first time with greater reluctance, with more modesty, and with less assurance." "I declined to speak," he said, "because there are grave and experienced men here who know more than I can pretend to know of the subject; and I am aware that it is a duty of the young members to act the part of jurymen and to come to a decision on the arguments used by those who were here before them, and also on what has been said to the constituents at the late elections." Having thus apologised for his temerity in addressing the House so soon after admission to its precincts, he went on to excuse himself for differing radically on various important questions from older and more experienced politicians. "I trust that, though I may differ from the experienced politicians in this House upon the great principles that have been engrossing the attention of the country, they will bear with me in the remarks I am about to make. I will not, like the honourable member for Auckland City East (Mr. W. J. Speight), say that I dare them afterwards to attack my remarks, for I feel that, owing to my inexperience, those remarks will be open to be assailed. But, Sir, with the experience I have had and the knowledge I have gleaned while serving in the position of a representative on local bodies, I shall try to convince some of those members who are on the Opposition benches that by adopting their present course they are not doing that which is right and good and which will be beneficial to the colony at large." The member for Hokitika went on to justify his apparent presumption by reminding the House that he stood there to speak for a constituency of 3500 voters; and there is a note of conscious pride in the words in which he pointed out to his hearers that there were many members present whose experiences might be greater but whose responsibilities were certainly smaller than his own. And having cleared the way and disarmed criticism by this modest introduction, Mr. Seddon proceeded with his defence of the Grey Government and its public policy. His speech was possibly not so correct in manner as many of his later efforts. But one who heard it has recently declared that it was equal in force and energy to the best that the Premier ever delivered. "Mr. Seddon in those days did not choose his English, and his h's were rebellious, but his argument suffered not in the least. He was absolutely natural, forceful, logical, and convincing." There is a characteristic story connected with this speech. While the House was listening in somewhat awed amazement to the powerful voice and the sledge-hammer arguments of "Digger Dick," Mr. John Sheehan rushed into the Government Whip's room in a state of great excitement, exclaimed, "Come and hear this chap from the West Coast giving the Opposition beans!" It is not likely that anyone who heard that speech delivered conceived at that time how far the energy and courage and resourcefulness of the young speaker would carry him. But there is no doubt that Mr. Seddon's first Parliamentary speech made its mark and produced a distinct impression upon an audience which was by no means predisposed in his favour.

THE COMING POLICY.

As to the matter of this first speech, it is interesting chiefly as an anticipation of a great deal that Mr. Seddon said and did later, when he had attained the full height of his ambitions. It includes comments on such varied subjects as triennial Parliaments, financial reform, manhood suffrage, the social and industrial progress of the country—in fact, all that has since come to be regarded as characteristic of progressive Liberalism. One passage in particular we may quote as illustrating the views which Mr. Seddon even then entertained on the land question, and also the sympathy that his kindly, generous heart always held for those whom he believed to be oppressed or misgoverned. Replying to some comments made upon the question of land tenure by an Irish member, he said:—"I have seen his fellow-countrymen who have left their homes standing on the wharves at Liverpool. I have seen old men and women bidding good-bye to their sons and daughters, and shedding tears as they parted from them when the young people were starting on their voyage to this country. Then the time comes when the sons and daughters send for their fathers and mothers to come out. Do they who spent their sixty or seventy years perhaps in the land of their birth tear themselves from it without feelings of regret? The last Sunday comes—they visit the graveyard where those who have been dear to them lie. They tear themselves from all the old associations, and they come away to this new country. Do they come willingly? Is it of their own free will that they break asunder all these old ties? No; they are driven away. They are driven from their homes by the bad laws which oppress them. I hope honourable members will bear that in mind when they vote on this occasion, and I trust that in years to come we shall not, through their votes, see the same thing happen here. I fear me," he added, "that if I were to arise from my grave some 50 or 100 years hence, I should find the people driven from our shores and going to Victoria and New South Wales, where they are legislating year by year against squatocracy." This was 27 years ago; and the speaker lived to see that peril averted by the legislation that his party, under his guidance, carried in the face of strenuous opposition. But no one in those days had yet conceived what the future would bring forth for New Zealand or for the great man who for thirteen years guided her destinies.

But mingled with all these more weighty matters are frequent references to land surveys, dredge channels, and water-races; in fact, it is evident throughout that though the member for Hokitika is doing his best to look at policy questions from a broad and public point of view, he finds it difficult to prevent his thoughts and words from leading him back to his own country and his own people. "The West Coast, its trials, joys, sorrows and grievances," figure largely in this oration; and it was for a long time a matter for humorous comment in the House that Mr. Seddon found it hard to keep the miners out of his speeches. But very few men ever affected to treat "Digger Dick" as a fit subject for humour. In this first speech he dealt vigorously with Mr. Alfred Saunders, who had spoken contemptuously of the "Greyhounds," who formed a strong section of the Government. "The honourable member for Cheviot," he said, "has tried to bounce the 'Greyhounds,' but if he attempts to bounce me, he will soon find that my motto is 'no surrender.' When once I take up a position I will fight it out to the last; I will never cry 'Peccavi'; I will never ask for quarter."

THE FRIEND OF GREY.

In spite of the diffidence and the apologetic attitude which the young member assumed in his opening sentences, here we have the true nature of the man emerging at last. The speech is eminently characteristic of Mr. Seddon, and nowhere more so than in the bold and defiant challenge with which it closes. It sufficiently marks the attitude that the "young miner" adopted towards his friends and his opponents in the House. He was a faithful follower of Sir George Grey, an ardent supporter of Liberal measures, an assiduous guardian of the interests of his constituents, and, withal, a forceful and independent factor in political debate. Older members like Mr. Alfred Saunders might sneer at his loyalty to Sir George Grey, or, like Sir Frederick Whitaker, refuse to "fire off a cannon at a window." But more observant judges of character could not fail to appreciate the rationality and the foresight, and above all, the immense "driving power" of the member for Hokitika. After the debate to which we have referred, Sir Geo. Grey was defeated and driven from office, and Mr. Seddon remained faithful to him in adversity as he had been during the short-lived Liberal triumph. The Liberal party, divided and disorganised, was for the time being swept away in headlong rout; its policy was taken up and exploited by the Conservative Ministry, which, for the next five years, held practically continuous sway; and its great leader found himself at last discredited and deserted, "lagging superfluous upon the stage." But Mr. Seddon was to the last true to Sir Geo. Grey, and to the doctrines which that great statesman had been the first to inculcate upon the people of this colony. The member for Hokitika could always be trusted to aid "the old man eloquent" in all his political projects; and while biding the hour of the triumphant resurrection of Liberalism, Mr. Seddon was gathering all that practical experience of public life and Parliamentary procedure which was afterwards to prove of such inestimable value to him. It does not seem that he delivered many speeches; but he did a great deal of hard work, especially on the Goldfields Committee and other committees of which he was from time to time a member. "As a toiler he was," we are told, "indefatigable. He was so impressed with the importance of his duties that he sometimes brought his tremendous physical strength to bear on members who were in danger of dropping into the wrong lobby." Until the time should come for the promulgation of Liberalism with some prospect of success, he was content to work chiefly for the immediate interests of his constituents. After long efforts he succeeded in getting all property used for gold-mining purposes exempted from the operations of the property tax. The Gold Duty Abolition Bill was for many years as closely connected with Mr. Seddon's name, as the Elective Executive Bill with Sir Wm. Steward's; and it was only after fighting for seven successive sessions that he succeeded in forcing his measure on to the Statute Book. On several occasions the Bill passed the Lower House, only to be blocked in the Legislative Council, because money was scarce, and Government could not be induced to surrender so profitable a source of revenue. It was not till the "Continuous" Conservative Ministry returned to power in 1887 that he induced Parliament to adopt the measure. The Bill was finally carried at the instance of the Hon. T. Fergus, Minister for Public Works in the last Atkinson Administration; but it will always remain associated with the name and reputation of Mr Seddon.

THE TIRELESS TOILER.

Another proof of his pertinacity and determination to succeed in all that he undertook, was the Auctioneers Act, which he brought up for seven years in succession before the House allowed him to have his way. The first Bill that he ever succeeded in passing on his own account was the Adulteration of Tea Prevention Bill—a measure which is especially interesting, as indicating the view that he always took as to the necessity for active Government supervision of even the commonplace details of daily life. It was, indeed, chiefly by way of suggesting improvements in the condition of the people that he inaugurated his career as a great social and political reformer. In the opinion of many who knew him well, Mr. Seddon was not a theorist. He was always intensely practical, and had the statesman's eye for the methods which would enable him to attain his purposes, and the men who could serve him best. It is true that in the higher sense of the term he was an idealist, as all great statesmen have been—a man, that is to say, inspired by vague and vast conceptions, which he seeks to realise, not by logical argument or abstract theorizing, but by seizing upon the opportune moment, the appropriate weapon, the fitting practical means to secure his great ends. It is only when idealism of the highest type is combined with a grasp of practical life that there emerges such a leader and ruler as Richard Seddon. And though his genius, as often happens, was at first largely unconscious of its destiny, he was always preparing for the great future by strenuous industry and by laborious attention to the details of public work. Practical reforms, he knew, were urgently needed in every phase of social, political and industrial life; and one of the means by which the reforming spirit could make its presence most widely felt was by the constant assertion of the right of free speech, and the constant exercise of the privilege of self-government. Hence we find Mr. Seddon on all possible occasions constantly advocating the extension of local self-government, manhood suffrage, popular representation on a more equitable basis, and triennial Parliaments. It was during one of these many struggles for political reform in 1881, that Mr. Seddon came into prominence in connection with one of the most dramatic episodes of our political history. The Conservative Representation Bill was before the House, and Mr. Seddon was one of the seven stonewallers who kept the House sitting for 73 hours continuously to obstruct the passage of the Bill. But it will be easier to let the Premier tell the story in his own words. "In 1881," he said to an interviewer two months ago, "there was a battle royal over the Representation Act, under the provisions of which the representation of Nelson, the West Coast, and the other outlying districts was considerably reduced. On that occasion I formed one of the seven stonewallers. Colonel Pitt—then Major Pitt—now my colleague and Attorney-General, was our captain. The House was kept sitting continuously for three days. The stonewalling speeches of those days differed widely from speeches delivered on similar occasions at the present time. The late Mr. Richmond Hursthouse's speeches on the fauna, flora and forest, as they were delivered by him, would have been to-day regarded as fit to grace the pages of the text-books for the school children of the colony; whilst the speeches of the Hon. Richard Reeves on apiaries, bees, and foul broods amongst bees, as applied to politics and politicians, were of such a lively character that even a Mark Twain would probably not have been ashamed to write his name under them. I took as my text the West Coast and its residents, using the electoral roll as a sort of chart, and by this means brought the West Coast and its people under notice of the House. I had got as far as the letter 'L' in this category, when, pausing, I said to the Chairman of Committees: 'We are now going to "L"'—with the aspirate. He immediately ruled me out of order, and declined to allow me to proceed any further. Well, I moved to report progress, and the Chairman refused to accept a motion. Mr. Gisborne rose in protest, and asked that the question should be referred to the Speaker. Well, the result was that Mr. Gisborne was fined £20. I may tell you that the fine on the motion was intended for me. Mr. Gisborne intervening, resulted in his taking my place. The fine was paid by the people of Nelson; but it broke the stonewall up."

With respect to Mr. Seddon's statement that the fine was intended for him, that is the opinion of those familiar with the circumstances. "It was Mr. Seddon," as has been publicly stated, "who was intended as the victim, but his Scotch caution