

a representative of the people, as we shall presently see, has its compensations.

Still, the tribulations of an M.P. are undoubtedly many. There are, to begin with, the torments of the post. Cobden, in a letter to a friend, early in 1846, when his name as the leader of the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws was in all men's mouths, gives us an interesting glimpse into the contents, half laughable and half pathetic, of the letter-bag of an M.P. He says :

First, half the mad people in the country who are still at large, and they are legion, address their incoherent ravings to the most notorious man of the hour. Next, the kindred tribe who think themselves poets, who are more difficult than the mad people to deal with, send their doggerel and solicit subscriptions to their volumes, with occasional requests to be allowed to dedicate them. Then there are the Jeremy Diddlers, who begin their epistles with high-flown compliments upon my services to the millions, and always wind up with a request that I will bestow a trifle upon the individual who ventures to lay his distressing case before me. To add to my miseries, people have now got an idea that I am influential with the Government, and the small place-hunters are at me.

Cobden enclosed a specimen of the begging-letters he was accustomed to receive. It was from a lady asking him to become her "generous and noble-minded benefactor." As she desired to begin to do something for herself, she hoped he would procure her a loan of £5000 "to enable her to rear poultry for London and other large market towns." In another letter, written July 14, 1846, after the taxes on bread-stuffs had been repealed, and the Corn Law League disbanded, Cobden says :

I thought I should be allowed to be forgotten after my address to my constituents. But every post brings me twenty or thirty letters—and such letters ! I am teased to death by place-hunters of every degree, who wish me to procure them Government appointments. Brothers of peers—aye, "honourables"—are amongst the number. I have but one answer for all : "I would not ask a favour of the Ministry to serve my own brother." I often think what must be the fate of Lord John, or Peel, with half the needy aristocracy knocking at the Treasury doors.