

products and by-products go to waste for lack of capital and want of investigation.

There are many useful articles manufactured from worse material than some that is found among these islands. For instance, there would be considerable opportunities for the manufacture, on an extensive scale, of starch. The highest class of paper, which is made from bamboo, could be made on some of the larger islands, where the bamboos grow without any form of cultivation. Some of the islands teem with wood of unequalled quality and durability, fetching as high as seventy-five cents a foot in

foreign markets. There is no reason why cement could not be made right on the islands. There would be enough marl and limestone to do this if coal could be obtained cheaply enough.

It would be found somewhat difficult to establish political relationship. Although much favourable comment on this subject will be heard among the islanders of certain classes, when it actually comes to the cutting of the painter from the old boat which has piloted them through the centuries of their existence there will be many who will cling to the old hull, despite its weaknesses and failures.

With the possibility of connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific by cutting through the Isthmus of Panama, the Island of Jamaica will occupy one of the most strategic naval positions. It is for this reason chiefly that the question of annexation would probably not find favour with the naval authorities of Great Britain. There are other islands which, perhaps, could be more readily annexed if the price were paid. Without attempting to be humorous on this important subject, perhaps England would sell some of her smaller West Indian possessions for a good, reliable Dreadnought.

BRITAIN'S FOREIGN MINISTER

By T. P. O'CONNOR*

AN IMPRESSIVE SPEECH.

WHEN Sir Edward Grey stood up last week to make the case for the Government, he must have felt a little thrill of fright and of satisfaction. He looks the most composed speaker you ever heard; and yet he is a highly nervous one. Watch him closely, especially in those opening moments when he has yet to get hold of his audience and command of himself; and you will see traces of nerves in a score of little things. For one thing, his hands are never quiet. At one moment they are grasping the lapels of his coat; then they rush down to his trousers pockets; then one of them is left in one of his trousers pockets while the other seeks his watch chain, and so they go on, eloquent though mute witnesses of all the internal emotion that is hidden beneath the frigid face, the cold even voice, and the composed manner.

These little self-betrays, however, are not palpable to the majority of Sir Edward Grey's listeners; they are obsessed by the appearance of perfect, detached, Olympian calm. Indeed from the first moment almost that Sir Edward Grey rises to his feet to his last word, there seems to come over the House of Commons a strange spell. Now and then there is a cheer; but not often even that. The House listens in that rapt and almost thrilling silence—if I may use the contradiction—which is infinitely more impressive and to the true orator more flattering than the loudest cheers. It means that the nerves of the House have been so stirred to the very innermost recesses that there is no time or thought for anything but absorbed attention; jealous listening to every word and phrase.

HIS INFLUENCE

What is the strange secret of this man's immense influence and power as a speaker? There are doubtless some aids from historic position. Sir Edward Grey belongs to one of the most ancient and most historic of English governing families. Prouder in their simple baronetcy than if they were called dukes or marquises, they represent that sturdy squiresarchical class who have been for centuries the hereditary law-makers and rulers of England. In my day there was another Grey among the chief colleagues of Palmerston; and though I am not sure of it, I have little doubt that a Grey was in the Civil Wars and, I should expect, on the side of Hampden and the other advocates of the rights of the nation against the prerogatives of the sovereign.

And Sir Edward Grey is in every inch of him the very embodiment of his class. The figure, slight, agile, that of a well-trained athlete, without an ounce of superfluous flesh, is one you would associate with the young university man who rowed stroke in the boat race; the nose has the aquiline curve of that sturdy Norman race which now for nearly a thousand years has preserved its leadership of the race it conquered at the Battle of Hastings; and the high cheek bones, the ruddy cheek, the cold reserve of the air—all these things make up the typical English aristocrat as he has figured in every scene of English political life. You might well imagine that Sir Edward Grey was cunningly fashioned by Nature in one of her most artistic moods to be the speaking and unmistakable embodiment of a class so marked in its characteristics, enduring in its traits, as that of the governing English squiresarchy.

A TYPICAL ARISTOCRAT

It is one of the characteristics of this class that it should at once be modest and proud. No man has ever heard from the thin, well-chiseled lips of Sir Edward Grey, I am sure, a word that might be

regarded as even an approach to egotism or self-glorification. Such a thing as a boast, or perhaps even a personal allusion, might be regarded by a man of such a temperament and of this class as an unmistakable offence against good manners. In all the speeches he has made there is not to be found a trace of self-consciousness, or arrogance, or self-satisfaction. And yet few men, I am sure, are prouder. He is proud enough, indeed, to regard every personal success, however great, as not worth troubling about, and certainly as not worth purchasing by any sacrifice of principle.

Emphatically Sir Edward Grey is a straight man. Indeed the great defect of his character, up to a few years ago, and the permanent obstacle to his political success was his indifference to personal success. His friends of that earlier epoch of his life used to quote a saying of his: "I am told that the ball is at my feet, but I don't care to kick it." I don't know when the transformation took place; perhaps it was when as Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs under Lord Rosebery he first realised all the momentous work that lay before the Foreign Minister of this great country. At all events, in recent years Sir Edward Grey has worked hard, and has even forced himself into a prominent position in the councils of his party.

METHODS OF WORK

And yet even to-day he remains in the House of Commons, but to a certain extent, not of it. He is never to be found on the benches of the House unless when he has some questions to answer, or when his department is under discussion. When the division comes, he seems to rise up from the ground, and to pass, spectre-like, through the throng of members that are passing through the turnstiles to record their votes. Even then he is in the lobby and not of it. He seldom stops to speak to anybody, does not, like Gladstone, sit down at a table and hurry off a letter, but passes quickly, alertly, and silently, as if he wanted to get out as fast as he can.

AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE

I am told that Sir Edward Grey's working day is sometimes seventeen or eighteen hours. And thus it is that he has to rush back to the Foreign Office or to his room in the House of Commons instead of loitering in one of the smoke rooms, or even listening lazily to the debates on the floor of the House. But apart from this excellent reason for his detachment from the ordinary life of the House of Commons, Sir Edward Grey's absence from its comradeship and its common life is due to disposition. Shy and reserved except to intimates, taciturn unless when his heart is opened by sympathetic surroundings, Sir Edward Grey is little fitted for any of the hail-fellow-well-met spirits of the House of Commons.

Other ministers also absent themselves from the House except when their work is being discussed; but most of them do drop in now and then, listen absent-mindedly, of course, but listen to what is going on; then drop out again, and drop into the smoke-room, and have a chat with the rank and file. But Grey never. The smoke-room has never known him; I have never seen him dine even in the House of Commons, though I have no doubt he does so occasionally, and so far as the general work of the House of Commons is concerned, he seems to be as remote from it as if he were not of the assembly at all. If he were not so unmistakable and distinctive a personality, and if he had not to answer questions almost daily, it is possible he might not be known even by sight to the majority of his fellow-members.

One explanation of this detachment is, of course

the terrible burden of his office. I remember once after a dinner party at Lord Rosebery's house being brought by the host into a small room off the hall, and there I saw a wild array of dispatch-boxes—it looked to me as though there were a score of them—some black, some red, like so many jewel cases; and Lord Rosebery told me that these dispatch-boxes had come to his house during the short period since he and his guests had sat down to dinner. If that were the tale of three hours of an evening, one could guess what was the total of a whole day. And thus it is that our Foreign Secretaries, if they attend to their work, have to be the busiest men in this country of hard workers.

STYLE OF SPEAKING

To return to his speaking; if I am asked to explain its extraordinary power, I should say that it was mainly due to its perfection of style. One might be tempted to say at first sight that there was a complete absence of impressive diction. Sir Edward Grey utters no *mots*, is incapable of epigram, would probably distrust any phrase which was alliterative, as defective either in taste or in sense. It is difficult, when he has sat down, to recall at once a single one of the phrases he has used. And you might be disposed to regret that you did not carry away with you some such thrilling, burning or noble phrase as is to be found in almost every speech that Lord Morley utters.

However, when you think it over, you will discover that this absence of art is a case of that highest art—the art which conceals itself. I would compare Sir Edward Grey's speech to the speech of the ordinary, and above all the ornate, orator, as I would the prose of Addison or Goldsmith to the prose of Carlyle or of Macaulay. The perfect naturalness, the inimitableness, and the simplicity of the language are part of the power, are the real secret of the immense impressiveness.

Or shall I take another literary example, and say that when Sir Edward Grey speaks, you have the same sense as when you read "Robinson Crusoe," the very simplicity of the language for the moment kills all spirit of criticism, you are so much under the spell of the story that you forget the great story-teller who is behind it.

A QUESTION

And yet—and yet—I often ask myself after Sir Edward Grey has sat down, and when I reflect enough to get away from my first impression, whether any story can be so perfect as he makes it to appear. I ask myself whether, after all, it is not like "Robinson Crusoe"—fiction so deftly handled as to appear more real than reality. Perhaps I am a little prejudiced, for I differ profoundly from many of Sir Edward Grey's points of view; his gospel is not mine. And, therefore, I never find myself able to accept what he has said till I have had time to think over it and examine and analyse it, and probe to the realities which underlie the beautiful, simple, stately sentences.

There are those who think his foreign policy is perilous, and a failure in important points. But I do not stop to discuss these differences of opinion; it is the man and his personality that I discuss in these non-partisan columns, not his policy. And I therefore wind up this description of him as an orator, by saying that he is, to my mind, the most perfect official speaker I have ever heard. The reticence and the frankness, the dignity and the self-restraint, the courage, and the polite but stern defiance to all powers and principalities which should be the equipment of the ideal British Minister for Foreign Affairs, have never found, in my time at least, an exponent more perfect than the present Foreign Minister.

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