

Things have but little improved, if at all, since the time of Cobden. The ordinary elector fails to see that his representative deserves any gratitude or thanks for his services in Parliament. On the contrary, he thinks it is he who is entitled to some return for having helped his representative to a seat in the House of Commons in preference to another who was equally eager for the honour. The spectacle of so many men competing for the voluntary service of the State in the capacity of a Member of Parliament cannot but make the ordinary elector feel that he is conferring a favour on the particular candidate for whom he votes. This being their state of mind, constituents are naturally exacting. As the representative, on the other hand, desires to retain his seat, he cannot afford to ignore a letter from even the humblest and obscurest of the electors. The General Election may come round again with unexpected suddenness, bringing with it the day of reckoning for the Member. Then it is that the voter, however humble, however obscure, can help to make or mar the prospect of his return to St. Stephen's. But constituents will unreasonably persist in asking for things impossible. In the post-bag of the representative appointments are greatly in demand. There was a time when the M.P. had some patronage to distribute in the way of nominations to posts in the Customs, the Excise and the Inland Revenue, for which no examination was required, should the Party he supported be in power. But that good time, or bad, is gone and for ever. The throwing open of the Civil Service to competition has deprived the M.P. of this sort of small change, which he once was able to scatter among the electors so as to reward past services and secure future support. Now he has absolutely nothing in his gift, except, perhaps, a nomination for any vacant sub-post-office in his constituency. Yet numbers of the electors still imagine there are many comfortable posts which are to be had by their representatives merely for the saying of a word to some Minister. An example of what the M.P. has occasionally to put up with is found in the following blunt and abusive