

ting of the House of Representatives at Washington, was that one representative made a fierce attack on the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Navy was not there to defend himself.*

Passing now from this matter to a general consideration of our legislatures on the one hand and the American on the other, I would point out in the first place that as Ministers with us are entrusted with seats in the legislature and supreme control and influence therein so long as they can maintain a majority, so our legislatures are themselves trusted with plenary powers on the broad subject matters severally entrusted to them. We know nothing of that distrust of legislatures, which is a pervading and growing characteristic of American institutions. The Americans regard legislatures merely as agents with limited powers and fetter their discretion by all manner of provisions embodied in fundamental laws, intended no doubt for the most part to prevent invasions of rights of personal liberty and property, and unjust legislation, but in some cases, as I could cite high American authority to show, by reason of the generality of their application, preventing legislation which would be wise and proper, and working for wrong and not for right. Again, it is to be noted that the two Houses constituting Congress possess substantially equal and co-ordinate powers, whence arises, says Mr. Bryce, frequent collisions between the two Houses, whose disagreement paralyzes legislative action. The American newspaper, *The Nation*, in 1872 said that there is somewhere in the records of the Courts the history of a private claim of unquestionable merit, which was passed without opposition ten times by one House and fourteen by the other, and yet never succeeded in getting through both Houses of the same Congress.† With us, of course, it would be contrary to all constitutional convention for the Senate, as it would for the House of Lords in England, to persistently thwart the clear expression of the will of the popular House.

But I must pass on to notice how the business of legislation is carried on in Congress, to bring out, as I think it will do in a way very startling to any not already familiar with it, how much more worthy of a free people our methods are. It is, of course, necessary for every legislative body to evolve some kind of organization. Debarred from having the Ministers of the day as a ruling committee controlling all business, as with us, the Houses of Congress took the alternative of distributing business among a number of small committees to each of which is assigned a specific class of subjects, indicated by the names of the committees, such as Ways and Means, Appropriations, Banking

* Aug.-Sept., 1882.

† *Nation*, Vol. 16, p. 145, cited by Miss Follett in her "Speaker of the House Representatives," p. 329, n. 19.