

also a man of unscrupulous ambition, mounted to supreme power. The main solution of the mystery probably is that Robespierre, during the months of his ascendancy, was the incarnation of the dominant idea. But to this it must be added that though fanatical, egotistical and cruel, he was sincere and, unlike Mirabeau, Danton and most of his compeers, free from any suspicion of corruption. Jeer at the "Sea-green Incorruptible" as you will, it was his incorruptibility that gained him the confidence of the people, of whom he was not, and in fact did not know how to be, a great flatterer; and it is something to learn that even such a mob as that of the Faubourg St. Antoine, at such a time as that of the Revolution, is led by what it imagines to be public virtue.

A BYSTANDER.

### HERE AND THERE.

IN another column a correspondent calls attention to the increased and increasing amount of talk in the Legislative houses. The age we live in is one of rapid movement in every department of life. We do our business at high pressure, and we even hurry our pleasures as though we were impatient to have done with them. It is an age of short books, terse colloquies, brief entertainments, of letters written and answered in a single line, bargains proposed and accepted in a telegraphic word. Yet it is at the same time, unfortunately, the age of long Parliamentary debates, of much talk, and many speakers. And there are numberless causes which diminish the excuse for Parliamentary prolixity. Most questions are threshed out by the press before ever a debate commences, and hence—not to mention the exceeding mediocrity of some public speakers—the indifference with which the public turns away from the protracted display of Parliamentary speechmaking with which we are deluged. And there is the less necessity for all this talk when it is remembered that most questions are made party issues, and no speaker hopes to influence one vote, though he talk to the Greek Calends. Mechanical majorities are at the beck and call of party chiefs, and debates are but useless preliminaries to foregone conclusions. It is not the true stability of consentient opinion, but the artificial cohesion produced by external pressure, which at present keeps majorities together.

A CORRESPONDENT of the *New York Sun* has drawn some interesting pen pictures of remarkable persons and places he saw in Ottawa. Of the Parliament Buildings he was most impressed with the Library, which Lord Dufferin thought was unequalled in the world. "The central figure in Parliament," says the critic "is also the greatest figure in Canada."—

He is Sir John A. Macdonald, the real ruler of Canada, with but a short interruption, for twenty-five years, and the greatest man British North America has produced. Knight Commander of the Provincial Order of St. Michael and St. George, Knight Commander of the Bath, member of the Imperial Privy Council, a distinction enjoyed by no other man in Canada. For forty years he has been in Parliament, and during all that time Canada has noted his remarkable administrative ability. His service on intercolonial commissions, as, for instance, on the one regarding the Alabama claims, have given the English also chances to admire his genius. He is about seventy years old, and looks like William Davidge of Daley's Fifth Avenue Theatre company. His face is big featured and rough hewn. He is democratic, easy going, good natured, and unaffected. He lolls about in his chair, which is like all the other chairs, with his knees up against the edge of his desk or his limber legs twisted under the seat, and twists this way and that, to listen to the speakers in his party, to pass an approving word to them, or to exchange glances or witticisms with the men around him. He is a politician of the smartest sort.

Of Sir John's rival, the leader of the Opposition, the same writer says:—

Mr. Blake looks like Senator Bayard, but there is in his face an indefinable touch that betrays his Irish origin. He is smooth shaven and wears black, and, if he had a choker, might easily pass for a priest; but he prefers to put on a big slouch hat and to wear clothes that don't fit him, so that *Grip*, the Canadian imitation of our *Puck*, has made a bit by always portraying him as a farmer. He is considered the best orator in the House. His Irish softens and beautifies his pronunciation, gives him ready wit and a smooth flow of language; but he is better than a good talker. He has a broad and logical mind, has a lawyer's training, is predisposed to figures and accounts, and is absolutely and mathematically accurate. It is his business to want to know, and he has a great capacity for disturbing complacent and shiftless officeholders, exposing public extravagance, if any there be, and demanding official figures that may be hidden in sly, Ministerial poke-holes. He does not compare with Sir John as a politician. When one of his followers is speaking he is as likely as not to bury his head in his arms on his desk, or to read a newspaper, or go out and take a walk. The Premier will never be caught making such mistakes.

AMERICA is going to do everything. It is now preparing to give the world dried figs. A fig orchard is to be planted in Los Angeles, California, and it is expected that the Smyrna variety will soon go out of popularity, and be replaced by the American sort. What a pity it is that the United States cannot grow cathedrals dating from Saxon times, old English churches, and famous abbeys. If they could, there would be nothing left in the old country to be proud of any longer.

THE progress made by women during the last ten or fifteen years in England and America has been very great. In many respects our neighbours of the States have made more extensive and rapid progress than

others. We hear of wealthy, cultivated women in Boston, New York and other cities of the Union, devoting time, money and personal labour to the advancement of sound education, morality and religion, to the relief and raising of the cast down, the "beaten ones" in life's battle, and the tending of the sick and afflicted. Among many noble examples of this kind who have come to the front during the last few years, two appear preëminently worthy. For several years—though one of them is still in the early prime of life—they have been performing their beneficent work quietly and unostentatiously. One of them is Mrs. Quincy Shaw, of Boston, daughter of the late Professor Agassiz, who, as we read in the *Home Journal* and know from private sources, spends yearly more than \$50,000 in supporting schools, kindergartens, nurseries for children of the poor, and other benevolent institutions. This accomplished Christian lady does not merely thus devote a large yearly income to these objects, but personally superintends and watches the good work. Daily she may be seen in her unpretentious one-horse brougham passing through some of the poorest parts of Boston to inspect her schools, and cheer and advise her managers and teachers, paid by herself. The other lady—Miss Ellen F. Mason, recently made known as the author of two excellent translations of Plato—is also setting a noble example to ladies of high position and fortune, without renouncing any of the duties incident to her position as a member of one of Boston's oldest and most honoured families, grand-daughter of the late Hon. Jeremiah Mason, celebrated orator and jurist, daughter of the late Mr. Robert M. Mason, and near kinswoman to Hon. Robert C. Winthrop. Mr. Winthrop has maintained, in advanced life, the reputation early won by him as a statesman and orator. He has often been the guest and host of the mother country's most distinguished men, among others our late Governor-General, Dean Stanley, and Chief Justice Coleridge. Miss Mason devoted six years of her life, after finishing a lady's usual education, to the study of the classics, especially under a well-known able instructor, who, during his twenty years' residence in Boston, has fully maintained the high and solid reputation he had won at a very early age in Scotland and England as a classical scholar and teacher. Besides all this, she and a sister are devoting a large portion of their means and personal superintendence to the advancement of sound education, the assistance of deserving but poor students, and the helping of worthy distressed persons to help themselves. When Plato's philosophy is united with such practical and beneficent work as this, it wins from us a love and admiration we should never have given to the old Greek Philosopher alone.

INTERVIEWED on board the steamer when on the point of departure to England, Lord Coleridge is reported to have declared "American women far excel their English cousins in beauty and intellect," and since that moment the press has not ceased to discuss the question: In what does female beauty consist? With pardonable pride Americans cried "content" to Lord Coleridge's definition, and are doubtless honestly convinced that their women are the most beautiful in the world. Sir Lepel Griffin, however, on the other hand, boldly declares his conviction that "more pretty faces are to be seen in a single day in London than in a month in the States," and he very truly adds that this is the opinion of travelled foreigners. "The average of beauty is far higher in Canada, and the American town in which most pretty women are noticeable is Detroit, on the Canadian border, and containing many Canadian residents"—this also is the opinion of Sir Lepel, expressed in the *Fortnightly Review*.

BUT there is beauty and beauty—that of mind and heart, as well as that of face and form. If the question were asked, what is the greatest, most potent, and most enduring charm of female beauty, Shakspeare has given us the answer. It is the charm of variety. Of his wonderful presentation of what a late critic has called "the perfect and everlasting woman" in Cleopatra, we are told as her secret of retaining her powers in spite of the effects of time,

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety."

It is certain that women lose much of their influence by their readiness to forego their charm of variety. The idea of every fashionable woman is not to develop herself, but rather to stifle down her originality, and to cram herself into the one conventional world. Victor Hugo tells us of those infamous persons who form human monsters for exhibition, that they put a child into a huge earthen pitcher, let it grow there, grow into the mould of the pitcher. When it stops growing the pitcher is broken, and you have not a man, but a living jug. Something such is the idea of self-formation entertained and acted upon by the fashionable women, with such results as we see. That they thus surrender the chiefest of the spells by which man's feelings are wrought upon by female beauty it would be