

James Ewing Ritchie

# Here and There in London



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# Ritchie James Ewing

## Here and There in London

### THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, FROM THE STRANGERS' GALLERY

Not far from Westminster Abbey, as most of our readers know well, stands the gorgeous pile which Mr. Barry has designed, and for which, in a pecuniary sense, a patient public has been rather handsomely bled. Few are there who have looked at that pile from the Bridge – or from the numerous steamers which throng the river – or loitered round it on a summer's eve, without feeling some little reverence for the spot haunted by noble memories and heroic shades – where to this day congregate the talent, the wealth, the learning, the wisdom of the land. It is true, there are men – and that amiable cynic, Mr. Henry Drummond, is one of them – who maintain that the House of Commons is utterly corrupt – that there is not a man in that House but has his price; but we instinctively feel that such a general charge is false – that no institution could exist steeped in the demoralisation Mr. Drummond supposes – that his statement is rather one of those ingenious paradoxes in which eccentric men delight, than a sober exposition of the real truth. Mr. Drummond should know better. A poor penny-a-liner of a bilious temperament, without a rap in his pocket, might be excused such cynicism; but it does not become an elderly religious gentleman, well shaven – with clean linen, and a good estate. The House of Commons is a mixed assembly. It contains the fool of quality – the Beotian squire – the needy adventurer – the unprincipled charlatan; but these men do not rule it – do not form its opinion – do not have much influence in it. It is an assembly right in the main. Practically it consists of well-endowed, well-informed business men – men with little enthusiasm, but with plenty of common sense, and with more than average intellect, integrity, and wealth. Still more may be said. All that is great in our land is there. It boasts the brightest names in literature, in eloquence, and in law. Our island-mother has no more distinguished sons than those whose names we see figuring day by day in the division lists. Nowhere can a man see an assembly more honourable, more to be held in honour, for all that men do honour, than the British House of Commons, to which we now propose to introduce the reader.

We suppose it to be the night of an important debate, and that we have an order for the Strangers' Gallery. As the gallery will not hold more than seventy, and as each member may give an order, it is very clear that at four, when it will be thrown open, there will be more waiting for admission than the place can possibly contain, and that our only chance of getting in will be by being there as early as possible. When Mr. Gladstone brought forward the Budget, for instance, there were strangers waiting for admission as early as ten in the morning. We go down about one, and are immediately directed to a low, dark cellar, with but little light, save what comes from a fire, that makes the place anything but refreshingly cool or pleasant. Being of a stoical turn, we bear our lot in patience, not, however, without thinking that the Commons might behave more respectfully to the sovereign people, than by consigning them to this horrid blackhole. It is in vain we try to read – it is too dark for that; or to talk – the atmosphere is too oppressive even for that slight exertion; and so we wile away the time in a gentle reverie. As soon as this room is full, the rest of the strangers are put into the custody of the police in St. Stephen's hall. That is a far pleasanter place to wait in, for there is a continual passing to and fro of lords and lawyers, and M.P.'s and parliamentary agents; so that if you do not get into the House, you still see something going on; while in the cellar, you sit, as Wordsworth says —

“Like a party in a parlour,  
All silent and all damned.”

At length a bell rings. It is a welcome sound, for it announces that the Speaker is going to prayers. A few minutes, and another ringing makes us aware of the pleasing fact that that gentleman's devotions have already commenced. We joy to hear it, for we wish that the policeman who has had us in charge, and who has ranged us in the order of our respective *débûts*, will presently command the first five to get out their orders and proceed. The happy moment at last arrives, and with a light heart we run up several flights of stairs, and find ourselves in The House.

But let us suppose we are fortunate enough to get a Speaker's order, which admits us to a gallery before the other, and with well stuffed leather cushions. It is hard work sitting all night on bare boards, as one does in the Strangers' Gallery. We get into the lobby just as the members are going in. What is that the officials are calling out? "Make way for the Speaker." Of course we will; and as we do so, immediately sweeps by us a gentleman in full-dress, with black breeches, silk stockings, shoes and buckles, and a light Court sword. "Is that the Speaker?" one asks. Oh, no; he is merely Serjeant-at-Arms – he is the man who bears the mace, and sits in a chair of state below the bar, and is terrible in the eyes of refractory, chiefly Irish, M.P.'s, and for all which duties, though he is of the noble family of the House of Bedford, and is brother to Lord John Russell, he condescends to receive £1,200 a year. Well, next to the Serjeant-at-Arms comes the Speaker – the man whose eye aspiring orators find it so difficult to catch. Mr. Speaker has a judicious eye, and is wary as a belle of the season of her glances. Mr. Speaker is in full-dress; for he wears a flowing gown and a full-bottomed wig, and in his hand he carries a three-cocked hat; his train is borne by a train-bearer; behind him comes the Chaplain, and in this order they advance to the bar, and then to the table, where the Chaplain reads prayers prior to the formation of a House.

In the meanwhile we present ourselves to the doorkeeper of the Speaker's Gallery.

"Your name, sir?" demands that acute official.

"Nicks."

"Bricks, sir? I see no such name here."

"Oh, you must be mistaken – look again."

"No, sir, indeed there is no such name. I can't allow you to pass up."

"What! not Nicks?" we repeat, indignantly.

"Nicks, did you say, sir?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"Oh, yes, I have that name; but you said Bricks."

"No, I did not," growl we.

"Well, sir, I suppose it is all right; but if Mr. Nicks comes, you must come out."

"Of course," we reply, ironically, as we push the curtain on one side, and up we go.

At first we hardly know what we see. Chaos seems come again. On the opposition benches Lord Stanley is seated; on the ministerial the genteel Sir John Shelley is visible at one end, and the stout W. J. Fox at the other. All is confusion and disorder. No one but the Speaker seems to know what he is about. It is the hour devoted to private business, and Mr. Forster is bringing up bills like a retriever. He hands his bills to the clerks, while the Speaker, to an inattentive house, runs over their titles, and declares that they are read a first, or second, or third time, as the case may be. Then we hear him announce the name of some honourable M.P., who immediately rises and reads a statement of the petition he holds in his hand, with which he immediately rushes down and delivers it to one of the clerks, and which thereupon the Speaker declares is ordered to lie upon the table – but literally the petition is popped into a bag. In the meanwhile let us look around. Just below us is a small gallery for peers and ambassadors, and other distinguished personages. On either side of the house are galleries, very pleasant to sit, or lie, or occasionally sleep in, and by-and-bye we shall see in them old fogies very red in the face, talking over the last bit of scandal, and young moustached lords or officers, sleeping away the time, to be ready, when the House breaks up, for

“Fresh fields and pastures new.”

Opposite to us is the Reporters' Gallery. In the early days of parliament reporting was a thing much condemned. Sir Simonds d'Ewes, under the date March 5, 1641–2, gives us a special instance of this. Sir Edward Alford, member for Arundel, had been observed taking notes of a proposed declaration moved by Pym. Sir Walter Earle, member for Weymouth, upon this objected that he had seen “some at the lower end comparing their notes, and one of them had gone out.” Alford having been called back, and given up his notes to the Speaker, D'Ewes then continues: – “Sir Henry Vane, senior, sitting at that time next me, said he could remember when no man was allowed to take notes, and wished it to be now forbidden.” At present the gentlemen of the Press are taking it easy, and favouring each other with criticisms on the speakers by no means flattering. In a little while they will have to suspend their criticism and work hard enough. Above them are gilt wires, behind which we perceive the glare of silks and satins, and faintly – for otherwise attention would be drawn from the speakers below to the ladies above – but still clearly enough to make us believe —

“That we can almost think we gaze  
Through golden vistas into heaven,”

we see outlines of female forms; and we wonder if the time will ever arrive when Lucretia Mott's dream shall be realised, and woman take her seat in the senate, side by side with the tyrant man. Under the Reporters' Gallery, and immediately facing us, sits the Speaker, in his chair of state. On his right are the Treasury Benches; on the left, those where the Opposition are condemned to sit, and fume and fret in vain. Between these benches is the table at which the clerk sits, and on which petitions, when they are received, are ordered to lie, and where are placed the green boxes, on which orators are very fond of striking, in order to give to their speeches particular force. At the end of this table commences the gangway, which is supposed to be filled with independent statesmen, and to whom, therefore, at particular times, the most passionate appeals are addressed. Lower down is the Bar of the House, where sits the sergeant-at-arms on a chair of state, with a sword by his side; but him we cannot see, as he is immediately under us. At the end of the table lies the “gilt bauble,” as Cromwell called the mace – which is the sign of the Speaker's presence, and which is always put under the table when the Speaker leaves the chair. At one time, when a message from the Lords was announced, the Mace-bearer, bearing the mace, went to the Bar of the House, and met the Messenger, who came forward bowing, and retired in the same manner, with his face to the Speaker; for it would have been a terrible breach of etiquette had the Messenger favoured that illustrious personage with a glimpse of his back. When the Speaker leaves the chair, no one else occupies it. The House then goes into committee, and a chairman is appointed, who sits by the clerks at the table. On such occasions one of the forms of the House pertinaciously adhered to is often productive of good results. According to parliamentary rules, when the Speaker puts the motion that “I do now leave the chair,” previously to going into committee, it is at the option of any member who has a question to ask, or a statement to make, or a grievance to proclaim, to move that the House do now adjourn, and then deliver himself of whatever he may wish to say; or he can make his statement as an amendment. Such forms are very valuable, though often very inconvenient to ministers who are anxious to get over the business of the country with as much expedition as possible, and give independent members an opportunity of uttering their sentiments, of exposing jobs, of being a terror to evil rulers, and a praise to them that do well. They often lead to very animated discussions. In such little skirmishes Lord Palmerston, the Bight Hon. Benjamin Disraeli, and Mr. Thomas Duncombe greatly shine. As a rule, you may in consequence hear better debates between half-past five and eight – the time when these little scenes may be expected – than at any other period of the evening, unless, in the small hours, the House is precipitated into an Irish row.

But time has passed away, and the more serious part of the evening's business is commenced. The benches on both sides of the House are already filled. That first row on the Speaker's right

contains the ministers. Fronting them are the Opposition, always a formidable, and generally a useful band. If the Conservatives are in office, the Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli occupies the middle of the Treasury benches, supported on one side by the mild and respectable Sir John Pakington, and on the other by a figure fierce, and bearded, with a hook nose and a glittering eye like that of the Ancient Mariner, the great poet, novelist, and satirist of our day, Sir Bulwer Lytton. Lord Stanley, pale and studious-looking, is by; and around them are the gentle Walpole, the old party warrior, Fitzroy Kelly, and lesser lights. But undoubtedly the observed of all observers is the leader of the great Protectionist party, whose battles he has fought, whose councils he has guided, whose chiefs he has placed upon the Treasury bench. Up in the gallery no one is watched more keenly.

Lord Palmerston is the next best-stared-at man in the House; and next, that champion of the British constitution, Lord John. The Palmerstonians, whether in office or languishing on the bleak benches of opposition, are alike undistinguishable, for they have an official knack of pulling the hat over the eyebrow, so as completely to obscure the face, and from the gallery you can scarce tell one from the other, with the exception of Sir G. W. Hayter, who has always a mysterious air, and Wilson of the *Economist*, who rejoices in carrotty, and consequently unlovely locks. On the same side of the House, but below the gangway, are the Irish ultras and tenant leaguers, a band once formidable; but Lucas dead, Duffy seeking on another arena the position denied him here, Bowyer, bearded and red-haired, little better than the mouthpiece of Ultramontanism – that small party are little feared and little courted now. Below the gangway is the balance of power, where sit, on the first bench on the floor, on the right, Roebuck and Lord John Russell; the Manchester party (for, in spite of Manchester's ignoble denial of the same, there is still a policy known as of Manchester) are close behind. The Peelites and the eccentricities sit on the other side. Bright and Gibson represent the Gracchi. What Gladstone and Sidney Herbert and Sir James Graham represent, it is hard to say; yet in that great assembly you shall not find three abler men.

But we have been already some time in the House. Hours have come and gone – day has faded into night. Suddenly, from the painted glass ceiling above, a mellow light has streamed down upon us all. Rich velvet curtains have been drawn across the gorgeously painted windows, and if we had only good speeches to listen to, we should be very comfortable indeed. Alas, alas, there is no help for us! As soon as “Wishy” sits down, “Washy” gets up; and members thin off, leaving scarcely forty in the House. Nor can we wonder at this. Men must dine once in the twenty-four hours, and members of the House of Commons obey this universal law. Most of them have been hard at work all the day. It is no very pleasant life theirs, after all; crowded committee rooms all day, and the heated air of the House all night. An M.P. should have an iron frame as Joseph Hume had, or he cannot do his duty to his country or his constituents. Even we grow, as we sit in the gallery a few hours, weary as Mariana in the moated grange. Would that we were with the wife of our bosom at home! Would that we were listening to the child-like prattle and silver laugh of Rose! Would that we were discussing divine philosophy with a friend amidst a genial cloud of tobacco smoke! Would that we were anywhere – anywhere out of this! Sleep comes not when you want him. If you read, the gallery keeper is down on you in an instant; and as to talking, that is quite out of the question. Hark! whose is that name the speaker announces? It is that of one of the leaders. What a change has come over the House! No more chatting and laughing of members on empty benches – no more idling of reporters – no more indifference in the strangers' gallery. Even the divine voices of the women are hushed, and they stop to pay the homage beauty should ever love to pay to intellect and strength. What a grand sound is that cheer bursting from five hundred throats – for the house is hearty in its approval of a good speech, on whatever side it be delivered; and how telling is the reply, and how vehemently cheered – on one side at least; and how chaotic the confusion, and how discordant the sounds, when one of the smaller fry attempts to continue the debate which the House evidently considers has been sufficiently discussed, and respecting which it is now anxious to come to a vote! The helpless orator's voice is lost in the clamour. After a few minutes' purgatory he has sense enough to sit down, the

Speaker reads the question, and puts it – the ayes have it, the noes demand a division – the bell rings – peers and diplomatists and distinguished strangers under the gallery are turned out. Thanks to our insignificance we are suffered (though but recently has this been the case) to remain and see the ayes move in to the right and noes to the left. The House is emptied with the exception of the Speaker, the clerks, and the tellers. Immediately it begins to fill. After a little while all have come back. The tellers go to the bar, and thence in a row march up to the table, at which they are met by the clerk, to whom they give the result of the division. Already the House knows which side has won from the way in which the tellers are placed, the tellers of the victorious party being on the right side. And now the division is announced from the chair, the triumphant party cheer, and the House, if it be late, almost immediately adjourns. Out bound honourable M.P.'s as schoolboys out of school. Glad enough are they the thing is over; and, lighting their cigars – it is astonishing what smokers honourable gentlemen are – not unreluctantly do they go home. Following their example, we exchange the noisy and heated house for the chill and silent night. Yet, as we go, we cannot help observing, how generally well-behaved and patient the House has even been to unutterable bores. It is seldom they put a man down, or are boisterous or rude. A man of no party easily gets a hearing; but he cannot secure attention. The House is polite, not cordial – civil, but not encouraging. Accordingly the multitude, the second and third-rate men – that is, all except a dozen – do not attempt to speak to the House at all, but to the gallery, and, through the press, to their constituents. If the speeches were not reported, they would, in most cases, be made shorter and better. For instance, your own representative Smithers made a speech. The weak-minded politicians of Rottenborough class Smithers as A 1; and when he tells them what a fire-eater he is in the House, and what things he says to government, they wonder Smithers has not been committed to the Tower for high treason by the base and brutal myrmidons of power. Now, what are the actual facts? While Smithers was speaking, the House very still – and perhaps, with the exception of an understrapper of the Treasury, enjoying a five minutes' snooze, or deep in a statistical calculation, not a soul was on the government benches at all – nobody listened to Smithers; yet, on went Smithers stuttering incoherently, reading from his notes with fearful pauses between, screaming at the top of his voice, sawing the air with his arms in the manner of the unhappy Mr. Frederick Peel, amidst universal indifference, save when occasionally a good-natured friend timidly called out, "Hear, hear." The Speaker, perhaps, was chatting with an acquaintance about his next parliamentary levée; if Smithers had stood on his head, I almost question whether any one would have been aware of the fact; and Smithers sits down, as he rises, without any particular mark of approval at all. Why, then, does Smithers speak? Why, because the Press is there – to treasure up every word – to note down every sentence – to let the British nation see what Smithers said. This, of course, is a great temptation to Smithers to speak when there is no absolute necessity that Smithers should open his mouth at all. Yet this has its advantages – on the morrow honourable gentlemen have the whole debate before them, coolly to peruse and study; and if one grain of sense lurked in Smithers' speech, the country gets the benefit. At times, also, were it not for the Press, it would be almost impossible to transact the business of the country. For instance, we refer to Mr. Wilson's proposals for Customs Reform. On the occasion to which we refer, Mr. Wilson spoke for nearly four hours. Mr. Wilson we believe to be an excellent man, and father of a family, but he certainly is a very poor speaker. Never was there a duller and drearier speech. Few men could sit it out. In the gallery there were a few strong-minded females who heard every word – what cannot a strong-minded woman do? – but M.P.'s gossiped in the lobby – or dined – or smoked – or drank brandy-and-water – in short, did anything but listen to Mr. Wilson; and yet this was a grave, serious government measure. Why, then, did not members listen? Because there was no need for them to do so. The *Times* would give it them all the next morning; and so it mattered little how empty of listeners was the House, provided the reporters were there and did their duty. It is the same when the House legislates for our Imperial colonies, or our 150,000,000 in India. It is to the Reporters' Gallery members speak, not to the House. Thus is it orators are so plentiful in spite of the freezing atmosphere. Ordinarily no one listens – no one expects

to be convinced – no one seeks to convince. Said an old M.P., “I never knew a speech that influenced a vote.” As a rule, the M.P. was right. Orators like George Thompson are quite out of place in it. Such a man as Henry Vincent would be a laughingstock. The House consists of middle-aged gentlemen of good parts and habits, and they like to do business and to be spoken to in a business-like way. Next to business-like speakers, the House likes joking. Hence it is Tom Duncombe and Lord Palmerston are such favourites. Hence it is that Colonel Sibthorp got and Henry Drummond gets so readily the ear of the House. The House cares little for declamation. It would rather be without it. It considers it a waste of time. Figures of arithmetic are far more popular than figures of speech. You must learn to speak to the House in its own style. Disraeli attempted to take the House by storm, and palpably failed. He altered his style. He learnt to talk figures, and became a success. More recently Mr. Warren attempted the same feat, and also failed. If you adopt the Parliamentary style, and have the requisite *physique*, whether you be Tory, Radical, Free-trader, or Protectionist – Protestant or Roman Catholic – Irish, Scotch, or English – whether you represent a borough or a county – you have a chance of being heard. The House of Commons, it is true, is a club, but it is not an exclusive one. All classes are represented there. The Roman Catholic wolf reposes in it meekly by the side of the Protestant lamb. There you see, side by side, teetotal Crossley and Bass famed for bitter beer. Oxford sends there its trained and scholarly churchmanship, and the manufacturing towns their vigorous dissent. Lowness of birth is no obstacle to success. Lindsay was a cabin-boy; Fox, a weaver in Norwich in his youth; poor Brotherton, a factory lad; Ingram cleaned the shoes of one of his constituents; yet the House gives these men as ready a hearing as it awards to the inheritors of broad domains and the most illustrious of historic names. If the House is flunkeyfied, conventional, and illogical, it is the fault of the public – more flunkeyfied, conventional, and illogical – whom it represents. Waste not your honest indignation, but reserve it for the proper parties out of doors. Nor grumble that the working men have had no representative since their order was represented by the idiotic and self-seeking Feargus O’Connor, when you remember that, by means of the freehold land societies, almost any working men who like to go without beer might in a very short time acquire votes, and, combined, might carry the counties. Aristocrats, you say, are in the People’s House. Yes, but they are men, most of them, of untainted honour – of lofty aim – of comprehensive views; and the general fusion and ventilation of opinion and clash of intellect elicit action most congenial with the intelligence of the age. Take any of the extreme men, for instance. What can they do? Are they the representatives of the mass of opinion? Is the country prepared to break up the National Church, as Mr. Miall would recommend – to dissolve the Union, as Gavan Duffy desired – to put down all our armaments, as Mr. Bright would think proper – to grant the five points of the Charter, as poor Feargus O’Connor contended? Most certainly not. Yet the representatives of such opinions are in the House, and rightly in the House. With them away, the opinions of the people would not be fairly represented. At the same time, it must be remembered, that such men represent but sections, and it is wisely arranged that the representatives of all sections shall meet. Thus justice is done to all. Thus mutual toleration is learned. Thus the mental vision of all becomes enlarged. We make these remarks because we think we see a tendency to run down the House of Commons, and the representative institutions of which it is the type. By Britons this feeling should not be entertained. That assembly contains, it is true, not the grandest, but the best practical intellects of which our country can boast. In its earliest days it rocked the cradle of our liberties, and still it guards them, though the stripling has long become a giant. At our elections there is deep-seated demoralisation, but still that demoralisation has its bounds which it cannot pass, and the high-minded and the honourable form the majority in the House of Commons. At any rate, the representative body is quite as virtuous and intelligent as the constituency. If, gentle reader, it laughs at your favourite idea, it only does so because that idea is a poor squalling brat, not a goddess with celestial mien and air. A time may come when it may be that, and then it will not knock at the door of the House in vain. Till then, the House may be forgiven for not thinking of it. The House is not bound to take notice of it till then. Law Reform – Parliamentary Reform – Financial

Reform – Customs Reform – Education – Colonies – Convicts – India – these are the topics with which the House has now painfully to grapple. Your favourite idea must wait a little longer. In the meantime, if it be a good one let us wish it well – if it be a true one, we shall surely hear of it again.

## A NIGHT WITH THE LORDS

Amongst the sights of London surely may be reckoned the Chamber of Peers – fallen from its high estate, but still existing as a potent institution in this self-governing country and democratic age. Of course it is usual to sneer at the peers – we all do so; and yet we would move heaven and earth to be seen walking arm in arm with a peer, no matter how old or vicious he be, on the sunny side of Pall Mall. We all say the peers must give way to the Commons; and yet we all know that half the latter are returned by the former, and that you can no more succeed in contesting a county against its lords and landlords, than you can hope to fly in the air, or to walk on the sea. Hear a pot-house orator on the House of Peers, you would think it the most indefensible establishment imaginable. But is it so? Ask Exeter Hall; that truly British institution is in raptures with the whole British peerage. A lord at a Bible meeting – a lord stammering a few unconnected common-places about the propagation of Christianity in foreign parts, or the conversion of the Jews – a lord denouncing the Pope, or anticipating the coming of the millennium – is a sight dear to the British public. Sneer at the Lords as you will, expatiate on the manifest absurdity of supposing that they are wiser and better than other people, say, what every one knows and thinks, that you cannot transmit brains as you can the family spoons, and that therefore the idea involved in hereditary peerage is a lie; nevertheless, the House of Peers still continues a great fact. And it is a gorgeous fact as well. The apartments of the Commons are poor and mean compared with the chamber, all resplendent with crimson and gold, where the Lords meet. As you enter the central hall in the new Houses of Parliament, the passage to the right leads you to the Lords. We will suppose you have got an order – any peer can give you one; and as the House commences its sitting at five, and there is plenty of room in the gallery, you may take your time almost as freely as the celebrated Miss Lucy Long herself. Passing the lobby, you soon find your way into the house, the magnificent adorning of which will be sure to excite your utmost admiration. Some may say it is too gaudy, everything pertaining to the chamber is so richly decorated; but it is very fine, and when Parliament is opened by Majesty in person, and the house is crowded with all the great men of our land, and the galleries blaze with beauty and diamonds, the effect must be, as it has always been described, imposing in the extreme. On ordinary evenings, however, nothing of this splendour is visible; the house has a deserted air; an assembly of a dozen or twenty is a very fair muster; a debate of a couple of hours is generally considered as unusually exciting and fierce. The best description of a debate in the Lords we have ever read is that by Disraeli, in the “Young Duke.” We quote the passage: – “The Duke of St. James took the oaths and his seat. He was introduced by Lord Pompey. He heard a debate. We laugh at such a thing, especially in the Upper House; but on the whole the affair is imposing, especially if we take a part in it. Lord Exchamberlain thought the nation going on wrong, and he made a speech full of currency and constitution. Baron Deprivey Seal seconded him with great effect – brief, but bitter, satirical, and sore. The Earl of Quarterday answered these, full of confidence in the nation and in himself. When the debate was getting heavy, Lord Snap jumped up to give them something light. The Lords do not encourage wit, and so are obliged to put up with pertness. But Viscount Memoir was very statesmanlike, and spouted a sort of universal history. Then there was Lord Ego, who vindicated his character when nobody knew he had one, and explained his motives because his auditors could not understand his acts. Then there was a maiden speech, so inaudible that it was doubted after all whether the young orator really did lose his virginity. In the end, up started the Premier, who, having nothing to say, was manly, and candid, and liberal; gave credit to his adversaries and took credit to himself, and then the motion was withdrawn. While all this was going on, some made a note, some made a bet, some consulted a book, some their ease, some yawned, a few slept. Yet, on the whole, there was an air about the assembly which can be witnessed in no other in Europe. Even the most indifferent looked as if he would come forward if the occasion should demand him, and the most imbecile as if he could serve his country if it required him.”

But let us look around us. We, the strangers, are up in a comfortable gallery at one end of a long, narrow, and rather dark chamber, along the sides of which are narrow windows of painted glass, and bronze statues of the barons of the olden time. In a smaller gallery, just beneath us, sit the parliamentary reporters. Exactly opposite us is the Throne; its splendour we but faintly perceive, for it is veiled from vulgar eyes; but there it is – the very spot where Majesty sits, while around her are principalities and powers, – there the royal assent is given to laws which affect the weal or woe of an empire – there, with silvery voice, and faultless delivery, and perfect pronunciation, are spoken royal speeches, greedily bought up in second editions of the morning papers, and flashed along the electric wires to all the great cities of our own and the capitals of other lands. At present a few peers are leaning against the rails and chatting – that is all. A little below the throne is the purple velvet cushion – the object of so many a struggle – of so many a year of unflinching toil – of so many a defence of party spoken in another place – of so many a clever piece of intrigue. We mean the woolsack, on which sits the Lord Chancellor Chelmsford. If the debate is continued till a late hour, and the keeper of her Majesty's conscience retires to dine, Lord Redesdale acts as chairman *pro tem*. His lordship is eccentric in his dress – black trousers, white cravat, buff waistcoat, blue coat and brass buttons, white stockings and shoes, compose a *tout ensemble* rarely seen in the House of Lords or elsewhere. Greater men than Lord Chelmsford have sat on the woolsack. We live in a little age. Our great men are little men after all. Our Lord Chancellor has never done what other Lord Chancellors have done, viz., wielded the fierce democracy of the lower house, shone unrivalled on the parliamentary arena, thundered from the platform, won fame by their daring, and acumen, and learning, and eloquence, in every corner of the land. Indeed, he makes no pretensions to oratory or greatness of any kind. He is an able lawyer and eager partisan, little more. In this respect not at all resembling, or rather very much differing from, the extraordinary individual who has just darted on the woolsack, as if he would edge off the Chancellor and take his very seat. That individual we need not name; a glance at the nose and plaid trousers – trousers which he is incessantly hitching up when he speaks – are sufficient. It must be my Lord Brougham, and no one else. To no other man born of woman has nature vouchsafed the same power of universality. No other man would attempt to do what he is now doing, talking law with one man, politics with another, and scandal with a third, and all the while listening to the debate, and qualifying himself to take a part in it. In the course of time we shall see him pursuing an erratic career in any part of the house except in that one part in which sit ministers and their supporters. Amongst their ranks Lord Brougham is never to be found. To the party in power he is always opposed. It is his pride that he never worships the rising sun. The Ex-Chancellor has never forgotten or forgiven the treatment he received, but it does not affect his health – it does not tinge his life with melancholy. He does not let disappointment, like a worm in the bud, prey upon his damask cheek. His hair is a little greyer – his face is a little fatter; that is all the change the wear and tear of half a century of public life has produced: and of such a half century! the half century that waged war with France – triumphed at Waterloo – carried Reform – repealed the Corn Laws – and saw the birth of railways and the electric telegraph; a half century of more interest than any preceding age – the work and the excitement of which wore out our Romillys, Follets, and Horners, with premature decay. Yet Brougham still lives. Slightly altering Byron, we may say of him, —

Time writes no wrinkles on his brazen brow,  
Such as the *Edinburgh's* dawn beheld he wriggleth now.

Below the woolsack is a table, at which Lord Campbell generally sits; and on each side are ranged the orators and partizans of the two great sections which, under some name or other, always have existed and always will exist in our national history. The uninitiated call them Conservatives and Whigs; the wiser simply term them the men who are in office and the men who are not. The Government for the time being sits on the right hand of the Lord Chancellor, who acts as Speaker,

and who has a far easier berth of it than Mr. Denison. The Lords are not long-winded, nor noisy; not passionate, and, like true Britons, always adjourn to dinner. Hence no post-prandial scenes are visible. In the small hours no patriots, smelling strongly of whisky-and-water and cigars, expatiate to a wearied assembly on that ever fertile theme, the wrongs and woes of the Green Isle. The Lords, like Mr. Wordsworth's gods —

“Approve the depth but not the tumult of the soul.”

We can never fancy the House of Lords to be what you may sometimes take the House of Commons to be – a bear garden or a menagerie. You miss the vulgarity of the one, and you also miss its excitement and earnestness – its cries of “question” and “divide” when some well-known bore is on his legs, and its long resounding cheers when some favourite partisan sits down. All is staid, and correct, and proper, with the exception of a tirade from the Rupert of debate, or some father in God on the Episcopal Bench. We would fain say a few words about these reverend gentlemen. One could hardly expect to find the ministers of the self-denying and lowly Jesus of Nazareth sitting in a gorgeous house with the proudest and wealthiest of the English peers. You would expect to find them rather by the bed-side of the sick, in the houses of the poor, combating with the vice and infidelity of the day; or else you would look for them in their studies, surrounded with stately folios; or in the midst of their clergy, reviving the fainthearted, urging on the timid, counselling the young, and girding up the energies and hearts of all. You would expect to find them in the House of the Lord rather than in the House of Lords. In short, anywhere but in the turmoil of party conflict. This, however, is not the case. The bishops are almost the first object that attracts your eye. They sit on benches by themselves, on the Government side, but beyond the ministerial bench. In the “dim religious light” of the Upper House, you can scarcely make out what they are. You see venerable wigs, and black robes, and lawn sleeves; and if you look sharp, you may, at times, catch the outline of a reverend face – most probably of Dr. Tait, the energetic bishop of London, or of the pug nose and plebeian profile of Samuel of Oxford. They are very regular in their attendance, and frequently take part in the debate. Indeed, the latter bishop is a great man in the Lords; and so was Henry of Exeter, but his voice is seldom heard, and his name never mentioned now, though he is generally present, and sits at the end of the benches nearest to the spectator, while the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is also pretty regular in his attendance, occupies the other end of the bench. The other bishops do not muster quite so strongly. Half of them is a good attendance. It is to be hoped they are more profitably employed.

Coming lower down, our eyes rest on the men who did carry on government, and generally occupy the unenviable situation of Ministers of the Crown. At present they are out of office, and are seated on the Lord Chancellor's left. Generally, at the top of the bench, is seated a slight, undersized, juvenile, red-haired Scot – that is the Duke of Argyle, who, in virtue of being a Duke, and the husband of the daughter of the Duchess of Sutherland, was Lord Privy Seal. His lordship is as pert and ready as any forward youth in a debating-club, and has much of the appearance and manner of such a one. He gives you no great idea of hereditary statesmanship, the only quality conspicuous in him being a tolerable amount of modest assurance, perfectly natural to a peer who is an author and has lectured at mechanics' institutions, and read papers before the British Association. By him is seated Lord Panmure, very red in the face, which redness seems to arise from a military stock which he persists in wearing. There sits the Marquis of Clanricarde, who has suffered much from public opinion, and who deserves to suffer, if only his conduct in certain electioneering matters be taken into account. The Earl of Granville is the leader of this small band; he is a pleasant looking man, and speaks not badly for a lord. The Whig Nestor, the aged Marquis of Lansdowne, worthy of remembrance for his friendship for Tom Moore, is easily detected by his blue coat and brass buttons, that remnant of the palmy days of party. None of these men are remarkable for oratorical power. A strong contrast is presented by the illustrious personage sitting on the next row, higher up, just opposite the bishops – a

severe, well-made, heavy, grey-haired man, who sits almost silent and sullen, as if he had no feelings, as if the debate was a sham, and he should be glad if it were over. We refer to

“The travelled thane, Athenian Aberdeen,”

the best-abused man, at one time, in her gracious Majesty’s dominions, but without whom, nevertheless, it is questionable whether the Queen’s Government could be carried on. Unfortunately, Lord Aberdeen is not the man for the public. The public likes to be gammoned, and his lordship cannot gammon. He is spare in words, cold and unimpassioned in delivery, and somewhat too indifferent to party attacks. On neighbouring benches are seated discontented Whigs, overlooked in the scramble for place, and who therefore view the proceedings of all governments with an impartial, but yet a jealous eye. Prominent amongst such is the sandy-looking unamiable Earl Grey, who seems angry with himself and all the world, because he is lame, and has not the command of the colonies. Below the table are half-a-dozen benches, on which congregate a few peers till dinner time. Here sits Earl Fitzwilliam – here also sits one of the most frightful bores in the House, Lord Monteagle, who always speaks, and, for a lord, cruelly long. That is the consequence of his having been in the Lower House. Never stop to hear him. As soon as you see his bald head, be off. The Dukes sit here. On the front bench on your right is the Duke of Cambridge. On his left is seated the Duke of Newcastle, a promising orator when a member of the Lower House, and a follower of Sir Robert Peel. Crossing to the government benches, the Earl of Derby fills the first place. We need not paint his portrait; the sharp aristocratic face – but feebly reflected in that promising young man, but unfortunate speaker, his son – is familiar to us all; there he is out of place. He has no fitting opponents. It was among the Commons that he won his laurels. Yet, at times, the old afflatus fills him, and his clear voice and fluent declamation are as bitter and terrible as when night after night he wrestled, as if for very life, with the brawny champion of Catholic Emancipation, and the somewhat too selfish, unscrupulous exponent of Irish wrongs. By his side is his trusty page, the inelegant and insipid Malmesbury, of whom, in a passing freak, the author of “Vivian Grey” not merely made a statesman, but actually Minister for Foreign Affairs. On the bench behind the Premier sits that wonderful old man eloquent, whose shrill tones may occasionally be heard, and whose intellect seems as great and grand as when he was Sir John Copley – Attorney-General before the Reform Bill was carried, and England, according to Croker, for ever undone. Near him sits a tall, thin gentleman, with a copious head of hair, and a force of gesticulation hardly English: that is the Earl of Ellenborough, in his own opinion hero, statesman, lawyer, “all things by turns, and nothing long;” in this respect second only to Lord Brougham, who sits everywhere, speaks wherever he can, and whose Ciceronian eloquence, aided by a delivery more expressive than dignified, by gestures and tones at any rate vivacious, astonish the weak nerves of the spectators, and oft-times puzzles the parliamentary reporters themselves. Few other notabilities do we see. Perhaps we may note on the opposition benches the pale aristocratic form of that popular nobleman, the Earl of Shaftesbury. Disraeli makes one of his peers say, the House of Lords looks like a house of butlers. We think the satirist is unjust. At any rate, the peers are well dressed. Hats, gloves, boots, and frock-coats are all unexceptionable. We need not say, in this respect, the House of Lords presents a very different appearance to the House of Commons. Yet the Lords need not be so particular about their “gorgeous array;” there are seldom more than half-a-dozen ladies present to admire and reward their display. The Lords are more polite than the Commons. Such ladies as are present take their seats in the gallery, where they can see and be seen; in the other house, as our readers know, the case is different. But even the ladies, we dare say, would not mind being treated as the Commons treat them, if the debates in the Lords were as good as in the Commons. If the peers did not dress so well, and were not so excessively polite, but spoke better, no great harm would be done; but there’s the difficulty. It is difficult for a polite man to be ill-bred, and to lose his temper, and say sharp things. In the House of Commons nothing is easier. Say something bitter, and you will have a murmur of applause – be savage, and at any rate your own party will cheer; but in the Lords you

can't get up the semblance of earnestness. The whole thing seems too much like play – an apology for business, and that is all. No man can speak to twenty sleepy peers as he could to four or five hundred eager partisans. No man can be impressive in the bosom of his family – and the Lords are a family party, all connected, or nearly so; and if a stranger comes in, he soon apes the fashionable tone, and becomes as dull and apathetic as the rest. And why should a lord be otherwise? A lord is not more a lord for having brains – nor the less a lord for being without. Intellect, skill, oratory, are no helps – are unnecessary in an hereditary institution. Sir Robert Peel knew this, and lived and died a commoner. Chatham became comparatively a small man when he took a pension and a peerage. So was it with Walpole, when meeting his old rival Pulteney, after they had both been raised to the peerage, he exclaimed, “Here we are, my lord, the two most insignificant personages in Europe.” The Upper House but registers the decisions of the Lower – the business of the country is carried on elsewhere.

But while we have been looking at the House, the debate has closed. Lord Granville has asked a question and made an attack. Lord Derby has uttered a few petulant remarks, to which Lord Aberdeen has made a cold and formal reply, to which some peers, disappointed of place, have added a little independent criticism on their own account. Two or three exquisites have been discussing little matters of their own, till they find that if they stop much longer they will be too late for Rotten Row, and the House merely waits for Lord Monteagle to sit down and go home. Happily his lordship is briefer than his wont, and the Lord High Chancellor declares the House adjourned. Rushing outside, we catch hasty glimpses of our hereditary legislators as they, in fashionable brougham or on splendid blood, start for their parks or respective Belgravian homes. We also, in more plebeian manner, do the same. We are sure the reader will have had enough of the Lords for one night. He will have found out that they are not much better orators or speakers than other men – that even lords stammer, utter incoherent remarks, display poverty of ideas. Let us add, in conclusion, the great merit of a night in the Lords is, that it is soon over. If the Lords be dull, at any rate they are short. To be dull and long-winded is an offence against good breeding of which few peers are guilty.

## THE REPORTERS' GALLERY

If it has ever been your lot, most magnanimous sir, to be in the neighbourhood of Westminster Hall about four any afternoon while Parliament is sitting, you must have observed more than one individual, with cheeks evidently “sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought,” rushing into the door which leads to the Strangers’ Gallery in the House of Commons. If, however, you look well, you will see that the parties referred to, instead of going the whole length of the passage, as you are compelled to do when occasionally you get an order, turn sharply to the left and climb a flight of narrow stairs. If you manage to follow them, you will find at the top of the stairs a small lobby, where three or four boys, in the livery of the Electric Telegraph Company, are waiting to receive the parliamentary report, which almost immediately after is flashing along the wires to our great hives of industry, of intelligence, and life, or to the capitals of other lands – to Paris – to Vienna – to Berlin. You turn to the left and enter a small room set apart for refreshments – three or four individuals are seated at table, one drinking Bass’s far-famed ale, another feasting on juicy beef, another regaling himself with brandy-and-water, and another sipping the less stimulating and equally agreeable produce of the coffee plant. The happy fellows are poking their fun at each other in a mild and pleasant way, or possibly discussing the usual political topics of the day; others flit through the room with a celerity, as Mr. Squeers said of nature, easier imagined than described. Were they followed by gentlemen of Hebrew extraction, with those mysterious little slips of paper which contain letters of such magic power, they could not walk faster. As you listen, utterances of doubtful and dire import fall from their lips. “Palmerston is up,” says one. You are alarmed; you think the bottle-holder is in a rage, and you tremble for the consequences. Again you hear, “Lord John is down;” you are distressed at the intelligence, the old champion of civil and religious liberty you hoped would long have been preserved from such a catastrophe. The gentlemen around you, however, listen to such statements with the coolness of stoics, paying little or no regard to such announcements. One says to another, “When are you on?” another demands of his friend, whether he is off; another says he comes on at nine. You are puzzled to know what manner of men you are amongst. They are not strangers fresh from the country – they have too pale and town-like a look for that; they are not members – because members feast in another part of the house. You will soon see what they are! you leave that room and enter another, in which are a few well-dressed personages transcribing hurriedly, as if for life. The truth flashes upon you. “These men are the reporters,” you exclaim. For once, my good sir, you are right; and if you go through that glass-door you will find yourself in the Reporters’ Gallery.

We will suppose that for this time only the doorkeeper has relaxed his usual vigilance, and you have managed to effect an entrance. There is as much difficulty in getting a stranger into the Reporters’ Gallery as in getting Baron Rothschild into the House. As the gallery will not hold more than thirty, it is quite right this should be the case. On the back seats the reporters are sitting idle – some criticising the speakers in a manner anything but complimentary – some sleeping – some reading a quarterly; but on the front seat you see some dozen or thirteen, each in a little box to himself, busily engaged. If the speaker be a great gun, the reporter puts forward his utmost energies and takes down every word – if he be one of the illustrious obscure the task is less difficult, and a patient public is saved the painful duty of reading the *ipsissima verba* of Smith or Brown. Beside the reporter, in some cases, sits another gentleman, who has, comparatively speaking, an easier office to perform. He is the gentleman that does the parliamentary summary to which you instinctively turn, instead of wading through the eight or nine columns that give the debate itself. I believe the summary writer in the gallery remains all night, while the reporters take their turns, which last on an average half an hour. Thus, no sooner has a reporter been at his post for that time, than he leaves the house and rushes up to the office to copy out his notes; this may take him an hour. He then returns, and is ready to go on again when he is due. It would be utterly impossible for one man to report a debate and then

to copy out his notes, and be in time for the paper of the next morning; consequently each paper is compelled to have a body of nine or ten parliamentary reporters, and these reporters, in order that they may all have an equal chance, vary their turns every week. Thus the man who goes on one week at four, goes the next at a later hour – and the reporter who is one week in the Commons, perhaps the next has the honour of sitting in the House of Lords. Otherwise the hard work might fall to a few, and the rest might take it very easy indeed.

As we don't happen to be reporting, we will look about us a little. We will report reporters as they are: on our left, just below us, is the reporter for the *Star*; next comes the *Daily Telegraph*, then the *Advertiser*, and then the *Daily News*. Three boxes are occupied by the *Times*: one for the reporters, one for the summary writer, and one for the manager of the *Times* parliamentary staff. On the other side are the *Chronicle* reporter and summary writer, the *Herald* ditto, and the *Post*. Up to six o'clock in the evening the *Globe*, and the *Sun*, and the *Express* have each a parliamentary reporter present. The gallery is under the care of Lord Charles Russell, Sergeant-at-Arms, who is sadly put to it where to stow the gentlemen of the press, who have increased far beyond the limits of the gallery. Behind the gallery are rooms in which some reporters write out their notes; and so hot and inconvenient are they, that his lordship has latterly acceded to the reporters a committee room attached for such as need it. Behind the gallery also is a refreshment room, and a policeman to keep out intruders. A few of the weekly papers have reporters in on Thursday and Friday nights, and these constitute the only habitués of the gallery. Of course the aspect of the house is different to what it is when viewed from the Strangers' Gallery. You miss the Speaker and his ornamental chair and majestic wig, but you have a better view of the gangway and the bar – you see the Sergeant-at-Arms, wearing a sword, seated on his easy chair – that chair being made easy by the receipt of twelve hundred a year. You see the gallery under the Strangers' Gallery in which peers, and members' sons, and old M.P.'s occasionally sit; and now and then, through the glass door by which members enter, you see a bonnet, a bit of muslin – the lustre of some female eye – denoting that woman in her loveliness is taking note of the Conscript Fathers. This reminds us that the Reporters' Gallery is just under the little cage in which the British fair are confined during a debate. The consequence is to some of the reporters who wear moustaches, and cultivate the art of killing – who get themselves up in a very different style to your fathers of families – a Barmecide feast of the most cruel kind. They hear the murmur of female voices, not always “gentle and low” – they know that, shining like stars above them, are forms such as “might melt the saintship of an anchorite;” that above them are eyes more eloquent than the tongues below, but they cannot realise what they can imagine; and whilst music comes to them —

“Like ocean which upon the moonlight shores  
Of lone Sigæum steals with murmuring noise,”

they must take down the common sense of common men; such is their cruel fate. And now one word about our companions. Most of them are young men – some are in their prime. None of them are old; old reporters are only met with where dead donkeys and departed postboys are common. At any rate they are not engaged on the morning papers: the late hours, the hard stretch of mind required in a reporter, don't exactly suit old men. If you think reporting easy, my good sir, you are most egregiously mistaken. It takes you two or three years to master shorthand sufficiently to assume your place as a reporter in the gallery. When you have done that, you will find that you don't get your money for nothing, I can assure you. You must for half an hour take down all you can hear; you must then copy that out into long-hand and plain English as best you can. You must then come back into the house and take another turn, and so on, till the house is up; and then, worn and weary, you must again trudge to the office, and there indite the copy which, before the ink with which it is written is dry, is in the composing-room and in type. As this may detain you till four o'clock in the morning, you are then at liberty to retire to your bed, if it suit you, or to the flowers and early purl of

Covent Garden, if it be summer time, and you are of a sentimental turn. Now, occasionally, it is all very well to sit up till three or four o'clock in the morning; London then is invested with a grandeur and stillness very impressive: the air is fresh and pure, bearing with it the odours of the country; the grand Cathedral of St. Paul looms proudly before you; the streets seem broader, longer than usual; and, far off, we catch glimpses of Hampstead or of the Surrey hills; but when you have to see this, not once, but every morning, the case is altered, the spell is broken, and the charm is gone; and such a life must tell, sooner or later, upon the constitution. Reporters are not rosy, jolly men; they don't look like Barry Cornwall's happy squires,

“With brains made clear  
By the irresistible strength of beer.”

Most of them live well, and are protected against the inclemencies of the weather. The reporters of the *Daily News* and *Times* come down in cabs, but they appear delicate hothouse plants; though, after all, they do not look worse than a popular M.P., such as Lord Dudley Stuart or Mr. Milner Gibson, at the end of a session. As a class, we have already hinted, the reporters are intellectual men; among them are many who have embraced literature as the noblest of all professions, and have as sacredly devoted themselves to it as, in old times, priests did to the service of their gods. You can tell these by their youthful flush and lofty foreheads. A time may come when the world may seduce them from the service, when all generous aspirations may fade away, when crushing selfishness shall make them common as other men. Then there are others to whom reporting is a mere mechanical calling, and nothing else; who do their week's work and take their week's wages, and are satisfied; but most of the parliamentary reporters are clever men, and all aspire to that character. The mistake is one a little self-love will easily induce a man to make. Men of infinite wit and spirit have been in the gallery; therefore, the men in the gallery now are men of infinite wit and spirit. A gorgeous superiority over other men is thus tacitly assumed. You will hear of such a one, that he was a reporter on the *Times*, but he was not clever enough for that, and so they made him an M.P. But, after all, no man of great genius will report long if he can help it: reporting is a terrible drudgery. A man who can write his thoughts well will not willingly spend his time in copying out the thoughts of others. Dickens was a reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*, but he, though his talent in that way was great, though he could perform almost unparalleled feats as a reporter, soon left the gallery. At one time Angus Reach was in the gallery; there, till recently, might have been seen that accomplished critic and delightful novelist Shirley Brooks. For a literary man reporting is a capital crutch: he is well paid, and it often leads to something else. The *Times'* reporters are divided into three classes, none of whom get less than seven guineas a week. The other papers do not pay quite so well; but a literary man, if he be in earnest, can live on less than that till the day comes when the world owns him and he becomes great; and if his dream of fancied greatness be but a dream – if hope never realise the flattering tale she at one time told, still he has a means of respectable livelihood, and may rise from a reporter into an editor. Mr. James Grant, editor of the *Morning Advertiser*, was at one time reporter for that paper. In some cases the ambition of the reporter does not end quite so successfully. Only recently a reporter for one of the morning papers contested an Irish borough. Unfortunately, instead of being returned, the ambitious youth was thrown into gaol for an insignificant tavern bill of merely £250 for eleven days. What cruelty! What talent, what hope, what failure, have there not been in the Reporters' Gallery! And those who know it, if they wanted, could find abundance of material there with which

“To point a moral or adorn a tale.”

Perhaps, after all, in nothing is the astonishing improvement made in these latter times so conspicuous as in our system of parliamentary reporting. The House was in terror when reporters first found their way into it. “Why, sir,” said Mr. Winnington, addressing the Speaker, “you will have

every word that is spoken here misrepresented by fellows who thrust themselves into our gallery. You will have the speeches of this House printed every day during your session, and we shall be looked upon as the most contemptible assembly on the face of the earth.” In consequence of such attacks as these, the reporters became frightened, and gave the debates with the speakers disguised under Roman names, though nothing could be more wearisome than the small type of the political club, where Publicola talked against turnpike-gates and Tullus Hostilius declaimed on the horrors of drinking gin. Nor is it to be wondered at that the House grew angry when such reports as the following professed to be a faithful account of its proceedings: “Colonel Barré moved, that Jeremiah Weymouth, the d-n of this kingdom, is not a member of this House.” Even when the reporters triumphed, the public were little benefited. Nothing can be more tantalising than such statements as these, which we meet with in old parliamentary reports: “Mr. Sheridan now rose, and, during the space of five hours and forty minutes, commanded the admiration and attention of the House by an oration of almost unexampled excellence, uniting the most convincing closeness and accuracy of argument with the most luminous precision and perspicuity of language; and alternately giving force and energy to truth by solid and substantial reasoning, and enlightening the most extensive and involved subjects with the purest clearness of logic, and the brightest splendour of rhetoric.” Sheridan’s leader fared no better. “Mr. Fox,” we are told, “was wonderfully pleasant on Lord Clive’s joining the administration.” Equal injustice is done to Mr. Burke. We read, “Mr. Burke turned, twisted, metamorphosed, and represented everything which the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had advanced, with so many ridiculous forms, that the House was kept in a continual roar of laughter.” Again: “Mr. Burke enforced these beautiful and affecting statements by a variety of splendid and affecting passages from the Latin classics.” It is no wonder, then, that a prejudice should have existed against the reporters. On a motion made by Lord Stanhope, that the short-hand writers employed on the trial of Hastings be summoned to the bar of the House to read their minutes, Lord Loughborough is reported, in Lord Campbell’s life of him, to have said, “God forbid that ever their lordships should call on the short-hand writers to publish their notes; for of all people, short-hand writers were ever the furthest from correctness, and there were no man’s words they ever had that they again returned. They were in general ignorant, as acting mechanically and not by considering the antecedents, and by catching the sound and not the sense they perverted the sense of the speaker, and made him appear as ignorant as themselves.” At a later period, the audacity and impudence of the reporters increased; loud and numerous were the complaints made against them. Mr. Wilberforce, who really deserved better treatment at their hands, read to the House, on one occasion, an extract from a newspaper, in which he was reported as having said, “Potatoes make men healthy, vigorous, and active; but what is still more in their favour, they make men tall; more especially was he led to say so as being rather under the common size, and he must lament that his guardians had not fostered him upon that genial vegetable.” Mr. Martin, of Galway, has immortalised himself by his complaint made about the same time, though based upon a less solid foundation than that of the great Abolitionist. The reporter having dashed his pen under some startling passages which had fallen from the Hibernian orator’s lips, the printer was called to the bar. In defence he put in the report, containing the very words. “That may be,” said Martin; “*but did I spake them in italics*”

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