

THE FASCINATION OF PARLIAMENT

AT the General Election was witnessed the old and familiar, but ever curious and interesting, spectacle of about twelve hundred men—varying so much in consequence, ability, position and temperament that they may be said to reflect, collectively, the very image of the Nation—engaged in wooing the constituencies which have at their disposal the 670 seats in the House of Commons. How comes such a strange thing to pass? What are the irresistible allurements that compel this large body of men, the majority of them actively engaged in business or professional life, to spend their money and time, their strength and temper, in order that they may be given the chance of making a gift of their professional capacity and business experience to the Nation, expecting in return neither fee nor reward?

Let us hear Macaulay on the subject. Writing to his sister Hannah (subsequently Lady Trevelyan) on June 17, 1833, after a few years' experience of the House of Commons, he says :

I begin to wonder what the fascination is which attracts men, who could sit over their tea and their book in their own cool, quiet room, to breathe bad air, hear bad speeches, lounge up and down the long gallery, and doze uneasily on the green benches till three in the morning. Thank God, these luxuries are not necessary for me. My pen is sufficient for my support, and my sister's company is sufficient for my happiness. Only let me see her well and cheerful,