

THROUGH A MONOCLE

WHAT ABOUT THE SENATE?

THE usually somnolent and unobtrusive Senate has suddenly emerged into the "spot-light," and a lot of people are discussing its notions of Parliamentary etiquette who commonly think that all of Parliament sits to the left of the main entrance. Critics talk as if it were very rude of the Senate to insist upon its opinions after it had been politely but firmly informed that the Commons thought otherwise; while supporters aggravate the offence by urging that it was the plain duty of the Senate to amend bills sent up to that Chamber if it felt that they needed amendment. How otherwise could it pretend to earn its salary? The chief sensation, however, seems to be astonishment that the decrepit old "body" would "dare"! It was all right for it to express an opinion—modestly, of course, but still quite freely; but when it came to actually refusing to do as the Government told it, that was carrying a joke too far.

AND it was. Right there lies the explanation of the whole affair. We have got into the habit of regarding the Senate as a good deal of a "joke." We don't quite say so; for we never feel entirely certain that we may not need an Old Age Pension ourselves. But the country as a whole does not take the Senate seriously as one of the two Houses of Parliament, having duties and responsibilities very like those of the Commons. The consequence is that when the Senate wakes up and legislates—or refuses to legislate—we are pained and astonished and even indignant. We feel much as we would if some harmless character about the village store whom we all called "Colonel" for a joke, should insist some day on trying to command the local battalion—and should succeed. There are few things which can be more serious than for a "joke" to begin to take himself—or themselves—seriously. The "joke" is then on the rest of us.

THIS incident, however, should teach us that we must stop regarding a body, which has such great constitutional powers as the Senate, as a "joke." It is like using a loaded rifle as a "pointer." It may go off at a moment's notice with disastrous effect. If we are going to leave with the Senate the really immense powers which it possesses, we ought to make it worthy of those powers. We ought to create a House with the responsibility and the command of public respect and the share of public confidence which goes with such powers. Now it is my private opinion that we can never do that so long as we permit the Government—any Government—to appoint the Senators. No appointive body will ever be really trusted and steadily supported by the people in holding to its opinion in the face of the policy of our elected Commons. We go to great trouble to choose our Parliament. We may not always make a very good job of it; but we get into a tremendous fuss over it, and hold meetings, and nominate candidates, and abuse each other like pick-pockets, and even read dull newspaper articles, in our genuine endeavour to select the right men to rule over us. We think, in all sincerity, that we are performing the kingly act of self-government when we go to the polls and vote for our members of Parliament. We are laying down our public policy for the next four years.

AND here a little company of elderly gentlemen whom we have almost forgotten, and who have been little enough considered in the great national assemblage which has just been held, step quietly to the front and nullify the results of all our furious speech-making and leader-writing and voting. If a Senator had spoken at a public meeting, we would have ranked him a little lower than the local lawyer

and a little higher than the paid organizer. He would never have ranked with the candidate or been within shouting distance of a Minister. But, bless your heart, when our august new Parliament assembles at Ottawa, one Senator counts for as much as two members of the Commons; and the pledged policy of a newly-elected Government may be dumped into the ditch by the little-considered co-Members of Parliament who often owe their jobs to the pity of a successful Ministry for unfortunate friends who could not hold their seats in the Commons.

NOW there is no use deceiving ourselves. This sort of thing cannot go on. The large powers which are left with the present appointive Senate are only permitted to stay with them because they are practically never exercised. But a few such incidents as the slaughter of four Government measures at prorogation the other day will call public attention to the anomaly; and we shall have either a strengthening of the Senate or a clipping of its powers. At present, we think we have one-Chamber Government, with the outward form of two-Chamber Government to please those people who imagine we would go to wreck-and-ruin without it. But when we discover that we have two-Chamber Government in reality, we are mightily amazed and disgusted. Now it is perfectly obvious that we must have either one or the other. If we decide that one-Chamber Government is enough—

and show me a Second Chamber that is not a nuisance, and I will acknowledge the debt—then we should abolish the Senate. It costs too much for a "joke"; and it has a fatal habit of waking up which spoils it for an ornamental replica of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus.

BUT if we want two-Chamber Government, let us get it. Let us bring the Senate into contact with the people, who are the source of all political power—whether we like it or not—and make it a genuine co-ordinate member of our Parliamentary machine. We can create a very useful and widely-respected Senate in this country by causing its members to be elected for, say, two Parliaments—only half retiring at once—from large constituencies. The large constituency would bring out the large man; for it needs a man of some stature to be seen over a wide area. The squalid little "glad hand" artist would be automatically wiped out. Such a Senate would command public respect, and be amenable to public opinion. Being chosen by the people, it could stand sturdily up and fight for its ripe judgment against the will of the Lower House without everybody crying out in astonishment at its temerity. We would deliberately create, in such a Chamber, a body of men who would not be entirely subservient to the passion of a passing election; and we would endure with patience and even with gratitude their refusal to permit some the products of that momentary passion to pass into law until the people had had another chance to pronounce upon them. That would be two-Chamber Government. The present system is fair neither to the people, to the Government, to the Commons, nor to the Senators themselves.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

The Tragedy of the Titanic

ON the 10th of April the world's greatest steamship of all time steamed out of Southampton bound for New York. It was her first trip. At 10.25 Sunday night, April 14, the Titanic rammed head on into the broadside of an iceberg and sent a C. Q. D. message for help. Which was the beginning of the most incoherent complication of news that ever muddled through from the scene of a catastrophe to civilization all over the world.

The Titanic of the White Star line had long been talked about as the twentieth century triumph of shipbuilding. She was to carry 3,000 passengers, including a crew of 870. From bowsprit to rudder, representing nearly ten millions of dollars, she was a complicated world of inventions designed for the comfort of mankind. In her 66,000 tons of displacement and her total length nearly one-sixth of a mile, from topmast to the bottom of the lowest coal bunker, she was a cosmos of contrivances for the conquest of the sea. She was the product of an age when men and women who travel by sea demand that the voyage shall be infinitely more luxurious than travelling on the most superbly appointed train. And the 2,300 passengers aboard this "floating hotel" would have it to say in years to come that in the second week of April, 1912, they had been the first passenger list aboard this most tremendous of all steamships on a voyage from Southampton to New York.

But twenty-four hours after the Titanic struck an iceberg 450 miles off Cape Race, Nfld., newspaper extras that got on the streets by night reported—this much for certain from the colossal muddle of wireless messages, telegraph service and press despatches—that the Titanic had gone down seven hours after she struck the iceberg. After twelve hours of the most conflicting transmissions that ever bewildered the newspaper offices of at least three continents in half the languages known to the civilized world, it was reported as near the truth as might be, that of the 2,200 souls on board the Titanic, including the crew, less than nine hundred had been taken on board the Carpathia. Most of these were women and children picked up from the lifeboats. Some of the first-class passengers might have been saved—but who could tell? Magnates and millionaires, eminent men in many walks of life had gone down with the hundreds of others. The encouraging stories of earlier editions that all the passengers and the crew had been taken aboard the rescue steamers must have been the humane invention of some agency that feared to break to the world the news of a catastrophe almost as staggering as the story of an earthquake or some frightful reverse in war, and in some respects more tragic than either.

Up till midnight of Monday, twenty-six hours after the Titanic signalled C. Q. D., this is a summary of the various despatches that blundered through from wireless long after the wireless on the Titanic had ceased to work:

A message received early Monday morning at Cape Race and flashed to the Associated Press, gave the first news—inaccurate as to time—of the disaster:

"At 10.25 last night the steamship Titanic called C. Q. D. and reported having struck an iceberg. The steamer said that immediate assistance was required. Half an hour afterwards another message came reporting that they were sinking by the head and that women were being put off in lifeboats."

A bulletin from Montreal stated that at the Allan Line offices a message had been received from Capt. Gambrell, of the Virginian, stating that in response to the C. Q. D. message from the Titanic he was heading his boat full steam ahead with 900 passengers on board towards the Titanic. At 12.27 a.m. the Virginian got the last message from the Titanic—blurred and stuttering. The Titanic's wireless was out of business.

But before this two other vessels had got the C. Q. D. The Olympic, sister ship to the Titanic, distant 300 miles, eastward bound, and the Baltic, 30 miles further from the scene of the catastrophe than the Virginian, were already speeding to the helpless, isolated Titanic, known to be "sinking by the head."

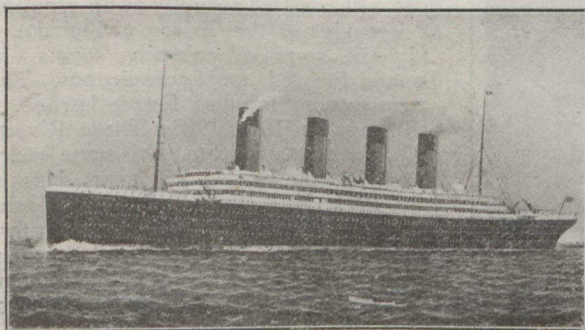
An unofficial despatch from Halifax stated that word had been received that the Titanic was afloat and was making her way towards Halifax.

Other hopeful messages were reported to have been received.

But later on Monday came a message declaring that out of a total of 2,200 souls on board only 675 had been saved. The Olympic's captain sent a message saying that of the passengers saved "nearly all were women and children." He reported that the steamer Carpathia had reached the scene of disaster at daybreak on Monday, but had found only boats and wreckage, that the Leyland liner California was remaining in the vicinity to make a search. Later the report of the number saved was changed to 866.

Such was the partial story of the impact on the world's nerves of this most appalling of all marine disasters in modern times. Almost diabolically complicated as the story is, many of the facts are almost malevolently simple. The Titanic was equipped with all the modern devices for the detection of icebergs either in a fog or by night, in storm or calm. Yet sudden as a crash of thunder, before many of the passengers were asleep, came

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S. S. "TITANIC."