



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

THE ENGLISH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT, WESTMINSTER.

At twenty-five minutes to seven on the evening of the sixteenth of October, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four, a cry of fire was raised in the neighbourhood of Westminster, and as the shout spread over the metropolis, and was caught up and echoed back by the crowds that rushed towards the scene of disaster, a deep red glow settled in the sky.

As the alarm spread over the town, and the streets began to fill with the crowds rushing towards Westminster, the interest and excitement was considerably heightened by the intelligence that the conflagration was raging in the Houses of Parliament, and that the old senatorial chambers were threatened with destruction. Within a few minutes of the breaking out of the fire, a vast multitude had arrived and settled down before the burning pile. Swaying to and fro like a restless sea, the crowd was driven back; ten thousand up-turned faces, ruddy in the glowing light of the fire, watched the devouring element as it began to rage with greater vehemence; and the quick arrival of the engines added fresh confusion to the scene. The shouts and cries, the clatter of hoofs, the noise of the pumps, so peculiar, so monotonous, the roar of the fire as it mounted higher and higher towards the sky, the restless movements of the vast concourse, the bristling bayonets of the guards, the open spaces here and there kept by the police, the leathern hose that lay like swollen serpents on the ground, the showers of water cast upward on the flaming timbers, the flames contending for the mastery, and the deep red glow from within the building, presented a spectacle rarely witnessed by the multitude that had assembled there that night.

Fire! fire! Rumour with her thousand tongues spread the report of the disaster. At the far east of the city the event was soon made known, and quiet streets were quiet no longer. Every thoroughfare was crowded by the throngs hurrying to the scene of destruction, the loud cries of men, and quick rattle of wheels, betokened the passage of another brigade engine; everywhere hurried questions were asked that nobody could stop to answer. But in the close neighbourhood of the fire the most intense excitement prevailed. From that part of the building opposite to Henry VII.'s Chapel the fire had at first been seen; it had burst through the roof in a spiral flame, and then, taking three separate directions, proceeded to the body of the House of Lords, taking within its range the several apartments over the piazza facing Palace-yard, then proceeding to the Painted Chamber, and extending to the Library. The whole of these apartments were eventually destroyed, but not completely so until about one o'clock on the succeeding morning. Every moment the crowd increased and the confusion became more confused. The red glow of the fire lighted up the scene with a strange unearthly glare, and showed upon the river the crowded barges and the numerous boats which had gathered about to witness the conflagration, and the dense forest of faces that watched the destruction from Westminster-bridge. The river flowed onward like molten lead, and mirrored the flames as they mounted still higher and higher, and every stone and tree about the old palace at Lambeth became distinctly visible.

Fire! fire! The flames had seized upon the modern library, and with a tremendous roar the roof had fallen in, crushing massive timbers, and scattering stones and firebrands like a volcano in eruption. Through every window and loophole the ruby light was shining, and the fire within was raging like a furnace. Strange fantastic shadows were cast out upon the night as the fire leaped and danced and caught upon the quaint old carvings. With the shrill hiss of a serpent, and still in mighty force, the water was cast up, and still with hearty zeal men laboured at the pumps.

Fire! fire! The flames were sweeping onward towards the river. The numerous large rooms which formed the offices of the House of Commons were first consumed, and in these the loss was very great. The library of the Commons shared the

same fate. The House of Commons was next attacked. At first, from its proximity to the river, it was hoped that this building would escape; but the tide was low, the building was in an enclosed situation, the fire-engines could not be brought to play upon it. The old building, with its strong wainscotings and timbers, added fresh fuel to the flames, and in an inconceivably short space of time the whole was a mere shell. The House of Commons was destroyed; but the chapel of St. Stephens stood, in its strength and beauty, like a rock amidst a sea of fire, and broke the force of its waves, which till then had gone on conquering and overthrowing.

Fire! fire! The official residence of the Speaker was next attacked, and the fire extended westward along the range of buildings leading to the Commons' entrance in Margaret-street, and facing St. Margaret's church. The scene became more and more exciting, the crowds greater and greater,—the police, the military, and the men of the fire brigades behaved with the greatest intrepidity,—and bright as noon-day stood out the tower of St. Margaret's-church and the whole of the surrounding edifices. The whole of the range of buildings, consisting of waiting-rooms, committee-rooms, Bellamy's coffee-house, &c., were entirely destroyed, nothing but the walls being left by eleven o'clock.

When it is considered," says a journal of the period, "that the fire raged simultaneously in all directions, forming one tremendous conflagration, it will be seen that Westminster-hall was in the greatest danger, while hemmed in on the east side and south end by the flames. Fears for its safety were entertained from the first appearance of the fire, and throughout its continuance, and its preservation was the greatest object of anxiety and exertion among all classes. There was more than one time when its destruction seemed inevitable. But its strong stone walls opposed such an effectual resistance to the consuming element, and fire-engines, which had at an early period been introduced into the body of the hall, played through the great window with such effect upon the surrounding fire, that the only injury sustained was in the destruction of the glass in the upper part of this window. Had the flames burst through the window, as there was much reason to dread, the roof, which is of fine carved oak, must have been destroyed, and a structure consecrated by many historical associations would probably have become a ruin. The strong anxiety which spectators of the very humblest class in life expressed for the preservation of this historical building is highly creditable to the national feeling. The antiquities of a nation are among its best possessions."

Thus, nineteen years ago, the old English Houses of Parliament at Westminster were destroyed. What strange scenes had those old walls witnessed! How many thoughts are suggested, as we think of the struggle between freedom and tyranny which had there gone on—how many privileges had been won? how many abuses had been exposed? and how much huge wrong-doing had been overthrown and destroyed! A strange, eventful history is that of the Parliament House, and the mind looks back with interest, and forgets the present in the past.

When the mild government of the Saxon kings had been succeeded by the arbitrary sway of imperious Normans, the territory was chiefly in the hands of military tenants, who held their estates from the Crown. This description of tenure brought with it the privilege of having a voice in the great council of the nation. When "Domesday Book" was compiled, there were about seven hundred of these persons, but the most wealthy and influential of them were alone permitted to exercise their right; and such was the origin of the meeting called the House of Lords, or rather the beginning of a representative government. In those days the people had no voice in the senatorial assembly. The condition of the burgesses is illustrated by the fact that the superior lord was equally prohibited by the feudal law from marrying his ward to a burgess or villain (slave). This fact shows very strikingly

the estimation in which these two classes, forming the bulk of the population, were then held. At a later period writs were issued to summon knights, citizens, and burgesses to parliament, but this was not the result of any attempt to confer those privileges upon the many which the few had before enjoyed, but was rather a skilful piece of policy on the part of the third Henry to overrule the arrogant domineering of the proud barons. But when these men of inferior rank were summoned, and compelled to attend, their tone was most subdued and humble; they declined to interfere in great questions of state, and oftentimes advised the king to abide by the council of his lords. In the reign of Elizabeth we find the Commons complaining that the Lords failed in civility to them by receiving their messages sitting with their hats on, and that the keeper returned an answer in the same negligent posture; but the house proved to their full satisfaction that they were not entitled, by custom or the usages of parliament, to any more respect.* Some amendments were made by the Lords in a bill sent up by the Commons; and their amendments were written on parchment and returned with the bill to the Commons. The lower house took umbrage at the novelty; they pretended that these amendments ought to have been written on paper, and not on parchment, and they complained of this innovation to the peers. The peers replied that they expected not such a frivolous objection from the gravity of the house, and that it was not material whether the amendments were written on parchment or paper, or whether the paper was white, black, or brown. The Commons were offended at this reply, which seemed to contain a mockery of their dignity; and they complained of it, though without obtaining any redress.

The first parliament held at Westminster after the conquest was in 1189, in the reign of the lion-hearted Richard, who, before he quitted England for the Holy Land, thought it desirable to take the opinion of his counsellors in parliament assembled. It was one of the most exciting scenes which was ever witnessed, for there the peers responded to the burning words of the king, and, assuming the cross, took the crusading oath upon the spot. So, from the house of legislature the peers went forth, true belted knights, to struggle with the Moslem power, and win the sepulchre of Christ from infidel dominion. In 1225 another parliament was held at Westminster, and from that date they were then held with increased frequency. In Edward the Third's time the parliaments were almost exclusively held at Westminster; and since the termination of that reign but fourteen have been held anywhere else.

At an early period in history, Westminster became the nucleus of a great city. On Thorney Island the Pagans had erected a temple, and there was built one of the first Christian churches. The Abbey of Westminster drew together a large body of religious men; to supply the wants of the monastic establishment tradesmen began to erect their shops in the neighbourhood. Canute the Dane had a royal residence at Westminster. This is generally attributed to the influence which the church exercised over his mind. He loved the company of the priests, and sought sanctity in the neighbourhood of their dwelling. Edward the Confessor erected a palace on the same spot. This building was large and magnificent; it stretched along the banks of the Thames, and not only occupied the site of Westminster-hall, the Courts of Law, the Houses of Parliament, and the offices adjoining, but also included the space now called Old Palace-yard, together with part of Abingdon-street. William the Conqueror enlarged the palace, and his son, Rufus, erected the present Westminster-hall as a banquetting-house. King Stephen built a chapel which he dedicated to the proto-martyr, which structure was rebuilt by the chivalrous Edward III.

The palace at Westminster continued for many years to be the chief residence of the English sovereigns, and in an apartment of this palace the earliest parliaments were holden. From a hint dropped by Stowe, it appears that this apartment was Westminster-hall: "for," says he, "when the original hall, erected by William Rufus, was taken down, and re-built

in the reign of Richard II., a temporary building of timber was run up in Palace-yard for the use of the parliament." In 1377, when the separation took place between the Lords and Commons, the latter took up their sittings in the Charter-house adjoining the abbey, while the Lords still continued to use Westminster-hall. After the Reformation, the chapel of St. Stephen's was appropriated for the use of the Commons' House, but at what period the peers first took possession of the apartments which formed the old House of Lords is uncertain. Stowe, who is generally remarkably exact and accurate, mentions no definite time. He only says: "and now of a long time, the place of the sitting of parliament remains in the same ancient palace: the Lords in a fair room, and the Commons in that which was formerly St. Stephen's-Chapel."

In the last year but one of the reign of the second Richard, the Duke of Hereford appeared in parliament, and accused the Duke of Norfolk of having slanderously and wickedly maligned the king, and of having treasonable intentions with regard to the crown. Norfolk denied the charge, Hereford gave the lie,—and as those were the days when men settled all disputes by hard blows and sharp thrusts, a passage of arms was demanded. The lists were prepared, crowds assembled to witness the fray, the king and his court in royal splendour were present. The rival champions,—armed cap-a-pie, came forward. It was a gallant show—these knights in their steel harness, their heralds in their costly tabards, their esquires in half-armor; and everything prepared to add pomp and splendour to the chivalric array. In the midst of it all, the king interposed; alas! for him it was a fatal interposition, for he, whom he sent into exile soon returned to pluck the crown from his head.

Parliament witnessed another curious scene in the days of Edward IV. The king himself appeared before the assembly as accuser and witness against his brother Clarence. The charge was frivolous and incomplete, but royalty was too much respected to be thwarted by its peers; the right divine of kings to govern wrong was fully believed, and poor Clarence was condemned, and was soon afterwards drowned in a butt of his own favourite Malmsey.

And Wolsey, once the honoured and reverend cardinal, became the object of scorn and contempt to the parliament when Henry VIII. withdrew his royal support. The House of Lords came forward with a charge, extending to forty-four articles, against him, and petitioned for his punishment and removal from all authority. A few years later, parliament saw the gentle Ann Boleyn brought as a culprit to their bar, and when the sentence of death was passed, heard her soft voice, as, with uplifted hands, she cried: "O Father! O Creator! Thou art the way, the truth, and the life. *Thou* knowest that I have not deserved this fate!"

The first time that parliament assembled in the days of Queen Mary, high mass was celebrated before both houses of legislature with all the ancient rites and ceremonies which had been abolished in the previous reign. Taylor, bishop of Lincoln refused to kneel when the host was elevated, and, after being very roughly handled, was violently thrust out of the house. In the days of Good Queen Bess, the trials of Essex and Southampton made no inconsiderable figure in the parliamentary history of the period.

During the troublous times of the first Charles many curious scenes were enacted within the walls of the Parliament House. There appeared the Earl of Bristol, though forbidden by the King to attend, and accused the Duke of Buckingham of the highest crime of which an English subject is capable. There the Earl of Strafford was tried and condemned, and there the arrogant Laud was found guilty by his peers. In the Commons' House a mighty power had begun to exert itself, a power which shook the throne. The Upper House became of no account, and the king himself was charged with high treason against the state. We are all familiar with the events of that period, and how the Long Parliament was finally dissolved by Oliver Cromwell.

Later in parliamentary history we meet with the trials of

* Hume.

Dr. Sacheverell, in the reign of Queen Anne, and those of Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, the Earl of Macclesfield, and the Earl of Oxford, in that of George I. The circumstances attending the trial of the late Queen Caroline, in 1820, are fully known, and need no mention in this place; but, perhaps, the most interesting and romantic episode in the history of the old Houses of Parliament is that of the Gunpowder Plot, in 1605. It was a strange scheme of vengeance skilfully planned, the detection of which brought down a fearful retribution on the heads of the conspirators. This affair has made so deep an impression on the minds of those in authority, that a practice is still continued of carefully examining the cellars and lower building, before the commencement of every parliamentary session.

But we have said enough of the old building, a building described as unworthy of so august a body as the parliament of Great Britain. A new and splendid edifice has arisen in place of the old structure; and while it is probably the largest Gothic building in the world, is one of the most magnificent edifices ever erected in Europe. It covers an area of nearly eight acres. The first stone was laid on the 27th of April, 1840. The architect is Charles Barry, R.A. "In its style and character the building reminds us of those magnificent civic palaces, the town-halls of the Low Countries,—at Ypres, Ghent, Louvain, and Brussels,—and a similarity in its destination renders the adoption of that style more appropriate than any form of classic architecture. The stone employed for the external masonry is a magnesian limestone, from Austen, in Yorkshire, selected with great care from the building stones of England by commissioners appointed, in 1839, for that purpose. The river-terrace is of Aberdeen granite. There is very little wood about the building; all the main beams and joists are of iron; and the Houses of Parliament, it is said, can never be burnt down again. The east or the river-front may be considered the principal. This magnificent façade, 900 feet in length, is divided into five principal compartments, panelled with tracery, and decorated with rows of statues and shields of arms of the kings and queens of England, from the Conquest to the present time.*

The river-front includes the residence for the Speaker at the north end, the corresponding terminal towards the south being the residence for the Usher of the Black Rod. Between the two extremes, and comprising what is called the curtain

portions, are the libraries for the House of Peers and the libraries for the House of Commons; in the immediate centre is the conference-room for the two houses. All this is on the principal floor, about fifteen feet above the terrace, or high-water-mark. The whole of the floor above the libraries, and overlooking the river, is appropriated to committee-rooms for the purposes of parliament; the Peers occupying about one-third towards the south, and the Commons two-thirds towards the north. The House of Peers and House of Commons are situated in the rear of the front building, or that next the river; and will, when completed, be enclosed also towards the west, so as to be entirely supported by Parliamentary offices. The plan of this truly national edifice is exceedingly simple and beautiful. The Central-hall, an octagon of seventy feet square, is reached through St. Stephen's-hall and porch, communicating, by noble flights of steps, with Westminster-hall, and forming an approach of unequalled magnificence. From the Central-hall, a corridor to the north leads to the Commons'-lobby and House of Commons; and a corridor to the south, to the Peers'-lobby and the House of Peers; still further to the south are Victoria-hall, the Royal Gallery, and the Queen's Robing-room, communicating with the Royal-staircase and the Victoria-tower, at the south-west corner of the pile, now rearing itself in Abingdon-street, intended for her Majesty's state entrance. The Royal Entrance is 75 feet square, and will, when completed, be 340 feet in height. The height of the entrance archway is 65 feet, and is peculiarly rich in some most beautiful architectural adornments.

Various other towers break the monotony of the river-front. The central tower is sixty feet in diameter, and 300 feet high. The clock-tower is forty feet square, with a richly-decorated belfry rising to the height of 320 feet.

The Houses of Parliament are perhaps the most splendid structure of the kind in Europe; a little more taste might perhaps have been displayed in particular parts; there might have been more grandeur and simplicity in the *tout ensemble*,—but it is, nevertheless, singularly in keeping with the character of the bodies who meet within its walls, and with the constitution whose working it witnesses. The adherence to antique forms, combined with the gorgeous magnificence, which modern science and research have introduced into the art of decoration, are emblematic of the spirit which now animates the English nation—the reverent clinging to the past in union with courageous and hopeful progress.

* Murray's "Modern London."

WILLIAM HARVEY, M.D.

THE DISCOVERER OF THE CIRCULATION OF THE BLOOD.

THERE are two classes of persons who succeed in obtaining "a name among men," and who acquire what the world calls "immortality." In the *first* class are those bold and enterprising individuals who explore regions hitherto unknown, who found colonies and cities, who rear towers and pyramids, who construct tunnels and bridges, who guide the pencil, the chisel, or the pen. These pant for fame, and, in the majority of cases, obtain the object of their ambition. In a *second* class are those who—without seeking or desiring it, having no motive to prompt them beyond the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake, or as a means of benefiting those around them, patiently persevere in a course of industrious investigation and research, and after enduring for a season contempt and ridicule—find their theories established beyond all possibility of refutation, and their names enrolled amongst those of the best benefactors of mankind.

In this latter class we place WILLIAM HARVEY, an English physician, celebrated as the discoverer of the circulation of the blood. He was born at Folkstone, in Kent, April 2, 1578. His parents, who were respectable, sent him to a grammar-school at Canterbury, whence, having made con-

siderable progress in study, he was admitted to Caius College, Cambridge, in 1593, where he devoted himself to the study of logic and natural philosophy for nearly six years. Being greatly desirous of improvement, especially in medical science, he went abroad; and after visiting France and Germany, he removed to Padua, at that period a celebrated school of medicine, where he attended the lectures of Fabricius ab Aquapendente on anatomy, of Minadous on pharmacy, and of Casserius on surgery. There he took the degree of doctor of medicine in 1602; and on his return to England, he obtained a similar honour at Cambridge. He settled in London, and at the age of thirty he was elected Fellow of the College of Physicians, and shortly after appointed Physician to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. In 1615 he was elected by the college to deliver the Lumleian lectures on anatomy and surgery, in the course of which undertaking he is supposed to have first brought forward his views upon the circulation of the blood, which he afterwards established more fully, and which, about 1623, he was induced to publish.

As this discovery has "immortalized" the name of Harvey, it may not be uninteresting to remark, that before his develop-