

Stories of M. P.'s

REVIEWING a number of books which have been issued, dealing with parliamentary reminiscences, The London Times says:

Books about Parliament increase in number so rapidly that the future historian will be overwhelmed by his too ample material. He will be able not only to quote the speeches made on any given day, but to describe the appearance of the House, the cut and color of the orator's clothes, and, in some cases, the precise nature of the refreshment by which the flights of oratory were sustained. If he is anything of a philosopher, he will reflect that this multitude of books is a good and healthy sign of the popular interest taken in politics, and of the fascination exercised by the House over its members. No one who has ever sat in the House speaks ill of it afterwards. The drudgery that falls to the lot of the average private member, and the disappointments that vex the average official, are forgotten as soon as the time comes for writing a book. Mr. Duncan Schwann, a new member, waits neither for success nor for disappointment, but hastens to dedicate his first impressions "to the 5,545 electors of the Hyde Division of Cheshire who made it possible for this book to be written." That, we suppose, was not their sole purpose in electing Mr. Schwann; still, they have gained a genial and humorous book, and, no doubt, a satisfactory member. Mr. Griffith-Boscawen and Mr. Hope, who lost their seats make useful contributions to contemporary history; and Mr. Lucy continues the series of vivacious sketches for which he has long been famous.

The difficulties of writing recent history are almost insuperable; but Mr. Hope has adopted a method which raises his book above the level of a mere record. He has written a consecutive narrative of the events of the years 1900 and 1901, illustrated by excellent summaries of many of the speeches on either side, with occasional passages at full length. He takes, naturally, the Conservative point of view, and to that extent falls short of the judicial spirit, but the partiality against which he warns us in his preface is by no means, as serious as the author, perhaps, imagines. One lapse, indeed, may be noticed. Full justice is done to Mr. Morley's great speech on the Finance Bill of 1901, but Mr. Hope, by way of supplying an antidote, gives equal space to extracts from letters by Sir R. Giffen that appeared in our columns in January, 1902. Mr. Morley's speech was a parliamentary event; either the parliamentary reply, or none, should have been quoted. At any rate, the "big brother" should not be called upon to interfere. With this exception, for the author has not treated other controversies in the same way, the work, of which only the first volume is before us, may be cordially commended. Mr. Boscawen covers more ground, and writes more unreservedly. He has recorded the impressions made upon him at the time by events of which he was an eye-witness. He has not attempted to disguise his opinions as a Churchman, a Conservative and a Tariff Reformer, but he has tried at the same time to be fair to political opponents. The author more than makes good this modest claim to consideration. Like others, he has been a good party man; but party loyalty has not hindered the production of an extremely fair-minded book. There is no suggestion either of "Whig dogs," or of the dictum that "Tories are born bad and become worse." On the contrary, nothing could be more judicious than the passage on what is known as the "khaki election," or more generous than the estimate of Mr. Gladstone, dreaded as a source of danger, but wonderfully eloquent, earnestly resolved to do right all the world over, and courteous beyond the courtesy of modern politicians, even to the youngest member. "He sat through my maiden speech, which is more, than any of my own leaders did." It must be owned that Mr. Boscawen's leaders were not famous for sitting through speeches. On the whole, the author criticizes more often than he praises, and somehow produces the impression on the reader's mind that the collective wisdom of the House is tempered by a good deal of individual unwisdom. The second part of the book relates to "the downfall of the Unionist party," and is written with all the proverbial candour of friendship. For instance, the author says of Lord Salisbury's reconstructed ministry in 1900 that the filling up of the vacancies formed by the retirement of Sir M. White Ridley and Mr. Chaplin "proceeded on principles no more intelligible than those employed to create them. Failure in a previous office, or reputed failure, seemed to be one of the best qualifications for promotion; another was ignorance, or reputed ignorance, of the affairs of the office." "There were, however, some very good appointments," but it was "a government of great Unionist families, the Cecil, the Cavendishes, the Stanleys, Londonderrys; a sort of twentieth-century reproduction of the old Whig system in the eighteenth century." Mr. Boscawen himself became parliamentary charity commissioner; "a curious position which carries with it no salary, and the holder of which ceases to be a private member without becoming a member of the government." Later, when Mr. Balfour's Ministry was tottering to its fall, he speaks of its bankruptcy as complete, and, at the end of the book gives the only possible explanation of the last general election. But it must not be supposed that Mr. Boscawen is more generous to his opponents than to his friends. He has his own decided opinions, and

states them freely and plainly; but he has sat in the House for fourteen years, and if that experience does not teach a man that there are two sides to every question nothing ever will. Once, in his remarks on Chinese labor, he is betrayed into needless and amusing vehemence. He sees no justice at all in the Liberal contention, describes the whole agitation as a "discreditable party fraud" and a "deliberate lie," and suggests that Mr. Birrell, who certainly has had bad luck, is even now the victim of Nemesis. Whatever one's own views may be, this is hardly dignified language; still, it injures the book less than the persistent animus that has sometimes spoiled the work of greater historians; and from persistent animus Mr. Boscawen is commendably free. His book is readable and useful throughout; but the first part, if only because of the easier perspective, is better than the second.

Mr. Lucy's new book is precisely what the public has learned to expect from him. He is neither an old nor a new member, but has spent practically all his life in the gallery and the lobby of the House, with no elections to fear and no constituents to conciliate. After all these years, he is naturally familiar with all that concerns the House, and can describe with equal ease the last speech of Mr. Gladstone and the ventilating machinery. In fact, nothing parliamentary comes amiss to him. He passes from grave to gay and from great to small on almost every page, and seldom fails to interest. We have little fault to find, for it would not be fair to make the author responsible for a few rather obvious slips of the pen, such as the statement that Lord Peel is the second son of the great Sir Robert. Mr. Lucy, we are sure, knows better. But we cannot agree with him that Lord Beaconsfield, having left the Commons, often visited the Peers' Gallery of that House. We believe it was remarked at the time that he was never seen there. Nor can we agree with him that "the Cecils have for centuries enjoyed, in truth, honorably won, a fair share of the fat things of ministerial office." The fact is that from the Elizabethan to the Victorian period one hears very little indeed of the family. But we must not be ungrateful to the writer of a book that is full of anecdote and humorous observation. The "Prime Ministers whom I have known"—five of them—are followed by other eminent men, who have not been prime ministers, and by a few chapters on other subjects. The omission of these latter would have given the book a more definite character of its own, but would have involved the sacrifice, at any rate for the present, of many good stories, and of a choice collection of Irish and English "bulls," or rather, mixed metaphors. For these, Sir W. Hart Dyke may take the first prize with his gentleman who "went to the top of the tree and caught a very big fish," which suggests, though this is not Mr. Lucy's property, the oratorical red herring that came home to roost. But Mr. Lucy's more important chapters relate to the distinguished men whom he remembers. He has nothing very new to say of Mr. Gladstone, but he has put together, in a sort of sketch, a number of small facts which will give the reader an extraordinary, but not untrue, impression of Disraeli. That is Mr. Lucy's strong point. He is often compelled to be an impressionist, but his impressions, to the best of our belief, are for the most part accurate. For instance, without claiming personal knowledge of Sir Stafford Northcote, he assigns to him precisely his right place among politicians; and he has the happy knack of writing about living men freely, justly, and without offence. He will be able, as time goes on, to continue his series of portraits, for new men seem to be coming rapidly to the front; but there are others also, men of an earlier generation, of whom much might be said by one who remembers them in parliament. Plenty of memories and anecdotes surely gather round Lord Granville, Lord Cairns, the late Duke of Argyll, Robert Lowe, and their prominent contemporaries and colleagues. Gossip, anecdote, and observation have a real value. They are not exactly history, but historians will want them; and, what is more to the purpose, they will be read today.

MR. BERNARD SHAW ON SOCIALISM

A PUBLIC meeting of the Fabian Society was held at Queen's hall, when an address was delivered by Mr. G. Bernard Shaw on Socialism, says the London Times. Mr. Sidney Webb presided, and was supported by the executive committee of the society, and representatives of the Oxford University Fabian Society, the Cambridge University Fabian Society, the Oxford (Women's) University Fabian Group, the London University Fabian Society, and several provincial societies.

Mr. Shaw, who was given a cordial reception, said that immediately they began to speak about Socialism, our statesmen and politicians changed the subject in a most extraordinary way. Only the other day Lord Rosebery, confronted with the subject, suddenly began to talk about religion. (Laughter.) That was the last thing in the world they have expected him to speak about; it seemed only the other day that he was scandalizing the Nonconformist conscience by winning the Derby. (Laughter.) Continuing, Mr. Shaw said that the wished to address them as an ordinary citizen with political views. What was his personal grievance and why was he interested in Socialism? While he found that he could build his house for a sum which, if he borrowed the whole of it,

would necessitate the payment of £100 yearly for interest, yet he had to pay another £200 yearly for permission to occupy the particular piece of ground in London on which the house stood. If he had to pay that money to the nation, he should not so much mind, but what annoyed him was that he had to pay it to a person who, for all he knew, might not make the best use of it. The money might go to a man who was abandoned to all the temptations of an idle life, and yet when he raised that natural question he found politicians constantly changed the subject to free love. (Laughter.) As one who had gone about in places mostly frequented throughout Europe by people who lived largely on ground-rents, he could certify that a good deal of such money was spent in free love. (Laughter.) The centre and backbone of Socialism was this grievance of paying toll—a toll which aggregated about £630,000,000 per annum. It was a scandal to throw away that money every year largely in extravagance and luxury. The remedy was an extremely simple one, but to get the money back they—the professional and middle class—would have to take independent political action. The middle class was the only important body of the people of this country who had not so far used their votes to secure their own position. (Hear, hear.) At present these persons had no political existence. The Fabian Society meant going on with its work until there was no such thing in the country as an unearned increment. (Cheers.) That was what was called an attack on property. That was quite right. The gentlemen now attacking them were the representatives of that class whom they meant to "squeeze out" absolutely. For this purpose they had the weapon of taxation. It was a weapon which could be adjusted to go as far as they wanted to go, and to spare certain incomes, which the present Chancellor of the Exchequer might put down as unearned, but which they would put down as earned. Mr. Balfour was entirely wrong in stating at Birmingham recently that it was only production that mattered, not distribution. It was important that the wealth of the country should be better distributed, so as to provide food and clothing for the needy instead of its being used to buy motor-cars and yachts for the rich. (Cheers.) He suggested that one excellent way of employing the ground rents of London would be to pull down three-quarters of London and build it up better and more decently. (Hear, hear.) In defending municipal trading he said that every farthing borrowed for such enterprise had to be "paid back," whether the undertaking was successful or not. The same could not be said of private enterprise. Who could tell the number of companies placed in the hands of the official receiver from which the shareholders had never got a penny? Municipal enterprise, on the contrary, had never cheated the widow or left orphans destitute. (Cheers.) At the close of his address a number of questions were addressed to Mr. Shaw. One gentleman asked if he would stand for parliament, and in reply Mr. Shaw said:—"That depends on the amount of support you give me." (Cheers.)

The chairman, in answer to an inquiry as to whether the Fabian Society was in favor of the Right to Work Bill, remarked that the society had a better plan of its own which would be sprung in due time on the intelligent public. (Cheers.)

Fight for Empire

THE London Times, reviewing the book by Reginald W. Jeffrey, M.A., "The Thirteen Colonies of North America, 1497 to 1763," says:

The story of how the English came to dominate and possess the North American continent has a never-ending fascination. Nothing at one time could well have seemed more unlikely, for a full century before the sailing of the Mayflower the Spaniards had minutely examined the whole coast line from Mexico to Labrador, and such strides had they already made towards the permanent foundation of a Western empire that one institution of learning in the City of Mexico alone boasted a thousand pupils. Half a century later, but still fifty years before the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, the Spanish population in the New World was estimated at 160,000, or as many as all the English colonies contained at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Though later in starting, France, on the north, pushing westward by the St. Lawrence and the Lakes to the headwaters of the Mississippi and then downwards to the Gulf of Mexico, soon claimed a territory vastly larger than anything of which the English in America yet dreamed; and in this movement France was consciously actuated by imperial ambitions. It was the definite desire to make of New France a great French empire overseas which guided men like La Salle across the depth of the continent and moved them to endeavor so to hem in the English settlements with a chain of forts as to confine them for ever to a narrow strip of territory along the eastern coast.

Between the pomp and splendour of Spain on the south and the adventurous ambition of France on the north, the English colonies lived ploddingly, their chief ambition being no more than to make homes for themselves and to be permitted to develop in peace into prosperous trading communities. They were neither dominated by one mind nor inspired by any single purpose. From Virginia, whose early settlers were largely the "discontented of London," to the New England colonies, to which the settlers came "not out of new-fangledness or any such like giddy humor," but of stern purpose to live their "ideally holy and unhappy" lives apart from the interference of the authorities at home, the English settlements were isolated one from the other in space and sentiment; and they never succeeded in acting in concert against either France or Spain or in any undertaking that came to throwing off the rule of the mother country. The secret of the ultimate triumph of the English lies largely in that very self-containedness of each of the Thirteen Colonies. While France and Spain imagined dominions and erected the framework of empires, England made "plantations" only, where the men who were planted struck root and gripped the soil, establishing themselves against any pressure from the outside short of actual eradication. And when the time came for them to

spread, their outward march was irresistible.

Of Spain in Mr. Jeffrey's narrative we hear little, for it was not till long after colonial days that the spheres of Spain and the English-speaking people in America touched each other, except only temporarily on the southernmost edge of the English settlements. The struggle with France, however, is told, in summary, with a sufficient sense of proportion to give us all that is essential clearly and not without picturesqueness. The laborious beginnings of the English colonies themselves make complicated narratives compact of many trivial incidents—the hardships of life in a new country, Indian quarrels, religious intolerances, governors, competent and incompetent, and bickerings now between the different settlements, now with the authorities at home—which, within the limits of such a book as this, can only be sketched in outline and with more or less arbitrary selection of such episodes as seem most essential to the picture. We may be disposed to quarrel with some of the author's rather over-positive characterizations of various actors in the story, as of Richard Nicolls, "a man of wonderful power," of Francis Lovelace, "a courtier of the conventional type," or more especially of Andros, "a most capable administrator," whose "rule was particularly wise and moderate." We may have a suspicion at times that the author is not intimately familiar with the conditions of America in later years. There are passages, too, where he suffers his English to become careless, and we wish that he could have made up his mind whether the members of a family famous in colonial history spelled their name ultimately as Bradstreet or as Brodstreet. But these are not large blemishes in a conscientious piece of work, which should serve its purpose well as a stepping-stone to a more complete study of the period.

GUNNERS' DEAFNESS

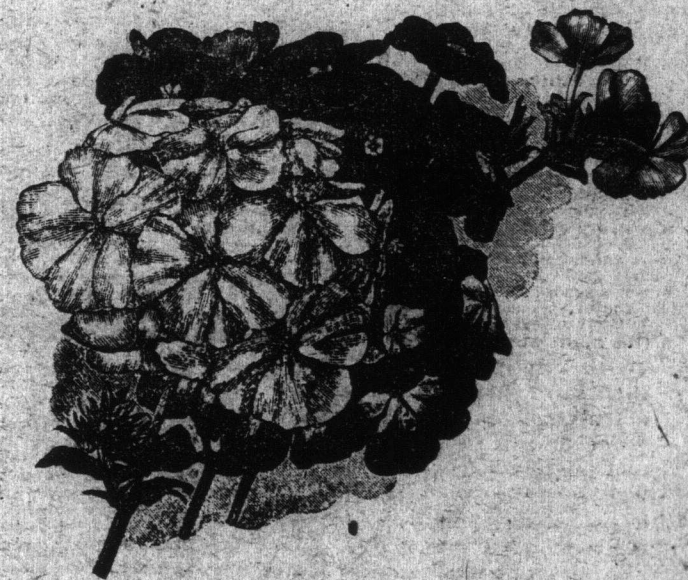
A British writer, quoted by the Army and Navy Journal, declares that 50 per cent. of the men in the British navy are more or less deaf as a result of heavy air shocks to which their ears are subjected by the firing of the big guns. Strange to say, however, this disastrous effect on the ears is sometimes greatest in the case of small guns. For instance, it has been found that the gun crews of the Dreadnought's twelve-inch guns suffer less from the "ring" than men handling three-pounders. This is explained by the protection resulting from the barbettes in which the former are enclosed, and which is not as a rule used for the three-pounder, and further by the fact that the men operating the twelve-inch gun are about nine times as far away from the muzzle as those of the three-pounder crew. To avoid the worst effects of these gun discharges on the ears it is recommended that a piece of rubber be kept between the teeth so that the mouth will be held open, and clay fibre plugs be used in the ears.

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TOMATOES



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