

and Currency, Rivers and Harbours, and so on. These committees consist of only from 3 to 16 members each. To some one of these small standing committees every memorial, bill, proposition, or report of a department must be referred without debate. They deliberate in secret, and no member speaking in the House is entitled to state anything that has taken place in committee other than what is stated in the report of that committee. Let me give you in the very words of a recent American constitutional writer* the state of things which results:—

"Over the legislative material thus given it the committee has almost unlimited control; the custom of bringing in bills and referring them is really nothing but a form; the committees might almost as well be allowed to introduce all legislation; they may amend a bill as they please; they may even make it over so entirely that it is really a new bill, reflecting the views of the committee rather than the views of the originator; or they may either by reporting a bill adversely or by delaying to report it until late in the session, or by simply not reporting it at all practically extinguish a bill. . . . Thus legislation rests with the committees; they may initiate whatever they please; they may stifle any measures which have not their approval; the rule that no bill shall be discussed without being reported by a committee might as well read 'without being approved by a committee.' In strict parliamentary practice no member is permitted to allude in the House to anything that has taken place in Committee. As a result of this secrecy the committees are subject to the tremendous pressure of private interests. . . . The steady tendency of the House within the last twenty years has been to give to the committees an ever-increasing power. . . . Thus Congress no longer exercises its lawful function of law-making, that has gone to the committees as completely as in England it has passed to the Cabinet." These committees, it appears, are practically under the control of their Chairmen, who are strict party men appointed by the Speaker (to whom if your patience is not exhausted I want more particularly to introduce you presently) who is himself under the American system a staunch and avowed partisan. "I know not how better," says Mr. Woodrow Wilson, the American writer whom I have already quoted from, "to describe our form of government in a single phrase than by calling it a government by the Chairmen of the standing committees of Congress."† But these Chairmen of committees do not constitute a co-operative body like our Ministry. "They do not consult and concur in the adoption of homogeneous and mutually helpful measures; there is no thought of acting in concert. Each committee goes its own way at its own pace. It is impossible to discover any unity or method in the disconnected, and therefore,

* Miss Follett's "Speaker of the House of Representatives," pp. 242-7.

† "Congressional Government," p. 102.