

last ten months, most of the committees have at their disposal during each Congress but two hours each in which to report upon, debate, and dispose of all the subjects of general legislation committed to their charge^(x). And even that space of time is not allowed to free and open debate. The reporting committee man is allowed to absorb a great part of it, and as to the rest the Speaker recognizes only those persons who have previously come to a private understanding with the makers of the report, and these only upon their promise to limit their remarks to a certain number of minutes. In addition to all this a practice has risen of hastening the passage of bills by suspension of the rules, "by means of which," says Senator Hoar, "a large proportion, perhaps the majority, of the bills which pass the House are carried through. . . . It requires two-thirds of the members voting to adopt such a motion. Upon it no debate or amendment is in order. In this way if two-thirds of the body agree, a bill is by a single vote, without discussion and without change, passed through all the necessary stages, and made a law, so far as the House of Representatives can accomplish it; and in this mode hundreds of measures of vital importance receive, near the close of an exhausting session, without being debated, amended, printed, or understood, the constitutional assent of the representatives of the American people"^(y).

However, even this stringent practice apparently was not deemed sufficient. In his article to which I have already referred, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain describes a proceeding then recently introduced under the provocation of obstruction or filibustering, by which a resolution is brought up to the House from the committee on rules fixing the length of time and the conditions under which further debate on a measure which it is desired to carry in this way, can be carried on, and this resolution is passed by the majority under the action of "the previous question" rule without discussion or amendment. The chairman of this

(x) Quoted in Congressional Government, at p. 72, from an Article in the North American Review.

(y) Quoted in Congressional Government, at p. 111-2.