

# The Re-Opening of the British Parliament.

By H. LINTON ECCLES.

VIEWED in any other way than as a sort of pageant, the re-opening of Parliament is a very dull and lifeless affair. King Privilege, the hoary old humbug, still reigns supreme, so we see the same old farce of the Debate on the Address from the Throne repeating itself with the opening of every session. It is really remarkable, in this supposedly up-to-date Twentieth Century, how conservative and old-fashioned our public institutions remain. One was never more forcibly reminded of the advice to "cut the cackle and get to the 'osses," than upon the present occasion of the recommencement of the parliamentary game.

It is probable that many supporters of the Government are of opinion that the work so far done by the Government is not likely to sufficiently impress the voters at the next general election. They have passed no measure, save perhaps the new Workmen's Compensation Act, that appeals to the somewhat shallow reasoning of the British electors. Mr. Asquith, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will, it is expected, have something like an £8,000,000 surplus to dispose of this year, and it may be that the Government has in mind the making of this a basis for an Old-Age Pension scheme. Such a scheme would doubtless prove very attractive to the minds of the electorate. At any rate, the Government, still backed by a big and solid majority, knows well enough that this, its third session, is to be the real testing-time. The Opposition, heartened by several bye-election victories, has plucked up courage considerably, and means to make the most of itself against the Liberal party.

There are one or two changes on the Liberal benches. Sir John Lawson Walton, the Attorney-General, has died during the recess, and his place is filled by Sir William L. Robson, Solicitor-General, whose duties now fall on Mr. L. T. Evans, K.C., a Welsh member. All of these men have made their names as distinguished lawyers, but the most successful as a parliamentary man has been, undoubtedly, Sir William Robson, who was a thorn in the side of Mr. Chamberlain and the Tariff Reformers during the great fiscal debates.

Growing age and failing health will prevent Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman from taking so active a part in the doings of the Commons as he has taken in the past. It is tacitly understood on all sides that he will rely to a great extent on the good feeling and consideration of the House on that account. Mr. Asquith will, consequently, be much in evidence as Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, and he certainly has a great opportunity, not only of adding to his reputation, but of consolidating his position with the other leaders of his party. Mr. Asquith seems to fall short of the qualities of a great leader because he lacks the divine fire of passion. His style, in a manner of speaking, is too good and equal, besides being a little monotonous. Unlike Disraeli and Gladstone, and, in a lesser degree, Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. John Burns, he has no "great moments" wherein he carries the House with him by sheer force of passionate eloquence. Mr. Asquith is not built that way; he is too much of the lawyer to be a great parliamentary leader.

Mr. John Burns, the one-time Hyde Park Socialist orator, has improved—or tempered down, whichever way one looks at it—into a capable and hard-working president of the local Government Board.

Much of the showing up of the gross extravagance prevalent on certain local bodies has been due to his personal vigilance, and some notable improvements in the conduct of public affairs may be traced to his hand. Mr. Burns is known here as the "unspoiled Cabinet minister," and he has certainly deserved the name, for he is just as democratic and approachable as ever he was; which cannot be said of the majority of Ministers. The interesting point about this is that the Opposition are more inclined to grant the success and ability of the president of the Local Government Board than that of any other Liberal Minister, with the possible exception of the Prime Minister himself. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman must certainly be given the credit for



Rt. Hon. H. H. Asquith,  
Deputy Leader in the British House of Commons

having with conspicuous success kept together the somewhat heterogeneous constituents that make up his following.

The Labour Party in Great Britain, at its Annual Congress held recently at Hull, endorsed and adopted the Socialistic programme as its own. This resolution comes as the result of the active propaganda of the Socialist section of the party. The moving spirit of this section is undoubtedly Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., secretary of the party. Mr. MacDonald is perhaps the least typical of all the Labour members, the majority of whom began life in very humble circumstances. Mr. MacDonald is a well-educated and even cultured man, and is an

able speaker. He has a pleasing appearance, knows the many moves in the parliamentary game quite as well as the oldest member in the House, and most people think he will one day, not very far in the future, become leader of his party. Meanwhile, there is likely to be some trouble in the camp over the resolution of the Hull Congress, for a considerable number of the Trade Unionists who nominate the Labour group are strongly opposed to the principles and aims of Socialism, and confine themselves simply to the policy of defending the interests of labour.

## The Greatest of All.

WITH the possible exception of Willison's "Laurier and the Liberal Party," there has been no book published in Canada in recent years to compare in interest with Dr. Parkin's Life of Sir John A. Macdonald. This is the latest addition to that wonderful list of biographies in the "Makers of Canada" series which already numbers seventeen volumes. A wonderful series—because it is the most extensive, most ambitious and most successful literary effort yet attempted in this country. Nor is Dr. Parkin's book, in spite of its excellence, able to cast too great a shadow over the other sixteen volumes.

Were a writer given his choice of subjects for a Canadian biography, he would naturally choose Sir John Macdonald. He it was whose vision and imagination equalled that of Hon. Joseph Howe, and whose judgment carried him into the high imperial position which Howe coveted. He it was who saw the possibilities of a united Canada and a developed West with the same clearness as the Hon. George Brown, and yet who never allowed as Brown did his personal feelings to interfere with the prosecution of his political schemes and undertakings. The men he worked with, the means necessary to placate opponents, the compromises necessary to remove obstruction—these mattered little. The grand purpose must be accomplished at whatever cost. To this type of statesman, Canada owes Confederation. Others saw it, worked for it, laboured with it, failed because of it; he rode to victory on the crest of the wave.

Dr. Parkin made an admirable biographer for this great Canadian. From the village schoolmaster in New Brunswick to the secretary of the Rhodes Scholarship Trust is a considerable distance to travel, but Dr. Parkin has accomplished it. His progress in affairs has been due mainly to his broad national and imperial outlook. He believed in Canada and preached about her; then he added the Empire to his text, and became an imperial figure. It is therefore fitting that he should interpret for the Empire, the life-work of one of its greatest statesmen.

Indeed, Dr. Parkin has informed his friends that it was because he desired to show the people in other parts of the Empire how the Dominion was created and developed, that he undertook the biography. He felt that all the British world should know more of the great difficulties which faced the makers of Canada, and should have laid before them the lessons which may be derived from a study of Canada's successful struggle. Knowing this purpose, one has a guide to the line which Dr. Parkin has followed in working out his series of comments and chronicles.

There are three volumes in this series still unpublished, but it is understood that these will be ready shortly. The list of twenty will then be complete.



Outdoor Skating Races—A popular amusement at this season.

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