



OUR LEGISLATORS.

SIDE LIGHTS ON THEMSELVES AND THEIR LITTLE WAYS.

SARCASTIC SNAP SHOTS FROM THE LADIES' GALLERY.

(BY BIRDS'-EYE.)

This a great institution this of Parliament. With its various advantages so constantly in evidence, he must be a constitutional sceptic who would fail to recognise its beneficial character. Note, however, that the prosaic being who regards this 'Palladium of our Liberties' as a mere means of securing the good government of the country is not in a state of mind to appreciate it. To do so fully one must have a mind untrammelled by old-fashioned prejudices. It is a great educational institution, a school—(No, sir, I was not about to say 'school for scandal'; but if there be M.H.R.s—and, mind you, I don't say there are not—who find such pabulum suited to their constitution, is not this a free country?) a school, I said. Now I don't mean precisely a school of elocution. And yet, where is the man with soul so dead as not to perceive the advantages derivable by our embryo public speakers from a careful study of the oratorical models here presented to their respectful attention? It was

THE MEMBER FOR RANGITIKEI,

I think, who said in one of his re-cessional speeches that twenty honest men could easily manage all the legislation required by this young country. (This conviction, be it noted, does not prevent him drawing an annual £240 as one of the superfluous fifty-four.) Were the people to endorse this theory the result would be an immediate saving to the colony of some thousands per annum. But ponder what Wellington would lose in such a case. Surely, in comparison with the rich melodious flow of jewelled sentences by which such skilful rhetoricians as Hogg, Taylor, Buckland, Buchanan, Fergus, Fraser and Co., enchain night after night the rapt attention of the House and galleries, a few paltry thousands are but as dust in the balance. But it is less in respect of its effect upon the rhetorical style of our budding youth than in its influence upon public morals that this institution is to be regarded as a school. There was an old person once—in the light of latter-day wisdom how foolish he seems—who declared that 'righteousness exalteth a nation.' By 'righteousness' I take it that he meant right doing. But should anyone be found to day so much behind the times, and so ignorantly bold, what would happen him? Why, if he were an M.H.R. the member for Te Aroha would say he was 'high falutin'' on a 'peddligal' and the high-souled Fish would hiss him for a fanatic. For we have outgrown that simple philosophy—the majority of us, at any rate. We know—for have not the Leaders shown us—that

PARTY HAS HIGHER CLAIMS THAN RIGHT,

and that sincerity is the attribute of a simpleton. The old watchwords are not yet wholly abjured, but the time is coming; and, meanwhile, the day of simples is over, and our honesty, like our other qualities, is a mixed article. Mixed, too, after the 'Metteian' method, on the principle of first, second, and third dilutions. Thus a grain goes a long way; which, after all, only proves that we are keeping pace with the times. Until one finds all this out, the methods of the place are confusing. A stranger from the

blessed verdancy of the country is apt to be misled. He never dreams of double shuffle, but takes all he hears for gospel, and fancies all things what they seem, than which there is no greater fallacy. As a matter of fact

NO ONE HERE CALLS A SPADE A SPADE,

at least not after his first session. When an M.H.R. says a spade, he means a hoe, and *vice versa*. Now consider the advantages of such a mode of speech. Does it not follow as the night the day that speech will eventuate in action? Was ever double-tongue found save in the mouth of a double-dealer? What follows then? And who will catalogue the advantages which will accrue to us when we have taken our lesson to heart and developed into

A NATION OF DOUBLE-SHUFFLERS!

The subject is a fascinating one, but there are some more pressing which will prevent my pursuing it further to day.

On a bench immediately below my present chair sits the member of all here most distinguished—that is, he sits when he isn't standing, or walking, or lying down, or lounging, or wriggling, all of which he is doing pretty often.

look not at all winning. He has an immense head whose proportions are but little obscured by the thin long strands of hair so carefully guided over and glued to his pate. (Query, who would have imagined mental

KINSHIP BETWEEN THE SENIOR MEMBER FOR AUCKLAND AND THE KNIGHT OF INANGARUA,

yet both alike are ashamed of Time's ravages, and both alike appear able to delude themselves that they are deluding the public with those carefully-glued strands of hair. If they only knew how funny they look when 'their brows are wet with honest sweat,' and the long hairs hang down like rats' tails behind one ear they would, like another member, in rest in a wig straight away. Such an acquisition would add materially to the interest which all the world feels in both.)

What a great possession is high intellectual faculty. Sir Robert Stout has it undeniably. You feel it in his presence. You are conscious that in that respect the House is distinctly poorer in his absence. He is not to be ignored, and can't be snuffed out. Many men as big, some bigger, sit in their places and come and go; but you neither see them when there, nor miss them when absent. But you can't help seeing *him*; he is a great fact. Better, perhaps, were his abilities of a humbler order since he is the man he is. I am thinking now of that petulant irritability which, unless he conquers it, will always militate against his success as a leader. He has other disqualifications also, say some who love him not, but this one is most in evidence. It is difficult to see exactly what will be the outcome of his presence in Parliament. Were placidity of temperament and suavity of manners united to his other qualifications, it needs no prophet to foretell what would happen. An advanced wing of the democratic party would soon carry all before it, for ambition is not dead within him, and it is easy to see that

HE THINKS HIMSELF SMARTER THAN ALL THE PRESENT MINISTERS

put together, and it is, just now, the policy of Her Majesty's Opposition to 'confirm him in that opinion.' Not content with assuring him that he 'completely overshadows' ministers, that he 'simply dwarfs each and all of them,' that he is their 'guiding spirit,' that it is 'intolerable that he should be permitted to occupy such an anomalous position,' etc., etc., they also fawn on and flatter him, pay



SIR ROBERT STOUT in a moment of repose (from an instantaneous photograph).

SIR ROBERT CAN'T SIT STILL.

Sir Robert Stout can do many things, and compass many others; but there's one thing he can't do for his life, and that is sit still for five minutes at a stretch. For a big man he has a wonderfully sensitive nervous organisation. This is constantly in evidence. You see it in the perpetual shifting of his position—a place of rest he cannot find; you hear it in his irritable cries of 'Order! Order!' and he brings it into clearer view in his angry retorts upon those who interrupt him or otherwise wound his sensibilities. This extreme irritability, this supersensitiveness places him at a great disadvantage in Parliament; for no man may hope successfully to manage men whose own nervous system is unmanageable, and it is understood that Sir Robert has not for ever resigned all ambition in that direction. He is sitting, just at this moment, with his back to me, writing letters. As one would expect, he has an immense correspondence which his power of concentration enables him to read and reply to without, apparently, losing a word of what is going on. Immersed he may seem in a legal-looking document, but let someone drop a word offensive to his *amour propre*, or even mis-state a fact in bygone Parliamentary proceedings, and his ears prick up instantly, while the ready tongue snaps out correction. That he is

A MAN OF UNCOMMON INTELLECTUAL FACULTY

and of rare powers of expression everybody knows; a man he is of commanding presence, too, passable enough as to looks, though his expression is spoiled by an odd creasing at the outer corners of the eyes which gives him a 'smirky'



SIR ROBERT with his head turned by Opposition flattery.