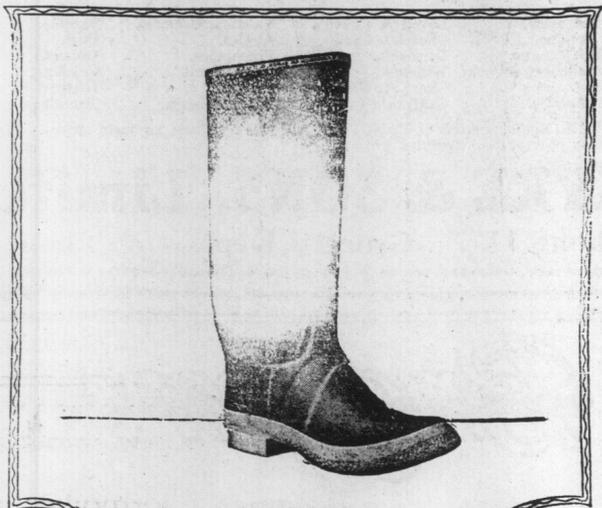


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"Black Rod."

ALL ABOUT THE DUTIES OF A PICTURESQUE AND POWERFUL POLITICAL OFFICIAL.

One of the most imperious of Parliamentary officials is the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, a Crown appointment which fell vacant through the death of Admiral Sir H. F. Stephenson, and is now to be filled by Lieut.-Col. Sir William Pulteney, D.S.O.

Black Rod derives his title from the wand, surmounted by a gold lion, which he carries instead of the mace, and this is the outward symbol of all the authority he exercises, not only in the House of Lords, but in the House of Commons as well.

The Door is Barred.

One of his duties is to summon the Members of Parliament whenever their attendance is required in the House of Lords. For this purpose he proceeds to the House of Commons, carrying his staff of office, and as he crosses the Lobby the watchful attendants give warning of his approach by crying aloud, "Black Rod!" Thereupon the doorkeeper rushes within the passage leading to the House, and closes behind him the heavy oak door, which he bolts and bars.

When Black Rod reaches the entrance he knocks thrice at the door, and then finds himself confronted by a face peering through an aperture made by drawing a slide.

Having announced his name, the door is opened, and amid strident silence Black Rod, with due obeisance, advances to the table.

No matter who is speaking when Black Rod enters the precincts of the Commons, business is at once suspended, and, having delivered his message, he bows and retires backward, as gracefully as possible.

Besides having some of the accomplishments proper to the stage, the ability to wear rather a dazzling uniform without seeming conscious of it, and to bow gracefully while walking backward, the occupant of the office of Black Rod must have a memory which will retain a form of words which, if not very long, is highly involved in style.

When His Memory Failed.

Admiral Sir H. F. Stephenson was not very well endowed with these gifts when he took up the office. The summons he had to deliver to the Speaker when he walked up the floor of the House of Commons gave him not a little trouble, and the first time he attempted it the tingling silence at the critical moment frightened the words out of his mind. "I desire," he began, "to acquaint this Honourable House—" There he stopped short, and remained mute. The pause was painful, and the tension was only relieved by Sir Henry

Campbell-Bannerman, who came to the rescue with dexterous, but quite audible, promptings from his seat on the front Opposition Bench.

Black Rod was heard murmuring, "That the Lords who are authorized by virtue of his Majesty's Commission to—" And then came the final collapse.

The situation was saved by Mr. Gully, then Speaker, who, nodding with friendly recognition of Black Rod's intention, said: "We understand that you have come to signify that the Lords Commissioners desire the immediate attendance of this Honourable House in the House of Peers to hear the Commission read." Black Rod indicated that that was his intention, and the awkward incident ended.

After this, Admiral Stephenson took the precaution of writing out in full the words of his message, and ever afterwards he kept them for ready reference in the lace of his cocked hat.

Other Important Duties.

In addition to his duty as "messenger" between the Lords and the Commons, Black Rod takes a share in the complicated ceremony which attends the introduction of a peer. He has also duties of a constabulary nature to perform, for he can arrest any peer guilty of a breach of privilege, and if the practice of bringing a Minister to book for high crimes and misdemeanours by impeachment were ever revived, the personage accused would find himself in the custody of the Gentleman Usher until he was admitted to bail.

For the dignity and traditions of the House of Lords Sir Henry Stephenson had a most jealous regard,

and it will be remembered that on one occasion he incurred the displeasure of the House of Commons by refusing admission to a Celt who appeared in the Peers' Lobby attired in a kilt.

Physician Murdered While Making Sick Call.

New York, March 26.—The bodies of Dr. Vincent J. Campisi, wealthy physician and a patient to whose bedside he was hastily summoned, were found last night in a tenement house in Brooklyn—the physician stabbed to death and the "patient" strangled.

The police, who at first were unable to identify the "patient," learned later that the physician had been hastily called to the house by an unidentified man. The police advanced the theory that the physician was lured into the tenement for the purpose of robbery, and, that attacked when he entered the room, he strangled the "patient" while fighting off his assailants, and then was stabbed by the man who lured him into the trap.

The murderer apparently lost his nerve, the police believe, and failed to carry out the robbery, for a large sum of money and a gold watch was found on the physician's body.

Frank Ambrose, a roomer in the house, told the police he saw Dr. Campisi enter the house with another man who seemed to be greatly agitated. Shortly after the physician arrived, Ambrose said, he heard the noise of breaking glass. A few minutes later the man who accompanied the doctor left the house hurriedly and ran down the street. Becoming suspicious that something had happened, Ambrose said he called a policeman and investigation revealed the two bodies, the physician's on the floor and the other in bed.

Examination of the body on the bed showed the man had been choked to death. No wounds were found. The physician was stabbed in the neck and mouth.

Mrs. Dorothy Parker, who conducts the rooming house, said the strangled man rented the room a week ago without giving his name and she had not seen him in that time. Nor had she ever seen, she said, the other man described to her as the one who brought the physician.

"The room in which the murders were committed is tiny and small, about nine feet by five feet, with a single bed, a table and a window, which had been broken in the death struggle the physician made for his life. A dirt and razor, both rusty, were found in the room.

Dr. Campisi was 35 years old and married. His brother, Samuel Campisi, said he knew of no enemies of his brother's who might have had cause to seek revenge.

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