

THE JUDGE WITH THE BRIAR-ROOT PIPE.

(From M. A. P.)

SIR JOHN RIGBY. — Wherever you had seen him you could not have mistaken him for anything but an Englishman. Stout, thick-set, rough-hewn, with the tendency to an enlarged waist which is the characteristic of most of his race as they reach middle age, with an abrupt manner, with a certain rough-and-tumble demeanor, and, at the same time, an imperturbable air of cheerfulness and good humor, he was almost so ridiculously like the legendary John Bull as to suggest that he was conscious of the fact, and tried to dress up for the part. Mr. Frank Hill used to say of the late Mr. Forster that he was the best stage Yorkshireman living. In some respects Sir John Rigby looked so English that he might have been called a stage John Bull, but that anything which suggested pose would have been an insult to a character the most fundamental note of which was a majestic simplicity. And the man was just what he looked — he was thoroughly English to the very fibre of his being.

I first made his acquaintance when I was about to start my first newspaper. One of the peculiarities of certain branches of the legal profession is that a man may have reached supreme eminence in them and yet be practically unknown to the outside world. The other day I read somewhere that when Mr. Gladstone had to appoint a Lord Justice, and someone mentioned to him the name of Mr. Justice Mellish as that of a man who held a great position at the Bar, and as the man above all others for the great office, Mr. Gladstone made the naïf remark that he had never once heard the name of Mellish since he had known him as a pretty and promising boy at school. The truth is that we all nowadays live more or less in water-tight compartments, and that the great men of one profession may be quite unknown to even the great men of another profession. I daresay Rigby was quite as unknown to Mr. Gladstone as Mellish. He certainly was quite unknown to me. He became one of my shareholders, and there our acquaintance might have ended. But, unfortunately, a dispute arose between me and some of my colleagues. I went to Rigby. His share in the paper was not large, but he formed so strong an opinion on my side that he took an eager, active, I had almost said passionate interest in the struggle.

It was then for the first time that I came to know Rigby and his character and position. I discovered that when I mentioned his name to men at the Bar they heard it almost with a hush. To them this man, unknown to me except by name, represented gigantic powers—all that unquestionable and supreme success which is attained by just two or three men in a generation. There was but one other man of his time who could be mentioned. I was told, in the same breath as Rigby—that was the present Lord Davey. One then began to realize what kind of a man Rigby was.

A man with a great position at the Chancery Bar has in some respects one of the greatest positions in the world. I dread to repeat what I was told that Rigby was then making at the Bar, but it was something like £20,000 a year. Just fancy what such an income means of confidence in one man's powers, and how extraordinary these powers must have been that were appraised at such gigantic sums! What it means, of course, is that clients are fighting in the Chancery Courts for such gigantic sums that they cannot afford to stop and consider the cost of obtaining the best counsel that money can buy.

As I had to see Rigby pretty often when the struggle was at its hottest, and as he was a man who was preternaturally busy, there was nothing for it but to go and see him in the early morning at his chambers. And now comes one of the many curious things in the life of this great man. This giant in his profession, earning his twenty thousand a year, and already with a huge fortune—some put it as high as a quarter of a million—lived in two small rooms at the top of a modest house in Jermyn street! I had been accustomed to receive notes dated Jermyn street, but these notes gave no indication of the

kind of place in which Rigby lived. I could scarcely believe my eyes when I was shown into two rooms, small, shabby, crowded with books scattered around, on the worn sofa, on the floor, against the walls. Rigby showed no consciousness whatever that there was anything peculiar in one of the most prosperous men of his time living after the fashion of a young law student preparing for the battle of life by graduating in the school of squalor and perchance hunger. And to complete the picture of the simplicity of the man I should add that he proceeded while he talked to me to shave his strong, firm upper lip!

Let me conclude the story of my personal relations with Rigby in a few more sentences. The day at last came when my opponents and I met for battle at a meeting of shareholders. The entire interest he had in the concern was £500—a mere trifle to him—and in any case he cared nothing about money. Yet this abrupt, rough-hewn, impatient, over-worked man came to the meeting, and gave to my small cause an advocacy for which thousands of pounds would have been willingly paid by many of his clients — nay more. He had to rush off to the courts to attend to a case, but he rushed back again once more to defend my cause, and before the struggle was over was ready to invest £8,000 in my undertaking. The struggle ended in a compromise — much to Rigby's disgust, but that was not his fault. This great and powerful and wealthy man had fought for a poor and an obscure one with all the energy that the majority of mankind reserves for the strong and the prosperous. From that epoch of my life, in which I found so much treachery and baseness, the noble friendship of Rigby stands out.

Some years after this, Rigby was a member of Parliament and a law officer. His Parliamentary career never attained the success and recognition to which his powerful intellect and his noble personal character entitled him. One of the reasons was that he entered political life at too late an age and his character was too strong and original and independent to allow him to be adaptable. A great reason was that he entered at a period when party passion ran high, and when men were not very scrupulous in the methods they adopted against political opponents. Rigby was law officer to Gladstone when he was trying to pass his second Home Rule Bill. That was the fierce and painful session in which there occurred the disgraceful scene when members of Parliament began pummeling each other on the floor of the House — this will sufficiently indicate the dominant temper of those days.

Poor Rigby had certain characteristics which gave shallow and ill-natured observers a false idea of the man, and which, to tell the truth, were a little eccentric in such a place as the House of Commons. Of these the most curious was a habit of pronouncing certain words so that the whole of the ascension fell upon the last syllable. The word "prosecutor," for instance, was pronounced "prosecutur"; the word "petitioner" was pronounced "petitioner"; and so on. The Opposition, fierce, powerful, angry, mocking, at once seized on these little peculiarities — jeered, mocked, shouted at Rigby. The sight of this intellectual and moral giant making sport for the Philistines was almost the most painful scene I have ever beheld in the House of Commons, and it was the more painful to me because I loved and admired and understood the man. Happily, he, I believe and hope, was unconscious of the somewhat forlorn figure he cut, and his strong, serious, unconscious face added to the merriment and the mockings of his tormentors.

The effect on Mr. Gladstone was disastrous. This Home Rule Bill was the end of all things to him; though he alone perhaps knew that — and he was sore beset and badgered and worried by powerful enemies on all sides. The law officers were among the few on whom he could count to face the mighty combination which was arrayed against him, and it was evident that, however over-

whelming the talents of Rigby were in the law courts, he could be of little service at that sore hour of Gladstone's need in the House of Commons. So for the moment Rigby had to be silent. It was a strange and pathetic fate that the voice, every phrase of which was as precious as the note of a prima donna, should have been found less precious than silence in the House of Commons. But that is a less infrequent occurrence with great lawyers in the House of Commons than people outside the House realize. The first time Mr. Balfour heard Charles Russell in the House of Commons he leant back wearily and exclaimed: "And they tell me this man makes £17,000 a year at the Bar!" Mr. Balfour was both right and wrong, for there never was a speaker like Russell at the bar, and yet he never had even an approach to a great success in the House of Commons. Jessel was an abject failure, and Webster but a moderate success, and so one could go on.

When it was discovered that Rigby had been closed by his chief, became the favorite amusement of the hot young bloods of the Opposition to call out "Rigby, Rigby," several times every night. This went on for weeks until in the end it descended into an almost stale joke. Rigby sat through it all unmoved, and, I believe, even unwounded. There was a tremendous lot of bull-like courage and tenacity in this massive typical Englishman. At last one night Rigby rose to his feet. The calls for him nightly had gone on for weeks, and it began to be thought that Rigby would never speak again. When, then, he arose, there burst from the Opposition the wildest, longest shout that I have heard in the House of Commons. It was minutes before Rigby could proceed. Whenever he started to speak the cheers were again and yet again taken up. It looked as if he would never be allowed to go on. In the end he did speak, and the Opposition, either because it was exhausted or because, I hope, it was ashamed of itself, allowed Rigby to proceed.

The end of it all was almost as strange in its way as the beginning. The honesty, the simplicity, the manliness of Rigby won the love of the House of Commons, and he was in time a popular favorite where once they had attempted to make him a popular butt. In time, he would doubtless have conquered the place there to which his gifts entitled him. But all this was brought to an end, as well as many other things, by a change he made in his life. The death of a brother left his two nieces in his charge. At once all that strong need of affection which had been stayed during his fiercely laborious life was liberated. He left his squalid chambers in Jermyn street, took for his nieces—two charming girls—a lordly house in Chelsea, and there, for the first time in his life, the mighty lawyer had a real home. In superintending the decoration of his new home he got into the lift he had fixed in the house, something went wrong, poor Rigby was injured, and it was impossible that he should face any longer the late hours of the House of Commons. Before his final departure there took place the incident which suggests the title of this article. All his life Rigby was a huge smoker, and a democratic smoker, too. Cigars were not for him, still less cigarettes. He stuck persistently and consistently to the briar-root pipe. One night as he rose to address the House there dropped from his pocket his briar-root—black, old, common, the pipe that only a thorough and seasoned smoker could have used. It was a touch of nature that made Rigby and the whole House kin, and cheer upon cheer, rising on the air, placed him for once and for ever in the foremost rank of the House's favorites.

He took a Lord Justiceship, which became vacant at the moment when his accident made life in the House of Commons impossible. He did not change either his habits or his demeanor with his office, for he was one of the fine minds that could not be regarded as gaining anything by dignities. He was true to his friends, he was true, above all, to his briar-root pipe. Some, perhaps, were shocked when they saw one of the highest judges in the land, even while he still wore the full-bottomed wig, sucking away at a briar-root pipe!

He never, I believe, recovered from the accident in the lift, and a few years after his elevation to the Bench he had to retire on the ground of ill-health. I used to see him now and then, for he was a neighbor of mine, driving in a big carriage, silent, apparently, and fighting the inroads on his once massive and Titan-

ic frame. Now the end has come, and this fine, manly, simple man of legal genius has passed beyond these voices. He was not known to many outside his profession. There were just a few—a very few—who had sounded the depths of his noble and generous nature. A prosperous life, absolute, according to all the usual canons, and a life typical of thousands in this country and in the profession of Rigby. But assuredly there are not wanting the elements of paths in all this fierce struggle for professional supremacy, and then, when the success came, loneliness for so long in those squalid chambers in Jermyn street, and finally a huddled-up and almost tragic close. It is thus that end so often the realized dreams, which in youth and in contemplation seem to make life too lovely and intoxicating a romance.

T. P.

Reaping the Whirlwind.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

We learn that Premier Combes feels keenly the indignity, not to say worse, that he was subjected to at Marseilles. The shots fired at him he ascribes to "blood-thirsty anarchists, the menace of all society and order." We would be long sorry that Combes or any person else should fall victim to the murderous instincts of the anarchists; and, despite all the evil that he has done, and of how little he deserves any sympathy—for he knows no mercy and feels no sympathy for his own victims—we are thankful that he escaped. It would have been a very happy experience if he were only to take a lesson from it. But he should be the very last man to speak harshly of the anarchists. He is the builder up of anarchy and the educator of anarchists. He has used all the power that he possesses to destroy every influence that might, under any circumstance, put a check upon anarchy and violation of all social rights as well as defiance of all authority.

The orders whose business it is to so educate youth that the rising generation may be imbued with lofty and noble sentiments, be respectful to authority, devoted to the State and be the advocates of order, he has scattered in all directions. He has pondered to the evil spirit of anarchy, he has fostered the God-hating, murder-promoting scum of European society, and he has raised the shield of the law to protect them, while, with the other hand, he has driven the sword of iniquity into those organizations that alone could withstand the advances of the anarchist.

Will he take the lesson? Not very likely. But he should not complain of the wild beast which he pets, feeds, and then lets loose on the country, turns on himself and injures him beyond reparation. With lavish hand he sows the wind of religious persecution, with corresponding equanimity should he reap the whirlwind of anarchical revolution. These are lessons that God — even that same God whom they deny, whose name dare not be mentioned in their Chambre of Deputies — sets before their eyes and with which He challenges them to reflect and to change from the path which, while it is strewn with ruins that they have created, ends inevitably in their own destruction. Will Combes take the lesson? No—for he is blinded by fanaticism and his heart throbs no longer with pangs that are human.

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