, I once heard a particularly good speaker give a learned disquisition on “dumping,” and when he had finished I doubt if one out of ten he was addressing had the faintest idea of what it was all about. John Bright was one of the few great speakers who never fell into that error, and also spoke in clear, simple language, as does, as a rule, Mr Chamberlain.

To any one who takes an interest in the racial differences to be found in the various parts of the country, nothing is more notice-

able than the distinctly different look of the audiences that confront a speaker. There is, for instance, the strong, well-built, big Cumberland and Westmorland men, and others of the same physique to be found in many other parts of the United Kingdom, including Scotland, whilst in some of the Midland and Southern districts the men are, comparatively speaking, small, although, as a rule, sturdy, well-knit-together specimens of manhood.

Some of the audiences seem quite different from others as to the brightness, quickness, and intelligence with which they grasp the speaker's ideas and cheer him to the echo, or dissent from his views. Urban constituencies, as a rule, are easier to address in this respect and more receptive of ideas than country ones. They see and appreciate the good points made by a speaker, and are more prone to understand and acknowledge by their laughter if any humorous remark is made to them. A Lancashire audience is probably the quickest in perception and best to speak to. Besides which they are composed of keen and thoughtful politicians, and are therefore more critical.

Even in addressing a completely friendly audience in some of the East Coast country constituencies, a speech that would be punctuated by cheers and laughter in many parts of the country is received in dead silence, which is a little disconcerting to the speaker. They are said, however, to understand all that is said to them, and go home and talk it over, and, despite their silence, often vote in the sense the speaker advocates, but appear to think it unseemly to interrupt in any way, even by applause.

A London audience is, as a rule, a good one, and thoroughly appreciates a good speech. Sometimes individual members of the audience make strange, weird, and pointless interruptions.

To quote an instance: It was my lot to once address a Holborn outdoor meeting in Red Lion Square during a bye-election, and was pointing out the advantages of a certain Local Government Bill, then passing through the House! A woman in the audience who was standing near the carriage from which I was speaking, with her arms akimbo, and who appeared to be listening intently, said:

“That’s all very fine, but what about Jack the Ripper?”

To which I replied :

“If you will bear with me, madam, I will refer to that sad blot in our social life a little later.”

Another member of Parliament, supporting the opposing candidate, was addressing another crowd from a cart about one hundred yards from where I was speaking, and to emphasise his arguments waved in the air a thing that looked like a horse collar, popularly supposed to be some instrument of torture used on Irish members of Parliament when thrown into jail by their “Saxon oppressors,” as they described the then Government.

It always seems best, in my view, to have a sort of time-table framed if there are to be many speakers at a meeting, so as not to let the first two or three monopolise all the time. But if one of the early speakers gets the ear of the audience and wishes to go on, that rule should be broken through. A speaker can always tell when he has got hold of a meeting ; there is a sort of magnetic current passing betwixt the speaker and the

audience, which seems to encourage the one to higher efforts and the latter to enthusiastic applause.

No platform speaker ever really gets hold of his audience unless he is thoroughly up in his subject, is clear and incisive, does not speak too quickly, and practically speaks from his heart. It is better not to use any further notes than the headings of the subject he proposes to speak on. Some speakers write out the peroration or termination of their speeches *in extenso*; and I well remember a laughable incident occurring in the House, of a speaker who, after a vain search through his pockets for the manuscript of the peroration of his speech, had at length to conclude his remarks somewhat lamely without its well-turned periods.

In Scotland, and in some other parts of the country, numbers of questions are put to the candidate. This is called "Heckling." If the candidate has his wits about him and gives short and incisive replies, and not laboured ones, he often makes good points and scores off his questioner. Much depends on the chairman as to how this part of the meeting goes off. A good chairman, as a

rule, will only allow such questions to be put which are sent up in writing, nor permit the replies to them to be commented on; exclude frivolous questions; and in all cases only allow a reasonable number of questions to be put at any one meeting, saying to those who propose to put others after a number have been asked and answered: "We have no more time for further questions to-night; you had better, if you wish to ask any further questions, come to our candidate's later meetings."

It has always struck me that the length of a General Election after the writs are out is needlessly protracted. Excluding Orkney and Shetland, of which more later, it is usually about a fortnight from the poll being taken in the first borough election to that in the last county one. That keeps the country more or less in suspense too long, and interferes needlessly with trade and industry. It further causes needless expense to the candidates. Some advocate that all the elections should be on one day, and that day should be a Saturday. But regarding the former suggestion, it might be inconvenient to have all the elections on

one day, as the returning officers, polling and counting clerks, scrutineers and police are often in a given district the same men in both the borough and county elections, and they could not obviously attend both places at once. It seems to me that it would be desirable to fix the elections for two subsequent days, one for the boroughs and the next for the counties. That would, of course, preclude Saturday being one of the days. Nor am I quite certain if, in any case, Saturday is the most convenient day. It is the day nearly all the provision merchants and traders in towns are busy, it is a market day in many country towns, the streets are often blocked by the carts and stalls of the hawkers, the railwaymen are all extra busy on Saturdays, and many, rich and poor alike, are anxious to leave the towns early on the Saturday afternoons. It is also a day that those of the Jewish faith regard as a day of rest. In many divisions the count could not be concluded on Saturday night, and would have to be postponed till the following Monday. Two days in the middle of the week would be, in my view, more convenient for Parliament to fix as the days of the polling, and not

leave the option to the returning officer, as at present—say Wednesday for all boroughs and Thursday for all county divisions.

The polling in Orkney and Shetland takes place now, in this age of telegraphs and steamers, at a ridiculously long time after the other pollings, and a week or so after the other elections were concluded should be ample time for a Government dispatch boat to go round to all the small islands comprised in that constituency, so their poll should take place on the succeeding Thursday to the rest of the county elections.

In conclusion, these lines have been written with the endeavour that they may interest and to some extent amuse the reader, to avoid making these reminiscences egotistical but general, and, as far as possible, from my varied experiences of elections in nearly every part of Great Britain, to give a few useful hints to all interested in elections. I am well aware that what applies to one constituency does not to another, and in all cases the local circumstances of the case will have to be considered, as well as the relative fitness and ability of the opposing candidates.

There has been every wish to keep out of

these reminiscences party names or party cries. It seems to me certain that at the present day any election will be more difficult for a man to win who has not made up his mind, and who cannot state his opinions clearly and frankly. It does not now depend altogether on old-world catch cries, nor can a candidate screen his views from the electors (if he fails to have any thoroughly convinced opinions of his own) by saying, "I vote for our leaders" or "I support the Government or the Opposition," but he must have the courage of his opinions, if he indeed has any.

In laying down my pen, I do so with the hope that at all future elections the country will send to the House of Commons a legislative assembly worthy of the Mother of Parliaments—a great council of the nation which will give liberal and constitutional progress and prosperity to this historic land and empire.

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