

the collective wisdom had undergone an astonishing alteration for the better. Canning was accustomed to say that the taste of the House of Commons was better than that of the individual within it whose taste might be considered the best. Certainly there is an astonishing quickness, delicacy, and in the long run, soundness of judgment in the opinion of the House. As correct taste is the great prevailing character of the assembly, so correct taste is the best qualification for a fair repute that any aspirant can possess. This is unfortunate, perhaps, but it is true. The tone of the House is pre-eminently that of gentlemen, and has the corresponding faults and merits. It shows great favour to inexperience; it shows great indignation at presumption; appearance, manner, chasteness of elocution, grace of expression, have there a greater weight than in any other public assembly in England, (the House of Lords scarcely excepted); and the respect paid to character even without talent, is far more constant and far more courteous than that which talent without character can ever obtain.

You often hear men out of the House say—"Oh, So and So cannot have much weight in Parliament, he declaims too much." Now it is utterly wrong to suppose that the House is averse to declamation. With a full and excited House declamation is incomparably more successful than reasoning; it is only in a thin House, on a question of business, that the correct taste we have referred to revolts instantly at all unnecessary ornament or unseasonable warmth.

"Remember," said an old and highly distinguished member to a young debutant of promise, "the character of the House is this: it is an assembly of men who have seen much; who have read sparingly. Address them not as deep thinkers, not as keen inquirers, not as ingenious speculators, not as ardent politicians; address them as men of the world." And here is one great reason why success in general is the work of years. To please men of the world, you must be a man of the world yourself, and this the young politician from Oxford or his travels must live longer in order to become. Intense study masters all other knowledge, but long experience only gives knowledge of the world.

It is too much the fashion for men out of the House to say—"Great information is sure of success!" Great information, if of the highest and most varied order, requires the nicest, the rarest skill in its management. Nothing the House so little forgives as a display of superiority greater than the occasion demands. Nothing it so despises as refined and new truths; it has a great dislike to philosophy; a great leaning to a bold common-place ingeniously put; to a well graced truism which a man of large information would be too apt to disdain. You are far more easily pardoned for falling below, than for soaring beyond the intellect of the House. When Mrs. Siddons was reading in her finest manner one of the finest passages in Milton to a delighted audience