

animated (?) by one desire—to kill time which costs twenty-five dollars a minute while they deliver soul-killing harangues on over-classification or the Canadian Navy. Technically the process is known as "talking to Hansard." Religiously the House reporters transcribe every word, and as piously the King's printers set them up by the acre, whence they are distributed by tons to constituents throughout the length and breadth of the land. For even the newspapers, except in the case of notable speeches by leaders, have abandoned the custom of verbatim reports on the theory that this is a busy age and that the supply of pulpwood is rapidly diminishing.

Talking to Hansard is the most scientific mode of killing time ever devised by the *ennui* of mankind. Pity of it is that so many members who on the stump and in committee are capable of handling a thing without gloves and with consideration for the clock, succeed in talking to Hansard so well. Talking out a bill in committee is a lively operation compared to strangling a bill in the House or keeping up the balance of speech-making. It seems to be an axiom that on any given measure or amendment one side of the House must deliver to Hansard as many columns of dry-as-dust as the other. It might seem to be quite as much of an axiom that if speeches in the House are not interesting enough to keep more than forty members out of two hundred and twenty at their desks, they are not vitally effective enough to interest even the constituents of the members who reel them off with such superfine disregard of the motto *Tempus fugit*.

Sometimes it happens that a member's wife is in the gallery; in which case she is a second edition of Hansard. Usually it happens that the member is talking for party purposes even while engaged on a so-called national question. In either case the effect is peculiarly enervating. Even the page boys seem to get lassitude. Weary of counting the panels in the ceiling; weary of matching the number of arches with the panels; still more weary of enumerating the members who wear red ties and those who have bald heads, the galleryite listens to the interminable dron of some man with a voice; almost startled when a member snaps his fingers—when all the member wants is a page, and to keep from going plumb to sleep four boys engage in a sprint across the floor of the House.

In such cases the only scientific way to fight off a headache is to analyse the sentences for subject and predicate; and it must be admitted that members have no trouble ringing in enough verbs to hold the nominatives, and as for adjectives—well, they work in automatically from an inexhaustible repeat order. This is not to say that members are not as a rule good speakers. Most of them who speak at all do so very well; though there are few orators in the House and the occasions for oratory are becoming few and far between.

### The War of Words.

JUST why the House of Commons debates should be of such remote interest to the country at large has never been explained. Even the Navy debate which was supposed to concern people in general—being a national question—petered out to a tourney of words; a supreme parliamentary Fantasia exploiting the idiosyncrasies of members on both sides of the House. Perhaps there were six really able speeches that threw any real light on the subject. Most of the rest were a war of words with which the gallery clock had nothing to do. Many of the speakers seemed to labour under the delusion that a speech is an essay. You understood that many of the members had been thumbing encyclopaedias and naval papers and magazine articles; and that in a week after the debate was over they would have forgotten most of it—blessed be forgetfulness!

It may be true that government is essentially partyism; that actual business administration should be left to departments and to ministers and deputies; but the spectacle of a large number of brainy men yawning out a debate, stalking about the lobbies, whiling away the time in the restaurant, lounging in room 16 and room 89—anywhere and anything to escape the boredom of a debate in the House, is not one to inspire much faith in the working efficiency of Parliament.

Empty benches may be the rule of all parliaments; they are certainly a commonplace in Ottawa. One marvels at the self-stimulus of members who are able to spin out the thread of a two-hour speech with nothing but a corporal's guard of members opposite to shoot at; with perhaps three ministers in their seats—though it must be said that the ministers are more regular in attendance than most of the members; with a good half of those present busy writing letters, reading papers, holding cross-aisle caucuses, once in a while automatically thumping the desks—which could be done almost as well by a machine. Now and then a member crosses the floor and consults one on the other side of the House; arrangement—that each shall leave the House; which is technically known as "getting a pair"—in case of a division.

The visitor in the gallery—and there are always a number content to sit and sit and wait and wait and wonder—is not interested in mere talk. He likes cross-fire; delights to see some member ruffling up and calling "You're another"; puzzled that anybody down there in the pit has enough energy left even to raise a kick; worse than a hot

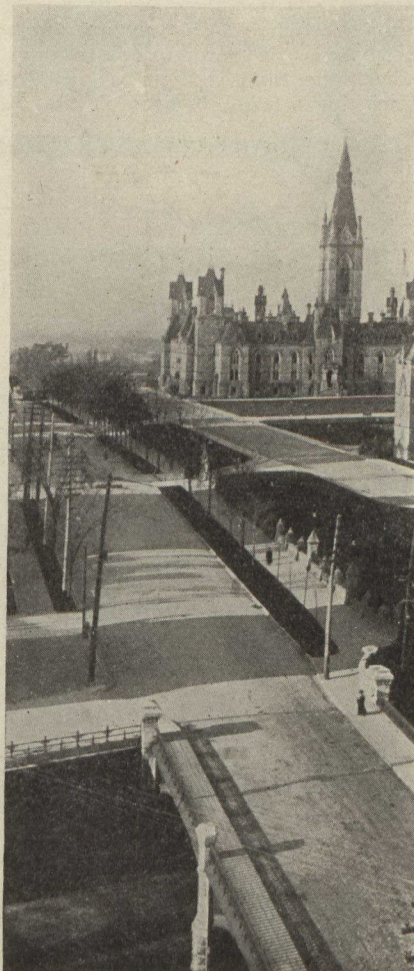
day in a cornfield with a hoe-handle; all the worse if it's an evening session—hoping members will at last say something worth while, call each other oblique names through the Speaker, insinuate graft and corruption, raise a laugh, do anything to escape the droolery of mere debate.

### Then the Scene Shifts.

WELL, the House may be clear down in the dumps about time for adjournment; three hours and not a speech that interested anybody but Hansard; the man in the gallery goes out for a turn in the lobby. He sees that room 16 is middling full up—considerable of a buzz in there; also 89 has a good-sized caucus; and in the lobbies there



Members' Entrance on the West, Hansard Desks in the middle of the floor; a race with the Gallery Clock.



Wellington Street, the real Boulevard of Ottawa, where the Members walk up to the House.

are knots of members head-on; up in the restaurant three or four more aggregations; all interested in something—snatches of talk about who's coming on next; probably Mr. Borden—or the Premier?

Going to be a division; that seems certain. Probabilities are that somewhere in the building you might round up two hundred members. Perhaps even now forty more have sloped out of the lobbies into the House. The chief Liberal Whip is not in his office; neither is the Conservative Whip. But they are somewhere in the building; so are the local whips—and there begins to be a surrury. Some one says the Premier is up. The visitor perambulates back—to find the gallery almost full and the House filling; by ones and twos the benches are occupied; hats on and hats off; the Premier is up; that impressive, classic figure and unusual voice with the odd French turn to it—and, not a member is writing letters or reading papers now; all the ministers in but three; members trooping in—and it is long past one o'clock before the Premier begins to get done.

You don't care if it never breaks up. You feel there's a fight on. The *ennui* has gone. The House is a spectacle; reminding you of the youthful notions you had about Parliament where the speeches were all of the grandiose sort and the hero was always on the floor. Hours during the day you've noticed the First Minister looking abstrusely at members opposite; patiently cogitating—and this is the result. The speech! The leap to oratory! You feel the thrill of it; because the dreary drivel has you in the mood for an episode. It's drama. No matter what the subject may be. The machinery of Parliament is at top speed and the dynamos are getting to the peak load.

Two o'clock in the morning. Opposition scowling and bellicose; Premier shows some temper; Government members fusilading the desks. Is he right? For the present that makes little difference. The game's the thing; oratory, personal magnetism—always available; he himself both master and creature of Parliament.

Now for the last time he is done; the House is in a hulabaloo. Division is called.

"Those in favour of the amendment say 'Ay,'" calls the Speaker.

"Ay," from the Opposition; a roar of it.

"Those in favour of the motion say 'No,'"

"No-o-o!" from the Government; a scream.

"The No's have it," says the Speaker.

Opposition object.

"Call in the members," says the Speaker.

The bell rings; the ten-minute gong heard over all the lobbies. Whips are busy on the round-up. Like Roderick Dhu's chieftains the members seem to rise from the scrub; all somewhere in the building for they expected a division. One by one at the call of the names from the Clerk the Ays rise and their names are recorded. So with the Nos. "Ays—eighty-four," reads the Clerk. "Nos—one hundred and ten."

Bombardment from the Government benches. The machine has done its work. Turn off the power; let down the dynamos. Five to three by the gallery clock; House empty; members streaking out to the nip of the snow-blown air. Out go the electrics in the tower.

Such is the end of one day in Parliament.

### T. P. on Canada

ONCE upon a time Mr. T. P. O'Connor, the *genie* of M. A. P., was in Canada and he has written a few of his impressions. T. P.'s reflections were inspired by a recent article in the London *Times* from the pen of Mr. J. S. Willison, Canadian correspondent of that paper, one of whose paragraphs reads:

"In the short course of twenty-five years this city has grown from a town of 100,000 to a city of 325,000 people. Society is broken into groups. A city of homes this is if ever there was one, and in the eyes of visitors who explore it thoroughly that must be its chief beauty and glory. It is said now that while Montreal has more splendid mansions and more men of great wealth, in fortunes of from \$500,000 to \$3,000,000, Toronto eclipses all Canadian cities."

T. P. goes on to say: "Toronto, as everybody knows, is the capital of the great Province of Ontario. It is a town which has a curious resemblance at once to an English and to an American town. It has a certain underlying tranquillity which is characteristically English. But it is so go-ahead, it throbs with such full and tumultuous life, that it looks for all the world like one of those new Western towns which you find in so many parts of the United States. Montreal is a big and strong and ho-ahead town also, and yet it remains more English than American. Toronto looks more American than English. Ottawa, the capital, might be a cathedral city so profound and universal is the spirit of holy calm that pervades it. There is no calm in any part of Toronto—except in some of the beautiful residential parts in the suburbs. The terrific noise of the universal street-car thunders in every street; there are mighty lumber mills which are working away with all the tremendous noise of Titans; and all around there is rushing and tumultuous water as if Toronto were within sound of the Niagara Falls."