SIDELIGHTS ON NOTABLE PEOPLE

BY THE MARQUISE DE FONTENOY

EVERY adult peer and peeress entitled to attend the coronation of King George next June has received from the leading theatrical costumer in London a circular offering to hire out to them the necessary robes for the ceremony. These are of velvet, caped with miniver, and barred with ermine, the number of the ermine bars being graduated according to the wearer's rank in the peerage. The length of the trains of these robes varies from two yards in the case of a duchess, to only one yard for a mere baroness, such as the new Lady Decies, who was until so recently Miss Vivien Gould.

King Edward created more than a hundred peers during his nine years' reign, and King George has already a dozen creations of peers to his credit. None of these has coronation robes, while many of the peers and peeresses who had coronation robes made for the coronation of Edward VII. have undoubtedly already turned them to other purposes, or else converted them into cash.

To all of these the offer contained in the London theatrical costumer's circular will prove very attractive. He makes no secret of the fact that he can subsequently either sell them, or hire them out for stage purposes, and for those pageants, reviving historic scenes, that are so constantly being organized for the celebration of national anniversaries. When peers and peeresses in moderate circumstances are called upon to choose between the hiring of coronation robes at a cost of perhaps $50, and the purchase thereof at an expense of about a thousand dollars, they will naturally prefer the costumer's proposition. Thus financial exigencies will bring about the invasion of the coronation ceremony in a manner calculated to affect the solemnity of the latter.

Capt. the Hon. Dudley Carleton, who has been frequently reported engaged to this or that American heiress, is now about to wed one of his countrywomen. His bride is not, however, his former fiancee, the lovely Violet Monckton, daughter of Lord Galway, and who, through the bequest of an uncle, became the owner of valuable estates in Surrey, and an income of $100,000 a year. It is because she jilted him, that he went to America for consolation. She is now the wife of Capt. G. H. Skeffington-Smyth. The girl whom Capt. Carleton, future Lord Dorchester, is about to wed, is the only daughter of Lord De Blaquiere, hereditary great alnager of Ireland. Lady De Blaquiere is the daughter of George Desbarets, of Montreal, while a branch of his own family has been established in the Dominion for nearly 100 years.

Lord De Blaquiere may be said to owe his peerage to the conviviality of his great-grandfather. The latter, after being relieved of the secretaryship for Ireland, remained on in Dublin, first as a speculator in political corruption, and then as one of the agents employed by Lord Castlereagh and his colleagues, to bring about the act of union between England and Ireland.

John De Blaquiere, as he was then, at a dinner party given by Lord Castlereagh, organized with the sanction of that nobleman a scheme whereby 30 or 40 members of the Irish House of Commons should until the act passed, always dine together in one of the committee-rooms, so as to be ever on hand for any emergency that might arise. This combination developed into a fighting confederacy, each member of which was pledged to pick a quarrel, or fight a duel, with some anti-Unionist. After the act of union had been passed, largely through the instrumentality of John De Blaquiere, he was by way of reward nominated by Lord Cornwallis, and by Lord Castlereagh for an Irish peerage, Lord Cornwallis' written recommendation to the king running as follows: "For having kept the friends of the union together by his great conviviality."

Other acknowledgments of his services consisted in a pension of $10,000 per annum, and the hereditary office of great alnager of Ireland, which in those days was worth $20,000 a year, but is now purely honorary.

Count Patrick O'Brien de Lassy was condemned to penal servitude for life at St. Petersburg last week instead of being sentenced to death, for having brought about the murder of his wife's brother, Count Vassili Bouturlin, because capital punishment in ordinary criminal cases has been abolished in Russia ever since the reign of Catherine the Great.

While it does not exist in civil procedure, it is retained for military and naval offences, and the Muscovite authorities are enabled to send nihilists to the scaffold, because political offenders, particularly those who have been concerned in nihilist outrages, are tried, not by the ordinary tribunals, but by courts martial, as being beyond the pale of the law.

When Vera Sassaulitch was tried by the ordinary courts for shooting and dangerously wounding Gen. Trepoff, prefect of the police of St. Petersburg, her trial resulted in an acquittal, and the Russian Government, finding itself powerless to deal with nihilist outrages by means of criminal courts, then and there arranged that not only all disturbed districts should be subjected to military law, but that political offences, especially those of a nihilist nature, should be dealt with by courts martial.

It is in this fashion that so many assassins and would-be assassins of members of the imperial family, of statesmen, of high dignitaries of the realm, and of officials of one kind and another have be n sent to the gallows.

Lord and Lady Litchfield's daughter, Lady Mabel Anson, who was to have married Sir Victor Mackenzie, and who has twice had the wedding postponed, has now broken off the engagement altogether. Sir Victor Mackenzie is the grandson and heir of old Sir James Mackenzie, who was the founder and original backer of the Marlborough Club, at the instance of King Edward, who accorded him much friendship.

He used to be known in the royal entourage by the name of "the Benefactor," owing to his readiness to extricate his friends from financial worries and difficulties. This excited the resentment of his eldest son, and it was owing to the bad feeling engendered thereby between the two, that when Sir James died, it was found that he had bequeathed Glen Muick, and almost every bit of his property, to his eldest son Allan's eldest son, then a minor, leaving Sir Allan and his sister out in the cold. Indeed, so badly was Allan treated in his father's will that a small fortune was spent in endeavoring to upset it, but without success. Sir Allan having to content himself with a very small income, while all the revenues of the estate accumulated in the hands of trustees, for the benefit of his eldest son.

This eldest son, shortly after obtaining a commission in the Horse Guards, volunteered for service on the west coast of Africa, and was killed in Nigeria. So that on Sir Allan's death it was the second of his sons, Victor, who succeeded to the money and estates.

Sir James Mackenzie was an extraordinary character, and in spite of his absurb pretensions to descent from the old Mackenzies of Kintail, was an entirely self-made man. He had gone out to India as a poor boy, and made a fortune in trade—hats and indigo—before returning home to buy Glen Muick, one of the very few big country estates in the immediate vicinity of Balmoral.

Shortly before he died, Sir James added a holograph codicil to his will, emphasizing the fact that he had been treated in a neighborly fashion by Queen Victoria and her family.

The battle of the Spurs has resulted in the victory of Lord Grey de Ruthyn and of Lord Loudoun, each of whom is to carry one of the pair of historic gold spurs compromised in the regalia at the coronation of King George. Lord Loudoun bore them alone at the coronation of Edward VII. He and his wife have just given a big ball at Loudoun Castle in honor of the coming of age of his nephew and heir, Reginald Rawdon Hastings, who last fall completed his education at Christ Church, Oxford.

It was at Loudoun Castle that the treaty of union between England and Ireland was signed, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, under a great yew tree, just outside the windows of the breakfast-room, and among the many treasures of art and history preserved at the castle is the actual pen used to sign this treaty, which if Prime Minister Asquith has his way is on the eve of being repealed.

Lord Loudoun inherited his earldom from his mother, who was a peeress in her own right. She was married to Charles Frederick Clifton, of Clifton in Lancaster, who assumed by act of Parliament the surname and arms of Abney Hastings, in compliance with the conditions of the will of Sir Charles Abney Hastings, an uncle of the late Lady Loudoun, and who had bequeathed to her and to her husband his estates.

The late Lady Loudoun, who possessed the baronies of Tarrinzean, of Mauchline, of Hungerford, of De Moleyns, of Hastings de Hastings and of Botreaux—the latter dating from February, 1367—in her own right, died in 1871, whereupon her eldest son succeeded to her earldom and to her many baronies, while his father remained a commoner, as plain Mr. Abney Hastings, for another six years, when he was raised to the peerage, on the nomination of Lord Beaconsfield, as Lord Donnington.

Lady Loudoun, at her death, gave directions that her right hand should be severed at the wrist and buried in the park of Donnington, on the banks of the Trent, and within sight of the windows of Donnington, her favorite residence, which has now passed out of the possession of the family, owing to its having been made uninhabitable, like the Duke of Sutherland's magnificent place at Trenton, by the poisoning of the waters of the Trent through the potteries and factories of one kind and another situated on its banks.

Nobody, not even the present Lord Loudoun, ventured to inquire of his father, the late Lord Donnington, the meaning of this direction of the late Lady Loudoun for the severance of her right hand at the wrist and its burial apart from her body. It has now been transferred from Donnington to Loudoun.

But it is recalled that her grandfather, the first and most famous of the Marquises of Hastings, constable of the Tower of London and governor-general of India, while on the way home from Calcutta, on the completion of his term of office, died at Malta. Finding that it was impossible that his body should be conveyed home for burial, he directed that his right hand should be cut off at the wrist and carried back to his wife, who was awaiting him, with her children, at Loudoun Castle in Scotland.

Fourteen years later, when his widow lay dying at Loudoun Castle, her daughter, Lady Sophia, afterwards Marchioness of Bute, and grandmother of the present Marquis of that ilk, sent a little note to the minister of the parish. In it she asked him to go himself to the famliy vault in Loudoun kirk and to fetch thence a small steel box which he was asked to bring to her without any delay, delivering it into her own hands.

The minister in question was the late Rev. Dr. Norman MacLeod, for nearly half a century Queen Victoria's principal Scottish chaplain, spiritual adviser, and friend, but then a young man. He did Lady Sophia's bidding and carried the little box to the bed of the dying Marchioness of Hastings, where it remained until she breathed her last two days later with her right hand resting on it. It was inclosed in her coffin in accordance with her antemortem directions, which intimated that it contained her husband's severed right hand.

There have been several other instances in this family of which Lord Loudoun is the chief of the severance of hands after death for separate burial, and so far as I am aware this is the only great house of the British, or rather I should say Scotch, aristocracy where this strange custom prevails.

BALFOUR'S REPLY

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thorny questions, there are some things which we cannot do, and which we will not do, and which if they be done must be done over our heads. (Opposition cheers.)

"No Compromise."

"I do not attempt to measure the power either of the majority in this House or of the advisers of the crown. I make no criticism at this stage of any machine by which their policy can be forced on the country or upon a minority, which, let me remind them, is but very slightly a minority (Opposition cheers), among the people of these isles. But I say, sir, and I say it I think for all my friends—certainly for myself—I could never be responsible by falling in with any agreement which should make me have part or lot in forcing—as I believe it would be—upon the people of this country a change in their constitution which they do not desire. (Opposition cheers and Ministerial laughter.) They do desire, I agree, a change in the existing relations between the two houses. (Ministerial cheers.) They do desire a modification of the constitution of the House of Lords, I agree. (Ministerial cheers.) They do not desire that this House and a ministry which controls this House should use these great changes as an instrument of revolution (Opposition cheers), on which people are not to be consulted, about which the people know nothing, and that they should do so not at the bidding of a real majority in this House, but at the bidding of what, after all, is an imported majority, coming from Ireland, who openly announce how little they care for your institutions provided they get their own way with regard to a particular measure. (Opposition cheers.) Much as I desire peace, anxious as I am to insure it, gladly as I would do much in the way of compromise, there are some issues so great that no compromise is possible. (Opposition and Ministerial cheers.) No compromise. (Loud and continued Opposition and Ministerial cheers.) If you are going to use the desire of this country to have some change in the relations between the two Houses as an instrument for getting something which they do not desire, then I say we shall have no part or lot with your plan. We should consider ourselves disgraced for ever if we did. (Loud Opposition cheers.)

ASQUITH'S SPEECH

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and his friends the principles of the Jacobins and the Napoleons, and to substitute them for the well-established doctrines of the English constitution. That is what Toryism has come to. (Ministerial cheers.) Having laid down a proposition which I think, with a few exceptions, will be universally accepted, let me now make an admission. No one pretends that the correspondence between any given judgment of any House of Commons and that of the electorate, is invariably exact. The House of Commons may have outstayed—we have Houses of Commons which did—what is called the mandate given to them by the electorate. The House of Commons may pass a measure by a majority small in number and obviously accidental in its composition. The House of Commons may from the crush of business or through haste in procedure pass a measure in an imperfect and incomplete, even a misleading form. All these are risks which I certainly admit ought to be guarded against. And we have guarded against them all.

The Effect of Shorter Parliaments.

In the first place, we propose to shorten the legal duration of Parliament from seven years to five, which will probably in practice mean an actual legislative and working term of four years. What will be the effect of that? It will secure that your House of Commons for the time being is always either fresh from the polls which gave it its authority, or—and this is an equally effective check—is looking forward in the near future to the polls at which it will have to render an account of its stewardship. Further, the delay of three sessions and two years which the suspensory veto of the House of Lords has interposed precludes the possibility—I say it with the utmost assurance—of covertly or arbitrarily smuggling in measures which defy and are condemned by popular opinion, while at the same time it assures ample opportunity for the reconsideration and revision of hasty or slovenly legislation. Lastly, it is as certain as daylight that in 99 cases out of 100 a new House of Commons would reverse legislation which had been shown by the general election to be opposed to the will of the mass of the electorate. These arguments were used last year, and, as I think, have never been adequately met. But there are new aspects of the situation which have changed its character since April last. Let me remind the House what happened. The lamented death of our late beloved sovereign early in May was followed by a political truce, and by the setting up and the sitting of the constitutional conference. I will say of that conference once more today what I have said before, that it was an honest and sustained attempt, carried on on both sides with goodwill and patience, and with infinite industry, to find a common ground of agreement. I cannot here refrain from offering a tribute of gratitude and of regret to the memory of one of the members of the conference whom, to the great loss of the state, an untimely death has taken from us. During the weeks and indeed the months I sat at the same table with Lord Cawdor I learned to appreciate his high qualities, and there is none of my colleagues who took part in its deliberations, on whichever side they sit, who will not join with me in acknowledging the debt we owed to his fine temper, his sound judgment, his masculine good sense.

The Emergence of the Referendum.

But, sir, the conference failed, and the conflict was resumed. But it was resumed, so far as our opponents and critics were concerned, from a somewhat different standpoint, and with an almost complete range of weapons. The whole-hearted defence of the House of Lords as an ideal second chamber, with which we were all so familiar in January of last year, was in December little heard of if it was heard of at all. Backwoodsmen were cooped up in their fastnesses. (Ministerial laughter.) They were no longer allowed a free run of the platform. A new model, I might say several new models, of a second chamber, in which the hereditary principle was to be copiously diluted or disguised, were hastily run up. My noble friend, Lord Rosebery, went about the country declaring that the House of Lords was dead. (Ministerial laughter.) All the schemes proposed, so far as I have seen and understand them, would give us a second chamber still predominantly of one party, and resting on no broad or real basis of popular authority. A still more startling change was the sudden emergence of an integral part of the programme of the Unionist party of the referendum. (Ministerial laughter.) I repeat what I said last year—I am not going to rule out the referendum as under conceivable conditions a possible practical expedient for dealing with some exceptional cases. But the proposals recently put forward are that the referendum is to be a normal part of our regular constitutional machine. (Unionist cries of "No, no.") It was first put forward as a possible solution of deadlocks between the two Houses of Parliament, but it very soon developed into a scheme which would apply not only to deadlocks—in which case, I may remark, it would obviously only be exercisable as against Liberal measures—but any measure of importance. That is how I understand it, but I am anxious for further light. (Ministerial laughter.) It would be applicable, for instance, to the budget when there was ground—to be ascertained by some wholly defined process—for believing that it does not accord with the popular will.

More Revolutionary Than the Bill.

I do not know whether I have adequately and fairly represented the present development of this scheme, but if I am right a scheme of this kind may work well enough—though I believe there is a great difference of opinion about that—it may work well enough in a small country like Switzerland, where the ministers act as clerks, and where the registrars are the electorate of the country. But to apply it to conditions like ours would be infinitely more revolutionary than anything contained in this bill, and it is nothing more nor less than to undermine and overthrow the whole structure of representative government. (Ministerial cheers.) I am not exaggerating when I say it would reduce our general elections to a sham parade, and it would degrade the House of Commons to the level of a talking club. (Renewed Ministerial cheers.) Our system of representation has its drawbacks, I fully admit. It has its drawbacks in the uneven distribution of the franchise—(Ministerial cheers)—in the multiplication of qualifications, in inequality of electoral areas—(Opposition cheers and counter Ministerial cheers.) We suffer quite as much as you do from that. And it has its drawbacks in the unduly long life of the House of Commons. In all these respects it will be made more perfect than it is. But even as it is, it is the best and most practical expedient yet devised for ascertaining and recording and embodying in law the will of the people. (Ministerial cheers.) That is the root principle, the governing purpose, the aim, and the goal of democratic institutions. It is today habitually thwarted, it is even frustrated for years by the veto of an non-representative authority. And we present this bill to the House once more, approved as it has now been seen by the people of this country, as the first and the most urgent step to its more perfect attainment. (Loud Ministerial cheers.)

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NATURAL MEASURES.

The first "natural measurement" to which the memory naturally recurs is the hand, four inches, employed in determining the height of horses. This measure is, of course, derived from the breadth of the palm, and it has become so well fixed in popular esteem that it is unlikely it will ever be superseded.

Another popular natural measure is the pace, and probably every countryman who has had to do with land has used it. The usual method is to stride off, taking as long steps as possible calling each pace a yard.

A natural measure much employed by a dressmaker is the yard. It represents the arm measurement of King Henry I., which was thirty-six inches; and it was he who ordained that the length of his own arm should be the standard yard of cloth measure—an ordinance that has been preserved in British commerce to this day.

For many hundreds of years there was employed the measure of the forearm, from point of elbow to tip of middle finger. This was the cubit of the Bible.

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