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## PARLIAMENTARY BOREDOM

A WRITER in *M. A. P.* cheerfully describes life in the British House of Commons in language which might aptly be applied to the ways and byways of Parliament Hill in Ottawa. He says:

"In my wrath I have described life in the House of Commons as boredom tempered by divisions. To the outside public and in the columns of descriptive chronicles, the House of Commons often appears to be one great thrilling drama, with every moment filled with some mighty speech, some vivid scene, some outburst of enthusiasm, a personal encounter of Titans. But it is with the House of Commons in the newspaper description as with life in all literature; that is to say, it is not life as a whole, but life taken at certain brief moments of excitement, of passion, of the dramatic, not life in its general grey dead level of the ordinary, the dull, the wearisome.

The real life of the Member of Parliament is spent in loafing in the lobby, in empty gossip over the most trivial and passing incidents, in seeing constituents, in reading over and over again one newspaper after another—in all the laborious processes, in fact, to which men resort in the dreary occupation of killing time.

Ministers in charge of some great department or of some important bill, who have their rooms for work in the House of Commons or whose minds are absorbed in doing things—men in that position have plenty to occupy them; but the ordinary member who does not take an active part in the House of Commons and who has been accustomed to make the most of his time, finds the House of Commons one of the bitterest of disillusiones.

### The Explorer in the House.

I have rarely seen a member of the House of Commons reveal so palpably

this *etat d'ame* as Stanley. He wandered about the lobbies with a curious lost air. He spoke to very few and seemed then, as perhaps he always was, a very lonely and a very detached individual. From the House he would wonder into the reading room, that favourite resort of the member of Parliament who finds time hanging heavy on his hands. For it is the room in which the newspapers from all parts of the country are kept, and newspaper reading is the modern method of killing time—the modern and one of the most deadly.

He also appeared to spend a great deal of his time in writing letters, an onerous duty, especially in the case of a man who, like Stanley, represented a huge constituency. His own feelings with regard to the House of Commons are best expressed in the following extract from his book:

"Long ago the House of Commons had lost its charm for me. It does not approach my conception of it. Its business is conducted in a shilly-shally manner which makes one groan at the waste of life. It is said to begin at 3 p.m. Prayers are over at 3.10, but for the following twenty minutes we twiddle our fingers; and then commence the questions.

These questions are mainly from the Irish party, and of no earthly interest to anyone except themselves, but even if they were, the answers might be printed just as the questions are, and that would save an hour for the business of debate. A member soon learns how wearying is debate. Out of 620 members some twenty of them have taken it upon themselves, with the encouragement and permission of the Speaker, to debate on every matter connected with the Empire, and after we have heard their voices some fifty times, however interesting their subjects may be, they naturally become very monotonous."

## CHATS ABOUT CITIES

### Rostand's Receipt.

WHEN Edmond Rostand is in Paris, one of the things he loves to do is to spend an hour or two in the old print shops on and near the left bank of the Seine.

The other morning he was turning over a portfolio of pictures, when a very pretty American girl burst into the shop. She chose her picture, paid for it, and asked the shopkeeper to give her a receipt as she was buying the picture for a friend. The man was rather embarrassed.

"I—I am afraid I can't," he said. "You see, I am not the owner of the shop. He has gone out to luncheon; I am only looking after it for him, and—and I don't know how to write." Then the man had a sudden inspiration. "But this gentleman is an old customer," he said, "he'll give you a receipt for me, I am sure."

And it was not until her return home that the American knew what a prize she had secured for her autograph album.

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### In Gay Berlin.

BERLIN is rapidly becoming the great centre of Continental gaiety, superseding Paris in this respect. The great public balls and fetes given in Berlin during the winter surpass, not only in magnificence, but also in good taste, anything of the kind known anywhere in Europe.

The Berlin Association of Journalists recently organised a great Egyptian fete in the enormous halls of the Exposition Building in Charlottenburg, and transformed this immense structure, which is larger than Olym-

pia, into African scenery. The desert, the pyramids, and the sphinx, the streets and bazaars of Cairo, the harems of wealthy Egyptian Moslems and many other characteristic features of Egyptian life were shown with remarkable realism.

The crowd was so great that dancing became impossible, and the guests had to content themselves with promenading throughout the building and drinking champagne at small tables, served by dark-eyed, Oriental-costumed beauties drawn mostly from the east end of Berlin.

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### English as She is Taught.

ENGLISH methods of education are much talked about in France and enthusiasts are constantly urging the authorities to introduce them, or some of them, into Paris.

The other afternoon one of these enthusiasts sought for and obtained an interview with Monsieur Briand, France's Socialist Premier.

"Have you ever thought, Monsieur, how useful it would be to send someone to England to study English public school life?"

"Yes," Monsieur Briand answered, "curiously enough, the same idea has been in my mind for some time past. I am thinking of sending Madame P—, a lady who speaks perfect English, over to Cambridge, where she will study English public school life on the spot."

Not the least funny part of the story is the fact that the enthusiast was delighted. He had no notion that one could not study the life of the public school at Caius or Trinity College.



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