

BACK TO OFFICE.

THE LIBERAL PREMIER OF BRITAIN.

session or non-possession of which enormously adds or detracts from a man's utility and the use he is enabled to make of his other powers. But assuredly to none is personality so vital a necessity as to those who have to win the confidence, enjoy the respect, and merit the affection of those under their care as school teachers must, if they are to be worthy of the most important trust they have undertaken in their too little honoured profession.

Youth is a keen, often a cruel critic, and unless a man really possesses the faculty known as charm or personality, no amount of other qualifications are of real avail. A man may possess teaching proficiency, for which 40 marks are to be allotted, and be able to show a surprising amount of passes on examination lists, but without personality he is useless in the turning out of good citizens and citizenesses, countrymen and country women, which is the higher aim of any teacher worth his salt. The mere book learning, much, at all events, of the teaching which, according to the ever varying syllabus, is crammed into children, is forgotten often within a few years of leaving school, but the personality of a teacher will probably leave its impress on many of his pupils—for good or evil—all their lives long. In recognising personality, therefore, even by 20 marks in the 100, the Conference did exceedingly wisely, and it is a matter for congratulation that the report recommending it was unanimously adopted.

New Zealand Direct, via Suez.

Though the somewhat adolescent exuberance of delight manifested in Auckland over the arrival and departure of the P. and O. mail steamer Malwa may provoke a gentle smile in some quarters, it will be an entirely good-natured one, and general satisfaction will be felt from one end of New Zealand to the other, at the inclusion of a Dominion port in the itinerary of so famous—and, it may be added, so conservative—a company. For though the extension of the Suez service direct to New Zealand is only experimental—and here we may mention that the duty of supporting such enterprise should commend itself both to shippers and passengers—it is an experiment which marks a distinct advance, and which will doubtless lead to very important future developments.

The Suez route, more especially for those who have never made the journey before, offers advantages in seeing the world which can scarcely be over-estimated, but there is a very large class who have a rooted antipathy to changing ship, and who at the same time dislike the long weeks of sea, with but one or two possible breaks to vary the monotony. To these the direct Suez service will come as a boon indeed, and will unquestionably be well patronised. Again, though the steamers on the Australian and New Zealand service have kept pace reasonably well with the requirements of inter-colonial passenger traffic, and certainly do not deserve to be dismissed as "practically coasting steamers," as a morning daily has ungratefully and ungraciously described them, the fact that they are good boats of respectable tonnage, and providing—when not overcrowded—good service and an excellent table, is exceedingly hard to bring home to meditating travellers in the Old Country, who have not infrequently the weirdest imaginings concerning the class of cockle-hells into which they will be required to tranship at their terminal Australian port, and who hesitate to take a trip on this account. To these, the knowledge that they can step aboard at Tilbury and disembark at once in New Zealand, seeing the East on their way, will be a strong persuasive and perhaps a determining factor, and an exceedingly profitable class of tourist will thus be added to those who annually visit the fortunate Isles. The longer sea route crossed by the superb and mammoth liners, which have served us so long and so well, will in no way suffer by the advent of the newcomers, for those who come via Suez will scarcely fail to take the advantage of the chance of returning via South America, gaining the opportunity of seeing Monte Video and (usually) Rio, which is certainly one of the most marvellous and progressive cities of the world, as it is undoubtedly the most exquisitely beautiful harbour in existence.

SOMEODDY once wrote a book about the eight Lord Roseberys. We propose to write an article about the two Mr. Asquiths. For there are two Mr. Asquiths. There is Mr. Asquith as he seems, and there is Mr. Asquith as he is. Of Mr. Asquith as he seems, there is no need to say much more than merely to call attention to the fact that he is believed by most people to be the only Mr. Asquith.

The Pseudo-Asquith.

This is a Mr. Asquith who is cold as crystal and as clever as the devil, of imagination so far from being all-comprehending that it appears to have been left out of his composition. A man whose intellect is of tempered steel, but whose heart is made of the same material. A

though he has married one of the cleverest political women in London, he is still as he has been from his schoolboy days—an enemy of the recognition of the right of woman to be recognised as a citizen, excepting by the payment of taxes and obedience to a law in which she is never to be allowed a voice in the making.

That is one Mr. Asquith. I have purposely exaggerated the harsh contour of the portrait, but in its broad outline the features are not much caricatured. Even his eulogists admit that "he does not appear to have that magnetic personality, that power of striking the popular imagination possessed in an eminent degree by Mr. Gladstone, etc. . . . There seems to rest in his nature a repressive power that paralyses the expression of his passion." As for his enemies, who has not heard the cry that the blood of the miners is on his hands? Mr. Healy's passionate out-

though warm of heart. If, in addition to their sterling virtues, they were to kiss the Blarney Stone, they would possess an altogether unfair advantage over their fellow men. But these things are on the surface. The Yorkshire tyke, like the Puritan, has the defects of his qualities, and it is impossible to combine the fighting qualities of the Ironside with the gallantries and graces of the Cavalier. That the Asquiths were of the right sort is proved by the fact that an Asquith, H.H.'s ancestor in a direct line, was a trusted leader in an attempted rebellion in 1664. England had then four years of the glorious and blessed Restoration. In Asquith's mind and those of his fellow-conspirators, and had had enough of it. So they entered into what was known as the Farnley Wood Plot to raise the country, to send the Stuarts packing, and to restore the Commonwealth. The plot failed; Charles II. did not die for twenty years, and the Stuarts did not finally disappear till 1688. But against such domination of the Evil One as the Stuart Restoration, it was better to have plotted and failed than never to have plotted at all. It is good to have a strain of the rebel in the blood, for rebellion has been the cradle of all our liberties, and no one who is not in heart "contingently" a rebel can ever govern with sympathy and justice people who are struggling, and rightly struggling, to be free.

H.H. at School.

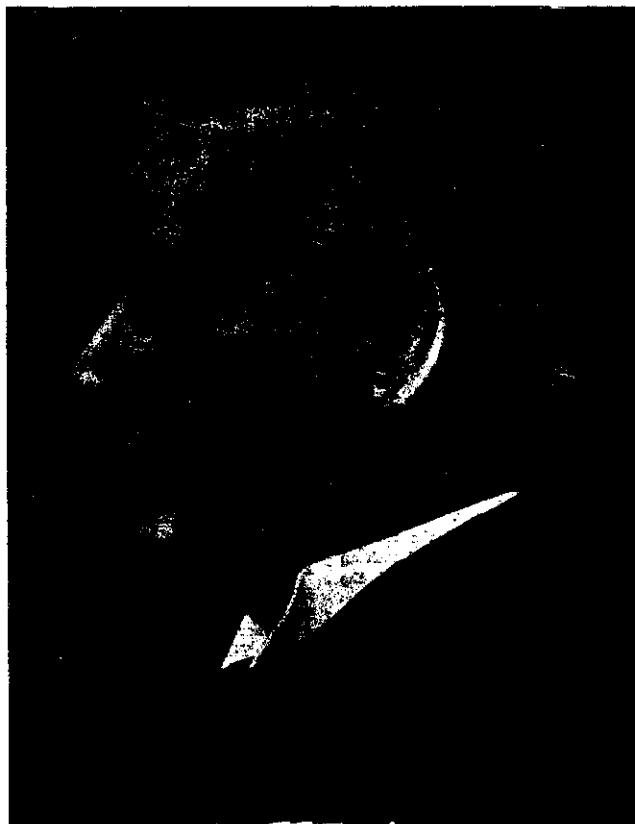
Of his early youth we gain stray glimpses. When four years old he carried a flag in a Sunday School procession which walked through the streets of Motley, singing patriotic songs to commemorate the close of the Crimean War—a curiously early initiation into international politics, the four-year-old thus taking an active part in a festival of peace. His father died when he was eight. After a couple of years at a Moravian boarding school—which, perhaps, helped to give a graver tinge to the boy's character—he came up to the City of London School. It is said he would rather spend an hour in reading the "Times" at a convenient book-stall than spend his time in football or cricket. But he also was a devoted admirer of Dickens, and developed so early the oratorical gift that Dr. Abbott could not correct the exercises of his scholars when "Asquith was up." He was, in his teens, an earnest Liberal, and even then—the young misogynist—obsessed by an antipathy to woman's suffrage, a cause which in the later sixties could hardly be said to have come within the pale even of speculative politics. He delighted his masters by his painstaking study, and when he became Captain of the School he was an invaluable assistant to Dr. Abbott in keeping up the tone of the school. Even at that early age he never got tangled in his sentences, he saw the end from the beginning, and made his meaning clear to all who heard him.

The School of London Streets.

Here is a vivid little glimpse of the schoolboy Asquith as the man remembers him:—"For my part, when I look back upon my old school life, I think not only, and perhaps not so much, of the hours which I spent in the classroom, or in preparing the lessons at night; I think rather of the daily walk through the crowded, noisy, jostling streets; I think of the river, with its barges and its steamers, and its manifold active life; I think of St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey and of the National Gallery; I think even sometimes of the Houses of Parliament, where I remember we used occasionally to watch with a sense of awe-struck solemnity, the members disappearing into the inner recesses which we were not allowed to cross."

The winning of the Balliol Scholarship was to him, as late as 1906, "the happiest, the most stimulating, and the most satisfactory moment of his life." It was "a pure, an unalloyed, and an unmitigated satisfaction." This is, perhaps, more than can be said of his accession to the Premiership.

At Oxford he fell under the influence of Jowett. Those who know the real Mr. Asquith declare that in the following description of the Master of Balliol the Prime Minister unconsciously described his own character: "He had none of the vulgar marks of a successful leader, either



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man without a generous illusion, harsh, hard, rude, unsympathetic. One whom all respect, many fear, and no one loves. A man who repels rather than attracts, without magnetism, incapable of a generous weakness, reserved, forbidding, ruthless, ambitious.

This is the Mr. Asquith who as Home Secretary was merciless to the imprisoned dynamitards, and was ruthless even to slaying in dealing with the strikers of Featherstone. Everything that C.B. was, this other Mr. Asquith is not. C.B. was the friend of the Boers; Mr. Asquith was the friend of Lord Milner. C.B. was as zealous for Home Rule as Mr. Gladstone; Mr. Asquith was a henchman of Lord Rosebery—a vice-president of the Liberal League in whose pledges against carrying Home Rule this Parliament the Unionists place their trust. And to all these things add this above all—that all

burst at the close of the debate on Mr. Redmond's Home Rule resolution illustrates the rancour with which Mr. Asquith is regarded by the Irish Nationalists.

We now turn to the much pleasanter task of revealing the other Mr. Asquith, of whose existence millions have no suspicion, but who nevertheless and notwithstanding we shall prove to be the real Mr. Asquith, Prime Minister of England.

The Asquith Ancestry.

Herbert Henry Asquith was born of Puritan stock in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

He had stiff knees, the Puritan. That were not made for bending. The homespun dignity of man. He thought, was worth defending.

Yorkshire men are blunt of speech,

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