

clares him as he actually is, to be "a constitutional phenomenon of the first importance," and "an autocrat of the first magnitude"(1). But one would scarcely gather from his, Mr. Wilson's, pages an adequate conception of his powers. For that we must look to Miss Follett's book, to which I have already referred, and of which so good an authority as Dr. Bushnell Hart has expressed an opinion that it is the best book he knows of on the workings of Congressional institutions since 1779(m). No doubt as Mr. Wilson says, "Mr. Speaker's powers must vary with the character of Mr. Speaker," and at times of great excitement Congress may, as the New York Evening Post, of October 22nd, 1899, expressed it,—referring to the way in which Speaker Reed's policy in regard to the Spanish war and expansion had been over-ridden by the House of Representatives, "roll on its way over the prostrate form of the Speaker." "The theory of the Speaker as an American Prime Minister," it added, "did not contemplate times of storm and stress. In the ordinary routine work of Congress the conception of the Speaker as an absolute dictator of legislation was plausible enough." With these reservations I will summarise what we learn about this official from Miss Follett's pages.

The Speaker of the House of Commons at Ottawa or at Westminster, as he steps into the chair is expected to shake from him all party ties, and to administer parliamentary law with absolute impartiality to friends and foes alike. Miss Follett cannot go further than to say, that "on occasions when nothing is to be gained by partisanship, the Speaker of the House of Representatives attempts to keep up the fiction of the Speaker as a parliamentary officer." He is an avowed partisan, and is not only allowed but expected to use his position to advance party interests. But matters have gone much farther than this. We read: "The idea which Carlisle, Reed, and Crisp," (Speakers from 1885 to the time of the publication of Miss Follett's book), "have sought to establish is that of a Speaker with a legislative

---

(1) Congressional Government, p. 106.

(m) Private letter to which reference is permitted.