

THE ENGLISH PARLIAMENT.

Growth of the British House of Commons from Edward I. to the Present Time.

While it would be an easy task, were we in a critical mood, to find many and grave faults in Mr. George H. Jennings's "Anecdotal History of the English Parliament," (D. Appleton & Co.) yet its many excellencies far outweigh the defects. There are two drawbacks to the success of such a book as that now before us—its arrangement should be tropical, instead of having the anecdotes grouped under the names of the persons of whom they are told; its compiler should quit the beaten paths so familiar to readers of intelligence, and introduce us to tales and traits less sadly trite. It is a pity, too, that Mr. Jennings could not have waited a few weeks and so have taken advantage of new Blue Book, showing the names of all members of Parliament returned since 1696, and of such members returned to the House before that date, as can be traced. We shall take the liberty of correcting and checking the author by this invaluable compilation. No copies of writs have been found of an earlier date than 1213, nor have the returns to those writs or to those issued in the 10th, 38th, 45th and 49th years of Henry III. been preserved. The loss of these last is particularly to be regretted, since that was the first Parliament which consisted of knights, citizens and burgesses. Only one return to the writs of 3 Edward I. (1275) exists—that for the county of Kent; so that the first "Knights of the Shire" on record are Fulco Peyferer and Henricus de Appeldrefued, names now existing as Peever and Appleford and Appleyard. Returns for the next two Parliaments are missing, but very full lists of those of 1290 and its immediate successors have come down to us. A. Corbert sat for Shropshire in 1290; one of his descendants represented the county in the last Parliament; from 1290 to 1450 that house figured on the rolls, though there were intervals when apparently its ascendancy had been successfully contested by rival country families.

The Commons were for a long time used by the Lords and the Sovereign with scant courtesy, or none at all. The Blue Book already mentioned tells us that Sheriffs in the earlier times constituted themselves Returning Boards, and cancelled names and inserted others into the returns very openly. The constituencies did not always appreciate the privilege of representation. When, in 1547, a writ was issued to Cheshire for the first time, no members were returned; in 1654, Durham county, hitherto memberless, declined to send representatives. Pryne tells us that many boroughs petitioned to be excused from sending members to Parliament, on account of the expense. From the 33rd of Edward III. during five successive reigns, the Sheriff of Lancashire certified that there were no cities or boroughs in that county which could afford the luxury of a member. And yet it was not an expensive luxury, the wages allowed by statute being four shillings a day for a Knight of the Shire and two shillings for a citizen or burgess. In 1463 Sir John Strange took a barrel and a half of herrings from Dunwich in composition of his wages. In 1586 Mr. Hall sued Grantham for the payment of his wages. The last payment of wages was to Thomas King, of Harwich, in 1681. Lord Chancellor Campbell was of opinion that the writ he obtained might still be claimed. In 1870, Mr. P. A. Taylor's motion for leave to introduce a bill to revive the practice was lost; we venture a prediction that before the century closes this ancient constitutional feature will be restored as a radical reform. Andres Marvell, "the incorruptible," took wages, and when Danby was sent to him from Charles II. with a check for £1,000 and an offer of place, Marvell called the cook to ask what he was to have for dinner that day. The boy replied that the bone of the little leg of mutton on which he had dined on the previous day was to be broiled. "My Lord," said Marvell, "do you hear that Andrew Marvell's dinner is provided? There's your piece of paper!" It may be doubted whether a century or so before a member of the Commons would have ventured on such a retort. Sir Peter de la Mare, Speaker of the "Good Parliament," was imprisoned for his share in its reforms by John of Gaunt; under Henry VI. it was decided that the privileges of the Lower House were altogether in the keeping of the Lords. In 1536, when one of Henry VIII's bills for the spoliation of the monasteries hung in the house, the bluff King lobbied it through by advising the Opposition to beware of their heads. On another occasion he sent for an influential member, Mr. Edward Montague, and cried to his humbly-kneeling subject, laying a hand on his head: "Ho, man, will they not suffer my bill to pass? Get my bill passed by to-morrow, or else to-morrow this head of yours will be off." Wolsey had not long before gone in state to "bulldoze" the Commons, and though Sir Thomas More, the Speaker, baffled him, it was with Oriental adulation offered upon his knees.

But if it had been first Lords and then Kings under the Plantagenets, and first King then Lords under the Tudors, the Commons began to take first place under the Stuarts. Wentworth had nobly resented the invasions of Elizabeth; her successor was forced to recognize the rising tide, as was clearly, though comically, shown by his threat to send his unruly horse to Parliament to be tamed, and to cry aloud when a delegation approached him, "chairs! chairs! Here be

twelve Kings!" James would never have lost his head as his son was fated to do—that son whom he had warned, when Charles was promoting the impeachment of the Earl of Middlesex, "You will live to have your bellyful of impeachments!" Charles could not see that the power had departed from the Crown and abode with the Commons; he hardly recognized the fact when he went to seize the five members—most people think they were actually arrested, but they were not—and was met by "the members scowling at him, and audibly muttering 'Privilege! Privilege!'" This event is commemorated at the opening of each new Parliament, when the members for the city of London, in court dress, take their seats on the Treasury bench, which are afterwards vacated for the ministers of the day. This Mr. Jennings records, but he follows a multitude to error when he says that an annual "search for Guy Fawkes" is made on the eve of the session; this inspection of the cellars does not date from the time of James I, but from that of Charles II or James II, and had its origin in the fact that the vaults were then stored with coal and fuel, while the adjacent wharves were crowded with combustibles.

When the Commons had finally secured their place in the constitutional organization of England, and "bulldozing" was no longer possible, bribery came into vogue. This is a familiar subject to all readers of English history. Massey has found no trace of the practice after the Grenville administration (1763-'75.) though up to that period money was received and expected by members, without any consciousness of infamy, very much as the voters in certain boroughs claimed and received "head money" from the candidate, as a matter of right and custom. A letter of Lord Say and Sele, November 26th, 1763, is extant, returning a check for £300 given him by the Premier, "as good manners would not permit my refusal of it when tendered by you." But corruption, though not open corruption, prevailed long afterwards, and money was used as well as place. The Legislative Union with Ireland was put through by sheer bribery. A sum of £1,260,000 was spent in buying rotten boroughs from their owners; twenty-two peerages were created; twenty-four peers were advanced; pensions and places innumerable were given, and as much as £5,000 was paid for an individual vote. To pass the Reform bill, Lord Grey had to promise between 250 and 300 peerages, promotions in the peerage and baronetcies. Charles Buller used to say that the votes of O'Connell's "tail" could be had for £200 a session each, "provided the money was laid before them in gold." Everyone knows Lord Melbourne's views on the subject of orders and peerages. "A Garter," he said, when the Queen pressed him to accept one, "may attach to us somebody of consequence whom nothing else can reach; but what would be the use of my taking it? I cannot bribe myself." Lord Beaconsfield thought differently; when he went out last year he made fourteen creations, nearly all of which were political, and the total number of peerages created and promotions conferred during his six years' administration was thirty-nine. Mr. Gladstone's between 1868 and 1874 numbered thirty-six. Mr. Gladstone's purity cannot be questioned, but he makes the most of his patronage. Sir Harcourt Johnstone, for instance, will soon receive a peerage; he retired from Scarborough last year to give Mr. Dodson, a seat, and it has always been Mr. Gladstone's custom to translate a bishop to a vacant see, and elevate a new man to the episcopal bench in his place, thus satisfying two men, while, as in the cases of Durham and Liverpool, Lord Beaconsfield filled the vacancy by direct appointment. It is curious, by the way, to notice how seats in Parliament appreciated in value. We have already told how representation was once shunned as an expensive honor. "Some hundred years ago," wrote Waller, in 1673, "some boroughs sent not—they could get not none to serve; but now it is the fashion, and a fine thing they are revived. Formerly the neighborhood desired a candidate to serve; there was a dinner, an end; but now it is a kind of an empire." When Mr. Coke was elected for Lynn in 1685 his agent "let loose the tap," and spent £7,000 over and above the ordinary expenses. John Evelyn complains bitterly in 1696 of the "confused, debauched and riotous manner of electing members;" in 1761, a breakfast for the voters in a small constituency cost £750, and at dinner the free and independent consumed 14,720 pounds of beef (to say nothing of veal, mutton, poultry,) 317 dozen of wine, 73 pipes of ale and 365 gallons of spirits, converted into punch. It was when the Indian nabobs came into competition for seats during the last century that the borough and their owner reaped their richest harvest. But the owners did not always sell their seats; one gave his seat to a favorite waiter at White's, who had to be elected twice, as his noble patron did not know his candidate's Christian name. Lord Camelford was so angry because his kinsman, Pitt, did not secure his release instantly when he was arrested for the crazy freak of attempting to cross to Calais during time of war, that he resolved on turning Pitt out of Old Sarum and putting in his black servant, Mungo, in his place. "The best thing you can do is to put me in," said Horne Tooke, and Lord Camelford did put him in. John Elwes, the miser, got his seat as cheaply; he spent eighteen pence in a tavern at Abington and sat for Berkshire twelve years. Joe Hume, as Sir Charles Gavan Duffy tells us, was elected without expense for Kilkenny, and

when the deputation called on him to announce the fact of his election, dismissed them hungry because he had to go to lunch—economy, indeed! By the way, we fancy that Professor Seelye's election to Congress only cost him a three-cent stamp, for his letter of acceptance, which he neglected to mail. John Gully, the prize-fighter, was twice elected for Pontefract, which inspired the neat epigram about Pontifrac's partiality being due to his having "broken the bridges" of so many noses. If we are not in error, Gully invested in his seat to win a heavy bet that within a given time he would not accomplish three different things, obtaining a seat in the Reformed Parliament being one of these.

Honorable Turcomans.

In consequence of a large number of corpses of Tekkes Turcomans, more or less decomposed, lying in front and behind the Russian position, and in view of the impossibility of burying them, Gen. Skobloff has proposed to the Tekkes, from the tower of observation, eighty yards from the main rampart of the fortification, that they should remove their dead, hostilities to be suspended for one hour, and in order to avoid a misunderstanding proposed to the Tekkes that they should afterwards reoccupy their positions, and should be the first to reopen fire. This was to be done after due warning had been given the Russians, the Tekkes taking care not to fire until the Russians who had temporarily left their trenches had returned into them. The conduct of the Tekkes-Turcomans was altogether honorable. The fighting was afterwards renewed with the former fury.

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