



PARLIAMENT opens next week, and will waste three days at the job. Normally Parliament only wastes two days in getting itself opened; but when it is a new Parliament, it requires three days for the more formidable operation. The first day, the members assemble in the Commons Chamber and the Senators crowd themselves into as much of the Senate Chamber as is not taken up by ladies in evening dress—though it is afternoon—or is it only the next day in the case of a new Parliament that the ladies come? Anyway the members are sworn in and await the dread summons of the Black Rod. A little after three, some one warns the officials of the Commons that the Black Rod is coming, and they hastily close the doors against him. He might walk right in otherwise; and the Constitution would be fatally shattered. As it is, he knocks with ghostly distinctness on the closed doors. The Sergeant-at-Arms looks to see that his sword is in its scabbard, and then cautiously peaks out. Discovering that the stranger who imperiously demands admission is none other than the Black Rod, he as cautiously closes the door again on this impressive personage and tip-toes up to the Clerk's table and reports the matter to him.

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IT is so long since I have seen an opening of Parliament that I may be transferring to the first day ceremonies which only grace the second; but it really does not matter. The upshot of it is that the Commons are summoned to the Senate Chamber to meet the Governor-General and—presumably—to listen to the Speech from the Throne. When they get over there, however, they are told that they have forgotten to elect a Speaker; and, when they come to think of it, they have. Every first session of a Parliament, they always forget in this way. It never seems to occur to the oldest Parliamentarian that, while they are standing around waiting for the Black Rod after being sworn in, they might elect a Speaker and “fool” the Governor-General for once. But they invariably go streaming over to the Senate without having provided themselves with a gentleman to wear a cocked hat and stand up beside the Mace and look dignified. So they are sent back to elect a Speaker and are not allowed to hear the Speech from the Throne until next day.

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WHEN the next day comes, the Black Rod makes another descent on the Commons, and is again forestalled and then admitted by the cautious and armed-to-the-teeth Sergeant-at-Arms. I tell you the country member sings pretty small while these two gentlemen are prying Parliament open. I will not bother you about the six bows—or is it nine—of the Black Rod. They are not what they were when I was a boy; but they are still examples of the poetry of motion. I have never seen anything like them elsewhere except at an African “cake-walk.” This time the Commons goes over with its Speaker at its head, and gets a chance to be unable to hear the reading of the Speech. However, the ladies are all there; and sometimes the Judges of the Supreme Court sit most uncomfortably on a backless divan in the centre of the room. Nor do the members miss the Speech altogether; for the Speaker announces on his return that he has brought away a copy as a souvenir—when no one was looking—and that they may have the benefit of it.



PRINCE GEORGE, THE SPEECH-MAKER, HEIR-APPARENT TO THE THRONE OF SERVIA.

The Crown Prince of Serbia has done all that in him lies to render the crisis in the Near East as dangerous to the peace of the world as possible. He has made fiery speeches almost by the score, and, according to report, he has announced that, if necessary, he will even take arms against his father, the King. Prince George is the second child of King Peter, and was born on August 27th, (old style), 1887. His brother, Prince Alexander, was born in December of the following year; and his sister, Princess Helene, in October, 1884.

THIS takes up Wednesday and Thursday; for the Commons does not think of even beginning its debate on the Speech that day. The journey to the Senate Chamber has unfitted it for serious business. Friday the debate opens and may end if it is to be purely formal. If there are amendments to be moved and serious discussion to ensue, that is all adjourned until next week. The first week is to be devoted to the overture; and it is unconstitutional for anybody to work except the Black Rod. Saturday night comes the Drawing Room when all and sundry may be presented to Their Excellencies, after which Society is officially aware of the fact that Parliament is open. The week after, the members may escape from the succession of pageants, and take up the business of the nation which they have come to perform. The grey and drab members of the Commons begin to emerge more from the background, as it were; and we can get a glimpse of some people who do not wear gold lace or carry a sword.

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I DARE say that this is all very impressive, and is intended to establish the dignity of Parliament. I hope that it has that effect. But it never seemed to me to raise the dignity of the House of Commons very much to be summoned over to the Senate Chamber like so many school boys, to stand up in a cramped space in the back of the Chamber while Ottawa Society sat at the Senatorial desks and officials in uniform pranced about, there to hear the reading of the Speech which a Committee of Parliament had written and which the House of Commons could “waste paper basket” if it so desired. To see Edward Blake, Dalton McCarthy, Wilfrid Laurier, R. L. Borden, George Foster, William Paterson, F. D. Monk jostling in the lobby below the sacred rail which usually shuts in the Senators, while their “betters”—the Senators they had made—sat in state above them, and uniformed officers shepherded them like farmers at a “side show,” never seemed to me to be particularly edifying. The best men of Canada have been in that throng, while the Governor-General was the only official, not their own creation, who lorded it over them. Personally, I had rather see Parliament opened by the arrival of His Excellency to read his Speech to the Commons, and then have business commence ten minutes afterward.

N'IMPORTE

A Matter of Manners

TORONTO is the second city of the Dominion and is not backward in proclaiming her enlightenment, educational and ecclesiastical. However, if the reports of the meeting of the Toronto Board of Education of January 6th may be credited, the manners and methods of certain members of that body should be amended speedily.

After a motion had been brought in, expressing regret at the “enforced parting” of three trustees, the gentlemen so addressed acknowledged the spirit of the motion in varying terms. One of the departing trio, so far forgot himself and the interests he had represented, as to descend to “sewer rats” and other terms of abuse by way of describing his opponents' methods. A noisy member, in replying, retaliated in unamiable fashion and the incident furnished the evening papers with a column of sensational epithets.

During the same week, a few riotous youngsters at Jarvis Street Collegiate Institute issued an ill-advised circular regarding recent time regulations and the press proceeded to magnify this foolish manifesto into a general insurrection. The complaint is made in these days that the young people of Canada are not characterised by respect for authority—that they are lacking in that courtesy which goes so far towards lubricating the commercial and social machinery. What may be expected from the pupils in the Toronto public schools in the matter of vocabulary or deportment, when the members at the head of the educational system show such a lamentable lack of restraint? Behind this controversy was an appointment in connection with which the Church of Rome was charged with exerting undue influence. Without pronouncing at all on the merits of the case, one may point out to certain agitated Protestants that they are doing their cause no good by a violence of speech and manner, such as instructors in the church which they attack carefully avoid.

J. G.