

and he belongs to no particular family. He is only the second peer of his line and the family has not had time to make great connections by marriage. Some people say it is pure personality, and in the absence of any better explanation we had better call it that." The reference to Lord Esher's family started a train of thought that may be illuminating. His father was a great lawyer, Sir William Brett, who became a judge and finally lord chancellor and won his peerage, and his mother was a Jewess, Miss Eugenie Mayer, the daughter of a great banking family. With such a parentage young "Reggie" Brett, as he was known before he succeeded to his father's title, might have been expected to go far, but no one expected the great things of him which he has accomplished.

A Record of Public Service.

"Perhaps he owes a good deal to his clever wife. She was the youngest daughter of Sylvain Van de Weyer, one of the most noted diplomatists of his day, who was for many years Belgian minister in London. Her mother probably was the most intimate woman friend that Queen Victoria ever had, and when she died Victoria is said to have remarked, "There is no one left now to call me Victoria." At any rate Lady Esher was brought up as playmate of the Queen's younger children, and when she married Reggie Brett at 17 the notice of royalty was attracted to the young man. Queen Victoria gave him the post of constable of Windsor castle—an honorary appointment which may or may not, according to the wishes of the holder, mean a good deal of work. Lord Esher elected to work and he suggested a lot of improvements. When King Edward came to the throne he was impressed by the capability of the young peer and he not only continued the appointment, but he made him one of his confidential advisers.

"Then Lord Esher had a couple of opportunities of which he made the most. He was chief of the office of works during Queen Victoria's second jubilee, and on him fell all the work of arranging for the great processions and other public functions. His clear brain and mastery of detail stood him in good stead, and everything went off without a hitch. Then came the Queen's funeral and the coronation of King Edward, and again Lord Esher showed his genius for organization.

A Hint for the Department of Public Works.

"These things gained him the confidence of royalty, and another feature of his work gained him the respect of the politicians. The planning and erection of the wonderful series of new government buildings which now line Whitehall happened to coincide with his term at the office of works. Now the old idea of government buildings was that they should be beautiful on the outside, no matter

how inconvenient they might be inside. Lord Esher had different ideas. He thought that a government office was primarily a place to work in, and he sent for the architects and told them that he would plan the inside of the buildings himself and that they might look after the shells, provided they confined themselves to a uniform and simple design. The result is a series of buildings that are beautiful and stately on the outside, and on the inside ideal for the purpose for which they are used.

"In 1905 he became one of the committee of imperial defense, an unofficial body whose duty it is to talk in a general way about military and naval matters and advise the government and the heads of the fighting services. Lord Esher, however, did not see it in quite this way, and it was soon found that he was taking a very active interest in the personnel of the services and in all that pertained to them. Officers began to hear that Lord Esher had said this, and Lord Esher wanted that done, and they began to join in the chorus of 'Who the dickens is Lord Esher?' The query was not answered, but the men who failed to take note of what Lord Esher wanted and see that it was done soon found that their advancement in the service was blocked in some mysterious way.

A Bad Man to Rub the Wrong Way.

"Lord Esher has been accused of intrigue and underground wire pulling. He never has replied to the charge. Indeed, he never has shown in any way that he was conscious of criticism. He seems to have acted on the theory that he was the heaven-sent governor of England and he has done his best to govern it according to his own lights. From time to time he has met with some snubs. One was from the kaiser, who made his acquaintance during one of his visits to Windsor castle and was not impressed by him. The snub was administered in the now famous Tweedmouth letter, which led to the removal of Lord Tweedmouth from the post of first lord of the admiralty, and no doubt had much to do with his subsequent mental breakdown. Lord Esher wrote a letter to the navy league setting it right in the usual Esher style on a question of policy, and making a reference to the kaiser's naval ambitions. The kaiser read the letter, and wrote to Lord Tweedmouth, assuring him that England need not worry about his fleet, and remarking incidentally that Lord Esher would better confine himself to looking after the sewers at Windsor castle than occupy himself with questions of high politics. Lord Esher could hardly get back at the kaiser, but he punished the kaiser's friend, Lord Tweedmouth, by throwing him out of the admiralty.

"Another man who tried to snub him was Gen. Smith-Dorrien, who was commander-in-chief at Aldershot. One day Gen. Smith-