

AT THE SIGN OF THE MAPLE

A DEPARTMENT MAINLY FOR WOMEN

FROM THE FRONT ROW

At the Opening of Parliament

By ESTELLE M. KERR

IT is all very well to be the wife of a Lieutenant-Governor or a Cabinet Minister on the day of the opening of Parliament, but it is even better to be a representative of the Press, if you want to see everything to the best advantage. So, armed with our magic passes, we sailed past rows of policemen and in to the senate gallery, while others more gorgeously arrayed and more intimately connected with the government, were forced to wait outside until two o'clock when those who had tickets for the reserved galleries were admitted. They bore down on us like a flock of beautiful birds alighting and surrounding us in the benches. Such costumes of satin and chiffon and lace, with gleaming white shoulders and flashing gems only equalled in splendor by the uniforms of their military escorts. When these were seated, those who had tickets which entitled them to standing room were allowed to enter, until every available space was filled while we sat smiling from the front row.

Meanwhile on the floor of the House the Members' wives were taking the seats which the Senators had vacated for them, and there the costumes were even livelier. The ladies strolled in, giving us ample time to criticize their costumes, and it amused me to listen to scraps of conversation from all sides. The lady behind me had been seated on the floor of the House the previous year, and bewailed the new government and its changes, the pretty girl to my right was interested only in the clothes, while an elderly lady nearby was so thrilled with the presence of royalty that she could speak of nothing else.

"This is the first time the royal ensign has floated from the tower above us," she said in an awed voice, "and after all, next to King Edward, he is quite the best! Yet their manners are so simple! They tell me at the state ball the other night that everyone was spoken to. This is the first time, too, that there have been two chairs on the throne; Lady Grey sat on the floor—I mean, of course, in an arm chair. And he is so good to his horses, they are exercised every day and were for a month before he arrived. I suppose they think of poor Princess Louise."

"Do look," remarked the former member's wife, "there's Mrs. A. sitting right beside Mrs. B., isn't that delightful? How they hate each other, those two, oh how they hate each other!"

"Here comes Mrs. P—" said the pretty girl, "what a perfectly beautiful bouquet! She really is awfully pretty until she starts to walk."

"That is Admiral D—. I'm just crazy about the navy, aren't you? Not individually or personally, but as a whole, there is something about them that simply—well *will* you look at that gown!"

"Isn't that band in the hair sweet. I wish I could wear one but it's frightfully unbecoming. Do you like this aigrette? Of course nothing looks well in the daytime. Don't you hate to get into evening dress at one o'clock? And an open carriage in this weather, but we considered ourselves lucky to get *any* thing!"

"Oh do look, Sir Wilfrid and Lady Laurier have just come in and they're standing there all alone. Why doesn't somebody go and speak to them. Oh thank goodness! He's shaking hands with his left hand—isn't he a dear! Sir James Scott is taking Lady Laurier to her seat. Sir Wilfrid can't even stay! And there's Mr. Borden standing to the right of the throne, just where Sir Wilfrid always stood."

"There's Miss E—, isn't she a beauty! She fell down the first time she was presented and made a great sensation—perhaps she did it on purpose! The first time she dined at Government House she kept on her gloves, but now she's engaged to the nicest man in town—well almost."

"I've been practicing my curtsy all morning, but it will be so crowded I know they won't give me time enough to do it properly. I wish they would let us wear court trains, but they take up too much room. There were 700 presentations an hour last year! Look at the plum-coloured robes on those church dignitaries, aren't they quite the most beautiful things here! Who are going to sit on that funny round bench near the throne?"

"The Supreme Court Judges. Here they come now; aren't those red dressing gowns the limit! They look like band men on top of a circus wagon."

"There's the Speaker, M. Landry. He's going to read something. I must say his French is better than his English, but it seems silly to read it twice. Now they're swearing in the new Senators. That's Rufus Pope and the other is George Taylor."

"I wish the Duke would hurry up and come. There's the first gun of the royal salute—isn't it exciting!"

"Here they come; now we must all stand; doesn't he look like King Edward!"

A silence fell as the Duke and Duchess appeared. The Duke wore his Field Marshall's uniform and led his lady by the hand in which he held his baton.

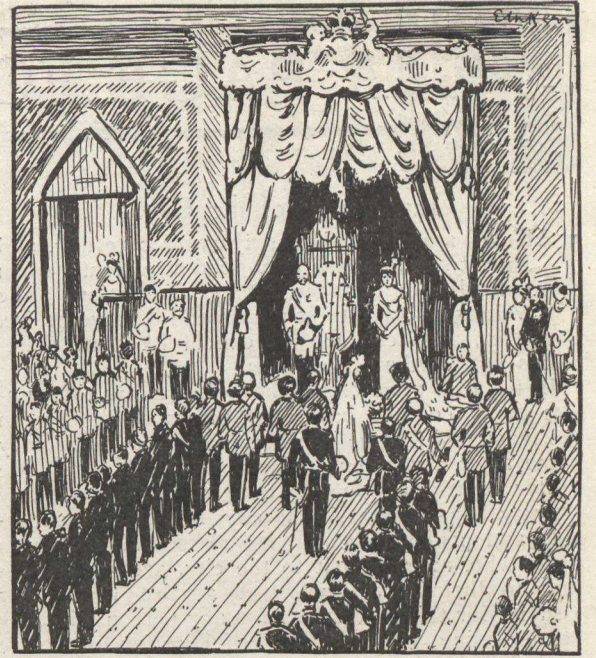
He preceded her in passing the barrier, then stepped aside most gracefully and again gave her his hand. The Duchess, too, was extremely graceful and looked very handsome in her magnificent gown and diamond tiara. Two small boys, Masters Sladen and Sherwood in red coats with white knee-breeches and stockings, carried her wonderful court train, and Miss Pelly in a lovely gown of gold tissue followed, and after curtsying to the throne, took up her position at the left.

The Duke then sat down, put on his hat and said, "Be seated."

The two little pages sat down on the steps, the gentlemen in waiting fell into their places and all who had seats

resumed them. Then M. Le Moine bowed to the throne, walked half way down the room and bowed again; at the barrier he made a third bow and departed to call the House of Commons. It seemed a long time before they appeared, but at last they came crowding in and stood at the back of the room behind the barrier. And very common they looked, too, in their rough tweeds. Major Lawler,

"There go the Gibson's, they're giving them arm-chairs right near the throne. What handsome uniforms the Lieutenant-Governors have!"



During the special presentations the Duke and Duchess stood.



A Corner in the Officers' Gallery.

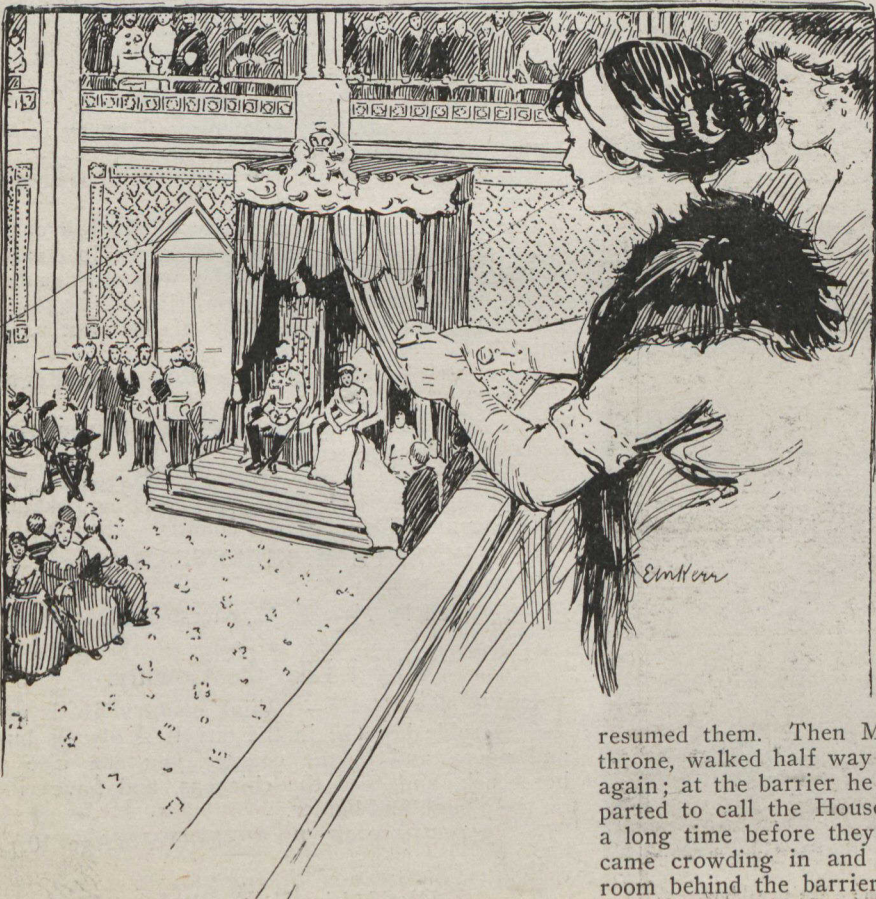
Military Secretary, presented the Duke with a manuscript, the Duchess handed her husband his glasses and he read the Speech from the Throne, first in English and then in French, after which the Duke and Duchess took their leave and the ladies after pausing to chat with each other gradually drifted on to the reception in the Speaker's chambers, leaving the Senators to resume the business of the day.

On Saturday night the scene in the Senate Chamber was even more brilliant. Every woman had saved her grandest gown for this occasion and the majority carried beautiful bouquets of flowers, while the veils and feathers worn by all, proved to be universally becoming. Again we took up our positions in the front row and saw at the best advantage the gay doings below.

The officers and their ladies had access to the galleries near us and so were spared any tedious waiting as they came last in order of presentation. The others could not come to the galleries until after they had been presented, but the Duke's thoughtfulness had provided waiting-rooms for the guests which everyone, especially those who had in previous years endured the long wait in the halls, appreciated very much.

The officers' gallery was a lovely sight with all the filmy tulle veils and dainty white feathers nodding from each feminine head. In the front row across from me, sat a pretty white-haired colonel's wife with a sheaf of tawny chrysanthemums that harmonized with the colorings of her gown; lying across the rail before her. Next to her a major's wife adjusted her gloves, while behind a couple of debutantes were taking their places. The white or very delicately-tinted gowns looked very much the prettiest with the tulle veils, but the more vivid colorings of deep rose, paddy green and turquoise blue varied the monotony of the scene.

The floor of the Senate was gay with military costumes, and the officers stood in four lines leading from the barrier to the throne. The Duke was dressed as before in his Field Marshall's uniform; the gown worn by the Duchess was ever more magnificent than that of the previous occasion, and her court train of white satin with flowers embossed in colored velvet and edged with sable, was a thing of great beauty. The presentations preceded with unusual rapidity; we timed them, sixteen to the minute—sometimes eighteen when no court trains intervened. The number of presentations was very large, but even when the numbers had passed the second thousand, the smile of the Duchess was extremely gracious.



As a Woman Saw Parliament Opened.