

Prominent Topics.

Reform of the Lords.

Lord Morley evidently has not imbibed the spirit of the House of Lords, of which it is generally said that he only reluctantly became a member. In the debate upon Lord Rosebery's motion for the reform of the Upper Chamber, Lord Morley expressed surprise that Lord Rosebery had not waited for the Government's proposals and pointed out that the scheme suggested would not avert the possibility of future dead-locks between the two Houses. Why on earth should the peers wait for the Government's proposals? Long before the elections, they had undertaken the reform of their own House. They have been the objects of most virulent and offensive attack, in the course of a bitter electoral campaign, in which the Government was practically worsted. Now they are asked to wait for the Government's proposals for their own humiliation, emasculation or extermination. The urbanity of the British peer is proverbial, but really this is going too far. As to the possibility of averting future dead-locks, what is the use of a second chamber, if it is never to lock horns with the House of Commons? In the recent election the Lords showed that, as usual, they more accurately interpreted public opinion than did the Commons. The Government is only sustained in office (not in power) by a heterogenous temporary combination of positively discordant elements, which threatens to go to pieces the first time any important legislation is attempted. Lord Morley is one of the most estimable men in British public life, but he has so little sympathy with the peerage, of which he is a brilliant ornament, that he evidently regards it as distinctly inferior to and subordinate to any group of right honourable gentlemen, who, by accident or otherwise, may happen to form the Government of the day. Radicalism is full of anomalies; in its extreme development it generally becomes the most exclusive despotism; and of all anomalies surely a radical peer is the most anomalous.

Coroners' Juries and Railroad Accidents.

The Coroner's Jury in the Rogers Pass disaster brought in a verdict of accidental death. This is about the best that can be expected from a coroner's jury empanelled in a big railway accident case. When the jury happens to agree upon a verdict, it is just as likely to be wrong, as it is to be right. The whole system of "Crowners' Quest," as it exists in Canada needs overhauling. It belongs to the age of sparsely settled and widely scattered communities. To this day in the great metropolitan city of Montreal, a coroner's jury is "selected" by putting a couple of policemen on the street with a drag-net to catch the first dozen victims that come along. The system of selecting a jury to investigate a big fatal railway accident, which necessitates ex-

ceptional qualifications, is probably little if any better. The work properly appertains to the Railway Commission. Not that the Commissioners themselves should actually investigate every case, but they should appoint competent experts to investigate them. This in the interests of the railway companies, no less than of the public. There is no money in train wrecks for the companies.

The First Lord of the Admiralty, Navy Estimates. Mr. Reginald McKenna, announces an expenditure of \$200,000,000 this year on the Royal Navy and holds out no hope of the amount ever being reduced. He claims, however, that the Government's programme, with the aid of the Australian and New Zealand Governments (he does not seem to have mentioned the Canadian Navy), will make the country safe. The most significant admission in the speech is that the great expenditure is rendered necessary by the building programmes of other nations. Soon there will be no Little England party left in all England.

British Budget. Mr. Asquith announces that the budget will be re-introduced and disposed of before the Easter recess. If there has not been any considerable modification, there is no necessity for any lengthy debate. The Prime Minister has evidently decided to put an end to an intolerable situation by bringing matters to a speedy crisis. The fate of the Government depends upon the Nationalists; if they vote against the budget, the Government will be defeated. It is possible they may simply abstain from voting. They regard the budget as injurious to Ireland, and may consider the price too high to pay even for a prospect of Home Rule.

Railroad Factors of 1910.

At the beginning of each year leading railroad presidents are asked by the New York Evening Post to express their opinions as to the general traffic outlook. This year the catechism contained the following questions:

"What do you regard as the most favourable factor in the railway outlook? As the least favourable?"

"If wages are increased because of the higher cost of living and freight rates are also raised, would the situation be changed for the better?"

Among prominent men catechized was President C. M. Hays, of the Grand Trunk and Grand Trunk Pacific, who responded as follows to the specific questions asked:

"Increased earnings. Demands in all directions for increased rates of pay.

"While we usually have no alternative but to increase wages, it is a very difficult matter to secure anything like proportionate increase in freight rates."

Railway trainmen in Canada, like those in the United States, are clamouring for higher wages, but happily strike rumours are not heard on this side of the line.