

IN THE HOUSE.

OTTAWA, April 13.

I suppose there must be some people in the world who think that the men who make a people's laws must be something more than a pinch of phosphorus and a bucketful of water, as we are told all poor mortals are. It must be difficult to pull down the successful candidate to the low level of the common folk, and to divest him of the nimbus of legislative purity which is supposed to crown a head wherein dwelleth the wisdom of a son of David. But a knowledge of the House of Commons and its members has made me sceptical about our legislators, and I have good reason for knowing that, contrary to the belief of some people, every beard in the House of Commons does not wag beneath the chin of a Grecian Solon. The fact is, our law makers are very ordinary people indeed; neither more nor less than common folk, and sometimes not even reaching the average. In this country a good deal of allowance must be made in every work of life where a high class of intellectual culture is desirable; and I am not disposed to be too severe on the men who stand forth as the saviours of their country. But there are times when I cannot help regretting that our best men avoid political life, and when I hear Mr. Mackenzie speak bad English and fly into a passion, or Plumb popping up and down like a porpoise in a mill dam, I cannot refrain from saying "Heavens! my bleeding country save." And I think, too, if you were in my place, you would say the same. The House of Commons, to my mind, is noticeable more for the absence than the presence of good taste, vigorous debate, or gentlemanly behaviour. As for good taste, I will tell you where I notice the absence of it. Last night, for instance, I was in the Speaker's gallery, and, I will confess, I was on the look-out for food for journalistic powder, and took the doings of the M. P.'s in with some relish. I was there to criticise, and what did I see? Well, I counted ten of our law makers cleaning their nails, and, to all appearance, regardless of the ladies who crowded the galleries and all around the Speaker's chair. Now, I call that bad taste. Even the nails of M. P.'s must, I suppose, at times undergo the process by which they are to be kept free from little gatherings which give a disagreeable fringe to the form divine, but the House of Commons is not the place to do it. Nor is it very long since I saw a member take a small comb from his pocket and coolly commence to comb his beard, and he did it just as coolly as if he stood before his looking-glass, and for all I know, perhaps he did. But these little things indicate, not only a want of culture, but of respect for the House and the ladies who are always to be found scanning the scene with a relish all their own. Then, as to dress, there are a good number of the M. P.'s who appear to think that soiled linen is no offence against society, and who look more like "old clo." than members of a House that rules a vast Dominion. And by "dress," do not fancy that I mean "foppy," or a love of gew-gaws, such as a suckling youth likes at times to bedeck his person with. No; I simply mean plain, clean, decently made clothes, such as we see on the majority of gentlemen in our thoroughfares, and such as many members of the House fortunately wear. But when I tell you that I have seen M. P.'s with a "fringe" to their shirt-cuffs and another "fringe" to their trousers, while others wear woollen shirts and hats that look worn with the age of many summers, you will no longer wonder that some of our law makers fail to impress one with the dignity which Clarissa tells us a becomingly dressed man so well creates. Even Mr. Speaker, who should be a model of faultlessness, is not free from his imperfections. His gloves never appear to fit him. They are always too long in the fingers and look more like the gloves I have seen on the wax figures at Madam Tussaud's than the ordinary gloves worn by men who are to the manner born. In fact, Mr. Speaker looks more like an automaton than anything else, and his immaculate suit of black only renders the delusion all the more real. Any ordinary machine could do all the work Mr. Speaker does when in the chair. Automotons can play chess; why cannot they be made to say "Motion" with mechanical regularity, or use a few set phrases as the business of the House goes on? If Edison set himself seriously to the task, I see no reason why he should not succeed. It ought to be as easy as clock-work, quite as regular, and far more economical than the present method. Mr. Speaker is supposed to have no opinion of his own—just like an automaton; Mr. Speaker repeats a few set phrases—just like an automaton; Mr. Speaker wears gloves that are too long for him—just like an automaton; and the only difference I can see is that Mr. Speaker is a man and a brother. To be sure he has to look after the internal economy of the House, but that could easily be delegated to others; and the onlookers in the galleries would be saved the pain of hearing what they know is the voice of nature but which might be done as well through the agency of the "phones" which are day by day upsetting our social system and no longer leaving any man's house his castle. It is odd, too, how few men command the ear of the House when they stand up to address it. There are only three or four men on the Reform side and about twice that number on the Conservative side to whom the House pays much attention. When we read the speech of the member for anywhere on say the Pacific Railway, the chances are that during its delivery the majority of the members were discussing the price of short-horns, the latest joke at the club, making arrangements for a

game of whist, or shying away to pass the time "looking at spoons" in the restaurant down stairs. The fact is that there is not enough of ability in the House to attract the attention of the majority.

Mr. Mackenzie with all his faults commands respect, and if he could only control his temper he would be more popular than he is. But as he sits in his chair he looks as glum as Squire Humphries, and when he casts his head down and looks over his glasses, he generally means to give a knock-down blow. I have noticed too that he is, perhaps, the most industrious man in the House. He is always either reading or writing, and yet he appears to take in every word that is uttered. But when he stops his work and looks up there is a squall approaching, and the chances are that he will interrupt the gentleman who has the floor, and with a broad "No-oh," often repeated, checks the debate, and then awaits events. Mr. Blake is more polished in his manner, while Sir John is always a gentleman. But I could not help noticing that the most gentlemanly men sit at the Conservative desks. This any stranger could not help remarking, and while there are Conservative boors just as there are Reform boors, yet the proportion is not equally divided. But, after all, it takes so little wisdom to rule the world, that I suppose the intellectual capacity of our legislators is not taxed to find a why and wherefore for the welfare of the people. A few men guide the destiny of the world after all, the rest merely follow like sheep after the bell wether. The world follows while the few lead, just as the three eldest sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the battle. Independence in public life is almost unknown, and there are not two men in the House who are bold enough to say with Pope: "Let fortune do her worst, whatever she makes us lose, as long as she never makes us lose our honesty and independence."

ROYALTY AND LOYALTY.

In the Old World, with its Kings and Queens, Emperors, Czars, Autocrats and Despots, it is the fashion to sneer at the tuft-hunting tendencies of transatlantic Republicans. The charge made against John Bull—that he "dearly loves a lord"—is admitted in a sheepish sort of way. Here we acknowledge, with a deprecatory sort of "it's cowardly to strike a man when he's down" tone, that we are desperately loyal. We sometimes give ourselves jaunty "liberty, equality and fraternity" airs, because, although we are monarchists, yet it is "with a difference" of surrounding the Throne with republican institutions. We say we had to take the world as we found it—we were *born* under a king,—monarchy is our fate, and we have to make the best of it. Our "old society," "our complex social relations," the political systems by which we are surrounded, necessitate our acquiescence in "things as they are," and, if you are to have royalty, why it won't do to make a burlesque of it. But that Brother Jonathan, the republican, in a new world all to himself, should run after a duke, or get crazy about a "title," we can't understand *that* at all. But is not human nature the same wherever one goes?

"Cælum non animum mutant, qui trans mare currunt."

The Jews had no kings, but they insisted upon having one. The instinct of worship is inherent in the *genus homo*. What's in a name? A king by any other name is still a king. The grim Protector made his reign felt as palpably as Harry's or Elizabeth's. Cæsar was Emperor long before—

"They thrice did offer him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse."

Was not Washington a king without a crown? Was not the greatest act of his life that of repelling the desire of his countrymen to make virtually a monarch of him? It has been said even now that the "comfortable classes" of America desire to have a sovereign.

It has been the ruin of Spain that it has been broken up into a number of petty independent municipalities, without cohesion, sympathy, or patriotism, but intensely jealous of each other. Italy owed her subjection and prostration to her little peddling and squabbling republics, which forgot their common tongue and their fatherland, their nationality, in their wretched local rivalry, and provincial emulation. Not until they had sunk their republican in their national feeling, until they ceased to be Venetians, Genoese, Sardinians, Tuscans, and remembered only that they were Italians, had they the remotest chance of recovering their independence. The king is their tower of strength; until they had dismissed the delusion of the Triumvirs, and finally seized upon the rallying cry of Victor Emmanuel, the cause of their independence was desperate.

As a phenomenon of the natural history of society the ovation thrust upon the Prince of Wales on the occasion of his visit to the U S, was not less striking than instructive. At the present time look how the people run and crowd wherever our Princess visits, erect their arches of welcome in every street on the mere chance of her going that way, deck their triumphal columns at every landing-place, and consecrate the very ground she touches with her Royal foot.

Is it imagined that some profound philosophical and speculative reason of State could have made a whole people crazy with the spirit of irresistible loyalty? The bees and ants have an autocrat; every herd and flock has a leader and a