

he is an effete and exploded Mumbo Jumbo with the Southerners, who refuse him any further political bread-fruit in the shape of votes, or whether it is that he is determined to "knock out" all comers in the prize-ring of the local courts and pose as Wellington's own Buzfuz we do not know, but we are confronted with the unassailable, awesome fact that he is amongst us and is a candidate to represent us in Parliament. No doubt he considers he comes, like a certain brand of pens, as "a boon and a blessing to men," but Wellington has blessings enough and to spare already. It has its wind, and its Petherick, it has a "reasonable and colourable imitation" of the electric light, it has tramcars which would be an aesthetic dream of colour to a Hottentot, it has a Destructor, and it has a fine assortment of choice stinks. We do not pine for more blessings; indeed, we fully believe we could manage to drag out a weary, sad existence without even Sir Oracle Stout. He, no doubt, considers he is one of our necessities, our own "long felt want," and, incidentally, he considers that we ought, every man and woman of us, to rush frantically to the poll and vote for him. This latter opinion is not, he will find, very generally held in Wellington. We have got on fairly well without Sir Robert Stout for a good many years, and we can worry along until the millennium and never sicken for him as a representative. Sir Robert, we may state, has got it into his head that his own special providence (that provided for ordinary folks is not good enough for him) has selected him to guide the political destinies of New Zealand, and as a first step towards the fulfilment of his mission he wishes to be returned for the capital of the Colony. We think it would be just as well if he were to start the mission somewhere else, say in Kamtschatka or Timbuctoo. In plain language we don't want Sir Robert Stout in Wellington. We don't believe in him save as a great and glorious gaspipe, a human volcano of verbosity and claptrap—a Talker and not a Doer.

Let us examine the career of this would-be leader of the Liberal Party. Born of "poor but honest parents," as the story-books say, in the far away Shetlands, where they breed small ponies and big men, he came out to Dunedin and became a pupil teacher in a school, of which the head master was Mr. J. H. Shaw, a barrister, one well-known in Wellington by the scarcity of his briefs, and the superfluity of his small "dorgs." Young Stout "taught school" just long enough to add to his natural good opinion of himself a big dose of the dogmatism, traditional in pedagogues, the dogmatism born of being a temporary potentate, with a tasse, be-

fore a class of timid and trembling youngsters; and then he "chucked" the school for the law, which he proceeded to study with the industry which is one of his few good qualities. He burnt the midnight oil over "Chitty on Contracts" and "Addison on Torts," sucking at a chunk of almond-rock or wolfing bulls-eyes the while. He passed his exams. and commenced to practice. Then came "pole-teeks" as they called it in Dunedin in the earlier days and in the House also, with politics, a mania for rushing here, there, and everywhere, talking about the People with a capital P. No one, save Sir George Grey, has talked so much about the people as Sir Robert Stout has done, but Grey has *done* something for the people—Stout only talked about them. In the intervals of gathering in the six and eightpences, and talking of the people, with a capital P, he started a bilious, coloured, flypaper-sized "rag," called "The Echo." In this thing, which in his innermost heart he fondly believed to be a journal, he wrote a good deal about the People, and having become an Agnostic—a man who spells the name of the Almighty with a small "g"—he ladled out a lot of frothy, fusty, folly, which he labelled Freethought. He is still, by theory, supposed to be a freethinker, but in view either of old friendship, economy—or with an eye to the Presbyterian vote—he lives in Wellington with a "meenister," none other than the Rev. Mr. Ogg. Sir Robert, we may here say, is an "old hand" at electioneering and knows the value, apparently, of small points.

After a time he got place and power, also pay—good pay—as a minister of the Crown. We have looked into his political career, and shall look into it a good deal more before the election is over. For the present we find that his only great achievements were his share in handing about a million acres of land belonging to his dear People to a rickety syndicate, that he helped to borrow some millions and helped to spend them in railroads that went up into wild regions and got lost and were never heard of again, and also invented a weird and wonderful measure called The Police Offences Act, which, curiously enough, seems mainly directed against the breaking of the "Sawbath," (which, by the way, Sir Robert Stout didn't invent, therefore doesn't believe in,) by such diabolical doings as harnessing horses in sight of a public road, kissing one's mother-in-law within ten yards of a house, or, if not these, some equally demoniacal crimes. That is all: only that and nothing more. All the gushy, greasy eloquence about the People resulted in virtually nothing. Not

one single legislative deed which might lessen the burdens of the people, make their lives happier, brighter, better. Not one word about sweating, not one suggestion for usefal factory legislation, nothing, absolutely nothing, did Robert Stout do for the benefit of those over whose welfare he was everlastingly saying he had so much at heart. Then came the Great Betrayal of those who had placed him in power, his great treachery to the cause of New Zealand Democracy, his acceptance of the K.C.M.G., the Cheap and Muddy Glory, the mark of servility and snobbery, the badge of the successful tufthunter and toady. Robert Stout became Sir Robert Stout, and as a democrat ceased to exist. As a sham democrat, however, he lives, seeking the people's votes to help him once again to that place and power he loves so dearly. He has evolved from his over-fertile brain several schemes for the regeneration of everything and everybody, and he is talking more than ever of the People and the vast benefit to be conferred upon them should they return him and his followers to Parliament. With his more recent parliamentary career, and with the chief planks of his much-talked of new platform; with his advocacy of that insanest of political insanity—prohibition—we shall deal at another time. He is now more than ever a potent factor for widespread political mischief and evil. We have to-day glanced briefly at his past, and next week we shall analyse the views he now sets forward, and give the public some clear idea as to the real motives, aims, and ends of the man who would pose as the "Sir Oracle," the great "I Am" of the colony, without whom nothing can go right, and who alone is fit to be politically trusted and revered.

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